

THE SOVIET UNION AND EGYPT, 1947-1955

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Ph.D.

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FOR MY PARENTS FORTUNA AND ABRAHAM

AND FOR SYLVIA AND ELIE

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ABSTRACT

THE SOVIET UNION AND EGYPT, 1947-1955

RAMI GINAT

This research deals with the political history of the Middle East, with special reference to Egypt. It aims to explore, describe and analyse the events which led to the involvement of the Soviet Union in Egyptian affairs. Attention is given to the domestic and foreign developments in the U.S.S.R., Egypt and the Middle East in general, which created a favourable atmosphere for Soviet penetration into Egypt. It examines the change in the Soviet position towards the Arab-Israeli conflict after the partition resolution of 29 November 1947 was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

This study disproves the current belief that arms supplies from the Soviet bloc to Egypt started in September 1955; it shows that such supplies were reaching Egypt as early as 1948. Furthermore it shows that Soviet-Egyptian commercial relations increased steadily from 1948 until 1955.

The dynamics of Soviet penetration into the area can only be understood by tracing the roots and motives of Soviet policy after the Second World War. The strengthening of Soviet influence and the improvement of their position in Egypt in the second half of 1955, was a result of a long process of gradual political and ideological developments in Egypt, beginning in the late 1940's. The pre-1955 agreements, so far neglected, are of vital importance in the establishment of Soviet hegemony over Egypt and other Arab countries.

The study examines the interaction between political history and the history of ideas. It assumes that there was a gap between ideology and Realpolitik in the Soviet approach towards the Third World generally and the Arab World in particular.

The research is based upon extensive use of British, American and Israeli official files, as well as Arabic and Soviet primary and secondary sources.

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PART ONE
DOCTRINE VIS-À-VIS REALPOLITIK

CHAPTER ONE
SOVIET DOCTRINE CONCERNING THE ARAB WORLD

A. Continuity and Change in Consolidating and Shaping
Soviet Doctrine up to the early 1950's

In his study The Soviet Union and the Middle East, Walter Laqueur divided the Soviet doctrine towards the Arab world up to 1954, into five main periods. The first period was from November 1917, when the Bolsheviks took over up to 1921. There was little information then and less interest in what really went on in Asia, despite the fact that much lip service was paid to the revolutionary potentialities of the East. The second period was from 1921 up to 1928. During these years the Soviets had not appreciated the potential role of the intelligentsia in the national movement, and were unwilling to take advantage of the great appeal of nationalist slogans. The third period had begun in 1928, when a significant change took place in the Soviet general doctrine. This new line was shaped by the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928. A period of tensions and revolutionary conflict had begun as a result of communist setbacks in Europe, the crisis in the far East, and certain internal processes within the Soviet Union. These changes pushed the Soviets to be more involved in the Middle East political events. Their rigid doctrinaire line regarding the role of the national bourgeoisie in the struggle for liberation in the third world had been softened a little. This period was ended sometime in 1935 as a result of political events inside Europe. The fourth period was between 1935 and 1945. The Soviet attention was focused on the Central European and Far Eastern danger zones. Less attention was paid to Middle East affairs. The fifth period started in 1945 and went to 1954.

Considerable stress was put on the national liberation movement in Asia, but it was argued, at the same time, that this movement would succeed only under communist leadership¹.

Laqueur's division, apart from his argument concerning Soviet policy towards the Middle East in the fifth period, is accepted. This last period will be discussed at length in this study.

The Soviet Union's attempts to increase its influence in the Arab world, and to bring it under communist control had become apparent shortly after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution took place. For instance, In 1919 Lenin published an appeal to the Muslims of the world in which he declared *inter alia*:

"Muslims of the entire world, victims of the capitalists, wake up! Russia has abandoned the pernicious policy of the Czars with regard to you and offers you a helping hand in your efforts to overthrow British tyranny. Russia will give you full religious freedom and political autonomy. Pre-war frontiers will be respected, no Turkish territory will be given to Armenia, the Dardanelles will remain Turkish and Constantinople will remain the capital of the Muslim world...²".

Lenin's appeal and the Soviets' efforts to increase their influence were not crowned with success, mainly because of their inconsistent attitude towards Islam. For instance, as opposed to the above appeal, the Soviets organized a "communist congress of the peoples of the East", at Baku, in September 1920; the congress had been called to act in support of "proletariatism dictatorship" based on an atheistic and materialistic philosophy which rejects and scorns both Islam and Christianity³. Prior to the congress,

1. Walter Laqueur, The Soviet Union and the Middle East (London:1959), pp.7-158.
2. A report on "Communism and Islam", prepared by the research Dept. of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, 30 September, 1951, Records of Israel Foreign Ministry, (FM) 2530/8/A, Ginzakh Hamedina, Jerusalem (hereafter cited as I.S.A., FM with appropriate filing designation). See also: "Soviet policy towards the Arab East" Bulletin, Institute for the study of the U.S.S.R., Vol. 15, No. 3, March 1968, pp. 29-30.
3. Cornelius Van Engert, "Some notes on Islam and Communism", 22 March 1951, in: a report from British Embassy, Washington

Lenin had reached the conclusion that the Eastern peoples need not go through the capitalist stage of development. This could happen with the assistance of the Soviet Union, and would lead to Communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage¹.

The Third Comintern Congress in June 1921 recognized that the prospect of immediate revolution in the West had failed and therefore "without a revolution in Asia, the proletarian revolution cannot be victorious"². The Fourth Congress in November 1922 emphasized the need of collaboration with the national movements irrespective of the absence of a revolutionary wing within them. The resolutions passed by the Fifth Comintern Congress in June 1924, restated the need of collaboration with the bourgeois nationalists on the basis of a "united front" whose validity encompassed the whole East. Support for the leadership of the nationalist movements, it was said, was unconditional³.

Nevertheless, this doctrinaire line was rarely translated into action. In his first years in power, Stalin held the view that the revolution could only be achieved under communist leadership. The implementation of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine, was connected, according to Stalin's theory, with the rejection of any compromise with the capitalist world. Stalin considered this doctrine as "the science of the development of society, the science of the working class movement, the science of the proletarian revolution, the science of the building of the communist society; this science of history is based on a

10 May 1951, F0371/91184, E1024/20G, Public Record Office (hereafter cited as F0371 with appropriate filing reference). See also: M. Leshem, "Soviet propaganda to the Middle East", Middle Eastern Affairs, January 1953, pp. 1-3.

1. Hashim S.H. Behbehani, The Soviet Union and Arab Nationalism 1917-1966 (London: 1986), pp.5-7. D. Boersner, The Bolsheviks and the National and Colonial Problem (Paris: 1954), p. 272.
2. Musa Budeiri, The Palestine Communist Party 1919-1948 (London: Ithaca Press, 1979), p. 1.
3. Ibid, p. 2.

dialectical analysis which explains all history...in terms of the conflict and contradiction in human affairs, in particular, of conflict between economic classes". Stalin said, that according to this doctrine, the violent take-over by the progressive classes, from the ruling classes, was inevitable. "At the present stage in history, the struggle is between Capitalism and Socialism. The Soviet form of state organization is the only true Socialism, which it is the duty of communist parties everywhere to extend by all means within their power¹".

In July 1928, the Sixth Congress of the Comintern decided to support the national struggle for liberation of the colonial peoples and those who achieved only formal independence. Despite the fact that the social content of the nationalist movement in the Arab world did not fit with the Marxist-Leninist pattern, or Stalin's theory, this new accommodationist approach was reflected in Soviet broadcasts, which encouraged Persian and Arab Nationalism².

The programme of the Comintern regarding the struggle against imperialism in colonial and dependent areas and the role of the local communist parties in conducting it was as follows³:

"To fight against feudalism and the pro-capitalist forms of exploitation and to develop systematically the peasant agrarian revolution...to fight against foreign imperialism and for national independence...the Communist International supports every movement against imperialist violence in the colonies, semi-colonies and dependencies themselves...the communist parties in the imperialist countries must render systematic aid to the colonial revolutionary liberation movement and to the movement of oppressed nationalities generally...the communist parties in the colonial and semi-colonial countries must carry on a bold and consistent struggle against foreign imperialism and unfailingly conduct

1. Paper on the "communist state in theory and practice", prepared by the F.O., 29 May 1949, F0371/86731, NS1023/3G.
2. Leshem, *Ibid*, pp.7-8.
3. Information memorandum No. 26, "Soviet Communism", Dept. of State, 29 December 1948, in: Records of Charles E. Bohlen, 1942-1945, Box 5, National Archives, Washington D.C.

propaganda in favour of friendship and unity with the proletariat in the imperialist countries".

This policy was translated into action in November 1928, when the U.S.S.R recognized the complete independence and sovereignty of the new state of Yemen in a treaty of friendship and trade signed in Sana, the capital of Yemen. Trade agreements had also been signed with Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan¹.

The Soviet decision makers had realized that the revolutionary process in this area would be connected with an extended struggle, in which the revolutionary movement was expected to pass through three different stages²:

- a. The immediate aim was the exclusion of the colonialist element; that would be achieved with the creation of a united national liberation movement, with the participation of all classes.
- b. After the national independence would be achieved, the local communist party should lead the workers and peasants towards a social revolution.
- c. The end of this process would be, the taking of control by the communist party.

This policy was formulated comprehensively, at the seventh Comintern congress in 1935, and intended mainly to induce the nationalists elements to conduct a massive struggle against western colonialism. The Soviets believed that when the struggle ended, the road to power would be open for the communist party. The content of the new-look policy regarding the battle against colonialism, as it was accepted and confirmed by the Seventh Comintern Congress was as follows:

1. Bulletin, *Ibid*, p.30.
2. Ivar Spector, "program of action of the communist party of Egypt", Middle East Journal, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Washington: 1956), p. 427; A. Yodfat, Arab Politics in the Soviet Mirror (Tel-Aviv: 1973), pp.1-4; G. Lenczowski, "Soviet policy in the Middle East", Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1954, pp. 52-54.

"In colonial and semi-colonial countries, the most important task of the communists consists in working to create an anti-imperialist popular front. To this end they must engage the broad masses in a national-liberation movement against growing imperialist exploitation and cruel slavery and for expulsion of the imperialists and national independence, actively participate in mass anti-imperialist movements led by national reformists, and arrange joint action with national revolutionary and national reformist organizations on a basis of a concrete anti-imperialist platform¹.

This was the Soviet method of implementing its doctrine within the Third World, mainly, up to the second world war, and according to its assessment, the Arab world was an integral part of it. The Arab communist parties became the main element by means of which the Soviets wished to deepen their penetration into that part of the world. To achieve this purpose, they concentrated their efforts on the nurture and encouragement of local communist parties in the hope that they would act as the revolutionary vanguard who would lead the masses towards a revolution and take over.

As suggested by George Lenczowski, the Soviet doctrine had two essential objectives²:

- a. The establishment of a communist society through violent means if necessary;
- b. Linking the area to the Soviet Union in some form of dependent relationship.

From the Soviet viewpoint, up to the late 1940's, there was no significant change in their doctrine towards the region. The same goals and aspirations continued to motivate their political activity.

The external image of the Soviet Union within the Arab world was improved as a result of Soviet entry into the Second World War on

1. Rezolyutsii VII Vsemirnogo Kongressa Kommunisticheskogo internatsionala, Moscow, 1935, pp.27-28, in: Bulletin, ibid, p. 31.
2. G. Lenczowski, "Soviet policy in the Middle East", ibid, p.52.

the side of the allies. Furthermore, the Soviet achievements at the end of the war, particularly their joint occupation of Iran, with Britain, gave them a respectable introduction to the Middle East.

B. Methods and Vehicles For Carrying Out The Soviet Doctrine

a. Ideological Warfare

One of the most popular means taken by the Soviets to attract public attention and influence opinion, was the conduct of ideological warfare in a variety of media. This ideological activity focused on, and took place mainly in the so-called "bourgeois countries", and within the colonies and semi-colonial countries which were ruled by capitalist powers. Ideological warfare became a prominent political weapon, inside and outside the Soviet Union, either to mislead people as to the significance and virtuous motives of the policies of the Soviet Government compared to other, evil, powers, or actively to foment discontent. Therefore, propaganda activity became the principal tool used by the Soviet Government to establish its superiority¹. The Soviet purpose was not the creation of a new positive atmosphere in the international arena, but to manipulate and subvert. The long-term aim of their propaganda, was to speed up the world

1. Dispatch 610 from British Embassy, Cairo, 25 April 1945, FO371/46003, JK1522. Memorandum on "Propaganda Directed to Egypt by the Soviet Authorities", from British Embassy-Cairo, 14 September 1945, Ibid, J2962/440/16. On the Soviet propaganda activity see also: "The Communist State in Theory and Practice", a paper sent from Joint Services Staff College, Latimer, Chesham to Services Liaison Department, F.O., 19 January 1950, FO371/86731, NS1023/3G; Information memorandum No. 26, "Soviet Communism", Department of State, 29 December 1948, in: Records of Charles E. Bohlen, 1942-1945, Box 5. "Some Characteristics of Soviet Propaganda", Department of State memorandum, 9 March 1949, Foreign Office Posts of the Department of State, Record Group (RG) 84, Cairo Embassy-General Records, 1949: 350.21, Box 207, Washington National Records Center, Suitland Maryland (hereafter cited as RG 84 with appropriate filing reference).

revolution which would be the first step to world progress. The following pattern was shaped by Lenin in 1918, and adopted by his followers¹:

"International policy: Support the revolutionary movement of the socialist proletariat in the advanced countries in the first place. Propaganda. Agitation. Fraternization. A ruthless struggle against opportunism and social-chauvinism (i.e., deviation from the doctrine). Support of the democratic and revolutionary movement in all countries in general, and particularly, in the colonies and dependent countries. Emancipation of the colonies. Federation, as a transition to voluntary amalgamation".

The possibilities of turning the peoples of the Middle East against the British had been earnestly considered by the Soviet leaders, including Lenin and Stalin; they wished via the ideological vehicles to agitate the masses against the British, and create a better atmosphere for their future penetration.

Soviet ideological activity, or propaganda activity in western terms, began to gather momentum in the Arab countries after the end of the second world war. In Egypt, this activity had been organized and carried out through the Soviet Union legation in Cairo, headed by 'Abd al-Rahmān Sultanov, a second secretary of Muslim origin, and Sakolov, the Press Attaché². In April 1945, it was reported by the British Embassy in Cairo, that the principal Soviet vehicles for the diffusion of propaganda were books and pamphlets for sale to the public, and material issued to the press. Most of the material did not contain direct communistic propaganda, it was said, but tended to display to the Egyptian people all the advantages of the Soviet Union created by the

1. Paper entitled "Some characteristics of Soviet Propaganda" prepared by the Department of State, 9 March 1949, in: RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Records, 1949: 350.21, Box 207.
2. Top secret report from American Embassy, Cairo, 8 April 1945, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group (RG) 59, 861.20283/4-845, National Archives, Washington D.C. (hereafter cited as RG 59 with appropriate filing reference).

communist system. Some of the books were written by local authors in Arabic, and some were translated into Arabic. For example, Bolshevik Russia, by 'Isām Muḥammad Sulaimān, described the reasons for the Soviet achievements in domestic and foreign affairs; Lenin and Stalin, printed in the U.S.S.R., talked about the history of the revolution and of Russia's contribution to victory; Soviet Cultures by A. Yudin has as its main theme that all cultures but the Soviet, were decadent; citing that, before the war, there were ten times more students in the U.S.S.R. than in Germany¹.

The Soviets did not focus all their efforts on distributing books; the selection of books and pamphlets, and the extent of sales were very limited. Even so, there was a great demand for information about the Soviet way of life. It was also reported by the British Embassy that revolutionary leaflets were being distributed by Soviet agents to workers in the towns. The following leaflet demonstrated the advantages of Socialism and claimed that Socialism was not incompatible with Islam:

"Socialism is not against Islam or against any other religion. It does not oppose any creed or any form of worship or devotion, but it is the universal panacea. It is the cure and salvation of the poor and the fruit of a great effort of the will...It has proved itself strong and steadfast in all troubles. It has spread its wings over divers countries, and in the end Socialism will triumph².

Since its establishment in 1943, the Soviet legation in Cairo, had attempted to press the Egyptian authorities to permit publication of a newspaper which would be written in colloquial Arabic; they wished that by the use of an understandable language, the process of diffusing their ideas to the masses would become easier and their messages would be delivered directly to the

1. F0371/46003, J2962/440/16, ibid.

2. Ibid, appendix E.

people. The Egyptian authorities gave permission to the Soviet legation to print a weekly publication, Bulletin de la Presse Sovietique. By doing so, they prevented the Soviets from reaching the Egyptian masses in their own language. In addition, the Soviet legation had heavily subsidised the Egyptian communist magazine, al-Fajr al-Jadid. Oral propaganda, by Arabic radio broadcasts from the U.S.S.R. to the Arab world, was used as another pipeline for the Soviets, to advance their interests¹.

The Soviets were also involved in the founding and financial support of Egyptian trade unions, teacher unions and student unions (affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions)².

The Soviet legation in Cairo became the main active centre for the transmission of communist propaganda in Egypt. In April, 1945, it was reported by Nuqrāshī Pasha, the Egyptian Prime Minister, that there was tangible evidence that the Soviet legation was involved in the creation of subversive cells inside the Egyptian Army and in attempts to spread Soviet propaganda in the industrial classes. Nuqrāshī pointed out that until 1945, there had been no definite indication of such activities in Egypt, but that since he had assumed office in February 1945, he had received reports from the Ministry of the Interior to the effect that the Soviet Legation in Cairo had become active in the spreading of propaganda which, in his opinion "was of a sufficiently serious character as to cause his government some concern"³.

1. Ibid, appendix c. See also dispatch 986 from American Legation, Cairo, 20 August 1945, RG 59, 861.20283/8-2045.
2. See a note on Communism in the Sudan, prepared by the Secretariat Central office, Khartoum, 16 February 1949, in: F0371/73471, J1855/10113/16.
3. Top secret letter from American Embassy, Cairo, 8 April 1945, RG 59, 861.20283/4-845. It was also reported that documentary films were being shown at the Soviet Legation and intended to introduce to the Egyptians the positive aspects of the U.S.S.R.; see, Ibid, 15 January 1948, 861.20283/1-1548.

A very interesting description of Soviet activity in Egypt was given by P.M. Denieprov, the Charge d'affaires of the Soviet Legation. In a conversation which took place on 4 January 1946, with Lyon, a member of the American Legation¹, Denieprov complained of a feeling of uneasiness in Egypt because of the number of arrests which had been made of alleged communists. Denieprov said that the Soviet Legation had arranged an exhibition at the Agricultural Society, which contained exhibits from the various Soviet Republics, photographs, pamphlets, copies of the constitution of the U.S.S.R., etc. He pointed out that certain Egyptian students had found this exhibition interesting and had requested pamphlets. The Egyptian Government had done all possible to "limit the influence of the exposition" said Denieprov. According to his words, Arabic copies of the Soviet constitution were printed in Moscow and sent to Egypt for distribution. These copies had been favourably received and had created much interest but had also met with governmental opposition. Denieprov said that all the stories about the propaganda being spread by the Soviet Legation were exaggerated. "You have heard them, they are really scared of us, aren't they?", said Denieprov to Lyon. Lyon emphasized that Denieprov never denied that the Soviet Legation was disseminating a considerable amount of propaganda, but he obviously intended to give the impression that the allegations referred to were ridiculous. Denieprov mentioned the influence of the events in Iran on the Soviet position in Egypt. He said that the fact that Egyptians were saying that the whole business was being engineered by the Soviets was causing anxiety in Egypt among a few officials; in his view, most people were quite indifferent to the whole situation and the average Egyptian was very little concerned

1. Enclosure No. 1 to dispatch 1260 from American Legation, Cairo, 7 January 1946, RG 59, 711.83/1-746.

about anything that did not touch him personally. Denieprov said that very few Egyptians were interested in Communism "the people are completely without hope or desire...the people are just deadened and have no expectations". The upper ruling classes, said Denieprov, "with which we come in contact are entirely motivated by fear of Communism, but in the middle class there is slight interest in Communism, as well as among the so-called intelligentsia". He emphasized that there was no revolutionary movement or activity in Egypt, and that the only interest in Communism was a slightly academic one. Denieprov said that the Soviet Legation had very little contact with the Egyptians either during working hours or socially, and while the Egyptian officials and important Egyptians accepted all the invitations extended to them by the Legation, hospitality was never returned. "They seem really to be afraid of getting into close contact with the Soviets"¹.

b. Soviet Activity in The Greek Orthodox Church

Despite the fact that there was no room for religion in communist doctrine, the Soviets attempted to assert control over the Orthodox Church in the Middle East and to use it as a political instrument for their own purposes.

The Patriarchs of Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Constantinople were invited to Moscow in January 1945 to attend the General ecclesiastical Assembly convoked to elect a new Patriarch of Moscow. Several months later, in May 1945, the Church's new head, Aleksei, arrived for a visit in the Middle East which included Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Egypt. These religious contacts, said Sir R. Campbell, had obviously a

1. Ibid.

political background, namely, the promotion of Russian, and therefore also, communist influence among the Orthodox minorities of Egypt and the Middle East¹.

In addition to the Soviet Church's direct links with local clergy, said Yaacov Ro'i in his book Soviet Decision Making in Practice, the Soviet diplomats assigned to Near Eastern capitals began to reveal an interest in the Holy Places, pilgrimages and the various organizations and institutions connected with the Church and the Orthodox religion².

In Egypt, this activity was concentrated mainly in Alexandria, but it extended to Cairo as well. Soviet aspirations were crowned with success in the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria as a result of support given by Christophoros II, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria, mainly after his return in January 1945 from Moscow where he had participated in the election of a new Patriarch³.

Father Alexis, Priest of the local Russian Orthodox Church of Alexandria, was involved in communist activity and it was well-known that the Soviet Legation had financially supported his Church. Consequently, in March 1947, he was given fifteen days to leave Egypt by the Egyptian authorities⁴.

1. Sir R. Campbell was the British Ambassador in Egypt at this time. See dispatch 106 from Campbell, Cairo, 3 February 1947, FO371/63046, J675/422/16G. Yaacov Ro'i, Soviet Decision Making in Practice (New Jersey: 1980), pp.34-35.

2. Ro'i, *ibid*, p.35.

3. On the visit of Christophoros II, and on the inter-Orthodox relations, see: dispatch 513 from the American Legation, Cairo, 26 January 1945, RG 59, 883.404/1-2645; Paper on "The Russian Church and the Eastern Patriarchates" prepared by the Research Department of the F.O., March 1950, FO371/81977, E1781/2. See also Record of Conversation, took place on 15 December 1948, at the Department of State, between Baxter, Division of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs, the Greek Ambassador and Athenagoras, the newly elected Ecumenical Patriarch, RG 59, 883.404/12-1548.

4. A-17 (Airgram) from American consulate, Alexandria, 14 March 1947, RG 59, 861.404/3-1447.

In 1946 the Patriarch of Alexandria went on another visit to Moscow and in 1947 the Patriarch of Moscow, Sergei Alexis visited Alexandria¹. Christophoros II had close relations with the heads of the Soviet Legation. Towards the end of 1948, it was reported that he had received three separate visits by the First Secretary of the Soviet legation in Cairo, and at his request, had accepted as an employee in the Patriarchal Library, a Greek subject who was known to be pro-communist. Later on, the librarian was arrested by the police and placed in an internment camp following an investigation which disclosed that he was engaged in communist activities. Efforts to have the librarian released were made by Christophoros II, but his efforts were not successful because the arrest was carried out upon orders from the Ministry of Interior². In addition, the Head of the Patriarchal Labor Employment Office was a communist who had engaged communists to work with the British Forces in the Suez Canal Zone³. Moreover, in the election of the Patriarch of Istanbul, Christophoros II favoured the candidate who was nominated by Moscow⁴. On 14 November 1948, at the ceremony when the Greek Orthodox Patriarchal Library was transferred to new quarters, a place of honor in the front row was given to Alexis Shvedov, First

1. Dispatch 83 from American Consulate, Alexandria, 15 November 1948, RG 59, 883.404/11-1548.
2. Ibid. See also dispatch 84, ibid, 17 November 1948, 883.404/11-1748. Dispatch 101, ibid, 20 December 1948, RG 59, 883.00B/12-2048. Broadly speaking, a significant number of communist activists in Egypt were of Greek origin and many of them had come to Egypt as refugees after the German occupation in 1941. It would be therefore possible to assume that the Patriarch's pro-Soviet attitude was not exceptional among the Greek population in Egypt. See dispatch 96, ibid, 9 December 1948, 883.404/12-948. Dispatch 116 from American Consulate, Alexandria, 2 March 1955, RG 59, 774.00/3-255. On the activity of Greek communists in British camps located at the Suez Canal zone, see, dispatch 61 from American Consulate, Port Said, 26 July 1949, RG 59, 883.00B/7-2649.
3. Dispatch 11 from American Consulate, Alexandria, 17 January 1949, RG 59, 883.404/1-1749.
4. See dispatches 83 and 84, ibid.

Secretary of the Soviet legation in Cairo. The attendance of a Soviet official at a religious ceremony was a matter of interest because as a rule no representative of the Soviet Government was allowed by his superiors to attend such a ceremony¹.

At the beginning of 1949, it was reported that the Patriarch of Alexandria was going to assent to the establishment in Alexandria of a chapel to be run or directed by the Patriarch of Moscow, Alexis².

Whether or not we accept Christophoros II's defence that he was anti-communist and that there had been a misunderstanding about some of his activities³, the main point was, that the homeland of atheism, which waged an internal, continuous campaign against all religions inside her boundaries, was ready to sacrifice some of the basic ideas in her doctrine in order to achieve a political benefit. The use of the Orthodox Church as a shelter for hiding communists, or conducting subversive activity on behalf of Soviet interests, was an essential change in their doctrine, which took place as a result of Soviet foreign policy developments after the second world war. For the realization of their goals in the Middle East, they were ready to support and encourage every local group who had a sympathy for, or any sort of link to, the U.S.S.R., not necessarily on the basis of ideology. A further illustration, according to British and American reports, concerns the Egyptian Armenians. The Armenians desired to see the Armenian provinces in Turkey freed and linked to the Armenian Soviet

1. see dispatch 84, *ibid*.

2. Dispatch 11, *ibid*, 17 January 1949, RG 59, 883.404/1-1749.

3. This statement was made by Christophoros II on 21 January 1949, during a conversation with Robert L. Buell, American Consul General to Alexandria, and Charilaos Zamarias, Greek Consul General to Alexandria. See record of conversation in dispatch 13, *ibid*, 26 January 1949, 883.404/1-2649. See also, dispatch 11, *ibid*; and dispatch 98 from American Embassy, Cairo, 28 January 1949, RG 59, 883.404/1-2849.

Republic, therefore, they supplied propaganda agents for the Soviets. It was stated that the Charge d'affaires of the Soviet Legation, Denieprov, was in touch with local Armenian cultural organizations in promoting Soviet cultural propaganda¹. Yet, up to the late 1940's, Soviet political activity concentrated mainly in nurturing and preparing the local communists to be able to lead the future revolution.

1. Memorandum from the American War Department to the Department of State, 23 May 1946, RG 59, 861.20283/5-2346. Dispatch 536 from British Embassy, Cairo, 11 April 1945, FO371/46003, J1412. On this subject see also, Intelligence Report No. 5914, "Problems and Attitudes in the Arab World: Their Implication for US Psychological Strategy", 19 May 1952, U.S. Declassified Documents Reference System, U.S., 1979, 314A. "The Soviet and Islam", The Times (London), 28 January 1949.

C. The Soviet Union and the Local Egyptian Communist Elements

Soviet strategic interests in the Middle East up to the late 1940's concentrated mainly on Iran¹. Yet, the guiding principle for communist activity in the Arab world had been formulated by the Sixth and Seventh Congress of the Comintern². The principle of struggling against imperialism for national independence had served as a guiding light for all the communists in the Near East for a long period. The tactic adopted by them was, on the one hand, a massive attack on imperialism and its handmaiden domestic reaction, and on the other hand, to picture the U.S.S.R. as a powerful friend of small peoples who were struggling for their national independence. They hoped that once the imperialist powers had been expelled and independence achieved, they would be able to take over.

Soviet legations opened in some Arab countries in 1943. The Soviets took great care that their representatives should be able to integrate themselves easily and speedily in the new milieu. For instance, Daniil Solod, the first Soviet minister in Syria and Lebanon, spoke Arabic; the second secretary in the Cairo Legation, 'Abd Al-Rahmān Sultanov was a Muslim and Arabic

1. The Soviets were involved in internal political affairs in Iran mainly, with a massive support to the Communist Party-the Tudeh. The Tudeh was almost strong enough to take over the government in 1947. On the political capacity of the party and its interaction with the Soviet Union, see C.I.A. report entitled: "The Tudeh Party: Vehicle of Communism in Iran", 18 July 1949, President's Secretary's Files, Subject File: Central Intelligence Reports-ORE 1949 (No. 17-24, Box 256), Harry S. Truman Library, Independence Missouri. "Communist Party Capabilities in the Middle East and North Africa", Department of State Intelligence Report, 24 November 1952, R&A Reports, IR 6044, National Archives, Washington D.C. See also, The Times, *ibid*.
2. See pp. 11-13. See also, report on "The strategy and tactics of world Communism", U.S.A. Government printing office, Washington: 1948, in: RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Records, 1948: 800c, Box 187.

speaker¹.

The Soviet Legation in Beirut served as a centre for communist activities in the Middle East. Representatives of Telegrafnoe Agentstvo Sovetskogo Soiuza (Tass- Telegraphic Agency of the Soviet Union) in Beirut were also actively engaged in communist contacts and activities. Furthermore, visits of representatives of the Cominform to Lebanon were known. Communist representatives from Eastern European countries, mainly Yugoslavia (up to the crisis with Moscow on 1948), were thought to be active propagandists².

According to Egyptian press reports the Yugoslav legation in Cairo gave material and moral support to Egyptian communists. The Soviet Legation, it was said, attempted to avoid suspicion and therefore refused to receive the Egyptian communists, abstaining from having any connection with them. The Soviets used the Yugoslavs for pursuing the Soviet goals of encouraging subversive movements and providing for their needs. By doing so, the Soviets wished to prevent any diplomatic friction with the Egyptian authorities³. Indeed, the activities of the Yugoslav legation in Egypt created a lot of tension with the Egyptian authorities. For instance, in July 1948, the police closed a club in Alexandria which was run by Yugoslav agents and used as a centre for communist activity⁴. However, it would be an exaggeration to say that the Soviet Legation in Cairo was not involved in local communist activity. The legation sought to become the patron of

1. Y. Ro'i, Soviet Decision Making in Practice, pp. 33-34.
2. F.O. Research Department memorandum of 21 July 1948, on Communism in countries outside the Soviet orbit, FO371/71651, N9471/31/G. The Times, *ibid*.
3. See dispatch 275 from American Embassy, Cairo, 3 April 1948, RG 59, 883.00/4-348.
4. File No. 800B from American Consulate, Alexandria, to American Embassy, Cairo, 1 July 1948, RG 84, American Embassy-General Records, 1948: 800c, Box 193.

Egypt's workers. According to Egyptian press reports, the Soviet Union sent financial support to workers striking in Egypt and organized the student and worker demonstrations that hit Egypt in February-March 1946. The Soviet Legation's short-range aim was the establishment of a national united front in Egypt to struggle against Britain¹.

In the Egyptian elections at the beginning of 1945, members of the Soviet legation had been in touch with the communist candidate. In addition, the Soviet minister in Cairo warned the Egyptian Prime Minister, that there must be no harassment to communist candidates. The Soviet Minister said that he was not "disposed to argue or discuss varying national ideologies as the Egyptian public, so largely illiterate, were not fitted for such stuff, and as the Egyptian Prime Minister he must see to it that they were not subjected to it²".

In April 1945 it was reported that King Faruq worried about local communist activities and particularly about the role the Soviets might have played in them. The Egyptian Director General of Public Security, Hassanain Pasha, was quoted as saying that he was convinced "that the Russians will aim at the capture of Egypt as being the heart and nerve of the Middle East". That was the reason for his opposition to the establishment of diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. He put the blame on Nahhas Pasha for having been too forward in this matter³.

Hassanain said inter alia, that Henry Curiel, an Egyptian Jew, the founder and leader of the Communist party M.E.L.N. (the Egyptian Movement for National Liberation), ran a bookshop in which Soviet propaganda literature was prominently displayed. The

1. Ro'i, pp.35-36.

2. Dispatch 25 from British Embassy, Cairo, 25 January 1945, FO371/46003, J1440.

3. Dispatch 536, ibid, 11 April, 1945, ibid, J1412.

literature presented different aspects of Soviet social activities in an attractive light, and found its readers mainly among Egyptian students¹.

The attitude of the Soviet Legation to Egyptian communist activity, seemed to be ambivalent. On the one hand, to prevent any friction with the Egyptian authorities, they avoided direct support of the local communist movement. On the other, there was evidence of a steady support, mainly moral and financial, which was given to individuals and organizations to propagate pro-Soviet sentiments.

As was pointed out previously, the qualifications of 'Abd al-Rahmān Sultanov were useful in carrying out his activities. He became the most popular member of the Soviet legation. As a Muslim, his prestige among Muslim circles was high. It brought him into much closer contact with the population as a whole. He was known to have paid several visits to Al-Azhar. In these visits, he demonstrated his knowledge of Islam and attempted to prove that Islam and Communism can co-exist. Likewise, Sultanov was active in organizing communist meetings to stimulate the development of cells. He even attended meetings in some of them².

Of the local communists activists, Fathī al-Ramlī was known to be one of the most prominent figures who had direct contact with the Soviet legation. He was supported financially by the Soviets in order to diffuse their propaganda. Despite the fact that Ramli did not have an official party which connected him to the communist movement, he was known by most educated people as a

1. Ibid. On Henry Curiel see also pp.35-36. On Soviet communist activity in the Sudan see: letter No. 22(36.11.17) from the Governor of the Sudan to the British Ambassador, Cairo, 13 March 1947, F0371/63082, J1450/16G.
2. Report on "The Development of Communism in Egypt" from British Embassy, Cairo, 7 April 1945, F0371/46003, J2211/440/16.

communist. Those who had heard of him, mainly through his articles in the press, considered him as one who was supposed to have an unaccountable supply of money. For instance, it was said that students cynically took money from him; they considered him as "an eccentric whose pockets were full of ready cash"¹.

An American secret report based upon information given by Egyptian communists who worked according to Soviet orders, outlined the Soviet methods of implementing their interests in the Middle East². According to this information, Odessa was an important centre of the Soviet Intelligence High Command in the Middle East and was in direct contact with Istanbul, Haifa, Beirut, Port Said and Alexandria. From Odessa, secret instructions, communist propaganda in Arabic, and specially trained Soviet agents infiltrated through these ports to the interior of Arab countries. Two Soviet Black Sea command vessels were engaged in servicing Soviet intelligence requirements, under cover of commercial and repatriation activities. Communist and Soviet intelligence activities in the Middle East were for a time financed exclusively by shipments of gold and platinum, which were usually transported by these vessels to Beirut, where the Greek Navigation Lines Co. received the cargo for distribution elsewhere. Communist agents at Alexandria and Port Said handled the allotment for Egypt, sending the metal to Cairo. The Alexandria division of Soviet Intelligence, emphasized the report, had been proved responsible for the subversive activities in harbour, docks and customs houses of Alexandria. The report

1. Report on "Propaganda directed to Egypt by the Soviet Authorities" from British Embassy, Cairo, 14 September 1945, *ibid*, J2962/440/16.
2. Secret report on "Ramification of Soviet Intelligence System", from American Embassy, Cairo, 10 February 1947, RG 59, 883.00/2-1047.

also indicated direct contact between Odessa and Henri Curiel, and that Dnieprovski, the commercial attache of the Soviet Legation in Beirut, had twice visited Egypt after June 1946 to bring orders from Odessa to Curiel¹. Likewise, the Egyptian Under-Secretary of State for the Interior, 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Āmir, said that the Egyptian police was informed that communists had infiltrated into the Muslim Brotherhood, the Miṣr al-Fatāt and into the Wafd, as the Communist Party was illegal and communists could not act openly. The Soviet Legation, it was said, "had supplied their agents with funds to pass on to their adherents in these societies"².

The role to be taken by the local communist parties, was based upon the theory of Dimitrov, the Communist ideologist, and was adopted by the mainstream of the Egyptian communist movement.

This theory proposed:

"We wish to make out of our parties a political power for the working class movement in the capitalist countries and to establish them as a political factor with the highest degree of activity. We want them to follow a strong Bolshevik plan for the masses, not to confine themselves to propaganda and criticism; also to give the masses slogans for the fight to realise the dictatorship of the proletariat³".

A British intelligence memorandum on the development of Communism in Egypt confirmed that the general policy of the Egyptian communists was in step with the line adopted by communist movements elsewhere. In Egypt, the first step was to achieve

1. Ibid.
2. Memorandum of conversation between 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Āmir and P.H. Ireland, First Secretary of American Embassy, Cairo, 18 November 1948, in dispatch 944, from American Embassy, Cairo, 19 November 1948, RG 59, 883.00/11-1948.
3. Letter No. (E)200/128 from R.M. Shields, a representative of the British Security Services (S.S.R.), Cairo, to T.C. Ravensdale, British Embassy, Cairo, 9 August 1947, F0141/1158, 66/72/47. Shields received this information from the Egyptian Security Services who supplied him with a copy of two articles submitted by a member of the Egyptian Communist Party to the Central Committee.

Egyptian independence from British institutions and influence. Their propaganda and activity was concentrated in a constant attack on British Imperialism and American capitalism. The main channel of the communist propaganda was the weekly newspaper, Al-Jamāhīr. The editor was Mahmūd al-Nabawī al-Latīf, a lawyer, who was known to be in contact with both the Tass Agency and the Yugoslav legation. It was said that the Soviet legation subsidised his activity¹.

The response of the Egyptian communists to the international communist split which arose as a result of the dispute between Tito and Stalin in 1948, was definite support for the latter. Tito was attacked and described as a traitor and his country, Yugoslavia, described as a colony of America. Tito's attempts to preserve his country's independence and build socialism on a firm foundation would fail. The Egyptian communists declared that the struggle for liberation of Egypt and other dependent countries was part of the world struggle against imperialism. This struggle was an integral part of a common struggle of the world democratic bloc under the leadership of the Soviet Union².

The contacts between the Soviet legation and the local communists were conducted at the highest level of clandestine activity. Both the American and British Embassies confirmed that it was very difficult to establish independent proof that the Soviets had subsidised the communist movement in Egypt in the early 1950's, Although both Embassies were informed by the Egyptian authorities that the Polish, Czech and Soviet legations had been used as channels for dissemination of funds and

1. Letter No. (E)20/2/24 from Campbell, Cairo, 18 March 1948, FO371/69250, J1890/1262/16. A-12 from the American Embassy, Cairo, 8 January 1948, RG 59, 883.00/1-848.

2. "Project of the Egyptian Communist Party Programme", in letter No. 1014/3/50, from British Embassy, 9 January 1950, FO371/80354, JE1041/1G.

propaganda to communists. The contacts which had existed with the Yugoslav legation appeared to have ceased after Tito's break with the Cominform. Contacts between Egyptian communists and communist party personnel in Western Europe were known to the Egyptian authorities¹. Al-Misri reported in April 1951 on despatches received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from Egyptian legations in Central Europe. The legations informed the Ministry on the relation between communist activities in Egypt and Cominform agents in those countries. Likewise, the Egyptian Foreign Minister was informed of a possibility of the infiltration of these agents to Egypt by means of forged documents. As a result, all routes of entry into Egypt were closely guarded and a list of dangerous persons distributed to all passport offices². Towards the end of 1951, while Britain became involved in disputes with Egypt and Iran, reports from Rome's Sciampino Airport showed that Soviet diplomats, technicians and "civilian employees" had been streaming into the Middle East for what described as various missions³.

In spite of the above connections, one American report estimated that a considerable amount of communist activity was of a "home-grown" variety taking its line from Soviet radio broadcasts, contacts with various foreign communities and occasional contacts with western European communists and Eastern European diplomats in Egypt⁴.

1. "Survey of Communism in countries outside the Soviet Orbit" by F.O. Research Department, report No. RC/19/50, 1 January 1950, FO371/86751, NS/1052/12G. Ibid, report No. 2192/5/50G, 1 July 1950, FO371/86902, NS2192/40G. Report entitled, "Communism in Egypt", from American Embassy, Cairo, 17 March 1950, RG 59, 774.001/3-1750. Report on Egypt, Department of State, 5 July 1950, RG 59, 611.74/7-550.
2. Dispatch 2514 from American Embassy, Cairo, 20 April 1951, RG 59, 774.001/4-2051.
3. New York Herald Tribune, 13 December 1951.
4. 774.001/3-1750, *ibid*.

CHAPTER TWO
THE EGYPTIAN COMMUNIST MOVEMENT AND ITS ROLE IN THE
INTERNAL POLITICAL ARENA UP TO 1955

In a discussion of the beginnings of the Soviet Union's involvement in the Middle East generally, and Egypt in particular, it would be impossible to disregard the main element by means of which the Soviets wished to deepen their penetration into that part of the world. They concentrated their efforts on the nurture and encouragement of the local Communist Party in the hope that it would act as the revolutionary vanguard which would lead the masses towards a revolution. This was the Soviet method of implementing their strategy within the Third World, as mentioned above.

The Soviets were mistaken in their appreciation of the political capacity of the communist movements in the Arab world in general, and of Egypt in particular. One of the main reasons for Soviet miscalculation was *inter alia*, the influence of two models with limited success, the Iranian and Indian communist parties, and the fact that the Soviets did not make necessary distinctions between individual countries in the Third World.

Many long studies which have dealt with the Arab and Egyptian communist parties have interpreted the persecution and harassment of these parties as an indication that they constituted an important factor in the various struggles for power. However, a deeper study of the subject will show that in fact, the repression of these parties was a result of their illegal activities on behalf of the Soviets and not because they were a potential threat to the established order. In reality, their political influence among the masses was so minute that it would have been impossible to meet Soviet expectations.

This chapter will discuss various dimensions of the real potential of the Egyptian communist movement and try to demonstrate that estimates of the influence of this marginal movement have been widely exaggerated.

A. The Emergence of a Communist Party in Egypt

a. The Egyptian Communist movement in the inter-war period

In 1920 the Egyptian Socialist party was established by Joseph Rosenthal, Ḥusnī al-‘Arabī and Antūn Marūn. In 1922 the party was accepted into the Comintern and changed its name to "The Egyptian Communist Party", at which point Rosenthal who opposed this step withdrew from the party¹.

The party published in 1921 its first political credo, which sharply denounced the "brutal aggression by which British militarist and colonial officials have replied to the sacred demands of Egypt"².

The objective of the founders of the Communist Party was to create a party of the proletariat, but they failed to realize this, and not a single worker became a party leader. The number of party members remained small, and most of them were intellectuals of middle class origin. The most remarkable phenomenon was that many active figures were Europeans and Jews. The party had attempted to infiltrate the Trade Unions and in 1923 a confederation of Unions was established which stood for a communist orientation³.

In 1924 these communists organized strikes in Alexandria and in

1. Walter Z. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), pp.33-34. Selma Botman, The Rise of Egyptian Communism, 1939-1970 (New York: 1988), pp. 1-6.

2. Laqueur, *ibid*, p.34.

3. *Ibid*, p.34-35; see also a memorandum prepared by Israel Foreign Ministry on Communism in the Middle East, 2 August 1954, I.S.A., FM2403/13/B.

other industrial centres, but the strikes were suppressed by the Wafd Governments which dissolved the confederation and formed "The National Labour Union" which was led by Wafd members.

In the middle of 1925 the party was declared illegal, and henceforth it ceased to exist as an organized element¹.

Stalin determined in 1925 that in countries such as China and Egypt, the communists should create a united political front with the "Revolutionary Bourgeoisie"² which would be expected to conduct a constant campaign against the imperialists.

The 1928 Comintern congress confirmed Stalin's line and the Egyptian communists were called upon in this congress, to take over the Trade Unions to reduce the influence of the "National Bourgeoisie". In addition, the Communist Party was encouraged not to confine its activity to the urban proletariat, but to infiltrate the society of the fellahin; but there was a significant gap between the doctrine and its application. Inevitably, the Communist Party's political power decreased after being declared illegal, and it could not operate effectively in opposition to the Wafd. To counteract this the Comintern sent European delegates to Egypt, in the middle 1920's, posing as trade agents in an attempt to establish a new party leadership. However, the efforts failed. The Syrian communist Mahmūd Wahīb Mālik was sent in 1934 by the Comintern to Egypt on a similar mission in the hope that he would succeed better, but his mission was not crowned with success. The Egyptian authorities reacted to the Comintern's attempts by arresting most of the militant figures of Communist Party. In spite of this, a few communist groups continued their

1. M.S. Agwani, Communism in the Arab East (Bombay:Asia Publishing House, 1969), pp.5-6.

2. As opposed to the "National Bourgeoisie" which was represented by the Wafd, and considered by the communists as cooperating with British imperialism.

activity in Cairo and Alexandria, But without directives from the Comintern, communist activity was stamped out entirely by the end of 1930's¹.

b. Communist activity in the second world war and its aftermath

The communist movement was reborn in Egypt during the second world war. Several studies have suggested that the reason for this could partly be the shattered image of Egyptian political institutions. For example, the Wafd accepted British army assistance in a successful effort to take over the government; the British interference in Egyptian domestic affairs and the King's submission to their demands, considerably damaged his authority. The leftists were enjoying a more favourable atmosphere as a consequence of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. The communists could offer a rational alternative to the existing Egyptian political system. A vital factor in the emergence of the Communist party was the rapid growth of industry during the second world war and the resultant growth of the working class².

In spite of these suitable conditions the movement itself was weak, its members few and the various factions divided³.

Marxist study circles which constituted the beginnings of

1. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism, pp. 37-41. Mohamed Heikal, Sphinx and Commissar (London: Collins, 1978), pp.42-45. In relation to the programme of action of the Communist Party of Egypt in that period, see: Ivan Spector, Middle East Journal, Vol. 10, No. 4 (1956), pp. 427-437; this programme was published by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in Moscow in 1934.
2. A. Cohen, The Arab Labour Party, (Tel-Aviv: 1947), pp.36-39 (Hebrew). Agwani, Communism in the Arab East, pp.31-32. On the increasing industrialization of Egypt after the war see: U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States-1947 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), Vol. 5, p. 546 (hereafter cited as FRUS with appropriate year and volume number). See also, Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, Workers on the Nile (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 4-8.
3. See dispatch from Campbell, British Embassy, Cairo, 3 February 1947, F0371/63046, J675/422G.

a new communist movement were established in Cairo and Alexandria in 1941. From these circles grew almost twenty different communist groups in the following years. This split constituted one of the main characteristics of the Egyptian communist movement.

Two main factions were:

a. M.E.L.N.- "The Egyptian Movement for National Liberation" (al-Haraka al-Miṣriya lil-tahrīr al-Waṭani), which was founded by Henry Curiel, an Egyptian Jew¹.

b. "Iskra" (al-sharāra), was founded by Hillel Schwarz, also a Jew.

Both groups consisted of thirty members, all foreigners. The two opposed one another on tactics; the M.E.L.N. called for immediate action among the masses, and insisted that the party should embark upon a rapid Egyptianization and proletarization process, whereas Iskra emphasized the need for the mobilization of a revolutionary reserve of Marxist consciousness and of intellectuals in order to establish a sound base from which popular activity could follow².

1943 saw the emergence of new communist groups influenced by Soviet successes in the war. In Alexandria the talī'a faction was established by young Wafd dissidents; in Cairo there was al-Fajr al-Jadīd which published a weekly paper under the same name; this weekly was one of the most important communist periodicals in Egypt. The number of active members increased, and in 1945 the M.E.L.N. itself contained about one thousand members and supporters³.

At the beginning of 1946, the communists faced direct confrontation with Ismā'il Ṣidqī; Ṣidqī accused the Egyptian

1. On Henry Curiel's life and activity see, Gilles Perrault, A Man Apart (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1987).
2. Raūf 'Abbas Hamid, al-haraka al-‘ummaliyya fi Miṣr 1899-1952 (Cairo: 1968), pp. 265-268. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism, pp. 42-43. Heikal, Sphinx and Commissar, p.47-48.
3. 'Abbas Hamid, *ibid*, pp.418-419. Heikal, *ibid*, p.47-48.

communists of a conspiracy with the Zionist movement; in February 1946, more than twenty students were killed as a result of clashes with the police (the 'Abbas bridge incident); this incident led to the communist ~~movement~~ proclamation of a general strike on 21 February. In the demonstration which broke out on the same day, three demonstrators were killed and more than a hundred were injured. Later on, during the first half of July 1946, over 200 persons were arrested on charges of communist activity¹.

The Soviets considered the February 1946 strikes in Cairo and Alexandria as "the most important event in the political life of the country"².

Many studies which have dealt with the subject have suggested that these events constituted the turning point of the communists' political reputation in the political arena.

1. Telegram from American Embassy, Cairo, 14 July 1946, RG 59, 883.00/7-1446. Airgram (A) 4499 from American Embassy, Damascus, 18 July 1946, RG 59, 883.00B/7-1846. Dispatch 1741 from American Legation, Cairo, 14 August 1946, RG 59, 883.00B/7-2246. See also, Cohen, the Arab Labour Party, p.158. Agwani, Communism in the Arab East, p.45. Heikal, *ibid*, pp.47-48. Jean and Simonne Lacouture, Egypt in Transition (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1958), pp. 259-260. On communist activity in Port Said in that time see: Dispatch 34 from American Consulate, Port Said, 21 September 1946, RG 59, 883.00B/9-2146.
2. A. Kannunnikuv, "Rise of Labour Movement in Near East", Professional'nyii Soiuzy (Moscow), No. 4, April 1947, see translation to English in: RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Documents, File Subject-1947: 800, No. 3, box 166.

B. Some Ideological Dimensions in the Communist Design Concerning the Egyptian National Struggle

a. British Imperialism-the Arab's Enemy

The communist explanation for the malady affecting the Egyptian people was concentrated and focused on one main factor, British Imperialism:

"British imperialism did not make any positive contribution to the Egyptian people during its rule in our country; the opposite, it strove to concentrate its efforts on breaking all the economic, social, political and scientific options of our people".¹

The communist press attacked and condemned the British and other Western imperialist powers by pointing out constantly that all existing Egyptian defects were caused by British imperialism. According to a prominent publicist in al-fajr al-jadīd, there were many reasons to justify struggle against imperialism²:

"Imperialism is chiefly responsible for our internal and external situation... imperialism weakened the popular strata in Egypt. The great monopolies (al-iḥtikārāt al-kubrā) in our country are in the hands of foreign capital... British Imperialism is chiefly responsible for backwardness in our economy, by its control of its main branches (the land, foreign trade, banks); thereby, it has always paralysed our industrial development... it is also chiefly responsible for backwardness in our political life. The constitution has emerged under the official shadow of a British occupation and has awarded extensive rights to the executive... British Imperialism is the defender of various Fascist regimes, and brought the middle classes under its rule and used them against the popular strata... the main aim of the National Movement (al-haraka al-wataniya) in Egypt is to eradicate this situation which we find in our country".

The communists saw themselves as a vanguard at the spearhead of the struggle against imperialism, and the only force which would

1. Ṣadiq Sa'd, "daūr al-jamāhir fi al-ḥaraka al-wataniya wa-al-mufāwadāt al-hāliya", Al-Fajr al-Jadīd (Cairo), No. 29, 10 April 1946, p.9.
2. Ṣadiq Sa'd, "al-tahrīr min al-isti'mār al-Britāni wa al-mufāwadāt al-hāliya", Al-Fajr al-Jadīd (Cairo), No. 26, 20 March 1946, pp. 14-15.

be able to challenge British Imperialism; this could be realized because the Egyptian Government and the Royal court had collaborated with the British imperialists, and the communists call to establish a full democracy would impart a significant function to the popular stratum in Egyptian political life¹.

The communists attacked the Egyptian Government frequently because of its compromising and indulgent attitude towards the British, an attitude which could not lead the Egyptian people to full independence².

The communists absolutely rejected a continuation of this particular mode of negotiation with Britain, and called for more militant means³:

"If we had checked the reports published [by the Egyptian Government], and those who published them, we would have found in all of them weak solutions which are based upon negotiations and bargaining with Britain, and they contain a call, which would be in the Government's interests, to the people to accept the solution that is agreed on with Britain".

The communists called repeatedly for the termination of the 1936 treaty with Britain, because only by doing so, could the Egyptian Government negotiate with Britain as an equal and not from the inferior position which was created by the treaty⁴.

The full independence of Egypt would be achieved only by the fulfilment of the following three conditions⁵:

- a. British evacuation of Land, Sea and Air bases.
- b. The avoidance of any alliance with Imperialist Britain.
- c. The avoidance of a special position for it.

1. Rushdī Ṣalih, Al-Fajr al-Jadīd (Cairo), No. 16, 11 January 1946, p.3.
2. 'Alī Ghazī, "di'āya hizbiya am maṭālib qawmiya", Al-Fajr al-Jadīd (Cairo), No. 8, 1 September 1945, p.4.
3. Taha Sa'īd 'Uthmān, "al-amāna al qawmiya", Al-Damīr (Cairo), No. 272, 3 October 1945, p.1.
4. Ahmad Sa'īd, Al-Fajr al-Jadīd (Cairo), No. 27, 27 March 1946 p.10.
5. Sa'īd Khiyyāl, Qadiyatunā wa-majlis al-āmn", Al-Fajr al-Jadīd (Cairo), 27 March 1946, p. 8.

b. The Internal Popular Struggle for Democracy and against Collaborators

The communists saw the anti-British struggle as only one aspect of the Egyptian national struggle; the second aspect was in the sphere of internal struggle, a struggle for Democracy and against Egyptian "Reactionary Elements" which according to the communist viewpoint had collaborated with the British imperialists¹:

"it will be a mistake if we divide the National Movement into two phases-one of them being against imperialism and for the military evacuation, and the second against reaction (al-raj'iya), for an Economic Democracy, and liberation from the influence of Imperialist Economics. It is impossible in the first phase to collaborate with Egyptian Reaction for a military evacuation because we know certainly that it (the Reaction) hopes for the continuance of military occupation with a view to leaning upon it [as a means of] confronting the rise of democracy...therefore, the National Struggle (al-kifāh al-waṭāni) considers the military evacuation and freedom from economic and political imperialism as being of equal importance. It is a combined and not a separate struggle".

The popular strata were the great force which was supposed to conduct the struggle against imperialism for democracy. In the meantime, the communists called to the "Nationally Conscious" people in each stratum and class, to join the popular strata in their struggle²:

"we want to clarify to Loyal Nationalists (al-waṭāniyyīn al-mukhlīsin) that for the benefit of the popular strata and first and foremost the working class, these strata must turn to the Vertebral Column (al-'amūd al-faqrī) in our struggle against imperialism because imperialism is in complete opposition to its interests [the working class]. Therefore, the Loyal Nationalists should concentrate on giving support to its quest for liberty, and to move forward with it towards the realization of its aim, which is also the national aim".

But the communists were conscious of the fact that most of the working class and fellahin did not support them. Likewise,

1. Shahdī 'Aṭiya, "al-qadīya al-waṭāniya al-yaum", Al-Fajr al-Jadīd, (Cairo) No. 39, 19 June 1946, pp.10, 23.
2. Ibrāhīm al-Kāshif, "daūr al-muthaqafīn al-āhrār fi al-ḥaraka al-waṭāniya", Al-Fajr al-Jadīd (Cairo), No. 28, 3 April 1946, p.5. On this subject, see also, Muḥammad Amin, "al-dīmūqratiya al-Misriya", Ibid, No.5, 16 July 1945, p.5

they were conscious of the historical experience which taught them that the existence of a poor and oppressed "working class" is not sufficient, and they realized that the popular strata could not create a revolution by themselves, and it was necessary to spur them to action by the intensification of political activity and political education. This role was destined for the vanguard of intellectuals and the enlightened who would lead the popular national movement; these people were called in the communist periodicals, the "Liberal Intellectuals" (al-muthaqafūn al-ahrār)¹.

c. The Need for Co-operation with External Forces for the Solution of the Egyptian Problem

The communists demanded that the Egyptian problem be removed from bilateral discussions with Britain, and instead be internationalized by being given the support of other Superpowers and the United Nations organization, with a view to moving it forward towards the achievement of independence. In the international arena, Egypt could have achieved support by the Great powers, primarily, the Soviet Union, and the United States too, which was resisting British imperialist tendencies. It was vital that they make use of the favorable international atmosphere created at the end of second world war: an atmosphere of cooperation between peoples, the establishment of democracies and a feeling that the end of Imperialist Epoch was in sight².

The most lucid articulation of this idea was expressed in Al-Fajr al-Jadīd:

"we believe that our national problem is insoluble [if dealt with] separately from world-wide developments and with a disregard for the streams of freedom which are flowing in

1. Ibrāhīm al-Kāshif, Ibid, pp.4-5.

2. Rushdī Salih, Al-Fajr al-Jadīd (Cairo), No. 7, 16 August 1945, pp.3-4.

the world at this time...among the Great Powers (al-duwāl al-‘uzmā) there are (powers) which call for the application of the conventions which were signed during the war. Furthermore, the Soviet Union...demands the evacuation of the British army from Egypt and Palestine..."¹.

Egypt was among the founders of the United Nations organization in 1945, and in 1946 was elected a member of the Security Council. The communists accepted willingly that choice and called for the use of the Security Council and the General Assembly for an anti-British struggle. In their view, membership in the Council allowed Egypt a direct access to the powers, an opportunity which Egypt had to use².

In this international battle, which the communists intended to begin, a special place was designated for the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was described as the ^{principal} capital enemy of imperialism wherever it was, and as the friend of the people who were struggling for their independence. In their opinion, Egypt should establish friendly relations with the Soviets because the two countries had a common interest regarding the struggle against British Imperialism. The Soviet support of Egypt in the international arena could help it in its struggle against Britain and its aspiration to achieve full independence³:

"the Soviet Union is a Superpower [which acts] for liberty, and the proof of that is in its known positions at the San-Francisco conference and in the Palestine, Syria and Lebanon issues. Egypt wants also that the homeland should benefit from [the policy of] this Great Power in its struggle against English Imperialists".

1. "Qādiyatunā al-waṭāniya duwaliya", Al-Fajr al-Jadīd (Cairo No. 17, 19 January 1946, p.21
2. Sa'īd Khiyyāl, "illā majlis al-āmn", Al-Fajr al-Jadīd (Cairo), No. 19, 30 January 1946, p.11.
3. Ibid, "innaha maa'rakat al-waṭāniya wa-al-dīmūqrāṭīya", Al-Fajr al-Jadīd, No. 16, 11 January 1946, p.7.

C. Communist Political Activity and its Influence 1947-1955

a. Communist activity and its effects on Unification in 1947

Despite the fact that communist factions claimed a few achievements in their political activity in 1946, and there were indications of increased communist activity among labour groups in Egypt, the extent of their influence was very limited even among social groups which apparently had Leftist affiliations¹.

According to Sir R. Campbell's report, the Egyptian Trade Union movement was still in its early stages and only a few smaller Trade Unions were led by communist figures; most of the prominent unions were not under the communists' influence to any extent².

The Soviet appreciation of Egyptian Trade Union development was quite different; they did not make the necessary distinction between the varieties of Trade Unions and considered them as a well-organized unit with clear and obvious goals:

"The powerful National-Liberation and labour movement in Egypt, which has developed with special intensity since end of second world war, has greatly strengthened the position, role and importance of Egyptian Trade Unions. In spite of existing reactionary laws, a congress of Trade unions made its appearance in Egypt in May 1946"³.

The weakness of the communist movement at the beginning of 1947 and its disorganization and inability to lead the masses towards a revolution, were reflected clearly in a British report that pointed out that the communists themselves had realized that under

1. See for instance a report prepared by the American Legation in Cairo, regarding the strikes which took place on January 10th, 1946; The report discerned inter alia the role of communists in organizing and conducting these strikes, in, Dispatch 1270, 10 January 1946, RG 59, 883.5045/1-1046. See also a report from American Embassy, Cairo, 22 March 1946, RG 59, 711.83/3-2246.

2. See dispatch 106 from R. Campbell, Cairo, 3 February 1947, FO371/63046, J675/422/16G.

3. A. Kannunnikov, "Rise of Labour movement in the Near East", ibid.

present internal and external socio-political conditions it would be impossible to bring about any revolutionary changes:

"The communists in Egypt are willing to bide their time until they are satisfied that they themselves are really well organized, that the forces of repression are weakening, and that an undoubtedly strong revolutionary tide is running in the country"¹.

On the other hand the Egyptian authorities had promulgated a series of decree-laws which were intended to prevent the growth of communist influence and activity. The first to come was decree-law no. 116, which was apparently promulgated as a consequence of several strikes which took place in July 1946, among Government employees, which the Government thought were supported inter alia by communists; Art. 124(b) related indirectly to that by decreeing: "penalties will be inflicted upon whoever coerces or tries to coerce officials or public employees by force or terrorism, or threat or any other illegal method..."².

Later, on 19 August 1946, Decree-law No. 117 was promulgated and was intended to amend the penal code in connection with the punishment of subversive activities³.

Despite the authorities' efforts to limit communist activity and influence, the next few months saw a strengthening of the communist position in Egypt and a marked increase in overt communist activities. According to British sources, the increasingly effective propaganda activity of the communists in Egypt had latterly reached alarming proportions, particularly in articles published in the press and not merely in those periodicals which the communists managed to bring directly under their own control.

1. Top secret letter No. 66/11/47, from Campbell, 14 January 1947, FO141/1158.
2. Dispatch 40 from Campbell, 15 January, 1947, Ibid, No.66/6/47, regarding the July Decree-law; see more details in: Dispatch 1737 from American Legation, Cairo, 22 July, 1946, RG 59, 883.00B/7-2246.
3. Dispatch 40, ibid.

These sources attributed the communist success to the authorities' failure "to press home any charges against communists placed under arrest despite the vigilance of the police"¹.

Nuqrāshī pasha, the Egyptian Prime Minister said that according to an authentic information he had received, the existence in Egypt of a communist executive organization was definitely established. The central committee of this organization in Egypt was reported to be working closely with Daniil Solod, the Soviet Ambassador to the Lebanon².

Campbell pointed out that the recent acquittal of communists was due influence exerted by the palace in the hope of conciliating U.S.S.R. on the eve of the Egyptian appeal to the United Nations³. There was one more reason for the strengthening of the communist position, according to a well-known communist, Anwar Kāmil, who was reported as having said, that the Wafd had fostered communist propaganda because of its desire to embarrass not only the cabinet, but also the palace and the British Embassy⁴.

Campbell's appreciation of the communists ability to engage in socio-political activity had been resonably accurate; he did not distinguish between communist short and long-term activity; Campbell wrote:

"There is little doubt that communist propaganda is indeed on the increase and that this development is inevitable so long as there is in power a government which neglects social reform and so long as it is in the immediate interest

1. Letter No.365(66/34/47) from Campbell, 1 May, 1947, *Ibid*. The Soviets regarded the trials being held in Egypt against communists as activities of the reactionaries who barter the interests of the Egyptian people on "the pretext of a so-called communist peril"; see New Times (Moscow), 17 May 1947.
2. Top Secret Dispatch from American Embassy, Cairo, 26 May 1947, RG 59, 861.20283/5-2647.
3. FO141/1158, *ibid*. See also, statement by the U.S.A. and U.K. groups regarding subversive activities in the Middle East, Washington, undated, FRUS 1947, Vol. 5, pp. 610-611. On the Egyptian appeal to the U.N. see pp. 97-101.
4. FO141/1158, *ibid*.

of a majority opposition to exploit this neglect...even if when in power, the opposition actually and successfully carries social reform into effect, the communists could presumably then turn their attention to other methods of attack"¹.

b. The establishment of D.M.N.L.- The Communists' "Golden Era"

A process of change was taking place towards the middle of 1947, when the communist factions gained success in their efforts to organize themselves as an established movement².

The framework for collaboration and unification among Egyptian communist groups was formulated into an ideological and practical program. The aims and methods were as follows:

"The movement which is based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism, aims at forming a Communist party in Egypt with the object of leading the fight for national liberation, the improvement in the material and educational level of the people and to mould the masses into a new social system. The fundamental mission of the movement is to forge the Egyptian Communist party out of the teaching of Marxism-Leninism, to share in the national and democratic fight in all its forms of propaganda and incitement, and exercise within itself discipline and self-criticism. In the present political situation our movement is inevitably an illegal formation which makes it incumbent on members to adhere strictly to the security regulations. But the movement must always struggle to extend its lawful activity and form a legal movement"³.

The successful fusion which took place in July 1947 between the two most important communist groups- "The Egyptian Movement for national liberation" and "Iskra", was the most important feature in the evolution of the communist movement in Egypt. The new common framework was called "The Democratic Movement for National

1. Ibid.

2. Letter No. (E)20/2/3, ibid, 26 August 1947; Dispatch 364 from Campbell, 1 May, 1947, ibid, 66/31/47. See also a translation of a "manifesto by the Democratic Movement for National Liberation", sent from American Embassy-Cairo, 28 July, 1947, RG 59, 883.00B/7-2847.

3. Arabic document entitled "Regulation of the communist organization (No. 1)", supplied to Campbell by the Egyptian Defence Security Officer. The Document was found with a group of persons who were suspected of holding a communist meeting; the document was written on 1 December 1946, and was anonymous; see dispatch 364 from Campbell, 1 May 1947, ibid, 66/31/47.

Liberation" (al-haraka al-dimūqrāṭiya lil-tahrīr al-waṭani)¹.

The importance of the new union was stressed in a circular letter sent by D.M.N.L. to its members; this circular said inter alia: "We have striven for unity in order to make the revolutionary movement secure and to do away with all cross currents...such currents may become dangerous as political deviations lead to weakening of the working class"².

The party central committee enjoined that the movement had to strive for the formation of a National Front, comprising the Wafd, the Kutla and any advanced political groups. By doing this, they would act as the vanguard, and gain the maximum for the progressive cause from the wave of nationalism and heightened political consciousness. Moreover, it would widen the experience of the working class, impress upon them the necessity of having allies, and strengthen their political outlook³.

The communists described the change which took place and brought about their strengthening as follows:

"We are now passing through another stage. We have established ourselves among important sections of the workers and we have almost become the greatest political force in the university. Our influence has spread to the country and extends to different groups of intellectuals; we have also penetrated to the poor quarters in the capital; the two principal forces of the movement have joined together, and we are now quickly approaching the stage of a party of the masses"⁴.

The communist criticism of the opposition parties was explained by their failure to organize the people round themselves;

1. Letter DS(E) 20/2/24 from R. M. Shields, S.S.R., Cairo, to Sir Walter Smart, British Embassy, Cairo, 10 July 1947, *ibid*. See also dispatch 134 from Campbell, Cairo, 10 March 1948, FO371/69250, J1890/1262/16.
2. FO141/1158, *ibid*.
3. *Ibid*.
4. See a tract which was written by the central committee of the D.M.N.L. and circulated amongst members of the organization, in: Letter DS(E) 330/6 from R.M. Shields, S.S.R., Cairo, to T.C. Ravensdale, British Embassy, Cairo, 15 July 1947, *ibid*, 66/66/47. See also dispatch 649 from British Embassy, Cairo, 26 July 1947, *ibid*.

therefore, the people looked to new forces for their leadership, for the realization of their major demands which could only be fulfilled by complete British evacuation of the Nile Valley, Democracy and a raising of the standard of living for the proletariat¹.

If so, what was the political programme of the unified party regarding the Sudanese issue and the National question? In two articles which were written by a member of the new party and submitted to the central committee it was said with regard to the Sudanese issue:

"Egyptians and Sudanese should fight in a united struggle to drive imperialism out of the Nile Valley, together with the granting to the Sudanese of the right to decide their future so that they may enjoy either unity or separation after the imperialists have been expelled...thus our plan means exactly to leave talking about the future of the Sudan aside so that it should not be a cause of splitting up the struggle between Egyptians and Sudanese on one hand and among the Sudanese themselves on the other"².

In the programme of the Egyptian Communist Party which was published later, there was a clarification of their attitude towards the ideal pattern of a future union with the Sudan:

"We want a union of Egypt and the Sudan founded on a basis of equality with a right of self-determination for the Sudan, including the right to secede. We want economic, geographic and political unity. We want the abolition of British rule in the Sudan and the abolition of the Legislative Assembly. We want the immediate withdrawal of the British Army and the handing over of all administrative posts to the Sudanese"³.

In the period between the second half of 1947 and the beginning of 1948 it seemed clear that while the communist movement was more or less in its infancy, it was rapidly gaining strength among the workers and students not only in the cities but in the provinces.

1. Ibid.

2. Letter DS(E) 200/128 from R.M. Shields, S.S.R., Cairo, to T.C. Ravensdale, British Embassy, Cairo, 9 August 1947, ibid, 66/72/47.

3. See the "Programme of the Egyptian Communist Party", in: FO371/80354, JE1041/G.

According to a memorandum on the development of Communism in Egypt, prepared by the British security service representatives in Cairo, the communist movement was engaged in strengthening and developing its own organization underground and was meeting with a certain success. It was said, that the "Special Section" of the Egyptian Ministry of Interior determined that the movement was far stronger than it had ever been. The memorandum emphasized that for the first time communist propaganda was being taken to the provinces through the medium of the school teachers many of whom were members of the D.M.N.L.; amongst the students, the communists were the stronger factor and were continually campaigning amongst the workers¹.

The same appreciation was expressed by prince 'Abbās Ḥalīm, the leader of the Egyptian Labour party; he emphasized the strength of Communism in Egypt and warned the government that it must be fought by new ideas and not by prisons².

The control of the movement was concentrated in the central committee which was responsible for the policies of the movement, its organizational forms, its finance and its activities. The central policy of the movement was in step with the line adopted by communist movements elsewhere³

Communism continued to make headway among the workers and students in Egypt; American reports indicated a limited infiltration of Communism into the army and police ranks, because the Egyptian Government did not act effectively to stop it, by means of severe measures, and it seemed as though the movement

1. Memorandum No. DS(E) 20/2/24 from Campbell, Cairo, 10 March 1948, F0371/69250, J1890/1262/16.

2. A-2546 from American Embassy, Cairo, 8 March 1948, RG 59, 883.00B/3-548.

3. See note no. 1.

could develop rapidly¹.

The pro-government Egyptian press had stressed frequently that the danger of Communism in Egypt had been exaggerated by Britain in order to frighten Egypt into coming to terms with it. A particular emphasis was put on the seriousness with which the government authorities regarded the situation².

The communist method for achieving influence and support inside Al-Azhar could be considered as a case from which we can learn how they made their comprehensive frontal attack on other organizations and institutions which held a key positions in Egypt. In a pamphlet which was circulated among D.M.N.L.'s members it was said:

"We now aim at forming a democratic party which would be free of all imperialist and reactionary control. Men of religion in this country have always played an important part against imperialism- French, Turkish and English. At present Al-Azhar is standing at a cross-roads, between the people and the bourgeoisie. The importance of Al-Azhar is as follows: they are the religious body which assists reaction; their men represent the working class; they enjoy spiritual confidence among the people; their roots go deep among many classes of Egyptian-Teachers, Preachers, Imams, etc"³.

The communists who realized their importance planned to win them away from "Reaction and the Palace", and to make them join their national struggle. In the communist view the men of Al-Azhar could be the best Egyptian fighters against "Reaction and Imperialism". According to the British S.S.R.'s report, these efforts were meeting with some success⁴.

1. Ibid. See also, a report on: "Student Communist Activities at Faruk 1 University", from American Legation, Alexandria, 17 May 1948, RG 59, 883.00B/5-1748. Telegram 631 from American Embassy, Cairo, 29 May 1948, RG 59, 890.00B/5-2948.
2. Dispatch 275 from American Embassy, Cairo, 3 April 1948, RG 59, 883.00/4-348.
3. Secret letter 214 (501/50/48) from Campbell, Cairo, 25 April 1948, FO371/69250, J2953/1226/16.
4. Ibid.

Campbell confirmed that Communism in Al-Azhar was stronger; furthermore, since April 1948, there had been some further development of Communism in Egypt. He said that communists were also actively campaigning amongst the workers. According to information given by him, the Egyptian authorities had discovered a considerable quantity of communist literature (about 3000 books) which had reached Egypt from Syria and Iraq¹.

The communists' well-established position in Egyptian Universities could explain also some successes among Sudanese students. This was brought about because of the Egyptian Government's policy of offering scholarships to Sudanese students; later, these students in Cairo opposed the Egyptian authorities and drifted into communist clubs and societies. They became on the whole strong exponents of Communism when they returned to the Sudan².

Several important strikes, including those at Shubra in 1946 and at the Maḥāla al-Kubrā textile factory, in the autumn of 1947 and at Qasr al-‘Aini hospital in Cairo in April 1948, were known to have been to a considerable extent communist-inspired³.

The Egyptian authorities had tried to limit the extent of communist development and its expansion. The Egyptian Prime Minister Ibrāhīm ‘Abd al-Hādī said on 24 February, 1949, that he was going to "lay his hand on every communist centre throughout the country", after the discovery of four communist centres⁴.

1. Ibid.

2. Top Secret letter from the Sudan Government, khartum, 2 January 1949, F0371/73471, J236/10113/16G. Regarding the interaction between the Egyptian and Sudanese communists, see: F0371/90125, J10115/10.

3. Top Secret letter RC/19/50, "Survey of Communism in countries outside the Soviet orbit", prepared by E.J.W. Barnes of F.O. Research Dept., 1 January, 1950, F0371/86751, NS/1052/12G.

4. Secret letter 88/14/49 from Campbell, 26 February, 1949, F0371/73476, J1937/10118/16G.

King Faruq said regarding the above, that "the communists might still give severe knocks, but he thought that the forces of law and order would now be able to give them more than they got", that is to say, strict measures would be taken¹.

On March 16th, 1949, the Egyptian Prime Minister told Campbell that he thought the Egyptian authorities were making "satisfactory progress in the matter of Communistic cells and activities². By the end of March the police began to root out a number of cells, starting with the foreign Jewish element. The Egyptian Government gradually prepared public opinion to associate Communism with Zionism. Furthermore, there was a rift inside the movement between the Jews and the others³.

Campbell's realistic appreciation of the communists' political activity in Egypt was consistent all along the period under discussion, even while it seemed as though Communism was being strengthened. For instance, he concluded from the events which took place after the communist unification, that "it is rather early yet to hazard an opinion, whether the nationalist aspect of communist activity in Egypt is likely to result in the production of Pro-Russian feeling among the masses and whether, if it did, the politicians would feel tempted or bound to follow such sentiment in their foreign policy"⁴.

The same appreciation was outlined in an American report; the report said that "best information available to us does not lead... to believe that is liable to reach point where organized communist coup d'etat might be expected even in event of a serious

1. Dispatch 45 from Campbell, Cairo, 2 March 1949, F0371/73476, J10118/16G.
2. Secret letter 88/4/49G from Campbell, 23 March 1949, F0371/73476, J3502/10118/16G.
3. Letter 228(742/2/49) from Campbell, Cairo, 19 April 1949, F0371/73474, J3567/10116/16.
4. Dispatch 134 from Campbell, Cairo, 18 March 1948, F0371/69250, J1890, 1262/16.

military reversal in Palestine... although it may be weaker than formerly, Wafd still constitutes the strongest political entity in Egypt enjoying, as it does wide popular support"¹.

The Egyptian authorities campaign against Communism and its spread was strengthening the above assumption, in particular, the decline of Communism during 1949.

In April 1949, Campbell said, that there was mixed up talk about the spread of Communism in Egypt; no distinction was usually made between a revolutionary feeling among younger intellectuals and articulate Marxism linked with Soviet doctrine².

Campbell attributed the setback to Communism during 1949 not only to police measures but also to the fact that "the popularity which the Soviet Government had enjoyed in 1947 as a result of its support of Egypt's claims over the Sudan was reversed in latter half of 1948 by its attitude over Palestine"³.

c. Continuous Internal Splits and External Pressures

The amalgamation between the two main components of D.M.N.L. was not successful in the long term. Soon after the fusion, the old rivalry among its members had recurred. One of the main reasons for disunity was the deep cleavage between those who believed that it was necessary to build up in the first place a strong body of intellectuals imbued with communist ideas in order that the ideology might achieve ultimate success, and the other groups who considered that the immediate aim should be to inspire

1. Report written by S. Pinkney Tuck, American Embassy, Cairo, 29 May 1948, RG 59, 890.00B/5-2948. See also: Top Secret memorandum by Hare (the American chief of the division of South Asian affairs), Washington, 5 November, 1947, FRUS 1947, Vol. 5, pp.579-580.
2. Letter 228(742/2/49) from Campbell, Cairo, 19 April 1949, FO371/73474, J3567/10116/16.
3. Ibid.

the working classes with a revolutionary and communist spirit. In May 1948, most of Iskra members had retired from the party¹.

The process of deterioration which took place in the middle of 1948 inside the D.M.N.L.'s ranks was caused by external and internal factors; it was hard to work in harmony, when they were definitely forced underground after the Egyptian Government's declaration's of a state of emergency, and the introduction of Martial Law in May 1948, when the war in Palestine began. The immediate action which took place as a result was the arrest of three hundred communists, including most of the leaders; from that time there were frequent arrests, and most of the active communists were arrested and put in jail; the state of emergency continued up to February 1950; consequently, communication between the communist centres in Cairo and Alexandria with their branches in the periphery was cut off, and communist activity almost entirely stopped².

The Soviet Union criticised Martial Law and its implications for Egyptian society; this tendency was reflected clearly in an article published in Trud on July 1949. The Soviet attack was based mainly upon extensive quotation from Nahhās Pasha's criticism of the Law, and intended indirectly to warn the Egyptian authorities against continuing their persecution of communist

1. Top Secret No. RC/19/50, "Survey of Communism in countries outside the Soviet orbit", prepared by F.O. research Dept., 4 February 1950, FO371/86751, NS/1052/12G. See also, Tāriq al-Bishrī, Al-Haraka al- Siyāsiya fi Miṣr, 1945-1952 (Cairo: 1972), pp.417-419, 426-427.
2. FO371/86751, ibid. Tāriq al-Bishrī, ibid, p.420. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism, pp.45-46. See also Letter 1014/29/50 from British Embassy, Cairo, 9 April 1950, FO371/80354, JE10111/3G. Dispatch 263 from American Embassy, Cairo, 17 March 1949, RG 59, 861.20283/3-1749. Dispatch 27 from American Consulate, Port-Said, 26 April, 1949, RG 59, 883.00B/4-2649. Dispatch 626 from American Embassy, Cairo, 24 June 1949, RG 59, 883.00B/6-2449.

groups¹:

"In May of this year (1949), the Government of Egypt passed a Law extending Martial Law for another year; it had been introduced in the country in connection with the military activities in Palestine, which as is well known concluded long ago. Egyptian society is indignant about the Law. the recently published manifesto of the leader of the bourgeois-reformist Wafd² party, Nahhās Pasha, serves as vivid testimony to this. Nahhās Pasha accused the government of exploiting exceptional powers for purposes having nothing in common with those for which they were established. It has made of these powers a death-dealing weapon against its political opponents, stifling freedom, persecuting innocent people and suppressing free fighters".

In accordance with the authorities' official line, the Egyptian press published several anti-communist articles; the articles attacked Soviet Communism and its negative implications for Muslim society. The appearance of Communism in Egypt came as a result of British pressure on Egypt to establish diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia and glorify Soviet successes during the second world war; the Egyptian press and the Egyptian state broadcasting system had been instructed by the government to disseminate pro-Soviet propaganda; "this propaganda tended to give Egyptians a rose-coloured view of Communism, a view which the government took no steps to eradicate after the conclusion of second world war"³.

The Egyptian communists own view of the latest events was reflected in a pamphlet issued by D.M.N.L. and entitled "No. 3 Resistance-an Armed Struggle to expel the Imperialist and build

1. "Egyptian public demands repeal of Martial Law in the country", Trud (Moscow), 10 July 1949, in: Dispatch A-738 from American Embassy, Moscow to American Embassy, Cairo, 14 July 1949, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Records, File Subject-1949:350, No. 1, box 206.
2. The Soviets' view of Wafd as bourgeois-reformist reflected a significant change in the Soviet view of the internal political situation in Egypt and its readiness to cooperate with non-communist political parties which were supported by the Egyptian masses.
3. Report on recent anti-communist articles in Egyptian press, from American Embassy-Cairo, 4 April 1949, RG 59, 861.20283/4-449. Report on "anti-communist Newspapers Editorial", 17 March 1949, ibid, 861.20283/3-1749.

Popular Democracy"; the view expressed in the pamphlet concerning the Martial Law was as follows¹:

"Martial Law was declared last year as a pretext to protect the Egyptian army's line of communications in Palestine. The Government's real object, however, was to put an end to all opposition. To this end "political detention" was invented by the police, and innocent patriots were arrested and thrown into jails without any reason except that the police authorities receive their instructions from the Anglo-American Intelligence Bureau".

With regards to international affairs the communists accused the imperialist camp of using war as the means to divert peoples' attention away from national problems and of exterminating Communism which was struggling "to ensure the people's bread and liberty". War was the only solution to the problems of the decaying Capitalistic System. On the other hand, the Soviet Union, as on several occasions affirmed by Stalin and other responsible men desired peace and had no economic interests which necessitated the kindling of war².

The Foreign Office Research Dept.'s survey of Communism in Egypt, determined in January 1950 that the D.M.N.L.'s attempts to infiltrate the armed forces or police forces had not met with success, since no concrete instance of communist activity in either of them was known. In addition, there was no evidence of the existence of Communism in the civil service³.

The communists were however, very active in the industrial field during 1949; however, their efforts to capture Trade Union did not succeed⁴.

1. Dispatch 699, "Recent comments on communist propaganda activities in Egypt", from American Embassy-Cairo, 16 July 1949, RG 59, 883.00B/7-1649. See also: RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Records, File Subject-1949: 350.21, box 207. It is important to point out that D.M.N.L.'s pamphlet issued only a few days after Trud's article was published and it is easy to trace the textual similarity between them.

2. Ibid.

3. FO371/86751, NS1052/12G, ibid.

4. Letter 38/65/49 from Mayall, British Embassy, Cairo, 14 May 1949, FO371/73474, J4281/10116/16.

The same policy which was outlined and implemented by the Egyptian authorities during 1949, in their fight against Communism and its spread continued in 1950's.

An American memorandum on Communism in Egypt, determined that it was difficult to have an accurate assessment of the extent of the influence and the popular appeal of Communism as a political force and as a philosophy; it was said that severe oppressive measures, including the arrest of known communists and communist suspects under Martial Law, had kept the communists in the underground and limited the party's activities¹. Indeed, the Minister of the Interior, Sirāj al-Dīn Pasha, announced in a press conference that a special office had been created for the purpose of combating the communist movement².

The anti-communist activity undertaken by the Egyptian authorities led to the arrest of many communists, including their leaders, and to the discovery of many cells all over the country. On 27 July 1950, Henry Curiel was arrested by the police and deported from Port-Said on 27 August³.

At the same time, struggle against Communism was conducted in the Egyptian press; Al-Musawwar published an article stating that Egypt would never become communist since the principles and traditions of Islam were inconsistent with Communism⁴.

1. Report on Communism in Egypt, from Jefferson Caffery (the American Ambassador), Cairo, 17 March 1950, RG 59, 774.001/3-1750.
2. Dispatch 697 from American Embassy, Cairo, 7 April 1950, RG 59, 774.001/4-750.
3. Dispatch 518 from Caffery, Cairo, 20 March 1950, RG 59, 774.001/3-2050; Dispatch 600, ibid, 18 March 1950, RG 59, 774.001/3-2950; Dispatch 638, ibid, 3 April 1950, RG 59, 774.001/4-350; Dispatch 716, ibid, 11 April 1950, RG 59, 774.001/4-1150; Dispatch 154, ibid, 27 July 1950, RG 59, 774.00/7-2750; Dispatch 336, ibid, 11 August 1950, RG 59, 774.001/8-1150; Dispatch 503, Ibid, 29 August 1950, RG 59, 774.00/8-2950.
4. Fikrī Abāza, Al-Musawwar (Cairo), In: dispatch 273, ibid, 7 August 1950, RG 59, 774.001/8-750. See also, Muḥammad al-Tibi, Akhir Sa'ah (Cairo), in: dispatch 333, ibid, 11 August 1950, RG 59, 774.001/8-1150.

A later British memorandum of July 1950, attempted to evaluate communist political capacity; the report determined that Communism in Egypt was very weak and the propagation of communist principles was forbidden by the Egyptian penal code; consequently, all communist organizations in Egypt were illegal. The number of communist elements in Egypt was estimated at the maximum 2000. There were no communist members of parliament but there were at least four deputies who could be classed as fellow-travellers forming a left-wing within the Wafd party which was in power at that time. The memorandum pointed out that the communist movement in Egypt drew most of its support from student elements, and most of the leaders were students. The memorandum determined that the communist group had negligible influence¹.

The same appreciation was expressed in an American report, issued in November 1950; the report dealt with the political stability of Egypt, and rejected the allegation that communist influence had seriously increased in Egypt during 1950, and emphasized that the Monarchy was definitely a stabilizing force in Egypt².

According to an American policy statement prepared in the office of Near Eastern Affairs, the Arab States were all opposed the Communism and generally successful in minimizing or suppressing existing communist activities through restrictive measures³.

1. Report on Communism in Egypt, No. 2192/5/50G, from Chancery, Alexandria, 1 July 1950, F0371/86902, NS2192/40G.
The same appreciation was expressed in the British "Cabinet Overseas Negotiations Committee Working Party on Egypt" meeting held on 25 October 1950, and on 20 November 1950; see: CAB134/502, O.N(E) (50)1; CAB134/502, O.N(E) (50)2. The same estimate of the number of all communist elements was given in an American Intelligence Report Which was prepared by the Department of State on 19 May, 1952, in: U.S. Declassified Documents Reference System, U.S., 1979, 314A. p. 12.
2. "Harold Hoskins' Report on Middle East Trip", American Embassy, Cairo, 11 November 1950, RG 59, 774.00/11-1150.
3. FRUS 1950, Vol. 5, p. 271.

The administrative measures against communists in Egypt were the responsibility of the "Special Section" of the Ministry of the Interior which collected and collated all information on communist activities and suppressed communists by arresting them. In general these administrative measures were effective. The "Special Section" tackled them with reasonable success, and the comparative disorganization of the various communist groups was attributed *inter alia* to its activities¹.

The process of Egyptianization inside the communist movement was completed in the period 1950-1952, particularly, after the leader of the party, Henry Curiel was expelled to Italy and Sulaimān al-Rifa'ī succeeded him.

Communist activity became possible when the state of emergency came to an end, at the beginning of 1950. The communists started a new political line when they realized that their aims could not be achieved without widening the framework of cooperation with the main opposition groups; this was the communists' short-term aim and first priority, and they were ready to sacrifice some basic elements in their ideology for its realization.

The framework of cooperation was achieved after the D.M.N.L. and Ahmad Husain's Socialist party founded the "Democratic Popular Front" (Jabhat al-Sha'b al-Dīmūqrāṭīya) in August 1951. Formally, the Muslim Brotherhood did not join the front, but they actively collaborated with it, particularly after the Egyptian Government had announced the unilateral abrogation of 1936's treaty but

1. Report on "Anti-Measures taken against communists in Egypt", from Sir R. Stevenson (Sir R. Campbell's successor), Cairo, 28 February 1951, FO371/91177, E1017/2G. See also a minute on "Anti-Communist measures in Middle Eastern countries", by H.A. Dudgeon, 1 March 1951, FO371/91177, E1017/3G; Dispatch 401 from Caffery, Cairo, 8 January 1951, RG 59, 774.001-851; "Egyptian Government continues firm measures against communist activities", from Gordon Mattison, American Embassy, Cairo, 20 April 1951, RG 59, 774.001/4-2051.

could not implement its decision because the British refused to accept it.

A leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Salāh al-‘Ashmawī, was quoted as saying, that "at the present time the Brotherhood does not find any real objections which would prevent the Brotherhood from establishing a common front with the communists against our common enemies, the imperialists". Indeed, the front with Muslim Brotherhood collaboration organized an anti-British campaign which included strikes, riots and demonstrations in the Canal Zone, Cairo, Alexandria and Port-Said¹.

The communists also concentrated their propaganda and other activities in another group- the "Partisans of Peace Movement" (Harakat Anṣār al-Salām), which was established in 1950. This movement included the Socialist Party, the National Party, the Muslim Brotherhood, communists and the Wafd's left wing. The movement pretended to be a non-political organization, but it called actively for abrogating the 1936 treaty, British evacuation, and the establishment of friendly relations with the Soviet Union. The movement sought, with only limited success, to exploit the feeling of neutralism prevalent in the area in order to create hostility towards the west. The movement achieved some success but failed in its efforts to become a massive popular movement².

The communist threat in Egypt had always caused some concern because of the vast potential for its exploitation which existed.

1. Report on "The Muslim Brotherhood: Entrance into new phase under legal status of the Societies Law occurs without disorder, interview with 'Ashmawī", from Caffery, Cairo, 4 May 1951, RG 59, 774.00/5-451. See also: "Report of a meeting of opposition and extremist Egyptian groups", ibid, 17 July 1951, RG 59, 774.00/7-1751. Aghwani, Communism in the Arab East, pp. 45-47. Al-Bishrī, al-haraka al-sīyāsiya fi Miṣr, pp. 429-432.

2. Report on "Communist influence in the Middle East", prepared in the British F.O., 22 January 1952, FO371/98239, E1017/1. See also, Al-Bishrī, ibid, pp. 439-442.

But it failed in its efforts to exploit the existing conditions. The American estimate of the factors of instability in Egypt concluded that the "communists are getting a great deal of cooperation from the Egyptian Government and ruling classes who could not be more helpful in their crass and total failure to do anything towards alleviating the important problems which face Egypt today"¹; but the main problem of Egyptian Communism was the internal continuous splits among its components factions which had weakened the movement. The domestic result of collaborating with other political groups brought about sharp contradictions and splits among the communist factions, mainly, between D.M.N.L. and the "Egyptian Communist Party" (founded at the end of 1949). The Communist Party accused D.M.N.L. of deviations, opportunism, and inability to conduct a social campaign².

In the period between the end of 1951 and mid-1952, there was no known development among the various communist groups, and according to an American source, the local Communist party was exploiting discontent with local conditions but had not been trying "to spread the gospel of Marxism"³.

The anti-communist wave continued during 1952; Caffery, the American Ambassador in Egypt, pointed out in February 1952, that anti-communist measures had been taken particularly since 'Ali Mahir's government had been established immediately after the

1. Report on "stability as instability in Egypt", from Caffery, Cairo, 13 August 1951, RG 59, 774.00/8-1351. See also, a report on "Communism and Extremism in Egypt- proposals on how to combat them", from Caffery, Cairo, 25 September 1951, RG 59, 774.001/9-2551. The same appreciation was expressed by Dr. Ahmad Husain, the former Egyptian Minister of Social Affairs, in a conversation with Caffery, see: Caffery, Cairo, 4 September 1951, RG 59, 774.00/9-451.
2. Bowker, F.O." to Gascoigne, British Embassy, Moscow, 18 September 1952, FO371/98239, E1017/2.
3. FRUS 1951, Vol.5, p.437.

Cairo riots of January 26th, and it was known to be strongly anti-communist even if not actually Pro-Western¹.

An American intelligence report which analysed the political implications of the Cairo riots, called them "the most costly disorder in terms of property and life which have occurred in Egypt or the Near-East for many years"; the report assumed, that the planners and ideologists of these riots were the Egyptian Socialist Party leaders, that the other major dissident groups, that is to say, the Muslim Brotherhood and communists played only a small part; the communists and probably the Muslim Brotherhood, it was said, were not well enough organized internally or sufficiently centralized to make any broad decision quickly, and bring their members into extensive action; the communists were very few in numbers; however, the report determined that of all the subversive groups in Egypt, the communists had the most to gain from widespread disorder and total discredit of the regime; "although, January 26th was their best opportunity to date, they were apparently almost completely unprepared and powerless"².

What was the Soviet view of the internal political situation in Egypt and its influence on the communist dynamics of development, in other words, what was the Soviet appreciation of the communists political ability?

According to an article published in Problems of Economics, the Soviets had considered the campaign of strikes of the working class as a struggle for achieving their elementary political

1. Caffery, Cairo to the Dept. of State, 1 February, 1952, in: FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. 9 pp. 1759-1760.
2. "Some political implications of the Cairo riots of January 26 1952", Dept. of State intelligence report, 7 April 1952, R&A Reports, OIR 5808, National Archives, Washington D.C. See also, Record of conversation between Stevenson and Faruq, 30 January 1952, F0371/870, JE1018; Report on the riots of 26th January from British Embassy, Cairo, 31 January 1952, F0371/98871, JE1018/36; and F0371/96873, JE1018/86.

rights. Many strikes, it was said, "were closely connected with the popular anti-imperialist activities, with the popular struggle for peace"¹. The article emphasized that the most important proof of the political, ideological and organizational growth of the proletariat was the "ceaseless growth of the Communist Party"; despite the oppressive "sub rosa conditions", the persecutions and terror, the Communist Party had developed into a strong political force:

"The Communist parties in the Arab countries are not only the most advanced, but in many cases the most numerous and influential political parties in their countries... they are the most consistent fighters for national independence for the Arab countries... the communists of the Arab countries raise the national and class self-consciousness of the Arab workers, they imbue them with the great ideas of Marxism-Leninism"².

The article said *inter alia*, that the communist participation and activity in the popular movement of the peace partisans, inseparably connected it with the tasks of the national liberation of the Arab countries³.

The Soviets unrealistic appreciation of the political capacity of the communist movement in Egypt, as outlined in Problems of Economics, was exposed *inter alia*, in an article published in an Egyptian communist publication, called "The Truth" (al-Haqq). The article was considered as an Egyptian communist self criticism (naqd dhati), and made plain the weakness and difficulties hampering the local communists, a small and always factionalized movement of which membership was concentrated chiefly among the foreign communities of Egypt; the Communist Party admitted that its experience of working with the vast majority of Egypt's population - the peasantry, was slight if not non-existent.

1. V. Lutsky, "The national liberation struggle in the Arab countries", Problems of Economics (Moscow), No. 5, 5 June 1952, in: FO371/98239, E1017/2.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

"Truth" made a serious appeal to the communists, to concentrate their efforts on the nurture and encouragement of the peasants in the hope that they would act side by side with the communist movement for the implementation of its aims:

"[Communists] have got to understand all the facts about the peasants, to know their circumstances and their way of thinking...we should put on record step by step every experience we gain so that we would be in position to lay down a detailed plan for dealing with them... our contacts with farmers are still limited".¹

The Egyptian communists self criticism which is given above, was certainly accurate and realistic; the events to come would illuminate the real political power of the communists, and their inability to anticipate, and prepare themselves for political change.

I. The Truth, 21 May 1952. The Truth was a clandestine publication of Egyptian communists; it was mimeographed ostensibly only for circulation among party leaders. See, "Communist party capabilities in the Middle East and North Africa", Intelligence report of the Dept. of State, 24 November, 1952, R&A Reports, IR 6044, *ibid*.

d. The 1952 Coup D'état and its implications for Communist Movement 1952-1955

There was apparently little communist influence in the army, but evidence of a few communists among the Free officers¹. However, Communism drastically declined as a result of the officers' coup d'état. The new regime was convinced of the need for effective security measures to combat communist subversion; the military authorities had planned the establishment of a committee to plan and coordinate anti-communist activities².

General Muhammad Najib, the temporary leader of the free officers, was quoted as saying:

"the first thing we must do is put our own house in order unless we can raise standard of living of fellow men, we are wasting our time and in long run Egypt will go communist, and we are determined that it shall not go communist. Communism is against every thing we believe³.

Although, Egypt's new regime had declared its hostility to Communism, and asserted that it was the chief threat which faced the country, it released a number of communist leaders⁴.

Communists were certain to have a try at turning the change to their profit. Their immediate response to the July coup d'état was the establishment of a new political party, named, "The

1. On the relations between Communism and the Free Officers before and soon after the coup, see, Selma Botman, The Rise of Communism, pp. 115-131. See also, Abdel Malek, Egypt: Military Society (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 70. "Weekly summary of events, Egypt and the Sudan", office memorandum from Fowler to Stabler, 28 July, 1952. RG 59, 774.00/7-2852.
2. Dispatch 182 from Caffery, Cairo, 25 July 1952, RG 59, 774.00/7-2552; Dispatch 238, ibid, 2 August 1952, RG 59, 774.00/8-152; Dispatch 327, ibid, 11 August 1952, RG 59, 774.00/8-1152; "Egypt's new era-the first three weeks", dispatch 151 from Caffery, Cairo, 18 August 1952, RG 59, 774.00/8-1852.
3. Record of conversation between Caffery and General Najib, dispatch 666 from Caffery, Cairo, 11 September, 1952, RG 59, 774.00/9-1152.
4. Department of State Intelligence report on "Communist Party capabilities in the Middle East and North Africa", 24 November 1952, R&A Reports, IR 6044, National Archives, Washington D.C. The support which was given by the D.M.N.L. to the Free Officers before the coup was probably the main reason for the release of communist leaders. See Botman, ibid.

Democratic Party"; the author of the new political framework was Fathi al-Ramli.

The straight communist line taken by the Egyptian communists regarding the new situation was to contribute to the confusion that existed; accordingly, they alternately attacked and defended the "blessed movement" of the army; the new framework appeared to be a defender of the new regime¹.

The constitution of Fathi al-Ramli's "Democratic Party" was very comprehensive and dealt with all the spheres of Egyptian political life and reflected the communist line; the political programme called inter alia to²:

- a. Expel all foreign troops from Egypt and the Sudan.
- b. Reject all military projects and alliances which may be proposed by imperialist governments and which constituted a threat to international peace.

The attitude of D.M.N.L., the main communist group, towards the new changes was reflected in a manifesto issued by it; the manifesto expressed its support of the Najib regime:

"The response of the Egyptians to the military movement and their unconditional support of it had a very deep repercussions on the country. The movement aimed at realizing the national aspirations... our glorious nation now feels that its liberty is being restored through the intervention of the army....³.

The drastic struggle against communists and Communism which had

1. "Communist front party in Egypt", Dispatch 532 from Caffery, Cairo, 15 August 1952, RG 59, 774.001/8-1552.
2. See the full text of "constitution of new Communist front party in Egypt" in: dispatch 270 from Caffery, Cairo, 30 August 1952, RG 59, 774.001/8-3052. Regarding the campaign of the communist front against Egyptian participation in any Middle East defence plans, or any such alliance with the western powers, see, dispatch 662 from Robert Rayne, American Embassy, Cairo, 13 October 1952, RG 59, 774.00/10-1352; "Speech of Egyptian delegate at Vienna Peace Conference", dispatch 1262 from Robert Mcclintock, American Embassy, Cairo, 27 December 1952, RG 59, 774.001/12-2752 (the Middle East defence subject will be discussed in later chapters). On the relationship of the D.M.N.L. with the Free Officers movement, see Selma Botman, *ibid*, pp. 119-123.
3. See footnote no. 1.

begun at the end of 1952 was continuing and sharp measures had been taken by the Egyptian security forces. The Intelligence section of the Egyptian army, the G-2, uncovered during March 1953, the principal cell of the Egyptian Communist Party in Cairo, and more than twenty people were arrested and propaganda used by the party members was confiscated¹.

In July 1953 Nasir said that a special military tribunal was established to try people accused of communist activity; furthermore, it was said, that "this represents beginning of an operation to get all active communists firmly behind bars on conviction under the Egyptian Laws which make overt communist activity a criminal offense². The Egyptian press announced on 8 July, that nineteen communists would be tried in the military court on July 15. The Cairo court of Cassation had ruled that persons who had been accused previously of communist activities were not entitled to amnesty under the General Amnesty Law; this exception was intended to prevent communists from appealing for amnesty because their crimes were considered as "a social crime of attempting to overthrow the present social system of the country", this sort of crime not being within the scope of the political amnesty³.

On July 16th, it was reported in the Egyptian press, that two different cases against forty-three people accused of participating in a communist organization would be brought to the high military court on 27 July and 5 September⁴. The Egyptian Gazette reported on December 29 a trial held at the supreme court

1. Dispatch 1808 from Caffery, Cairo, 9 March 1953, RG 59, 774.001/3-953.
2. A letter from Caffery, Cairo, 9 July 1953, RG 59, 774.001/7-953.
3. Dispatch 91 from Caffery, Cairo, 9 July 1953, RG 59, 774.001-953.
4. Dispatch 160, *ibid*, RG 59, 774.001/7-1753; see also, dispatch 230 from W. Angie Smith (Regional Security Officer), Cairo, 25 July 1953, RG 59, 774.001/7-2553.

in Alexandria, against eight persons accused of communist activities¹.

The strong measures taken against communists continued during 1954. The government had been actively engaged in trying to suppress all communists groups in Egypt by arresting many Communists and communist sympathizers. The question of who was responsible for the Cairo fire of January 26th, 1952, was rediscussed in the trial of Fuad Sirāj al-Dīn, the former Minister of Interior; in his testimony before the revolutionary tribunal, 'Alī Māhir, the former Prime Minister, blamed communists and other elements for the fire; by his evidence, 'Alī Māhir contributed significantly to the continuous campaign against Communism². At the end of January 1954, forty four people were accused of having joined a communist organization (the D.M.N.L.), among them the leader of D.M.N.L., Sulaimān al-Rifā'i; they were accused of attempting to destroy the existing social and political system, and to establish an Egyptian society identical with the system in the Soviet Union, "using the revolutionary methods of Lenin and Stalin such as inciting workers to strike, forcibly occupying premises, perpetrating acts of violence, and instigation of class warfare"³.

1. Dispatch 1548 from American Embassy, Cairo, 30 December 1953, RG 59 774.00/12-3053; see also, dispatch 1419, from Caffery, Cairo, 11 December 1953, RG 59, 774.00/12-1153; dispatch 74 from Donald Edgar (American General Consul), Alexandria, 25 February 1954, RG 59, 774.00/2-2554.
2. Dispatch 1592 from Caffery, Cairo, 7 January 1954, RG 59, 774.00/1-754.
3. Dispatch 1852, *ibid*, 4 February 1954, RG 59, 774.001/2-454; the trial was opened on 13 November 1954, before the Supreme Military Court in Cairo; see some more details in: dispatch 964, *ibid*, 19 November 1954, RG 59, 774.001/11-1954. The trial of twenty five people charged with the same illegal activity opened on 3 July; see more details in: dispatch 33, *ibid*, 6 July, 1954, RG 59, 774.001/7-654; dispatch 383, *ibid*, 4 September 1954, RG 59, 774.001/9-454. Regarding the arrest of a large number of individuals who have been described as "the most dangerous communist group" in Egypt, see, dispatch 2123, *ibid*, 8 March 1954, RG 59, 774.00/3-854.

The main significant development took place on March 15th, when the Criminal Investigation Department of Alexandria raided the premises of what the Egyptian press described exaggeratedly as "the most important communist cell in the whole Middle East which is considered to be main centre of communist activities in the region"¹. Towards the end of May 1954, the chief of the communist section of the Security Police, Ahmad Hilmi, reported that almost 130 communists were held in detention camps and about 200 communists were in prison². As a result of official activity against communists, the communist activity had been limited to a marginal and an insignificant extent.

The Egyptian Government's fight against Communism included propaganda which intended to remove communist influence by emphasizing the negative elements of Communism and describing it as religion which ordered its followers to "pray to Moscow, not to Mecca". The propaganda apparatus was built within the ranks of the "Liberation Rally Organization". Their activity included distribution of pamphlets clarifying the danger of Communism to Muslim society, and used for that purpose the mosque Imams, particularly in the provinces³.

The anti-communist official line was emphasized and reflected in Nasir's interviews and speeches during 1954. In a statement to the press on 22 March, he asserted that "each time an accord with Britain becomes a possibility, the communists, who mask their activities under the pretext of nationalism, attempts to sabotage

1. Dispatch 2265 from Caffery, Cairo, 24 March 1954, RG 59, 774.001/3-2454.
2. Dispatch 2761 from Paul Lunt, American Embassy, Cairo, 25 May 1954, 774.001/5-2554.
3. Memorandum prepared by the Egyptian public affairs officer concerning the Egyptian government anti-communist activities, dispatch 2760 from Caffery, Cairo, 24 May 1954, RG 59, 774.00/5-2454.

the agreement"¹. On 3 August, Nasir put the blame on the U.S.S.R. as the planner of communist activity in Egypt:

"We are fighting an open battle in Egypt with communists. We are convinced they are working under Soviet direction; and by nature of situation Egyptian communists could not approve of this present government because we are working for peace and stability whereas what they want is disorder"².

In his speech at a Liberation Rally meeting, on 21 August 1954, Nasir accused communists of collaborating with Zionists, for the purpose of creating anarchy and disorder³.

Communism and communists continued to be used deliberately as a vulnerable target by Nasir and his administration during 1955; The Soviet-Egyptian arms deal of September 1955, did not bring about any significant change from the local communist point of view. After the arms deal was concluded, Nasir said in respect of the dangers of communist infiltration, that the position of his regime internally was very strong and that Egypt had nothing to fear⁴.

In spite of the sharp measures taken against them, the communists did not give up, but their efforts were not crowned with success; the following description given by Richard Sedlacek, (the Czechoslovak Commercial Attaché in Lebanon and Syria from April 1953 to March 1955), who defected on 27 March 1955, will illuminate some of the communists tactics and methods after the 1952 coup d'état:

"the Revolution of 1952 damaged Communism's chances in Egypt considerably...first the communists tried to work with all of the groups opposing the revolution...in an

1. Dispatch 2248, *ibid*, 22 March 1954, RG 59, 774.00/3-2254; see also, dispatch 79 from British Embassy, Cairo, 22 March 1954, F0371/108458, JE1198/13.
2. *Ibid*, 4 August 1954, RG 59, 674.00/8-454.
3. Dispatch 177 from Stevenson, Cairo, 23 August 1954, F0371/108458, JE1198/29.
4. British Embassy, Cairo, 15 December 1955, F0371/113787, JE10393/1; based upon an information given by *Najib al-Rawi* (from the Embassy of Iraq in Cairo), after his interview with Nasir.

attempt to capture the revolution and use it for our own purposes. Under the direction of Egyptians receiving instructions from Moscow, these forces attempted to infiltrate the ranks of the revolutionaries, to subvert the Egyptian armed forces, to use the success of the revolution for our own purposes, to take over from the officers who planned and executed the revolution. This was discovered by the new Egyptian Government, and a number of our Egyptian communists were jailed or fled the country. We had to use a new method then: we tried to either overthrow the revolution or to discredit it by calling the Revolutionary Government a pawn of the west. We created as much dissension as we could, among university students, through communists working in the press, through dissatisfied workers, through poor illiterates gathered from the streets of Cairo's old city who would shout any slogan for or against any body for a few coins to buy food¹.

The description which is given above and the facts given in this chapter indicate how far the Soviets were mistaken in their assessment of communist political capacity, furthermore, their direct and indirect involvement and support for communist caused a total repression and a continuous struggle against Communism in Egypt.

1. "Communism in Egypt", 20 October, 1955, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, 1948-61, Subject File-OCB 091-Egypt (September 1954-February 1957), Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas (it was not explained in the American report when and why Richard Sedlaeck made his statement). See also his statement on 30 March 1955, at Beirut airport before his departure to London, in: Arab News Agency, 30 March 1955, SWB, p. 35.

CHAPTER THREE
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNISM AND ISLAM

Soviet attempts to increase their political influence in the Arab world after the second world war, and their successes of the mid-1950's raised a very important and interesting question, how large can a gap be tolerated between ideology and reality in political life? In other words, what was the role and influence of the ideology in the shaping and implementing of foreign policy?

The relationship between Islam and Communism has been the subject of considerable attention in both Western and Middle Eastern research. Many scholars have attempted to illuminate one or more aspects of this issue.

This chapter outlines some of the approaches to this relationship. It will focus on the change in the Soviet attitude towards Islam as it was reflected in their official post-war publications and writings, at the beginning of the 1950's. Likewise, this chapter will examine the internal discussions on ideological concerns within Arab intellectual circles.

A. Communism and Islam

Communism is a comprehensive system of thought. It is a doctrine about reality, an ideal, and a call to action. Communism, as generally understood today, is the ideology of those who accept Marxist Leninist dialectical materialism, including the acceptance of the principle of being a great power and of a solidly organized group of nations under its hegemony; the ideal and cause of a worldwide movement.

Communism is a materialistic conception of reality interpreting human-social-historical reality as dominated by economic determinism. This view holds that every essential historical change is determined by the socio-economic processes which

preceded it. The meaning of history does not derive from divine power which is from without; rather, historical evolution is an internal movement - the pattern of socio-economic evolution is that which endows history with its meaning. It comes from within the society and is not imposed from the outside. The implementation of the struggle against exploitation and suppression would come about as a result of the materialistic evolution within the society and will be induced by internal forces (autodynamics), rather than by external, metaphysical ones. Communism is predicated on the emphatic rejection of God. With the abolition of God, goes the abolition of the absolute in any form. Communism is a revolt against the capitalist system, an antithesis to the bourgeois civilization of the 19th and 20th centuries¹.

Islam, as opposed to Communism, is a religion that accepts the absolute power of God. Islam like Communism, claims universal validity. There can be no question of the importance and status of Islam, since it was and still rooted deeply in Muslim society. Professor Elie Kedourie declares that it would be impossible to understand the character of the Muslim society without understanding its religion². To quote Professor Kedourie, "Islam

1. K. Marx and F. Engels, "Manifest Hamiflaga Hakommonistit" (The Manifest of the Communist Party), in: Marx and Engels, Ktabim Nibharim - Helek A' (Selected Writings - Part A'), (Merhabia: 1942), pp. 298, 322-323. V.I. Lenin, "Hamedina Ve-Hamahapeka" (The State and the Revolution), in: Lenin, Ktabim Nibharim (Selected Writings - Part A'), (Merhabya:1942), PP.146-145. K. Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (Chicago: 1911), see the preface of the book. Shlomo Avineri, Mishnato Hamedinit Ve-Hahebratit shel Karl Marx (The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx), (Tel-Aviv: 1976), pp.193-238. Information memorandum No. 26, "Soviet-Communism", Dept. of State, 29 December, 1948 in: Records of Charles E. Bohlen 1942-1952, Box 5, National Archives, Washington D.C.; Charles Malik, "The Challenge of Communism", 17 January, 1951, in: Record of Policy Planning Staff, 1947-1953, Box 8, National Archives, Washington D.C.
2. Elie Kedourie, Islam in the Modern World (London: 1980), P.33.

is not only the badge of Muslim society; it has remained, until the very recent past, the constitutive and regulative principle of Muslim life in its temporal as well as its spiritual concerns¹.

The Marxist view of the study of Islam has not been quite as homogeneous. As suggested by Professor Bernard Lewis in his book, Islam in History, this view can be divided into three main approaches². The first is the doctrine of the Asiatic mode of production, as outlined by Marx and Engels, in which the Islam and the Islamic world had received little attention.

The second approach, is the attempt made by Stalin to disregard the Asiatic mode of production, and to fit the history of Islam into the authorized sequence of the ancient, feudal and bourgeois modes of production; the underlying theme behind this change was "to refute rather than to explain, Islamic beliefs, and to discredit any view of the Islamic past which might nurture Muslim pride and encourage opposition to Soviet rule in Muslim lands", said Lewis. Politically, up to the mid-1940's, the Soviet attitude towards the Muslim world based upon such an approach. However, the Soviet leaders faced a tangible conflict concerning the attitude to be taken towards the Muslim minorities in the U.S.S.R. on the one hand, and Muslims in other parts of the world, mainly the Arab world, on the other. The policy adapted by Lenin and Stalin, intended to isolate the Soviet Muslim issue, by adapting it to the Marxist solution. Briefly, that policy was based upon the following elements³:

a. All Soviet citizens are equal, including the Muslims;

1. Ibid.

2. Bernard Lewis, Islam in History (London: 1973), pp.26-29.

3. Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State (London: 1983), pp.25-27. See also, Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union (Chicago: 1979).

religion in the U.S.S.R. is a private affair and not a criterion for national self-determination; therefore there cannot be such a thing as a Muslim nation.

b. The U.S.S.R. is a proletarian Marxist-Leninist state, the fatherland of Communism. Communist ideology is compulsory and has no rival. In case of conflict between nationalism and Communism, the latter prevails.

c. National differences will disappear, national cultures will survive only as folklore.

The massive campaign against Islam, launched around 1928, intended to destroy Islam in the Soviet Union bringing about equality between Russians and Muslims. This policy was governed by Marxist arguments against all religions. It was said that Islam is the "opium of the toiling masses, distracting them from the social struggle against the exploiting parasites; it has played and is still playing a reactionary role, being an instrument for the spiritual oppression of the workers... it is a fanciful, fallacious and anti-scientific creed... Islam, a spiritual creed is a hangover from the pre-socialist past, it is a mere survival doomed to disappear... Marxism-Leninism and religious ideology are therefore incompatible and irreconcilable... the communist party cannot remain indifferent or neutral towards religion...it must fight it and it must defeat it"¹.

Of all the religions, Islam was claimed to be the most conservative and the least social; Islam belongs to the past, not even to the capitalist stage of evolution, but to the feudal era. As such, it has no place in a society of advanced socialism².

Lewis' third category includes a group of colonial historians, mainly, French, British and Dutch whose approach, while

1. Bennigsen and Broxup, *Ibid*, pp.44-49.

2. *Ibid*.

resembling the second approach, is defined less dogmatically. For instance, in Marxism and the Muslim World, Maxime Rodinson, a French Marxist, rejected the idea that Muhammad's mission was purely a miracle, and nothing in the evolution of the Arab society had paved the way to it. Islam was defined as a "theologicopolitical religion, a means not only for each individual to seek his own salvation but for the creation of a society in keeping with divine law, with the sharia". Rodinson's conclusion of this definition is: "political and social motivations are implicit right from the start"¹. Rodinson attempted to prove that doctrinal incompatibilities between Islam and Communism have nothing to do with the strengthening of communist political and social influence, even in Muslim countries². This approach became the guiding principle of Soviet policy towards the Arab world after the end of the Second World War. The appearance of Communism in its most militant form after the War posed a challenge to the Muslim world. Soviet achievements on the Eastern front during the war, greatly impressed the Asian and African peoples.

The Soviet Union made determined efforts to increase its influence in the Arab World. However, Soviet decision-makers realized that the atheistic tenets of Marxism did not appeal to a conservative society whose entire way of life was dominated by religion. In order to demonstrate that Islam and Communism are not in conflict with each other and can successfully coexist, communist ideologists had to reformulate the previous ideological discourses hostile to Islam dating from the earlier period. These new syntheses of Communism and Islamic thought included statements

1. Maxime Rodinson, Marxism and the Muslim World (London: 1978), pp. 9-10.
2. Ibid, pp. 34-56, 76-119. See also, "The Soviet and Islam", The Times (London), 28 January 1949.

such as¹:

a. Communism is not incompatible with Islam; on the contrary, both support the fundamental rights of man, Communism, or at least socialism, was really originally a Muslim philosophy. "If Muhammad were living today he would probably be a communist". The fact that millions of Muslims live in the Soviet Union and have fought for her shows that Islam flourishes in a communist society.

b. The Qur'ān is just as opposed as Communism to the "concentration of great wealth in the hands of a few by forbidding monopolies and usury, and by not recognizing the rights of primogeniture".

c. Both systems condemn class distinctions and make a virtue of poverty. Both regard marriage as only a civil contract, and both insist that everybody must work either for himself or for others. Both point with pride to the fact that servants enjoy a footing of friendly informality with their master's family, and that there have been many instances of the humblest subjects rising to the highest social and political positions.

d. A man can earn good wages in the U.S.S.R., but he cannot be a usurer or exploit his fellows. The same applies to the Muslim state.

e. Communism and Islam are both universal brotherhood , neither discriminate between races, religious or class².

1. Report on "propaganda directed to Egypt by the Soviet authorities", from British Embassy, Cairo, 14 September 1945, F0371/46003, J2962/440/16. Cornelius Van Engert, "Some notes on Islam and Communism", 22 March 1951, from British Embassy, Washington, 10 May 1951, F0371/91184, E1024/20G. See also some more attempts to find communist parallels in the Qur'an, in: Walter Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London: 1957), pp.5-6.
2. The new attitude toward Islam in Soviet official publication is reflected in the moderate definition of Islam in the Soviet Encyclopaedia in 1953 and 1972. See, "Islam", in: B. A. Vedenskii (ed.), Bol'shaya Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia (Moskva:

The above developments led to a revision in western research regarding Islam's relationship to Communism in the early 1950's¹. The previously accepted view held that Islam was a firm barrier to Communism. The new view held that the Islamic barrier to Communism derived from the social rather than the religious aspect of Islam. The failure of Islam to solve the contemporary social problem of the Muslims had created a better atmosphere for communist infiltration. For instance, M. Halpern, in his book, The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa, said inter alia: "Communism is peculiarly attractive for Muslims who are prepared above all to look for a modern revolution as total in its concepts, emotional appeal, and the social control it exercises as was Islam in the past. For Muslims... Communism becomes attractive both because of the fundamental similarity of its form and the fundamental difference of its content"².

Walter Laqueur pointed out that the Soviet approach to Islam was derived from both political and social considerations. According to him, the relationship between Communism and Islam was more complicated than in the case of other religions, for two primary reasons. First, active persecution of Islam inside the Soviet Union could be an obstacle to increasing their influence in the Middle East and elsewhere in Asia, and could create unfavorable impressions. Second, Islam is not only a religion but

1953), pp. 516-519; "Islam", in: A. M. Prokhorov (ed.), *ibid*, (Moskva: 1972), pp. 484-487.

1. The new approach in western research was reflected in the writings of: Kenneth Cragg, "The intellectual Impact of Communist upon Contemporary Islam", Middle East Journal (Washington), Vol.8, No. 2, Spring 1954, pp.127-138. Bernard Lewis, "Communism and Islam", in: International Affairs (London), January 1954, Vol. 30, pp. 1-12. Manfred Halpern, "The implications of Communism for Islam", The Muslim World (Connecticut), No.1, January 1953, pp. 28-41.
2. Manfred Halpern, The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa (New Jersey: 1963), pp. 159-160.

also a way of life. Liquidating Islam, said Laqueur, involves abolishing an entire social system, with its manners, customs, laws, and specific way of life. Laqueur based his view on the resolution accepted by the Twelfth Party Congress regarding the need for atheist propaganda; it was noted by the Congress, stressed Laqueur, that for a variety of historical and social reasons, the influence of Islam in the U.S.S.R. was stronger than that of the Orthodox Church¹.

B. The Various Approaches to the Issue as Introduced by Egyptian and Arab Intellectuals

In the programme of the Egyptian Communist Party, it was declared that it was wrong that Islam should be the official religion of the state since Egypt included Jews and Christians in addition to the Muslims majority. The Egyptian state must not be tied to any religion but be a National State for the people, irrespective of their religion. Religion must be separate from the state and from all its institutions, it was said in the programme². Nevertheless, the Arab Marxists wished to demonstrate that Islam and "Scientific Socialism" were not in conflict with each other, and that the two can coexist successfully³.

In the social realm Arab Marxists discovered useful elements derived from the founder of Islam, and in socialism, they found some points in common with Islam, attempting ideological continuity. In their opinion, the first Caliphs had bequeathed to

1. Laqueur, The Soviet Union and the Middle East, pp. 56-60.

2. "The programme of the Egyptian Communist Party" in: letter No. 1014/3/50 from British Embassy, Cairo, 9 January 1950, FO371/80354, JE1041/1G.

3. The Arab Marxists view was well expressed in the Marxist periodical, Al-Talī'a, in an article written by its editor, Lutfī al-Khūlī; see, Al-Talī'a (Cairo), March 1966, p.5.

the masses the revolutionary principles of struggle against imperialism, monopoly, tyranny, and backwardness. In other words they attempted to nationalize and socialize Islam¹:

"the Islamic view—that of Muhammad, Abū-Bakr, 'Umar and 'Alī—is the revolution's view of tyranny, imperialism, monopoly exploitation, and backwardness. Hence, it was accepted by the masses, who are breaking the chains of tyranny through revolutionary action and with their sweat and hard efforts are building the liberty, unity and humanity of socialism... with the power of Islam, the liberty and socialist revolution and the culture of progressive Arabism (al-'urūba), we shall confront the reactionary, imperialist and mercantile alliance".

The Arab Marxist intellectuals have argued that there is only one form of "scientific socialism", but they have accepted the fact that "scientific socialism" (ishtirākiya 'ilmīya) must adapt itself to new historical circumstances. For example, after the emergence of newly independent countries, socialist ideas were widely accepted by social groups other than the working classes. The conclusion to which these writings lead is that the transition to socialism becomes possible even in underdeveloped societies. While there is only one authentic socialism, there are various "national roads" leading to its realization².

The intellectual father of modern "Arab Socialism" during the 1940's was the founder and ideologist of the Syrian Ba'th Party, Michel 'Aflaq. 'Aflaq produced a doctrine which was based on traditional Arab elements on the one hand, and on socialist elements taken from "scientific socialism" on the other. 'Aflaq understood the importance of Islam to Arab Muslims and its positive and crucial role in their entire way of life. 'Aflaq emphasized the difference between his Arab Socialism and Marxist Socialism. He attempted to integrate Islamic spiritual-religious

1. Ibid, p.8.

2. Fauzi M. Najjar, "Islam and Socialism in the U.A.R.", Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. III, No.3 (1968), pp. 186-187.

elements as an essential component of "Arab Socialism". 'Aflaq observed that Islam evolved in an Arab milieu, culture, and language. The language in which Islam had appeared was Arabic. Islam interprets events, phenomena, and ideas in accordance with the Arab mentality and tradition and expresses the Arab way of thinking and philosophy of life. Islam glorifies several Arab characteristics and decries others. However, the characteristics judged by Islam, whether approvingly or disapprovingly, are all Arab characteristics¹; therefore, Islam is integral to Arab nationality and inseparable from it. 'Aflaq emphasized the idealistic element in the "Arab Socialism" doctrine, while rejecting the materialistic philosophy²:

"The communist philosophy is based upon materialism and explains historical development by the economic factor, which is, in its view, all-pervasive. The Ba'th philosophy rejects that materialist approach and argues that idealistic and spiritual factors have a crucial influence in the development of human society. Therefore, the spiritual movements which have appeared in the Arab context, such as Islam, are not alien to the Ba'th philosophy and do not contradict it".

Despite the fact that 'Aflaq does not accept the philosophical method of scientific socialism, he has been influenced to a great extent by its doctrine. As he said³:

"It is a mistake to understand from our idealistic approach that we advocate the perpetuation of the present wasteful conditions or that we have delusions that economic reform might be implemented easily by just waiting in anticipation for the appearance of goodwill. Furthermore, it should not be presumed that we reject realist thought or that we disregard the claims advanced for scientific thought. We believe that we should be realistic in the way we think and concrete as though we were materialist. We should not attempt to correct the ills of society through illusions, miracles, or obscuring reality, but should rather examine its evils in order to amend and correct the situation. The exploiting ruling classes will not surrender their wealth or its interests just because we call upon them to do so

1. Michel 'Aflaq, fi sabīl al-Ba'th (Beirut: 1963), p.58.
2. 'Aflaq is quoted in A. Ben-Zur's book Arab Socialism (Tel-Aviv: 1965), p.18 (Hebrew).
3. Ibid.

for the good of the nation, for reason and progress. For that, what are required are struggle, political consolidation, and earnest thought".

From the above, it follows that the idealistic element is integrated with the revolutionary; thus "revolutionary idealism" emerges in 'Aflaq's thought.

The prominent spiritual dimension in 'Aflaq's ideology which he conjoins to almost any theme, makes it impossible to deny religion in principle. 'Aflaq has stated that he cannot accept atheism as a dogma, whether in its religious or spiritual sense; that is to say, he cannot accept atheism "on any matter which goes beyond the sensible" (*ilhād bikul shai' khārij 'an al-mahsūs*)¹. In contrast to Communism's "shallow" atheistic solution, 'Aflaq advocates something different: he believes in mankind and in its capacity to fight against the exploitative elements of society, which tried to subordinate and to mould religion in accordance with their own needs².

"Arab Socialism" was adapted to the circumstances and history of the Arab nation. There can be no question of the importance and status of Islam, since it was and still is deeply rooted in the Arab environment. The Arab masses would reject any attempt to implement an ideology in which the Islamic religious element did not constitute a cornerstone; and indeed, Islam has been an integral part of the doctrine of Arab Socialism. The proponents and shapers of Arab Socialism have presented Islam in its positive dimension. In so doing they have wished to simplify the process of transmitting socialism to Arab society.

The attitude of the leaders of Islamic orthodoxy towards Communism, the prospects of its application in Muslim society and the elementary differences between these doctrines, was

1. 'Aflaq, fī sabīl al-Ba'th, pp. 126,133.

2. Ibid.

expressed very clearly by the Rector of Al-Azhar University, al-Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusain, in an interview he gave to Al-Ahrām¹. In order to emphasize the essential contradictions, the Shaykh outlined briefly some of the main basic ideas of Islam and Communism, and made a comparison between them, for the purpose of illuminating the superiority of Islam in relation to Communism. He said *inter alia*, that Islam had intervened to correct errors, recognizing the original tendency of human nature, and attempting to direct it in the right direction; the principle of individual landownership was recognized by Islam but in a moderate way; it required that land should be acquired by legitimate methods, and it had imposed on Muslims certain duties and obligations regarding the poor for the prevention of injustice and exploitation. Islam recognized that men differ in intellect, capacity and the power to earn a living and to be useful to society. These differences were of the very essence of human nature and were the cause of the differences of the conditions of living². Communism, said the Shaykh, pretended that it had already destroyed the vice of exploitation and of limiting wealth to a few individuals by taking away that wealth and giving it to the society. However, emphasized Muḥammad Ḥusain, if we study the matter deeply, we would have realized that the question of "production and distribution of products under the communist regime was confined to a small group of individuals". Under the communist regime, "a few individuals live in palaces and enjoy all sorts of luxury, not less than what the old Tzars enjoyed, while the people lead a monotonous life of wearisome toil and drudgery which is in no way better than the life of the laboring classes in

1. Al-Ahrām (Cairo) , 25 November 1952; see also dispatch 1008 from Caffery, Cairo, 28 November 1952, RG 59, 774.001/11-2852.

2. *Ibid.*

other countries¹". The Shaykh stressed that Islam was not only a religious institution but was also a social and financial one, and to deprive a Muslim of his liberty in social and financial matters was to deprive him of certain important elements which were of the very essence of Islam and which, in the estimation of every devout Muslim, were far superior to any other institution, especially Communism which persecuted every institution contradicting it. Islam was foremost among such persecuted institutions because it contradicted Communism in every respect².

The director of the Mosques Department in the Ministry of Wakfs, Shaykh 'Abd Allah al-Marjī, outlined their struggle against Communism through the medium of the mosques. He said that his department had a staff of efficient Imams versed in Islamic studies whose principles can guarantee happiness to mankind. "They can explain these principles to the people, thus building a bulwark between the Islamic society and communist infiltration"³.

Communism, and primarily atheism, one of its basic principles had been used as a target in the Egyptian press, mainly by those who adopted or represented the government official view, but also even by those who considered themselves independent. The condition of the Muslims in the Soviet Union was discussed in an article written by Al-Ahram. The article complained of discrimination against the Muslims because of their religion; it gave a picture of Muslims who lived in the Crimea and had been driven from their homes after the second world war, to other areas by the Soviet Government, with Russians citizens relocated

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. "Recent Anti-Communist Articles in Egyptian Press", dispatch 327 from American Embassy, Cairo, 4 April 1949, RG 59, 861.20283/4-449.

in their homes¹.

In the pro-government newspaper, Al-Asās, the writer charged that Communism advocated complete freedom for women. It advocated the abolition of classical Arabic and the adoption of colloquial Arabic with the ultimate aim of prohibiting study of the Qur'ān and the practice of Islam. Communism advocated economic equality, despite knowing it was absurd to believe people are equal in intelligence or strength. People should not expect equal wages even though given equal opportunities².

The distinction between Communism and Islam, the dangers of communist ideas to the Muslims, and the socialist alternative, was outlined by Aḥmad Ḥusain, the author of the work "The Socialism Which We Preach". An attempt to prevent the publication of the work, was made by the Egyptian Public Prosecutor who claimed that the work approved and propagated Communism. This matter came before 'Abd al-'Azīz Sulaimān, the President of the Cairo Court of First Instance. On 16 April 1951, in his decision to release the work for publication, Sulaimān established that the work did not represent a violation of the Law. Communism, said Sulaimān, is aware that religion is not in accord with its principle of depriving property owners of their goods; it looks at the life of men from a materialistic and purely mechanical angle. Aḥmad Ḥusain's work, stressed Sulaimān, did not favour a regime which advocates the abolition of private property, realizing that religion is opposed to any such hateful system because³:

"To each man belongs that which he has, and the earth is the gift of God to the faithful, from whence they seek their sustenance and whereof their children and grandchildren inherit their limited portion, subject to the command of

1. Nūr Muḥammad, Al-Ahrām, in: ibid.

2. 'Abbās al-'Aqqād, Al-Asās, in: ibid.

3. "Work on the Egyptian Council of State", from Caffery, Cairo, 14 May 1951, RG 59, 774.3/5-1451.

God to reserve to the poor and needy a portion to be fixed according to the individual means and the public needs. Thus an individual may voluntarily, or in obedience to law, abandon a portion of his goods to the benefit of those without property. It goes without saying that individuals may acquire a fortune or be reduced to penury as the result of a single transaction or of a transaction which has turned out badly. This is a law which lasts as long as the world endures."

According to Husain, said Sulaimān, the remedy for misery, sickness and ignorance would become possible with the limitation of property without abolishing it. The socialism advocated by Husain, represented a spiritual growth and had its root in depths of the Egyptian nation itself; the purpose would be achieved without using force or violence, but by urging men to entertain fraternal relations with each other and to seek to live in the shadow of peace. Husain criticised Communism and the extremists of the left for denying the past and making enemies of religion; and criticised communists who believe in material things and deny that which lies behind these things; "effects do not exist without cause and the fact of showing abhorrence of poverty, illness and hunger is not the result of mere material necessity, but of an aspiration towards an ideal based on absolute justice. If it was merely a question of simple materialism, the strong would have despoiled the weak". Obviously then, an evolution supported by morality was essential. Muslims were considered by the Qur'ān as a middle nation who were partisans neither of the extreme right or the extreme left, and that socialism, as presented in the Middle East, found its support among the Muslims who form a moderate party. Socialism, according to Husain, was the basis of religion; this socialism was of a distinctive character in harmony with the beliefs of the people of the Middle East who followed an oriental rather than a western socialism, and whose Islamic religion proclaimed equality among people, whom God had created without

distinction, all were equal before the law¹.

The Egyptian official and traditional approach regarding Islam and Communism was summed up clearly by Nuqrāshī Pasha, then Egyptian Prime Minister, during a conversation with the American Secretary of State, in Washington on 1 August, 1947. Nuqrāshī said that Egypt feared Communism and was anti-communist in sentiment, primarily because Communism was contrary to the Islam. Islam, said Nuqrāshī, stressed the rights of the individual, it respected private enterprise as well as private property. Basically, Islam was opposed to the concept of Communism².

In his book Communism and Nationalism³, Walter Laqueur outlined two arguments. The first, that the problem of the affinity between Islam and Communism is of secondary importance in regard to the relations between the U.S.S.R. and the Muslim world. The second, that Islam has gradually ceased to be a serious competitor to Communism in the struggle for the soul of the existing and potential elites in the countries of the Middle East. Laqueur's first argument falls into line with the development of political events in the Middle East during the 1950's; the Soviet relations with the Muslim world had not been influenced by any ideological contradictions. Contrary to Laqueur's second argument, neither Communism nor any other ideology, could constitute a threat to the superiority of Islam in the Muslim society.

1. Ibid.

2. Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, in: RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Documents, File Subject: 1947, 710, No.11, Box: 165.

3. Walter Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism, pp. 6-7.

PART TWO
THE BEGINNING OF THE SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN EGYPTIAN
AFFAIRS: THE DYNAMICS OF PENETRATION, 1947-1955

CHAPTER ONE
THE U.S.S.R.'S FIRST STEPS IN THE
EGYPTIAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN ARENA

After the Second World War, Soviet policy towards the Middle East was intended to end British hegemony in the area and to fill the vacuum as soon as conditions would allow.

Soviet doctrine towards the area had already been shaped by the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928, and its implementation had taken place soon after the Second World War. The rigid doctrinaire line regarding the role of the national bourgeoisie in the struggle for liberation was softened. Despite their arguments that the struggle for liberation in the Arab world would succeed only under Communist leadership, the Soviets were in practice willing to support and cooperate with any Arab government who wished to liberate its country of foreign troops. They did not take into account the socio-political nature of these governments, even when such governments as was the case with Egypt had declared the Communist Party illegal.

This policy was first carried out at the United Nations when the U.S.S.R. sided with Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. This new and flexible policy, as future events were to demonstrate, disproves the belief current among scholars that Soviet interests and political activities during Stalin's period were marginal and focused mainly on nurturing Communist parties, and that the implementation of such a policy has been taking place gradually only after his death in March 1953.

A. Soviet Support for the Arabs

The first significant political dialogue between the Soviet Union and the Arab governments took place at the beginning of 1946. In an attempt to increase their influence in the Middle East, the U.S.S.R. approached the President of Lebanon, Bishara al-Khuri, on 10 January 1946, with the proposal to negotiate a secret treaty. After consultations and discussions between the Lebanese and Syrian Governments, both agreed to receive the first formal proposal of a treaty from the U.S.S.R.¹.

A secret Syrian-U.S.S.R. treaty was signed on 1 February 1946 in Beirut. Daniil Solod was the Soviet negotiator and signatory. The treaty included *inter alia* the following clauses:

- a. The U.S.S.R. agree to support the Syrian Government in all steps which the latter may undertake in order to establish complete independence. The U.S.S.R. will back Syrian demands for immediate evacuation of all French and British troops;
- b. The U.S.S.R. agrees to assist in the cultural development of the country. A considerable number of teachers will be sent from the U.S.S.R. to assist the Syrians in general to organize a native Syrian educational system, freed from foreign influence;
- c. The U.S.S.R. recognizes the need for signing a broad treaty with Syria as soon as possible, including provisions affecting economic, commercial and navigational questions. The Soviet Union agrees to send a sufficient number of military personnel to Syria, comprising military instructors and high ranking officers, in

1. The information was given to the Department of State by the War Department, Office of the Assistant Secretary of War, Strategic Services Unit, on 15 February, 1946; according to the War Dept. the information was believed to have come from a group of Russians in Paris, without any further corroboration; see RG 59 761.90D11/2-1546. The American Embassy in Moscow, could not confirm or deny that such a secret treaty had been signed; see Airgram 316 from American Embassy, Moscow, 12 April, 1946, RG 59, 761.90/4-1246.

order to help Syria to build up as rapidly as possible a national army of some strength;

d. The Syrian Government agrees to give the U.S.S.R. most favoured nation treatment.

A secret treaty between the U.S.S.R. and the Lebanese Government, based upon these clauses, was signed two days later¹.

An official visit to the U.S.S.R. of a combined Lebanese-Syrian cultural mission between 15 February and 18 March 1947, could be considered as a step forward in Arab-Soviet rapprochement. The delegation was invited by the Soviets for the promotion of cultural relations between the U.S.S.R. and the outside world. The delegation visited a great number of industrial and cultural centres². At the conclusion of the visit, Dr. Kāmil Ayyād³, a member of the delegation said:

"It gives us the greatest joy to have returned from the U.S.S.R., that new state which is considered to be in the foremost ranks of the states of the world, with a conviction that this great country has been able to, in spite of all the obstacles in its way, to make great strides towards the realization of a comprehensive culture...a culture which does not recognize the distinction of origin and race, which repudiates the expansionist and imperialist ideology...and which believes in peace and independence for all the nations of the world. We hope that our visit would herald a wider

1. Ibid. On 15 February, 1946, during a discussion in the Security Council of the U.N. on Syrian and Lebanese demands for a speedy and complete removal of British and French troops from both countries, the U.S.S.R. supported both demands. On the Soviet position, see Y. Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, A Documentary Study of Soviet Policy in the Middle East, 1945-1973 (Jerusalem: 1974), pp. 29-30. It is important to point out that during the Palestine war in 1948, the largest shipments of arms to the Arabs from the Eastern bloc had gone to Syria and Lebanon; see C.I.A.'s report on "Possible Developments from the Palestine Truce", 27 July, 1948, in: U.S. Declassified Documents Reference System, U.S., 1975, 4F.
2. Letter No. 428/1/44 from R.K. Roberts, British Embassy, Cairo, 13 March 1947, F0371/62154, E2448/2448/89. Dispatch 26 from American Legation, Beirut, 31 March 1947, RG 59, 761.90E/3-3147. Dispatch 607 from American Embassy, Damascus, 31 March 1947, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Records, 1947:800, box 169.
3. Dr. Ayyād was an able member of the Syrian Board of Education. It was reported that he had always been of Communist inclination. See dispatch 607, ibid.

reciprocalation of cultural and mutual relations between our countries and this great state...".¹

The process of rapprochement between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. was quite slow when compared with the rapprochement with Syria or Lebanon. An American assessment of Soviet expansionist tendencies in the Middle East assumed correctly that it would not be so quickly noticed in Egypt as in other Middle Eastern countries nearer the Soviet border. However, the American report noted that because "of Egypt's strategic position, the possibility of increased Soviet pressure therein cannot be safely overlooked". It was estimated that Soviet interest in Egypt in the long term, would probably be directed towards replacing the British influence².

The Soviet official line regarding the development of political events in Egypt after the second world war was outlined in a public lecture delivered in Moscow by Lutski, a well-known Soviet Orientalist. Lutski considered the Wafd as the centre of resistance to British Imperialism. He described it as a liberation movement so influential by 1920 that Britain feared it might be forced to abandon the protectorate. The current political situation in Egypt was marked by a struggle between Ṣidqī Pasha, Nuqrāshī Pasha and their supporters on one hand and the National Liberation Movement on the other. The Wafd led the National Liberation movement, said Lutski, but it had no progressive economic policy. The progressive parties had agreed on the necessity of withdrawing British troops and on Nile Valley unity. Ṣidqī Pasha and Nuqrāshī Pasha did not seek immediate British withdrawal. Their reactions to progressive demonstrations took the

1. Kāmil Ayyād was quoted in the Communist newspaper Sawt al-Sha'b, 25 March 1947; see dispatch 26, *ibid*.

2. Letter from American Embassy, Cairo, 22 March 1946, RG 59, 711.83/3-2246.

form of severe measures against the communist and Progress factions. Lutski said that Sudan and Egypt were intimately connected because of racial kinship, and economic ties growing out of the vital importance of the Nile to both. The British aim was to take exclusive control of Sudan so as to create pressure on Egypt. Regarding American activities in the Middle East, Lutski pointed out how United States infiltration had squeezed Britain out of Egypt's foreign trade¹.

The Soviet view of the Egyptian political scene distinguished between two main parties: The ruling circles characterised by their conservative approach and affiliated with the west; and the progressive forces, calling for a national liberation struggle. The latter was supported by the Soviet Union. Indeed, Soviet propaganda emphasized its support for the "Egyptian national liberation movement" but not of the Egyptian Government.

The question of Anglo-Egyptian relations and the future of the 1936 treaty had been the subject of considerable attention in the Soviet press. Radio Moscow reported on 23 December 1946, a new crisis in Anglo-Egyptian relations as a result of Britain's refusal to accept Egypt's demands for complete independence, the withdrawal of British troops, and the unification of the Sudan

1. The explanation of the Soviet positive attitude towards the Wafd party was given in Bol'shia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediaia, Vol.15, 1952, p. 461; the Wafd was the party of the national bourgeoisie. After the second world war, the Wafd occupied "an objectively progressive position on the question of denouncing the enslaving agreements with Britain and Egypt's refusal to participate in the aggressive measures of the Anglo-American bloc in the Near East"; see Yodfat, Arab Politics in the Soviet Mirror, p. 32-33. The translation of Lutski's lecture was given in Telegram 1 from American Embassy, Moscow, 27 January 1947, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Documents, 1947: 710, No. 1, box 165. See also commentary by Hassanov, "British Hampering Egyptian-Sudanese Unity", 29 January 1947, Radio Moscow in Arabic, Summary of World Broadcast, 3 (b) U.S.S.R.- for abroad (iv)-(v), British Broadcasting Corporation, Written Archives Centre, Caversham Park, Reading (hereafter cited as SWB with appropriate filing reference).

with Egypt. Constant hypocritical promises to evacuate Egypt and grant the country independence remained on paper, said the broadcast. The change of government in Egypt on 9 July 1947, and the fact that Nuqrāshī Pasha became premier, did not bring about concrete change. The Premier continued the policy of "silence and mystery" taken by his predecessor, Șidqī Pasha. According to the Soviets, the crisis in Anglo-Egyptian relations continued as acute as ever, and numerous facts indicated that the Egyptian people intended to press even harder for their national aims¹.

New Times published an article entitled "British Imperial Defence Plans and their Implications". The British imperialists, said the author, were trying to justify their expansion in the Near East by the need to protect communications with India through the Mediterranean. This was designed "to mask the fact that the purpose of a large army in peacetime is to perpetuate and increase the yoke on the peoples of...the Near and Middle East"². The anniversary of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement of 1899 about the Sudan was announced as a day of mourning in Egypt, said Radio Moscow. It quoted the Egyptian press demand for the termination of British occupation of Egypt and the Sudan, and said further that Egyptian people regarded the treaty of 1899 as the first step taken by Britain to separate the Sudan from Egypt. Britain imposed this agreement on Egypt and succeeded in separating the Sudan from the motherland of Egypt. "The Egyptian people are today striving

1. Commentary by D. Melnikov, "New Crisis in Anglo-Egyptian Relations", Radio Moscow in English, 23 December 1946, in: SWB 3 (b) U.S.S.R.- for abroad (ii). B. Raiiskii, "Angliia i Egipet", Trud (Moscow), 22 December 1946. P. Viēmov, "Na blizhnem Vostoke", Trud (Moscow), 19 December 1946. "Debate in Egyptian Chamber of Deputies on Position of New Government", TASS report from Cairo, 19 December 1946, in: F0371/66297, N166/166/38. "Egypt: British Civilians to Continue Occupation", 1 January 1947, in: SWB 3 (a) U.S.S.R.-Home (iii).
2. M. Galaktionov, "British Imperial Defence Plans and their Implications", New Times (Moscow: 1946), No.22.

for the union of the two lands and also demand the abolition of all treaties and agreements imposed on them by Britain", said the Soviet broadcast¹.

The manifestations of sympathy by the Soviet Union for the Egyptian demand for the evacuation of British troops from Egypt had been positively accepted by Egyptian statesmen. For instance, on 19 December 1946, a pro-Soviet statement was given by Kāmil al-Bindārī, the Egyptian minister to the U.S.S.R. Bindārī said in Moscow that it was necessary immediately to submit the draft of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty for examination by the United Nations. In the U.N., he said, "it will have a favourable reception...Egypt must have complete independence and be able to use her natural rights on equal terms with all Great Powers and U.N. members. It must not be bound by any pledges with any Great Power...Egypt can count upon the Soviet Union's absolutely friendly attitude...the Soviet peoples and Government have a deep friendship and respect for the Egyptian people"².

The Anglo-Egyptian negotiations and the failure to achieve any acceptable solution on both sides had been subject to considerable attacks in the Egyptian press. The anti-British tendency served Soviet interests. Numerous quotations from Egyptian newspapers were published in Soviet newspapers. Considerable prominence was given to the Egyptian Senate demand³ for the cessation of Anglo-Egyptian negotiations and a proposal to the Egyptian Government to appeal to the United Nations on this issue. For instance, Akhbār al-Yawm was quoted as saying that the negotiations had completely

1. Commentary by Hassanov, "Sudan and the Complete Independence of Egypt", 22 January 1947, Radio Moscow in Arabic, SWB 3 (b) U.S.S.R.- for abroad (i).
2. "Egyptian Minister's Moscow Statement to AP", 19 December 1946, SWB, 3(a) USSR-Home (V).
3. "Egyptian Appeal to UN Proposed", 24 January 1947, SWB 3 (a) U.S.S.R.-Home (ii).

failed and that the Egyptian Government had decided to approach the security council to demand the evacuation of all British troops from Egypt and the Sudan¹.

On 27 January, 1947, it was reported by the Egyptian press that V. M. Molotov, the Soviet Foreign minister, had invited for talks Bindārī Pasha, the Egyptian Minister in Moscow, and informed him that the Soviet Union was ready to support in the U.N. the members of the League of Arab States and likewise to support Egypt on the Sudan question. This was denied by a Tass announcement which said that this did not correspond to fact. Pravda reported² that Bindārī Pasha fully approved the Tass denial. In reply to the Soviet denial, 'Abd al-Rahmān Azzām, the Arab League's secretary, said: "I fail to understand the policy of the U.S.S.R.; it changes colour every day"³.

Towards mid-1947, the Soviet position regarding the Anglo-Egyptian dispute was ambiguous. On one hand, on March 24, during a conversation between Bevin and Stalin, the latter had stated that he had no intention of opposing British policy with regard to Egypt⁴. Tass declared that Anglo-Egyptian relations were the affair of Britain and Egypt, and that the Soviet Union did not contemplate intervening⁵. On the other hand, the Soviet press continued attacking Britain and the U.S.A. It accused the British of accepting the American proposal to mediate in the Anglo-

1. "Anglo-Egyptian Negotiations: Egyptian Press", 26 January 1947, SWB, 3 (a) U.S.S.R.-Home (v).
2. Telegram 579 from American Embassy, London, 28 January 1947, RG 59, 761.90B/1-2847. Telegram 2 from American Embassy, Moscow, 29 January 1947, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Documents, 1947:710 No. 1, box, 165.
3. Egypt (Telegraph Service) Arab News Agency in Arābic, Cairo, 29 January 1947, SWB, 6B (1) Egypt.
4. Top secret memorandum of conversation, by the director of the Office of European Affairs, Washington, 7 May 1947, in: FRUS 1947, Vol. V, pp. 771-772. See also, O. H. Brandon, "Soviet Policy on the Middle East", Sunday Times (London), 25 May 1947.
5. Letter No. 369(64/42/47), from British Embassy, Moscow, May 1947, FO371/66308, N5863/52/38.

Egyptian question¹, despite the American Government having no intention of offering mediation². Vecherniaia Moskva declared that neither evacuation nor the unification of the Sudan with Egypt had entered into the calculations of the British but that they aimed at maintaining exclusive control over the country; the British were trying to block the appeal to U.N. and were going ahead with their concentration of troops in the canal zone. The Egyptian Government was depicted as having resisted the British only under the pressure of public indignation³.

The underlying reason behind Stalin's expression of understanding towards British interests in the Middle East and of sympathy for the British case in Egypt was an intention to create tension in the relations between the U.S.A. and the U.K. surrounding the Anglo-Egyptian dispute; while the U.S.A. would push the British to settle the dispute the U.S.S.R. would not interfere. The Soviet union aimed to prevent the U.S.A. from acting as intermediary. The Soviets realized that in such a position the Americans could force the British to reach an agreement with Egypt, that its outcome would be an increase in American prestige in Egypt. They wished the dispute to be brought before the Security Council of the U.N. There they would be able to demonstrate their friendship to the Arabs by supporting their demands⁴.

1. Radio Moscow in Persian, 6 April 1947, SWB, 3(b) U.S.S.R.- for abroad (vi). Ibid, 8 April 1947, (iv). Radio Moscow in Arabic, 23 July 1947, SWB, U.S.S.R., p. 31.

2. FRUS, ibid.

3. P. Razin, "K polozheniiu v Egipte", Vecherniaia Moskva, 27 May 1947.

4. This approach was well-expressed in Soviet publications during mid-1947. See for instance: Bulletin de la Presse Sovietique, 31 May 1947, in: dispatch 2583 from American Embassy, Cairo, 4 June 1947, RG 59, 861.20283/6-447. K. Serezhin, "United States Policy in the Middle East", New Times (Moscow), No. 24, June 1947. L. Kraev, "Obrashchenie Egipta v Sovet Bezopasnosti", Komsomol'skaia Pravda, 1 August 1947. See also a report on

As a result of the failure to reach a solution of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, the Egyptian Government headed by Nuqrāshī Pasha, decided to bring the Egyptian demand for the revision of the 1936 treaty before the Security Council of the U.N. On 21 July 1947, Nuqrāshī went to the U.S.A. On 5 August, Nuqrāshī submitted the Egyptian case to the Security Council in a speech in which he demanded the immediate and complete evacuation of British troops from Egypt and the cessation of British administration in the Sudan¹. On 1 August 1947, Nuqrāshī had had a conversation with Marshall, the American Secretary of State, in Washington. Nuqrāshī said among other things, that in the appeal to the U.N. Egypt looked to the U.S.A. for support, for without such support Egypt could not win. He said that Egypt had attempted to formulate its policies generally in accordance with those of the U.S.A.²

The tactic taken by the Egyptian delegation to the U.N. was twofold. On the one hand, it meant to allay the fears of the various delegations who believed that there would be a connection between Egypt's independence and the spread of Communism. Egypt, its delegation argued, was strongly anti-Communist because Communism was contrary to Islam. On the other hand, Egypt expressed its readiness to cooperate with any power in order "to overcome any sign of danger threatening the East". This expression was intended mainly to demonstrate to the U.S.S.R. Egypt's neutrality in the inter-bloc conflict. Egypt would also side with

"Soviet Foreign Policy Based on the Press for April and May 1947", in dispatch 1443 from American Embassy, Moscow to American Embassy, Cairo, 8 July 1947, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Records, 1947:800, box 167.

1. Y. Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, pp.41-42.
P.J. Vatikiotis, The Modern History of Egypt (New York: Frederick A. Prager, 1969), pp. 363-364.
2. Memorandum of conversation, by the American Secretary of State, 1 August 1947, in: FRUS 1947, Vol. V, pp. 785-786.

the Soviet Union whenever necessary. The Egyptian delegation believed that this tactic would satisfy the Soviet bloc who would help Egypt to gain votes in the U.N. Assembly¹.

The Egyptian efforts to pass a resolution calling for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Egypt and the Sudan were not crowned with success. Several resolutions were presented by members of the Security Council, but none of them was adopted².

The Soviet press criticised Nuqrashi Pasha soon after he addressed his speech at the Security Council. It said that he clearly intended "to reduce opposition influence from the Wafd and to prepare the ground for an American loan"³. Even so, only the Soviet and the Polish representatives supported the Egyptian demand, but both expressed reservations about Egyptian claims regarding the incorporation of the Sudan into Egypt.

The Soviet position was presented to the Security Council on 20 August by Andrei Gromyko who said *inter alia*:

"The U.S.S.R. understands and sympathizes with these national aspirations on the part of Egypt and its people towards an independent existence on the basis of sovereign equality with other states and peoples. If we are to be guided by the high principles of the United Nations, the legitimacy of these Egyptian demands cannot be disputed....All this justifies the U.S.S.R. delegation's conclusion that Egypt's request for the immediate withdrawal of all United Kingdom troops from the territory of Egypt and the Sudan is well founded. For this reason the U.S.S.R. supports this request. With regard to the future of the Sudan...we do not know what the Sudanese want and what they are striving for. Without accurate information as to the aims of the Sudanese people, it is difficult for the Security Council to take any decision on this question"⁴.

The American position concerning the Anglo-Egyptian dispute was

1. FRUS 1947, *ibid. Radio Cairo*, 21 May 1947, SWB, 8B (1) Egypt-Home (i).
2. See FRUS 1947, Vol. V, pp. 796-812. Telegram 2384 from Permanent U.K. Representative to the U.N., New York, 26 August 1947, FO181/1028, File No. 158, Part II.
3. Tass transmission, 20 August 1947, SWB, U.S.S.R., p. 12.
4. Security Council, 2nd Year, No. 80, 20 August 1947, pp. 2109-2111, in: *Ro'i*, *ibid*, pp. 42-44.

ambivalent. On one hand, they believed that the continued presence of British troops in Egypt would impose a liability not only on Britain but on the U.S.A. and the Western world in general. They thought that relations with the Arab world could be seriously impaired for many years to come. On the other hand, British troops in the area served as a stabilizing factor. A complete withdrawal of British troops from the Middle East would leave no great power in this area, thus exposing it to Soviet aggression or infiltration¹. The U.S.A. was therefore interested in an early settlement of the controversy through a resumption of negotiations. This approach was reflected very clearly in the speech of Herschel Johnson, the American Ambassador to the U.N., on 20 August before the Security Council. He noted that the Council did not feel justified in condemning the U.K. and that the Council had genuine sympathy for the Egyptian desire for complete independence. He expressed his hope that Egypt and the U.K. would reach an agreement².

The Soviet Union's unconditional and decisive support of the Egyptian government in their dispute with the U.K. had significant implications for the short term. Many and different political factions in Egypt had begun to consider the Soviet union as a real friend of the Arab National Movement in its struggle against imperialism. Demonstrations in favour of the Soviet Union took place at the end of August 1947³. Sawt al-Umma and al-Misri printed the text of a letter to Gromyko saying: "We appeal to Comrade Gromyko on behalf of the educated Egyptian Youth to use

1. Memorandum by Henderson, the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs to Lovett, the Under Secretary of State, 28 August 1947, in: FRUS 1947, Vol. V, pp.800-801. Telegram from Marshall, The American Secretary of State to Johnson, the Acting U.S.A. Representative at the U.N., 8 August 1947, in: FRUS, ibid, pp.787-789.
2. FRUS, ibid, pp.797-798.
3. Dispatch 1022 from American Embassy, Cairo, 25 August 1947,

the right of veto if the majority of the members of the Security Council pass a resolution against the demands of the Egyptian people. We take this opportunity to thank Comrade Gromyko for his noble attitude which will always be remembered by the Egyptian people"¹.

C.I.A. reports suggested that owing to the American policy concerning the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, a favourable atmosphere for the Soviet Union in Egypt had been created². One report determined that Soviet relations with Egypt were not close, but the Egyptians, "although shunning any strong alignment with the U.S.S.R., have tended in recent years to look more towards the Soviet Union in the hope of gaining support for the Arabs in counteracting unpopular U.S. and U.K. policies in the Middle East"³. One more achievement was attributed to the Soviet Union arising from its tactics. With his arrival in Cairo from New York on 20 September 1947, Nuqrāshī stated that Egypt would consider the possibility of neutrality in the international arena. Egypt would seek the support of other powers in its struggle against Britain⁴.

In response to the Soviet stand at the Security Council, Farīd Zayn al-Dīn, the Syrian Minister to Moscow said on 12 August 1947, that Syria should work to widen economic exchanges with the Soviet Union. The relations with the Soviet Union arose from "our joint stand during the recent world war against Nazism...also we both are members of the U.N.O., and Soviet Russia was one of the first

1. Ibid.

2. "The Current Situation in Egypt", 16 October 1947, President's Secretary's Files, File Subject: Central Intelligence Reports- ORE 54, 1947, (No. 44-64, Box 254), Truman Library. "The Current Situation in the Mediterranean and the Near East", *ibid*, 17 October, 1947, ORE 52, 1947, Box 254.

3. C.I.A., ORE 54, *ibid*.

4. Rāfi'ī, Fi A'qāb al-Thawra al-Misriyya (Cairo: 1951), Vol. iii, p. 234 in : Vatikiotis, *ibid*, pp. 364, 482.

nations to stand by us in our case against France and in our struggle for freedom and independence"¹. On the other side, a pro-Egyptian line was reflected in the Soviet press, encouraging the Egyptian people to express more indignation about the indecisive policy taken by its government in the Security Council discussions. For instance, Pravda stated that the remaining foreign troops on Egyptian and Sudanese territories violated the sovereignty of these countries. In exchange for the latest promise to evacuate British troops, British diplomats sought to impose a burdensome military alliance, which was said to elicit indignation in Egypt. The Security Council had to take steps to secure British withdrawal².

The development of the events surrounding the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, led to an essential change in the superpower equation in the Middle East. A new factor was included into this equation - the Soviet Union. The expressions of sympathy and active support for Egypt in the international arena created a new opportunity for the Soviet Union to be involved actively for the first time in Egyptian affairs. As a result of these events, the Soviet Union began to play an important role in shaping Middle Eastern affairs. The next event on the Middle East agenda was the Palestine issue, in which the Soviet Union played a crucial role.

1. Airgram 319 from American Legation, Damascus, 12 August 1947, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Records, 1947: 800, box 169.
2. Pravda (Moscow), 2 September 1947, in: Airgram 1737 from American Embassy, Moscow, 6 September 1947, RG 59, 741.83/9-647. Radio Moscow in English, 28 August 1947, SWB, U.S.S.R., pp.16-17. Radio Moscow in Arabic, 9 September 1947, SWB, U.S.S.R., pp.12-13.

B. The Soviet Position concerning the Palestine Issue 1947-1948

The Palestine issue had absorbed the attention of the Soviet Union since the autumn of 1946. At that time, Soviet delegates to the U.N. General Assembly stressed the need for an immediate solution to the Palestine issue, which had been nothing but the result of British imperialist policy. Therefore, the future of Palestine should be discussed and determined only by the members of the United Nations¹.

By the beginning of 1947, the British government realized that the main object of Soviet policy with regard to Palestine was to embarrass them by stimulating anti-British feeling and encouraging the growing restlessness and dissatisfaction, thus attempting to undermine the British position in the Middle East. As outlined by a British report, no overt support was given to either side to the conflict, that is, Soviet propaganda represented both Jews and Arabs as being equally the victims of British imperialism².

The Soviet press tended to stress the substantial differences between the policies of the U.S.A. and Britain. U.S. policy towards Palestine, said Hassanov on Radio Moscow, had seriously complicated the country's problems and had caused deep indignation in the Arab East. The American programme in Palestine was regarded by Arab circles as an attempt to strengthen the influence of U.S. capitalism, he added³.

On 2 April 1947, a formal request to include the Palestine question on the agenda of the forthcoming Regular Session of the

1. Ro'i, Soviet Decision Making in Practice, pp. 46-49.
2. Report on "Soviet and Communist activities", prepared by F.O. Research Dept., 24 February, 1947, F0371/66294, N2370/49/38. Hassanov, "The Palestine Problem", Radio Moscow in Arabic, 2 February, 1947, SWB 3 (b) U.S.S.R. for abroad (i-ii).
3. Hassanov, Radio Moscow in Arabic, 19 March, 1947, *ibid*, (ii-iii). See also, Ro'i, *ibid*, pp.48-53.

General Assembly was submitted to Trygve Lie, the Secretary General of the U.N., by the British government¹.

The Soviet official position concerning the Palestine problem was outlined by Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. On 14 May, in a statement before the First Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly, he dealt with the problem of Palestine:

"...The legitimate interests of both the Jewish and Arab populations of Palestine can be duly safeguarded only through the establishment of an independent, dual, democratic, homogeneous Arab-Jewish State...If this plan proved impossible to implement, in view of the deterioration in the relations between the Jews and the Arabs...it would be necessary to consider the second plan ...which provides for the partition of Palestine into two independent autonomous states, one Jewish and one Arab. I repeat that such a solution of the Palestine problem would be justifiable only if relations between the Jewish and Arab populations of Palestine indeed proved to be so bad that it would be impossible to reconcile them...².

No definite or final decisions were adopted by the General Assembly's Special Session. It decided that a commission to study the question would be formed and would present its report to the Assembly's session in September 1947.

During the summer of 1947, the Soviet Union continued to pursue an ambivalent policy towards the Palestine problem and its solution as outlined by Gromyko's speech. The development of events after the end of August 1947, enabled the Soviet Union to make its final decision, that is to support the partition of Palestine. On 27 August, the commission voted on the form of government that was to replace the Mandate. The majority of its members favoured partition. On 26 September, the British government announced that it had decided to abandon the Mandate. On 16 September, the Second Regular Session of the General Assembly had opened and on 23 September, set up an Ad Hoc

1. Ro'i, p. 65.

2. United Nations Official Records of the First Special Session of the General Assembly, Papers of Harry N. Howard, File Subject: Middle East Chronological File- 1947, box 13, Truman Library.

Committee on the Palestine question. On 3 October, during the committee discussions, the first East European country to do so, Czechoslovakia, announced its support for partition¹. The U.S.S.R. announced its support only after United States delegate Herschel Johnson had committed his government to this solution too. On 11 October, the Soviet representative, Semion Tsarapkin, said: "relations between Arabs and Jews reached such a state of tension that it had become impossible to reconcile their points of view on the solution of the problem. The partition plan on the other hand, offered more hope of realization"². On 25 November the Ad Hoc Committee completed its work with the adoption of the partition proposal and the Palestine question was returned to the Plenary session. On 26 November, in a statement before the U.N. General Assembly, the Soviet Representative, Ambassador Gromyko, who supported the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab States, explained the Soviet position. He said that Jews and Arabs in Palestine did not wish or were unable to live together. Partition of Palestine was, therefore, the only workable solution. Gromyko did not agree that this decision was contrary to Arab interests or directed against either of the two national groups inhabiting Palestine. In his statement Gromyko spoke in a conciliatory tone vis-à-vis Arab representatives saying:³

"The Government and peoples of the U.S.S.R. have entertained and still entertain a feeling of sympathy for the national aspirations of the nations of the Arab East. The U.S.S.R. attitude towards the efforts of these peoples to rid themselves of the last fetters of colonial dependence is one of understanding and sympathy. Therefore, we do not identify with the vital national interests of the Arabs the clumsy statements made by some of the representatives of Arab states about the foreign policy of the U.S.S.R. in connexion with the

1. Ro'i, *ibid*, pp. 76-84.

2. *Ibid*, p. 84.

3. United Nations, *Official Records, General Assembly, Second Session, 26 November, 1947*, papers of Harry N. Howard, File Subject: Middle East Chronological File-1947, box 13, Truman Library.

question of the future of Palestine. We draw a distinction between such statements, which were obviously made under the stress of feeling emotions, and the basic and permanent interests of the Arab people. The U.S.S.R. delegation is convinced that Arabs and the Arab States will still, on more than one occasion, be looking towards Moscow and expecting the U.S.S.R. to help them in the struggle for their lawful interests, in their efforts to cast off the last vestiges of foreign dependence".

As early as this statement, the Soviet Union was making determined attempts to prevent their positive image with the Arab public from getting worse, because of the anti-Soviet propaganda in the Egyptian press.

For instance, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood attacked the U.S.S.R. for its inconsistent policy towards the Arab world. On one hand, it supported Egyptian demands in the Security Council. The Soviet Union was referred to with great respect in the Egyptian press because of this. On the other hand, soon afterwards, the Soviet representative at the U.N. General Assembly supported the partition of Palestine although this partition was against all humanitarian principles and against the U.N. Charter itself. "The Russians are using the U.N. today for their own ends. They support freedom or oppose it as it suits them...they supported Egypt because they wanted to put the British out of the Mediterranean and replace them instead"¹. Shaikh Ḥasan al-Bannā said that the support of the Zionists' plans by the United States had come as a greater shock to the Arabs than the support of the Soviet Union. Al-Bannā emphasized that he had always expected the Soviet Union to oppose the true interests of the Arabs and Islam².

1. "And Russia", Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn (Cairo), 17 October, 1947, Enclosure No. 3 to Dispatch No. 2979 from the American Embassy, Cairo, 24 October, 1947, RG 59, 867N.01/10-2447. See also, Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn, 4 January, 1948, Airgram 2273 from American Embassy, Cairo, 10 January, 1948, RG 59, 883.00/1-848.
2. Memorandum of Conversation between Shaikh Ḥasan al-Bannā, Supreme Guide of Ikhwān al-Muslimūn and Philip W. Ireland, First Secretary of Embassy, Enclosure No. 1 to Dispatch 2979, *ibid*.

The Soviet propaganda machine had launched a massive counterattack aiming to preserve recent Soviet achievements in the Arab world which were mainly due to its support of Egypt during the Security Council discussion of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute. On 13 November Pravda published an article by Belokon entitled "The real and imaginary friends of the Arab people". Belokon said that the real threat to the Arabs' freedom came from the imperialist powers, the U.K. and the U.S.A. He emphasized the efforts made by the Soviet delegation at the U.N. to bring about a withdrawal of British troops from Arab territories. The Soviet Union was the only superpower to support the Arabs' legitimate demands.

Palestine had become an arena of bloody clashes and a hotbed of unrest in the Middle East as a result of British imperialist inability to follow a peaceful policy. Despite criticism and attacks from the Egyptian press, he wrote, the Soviet Union would adhere to its decision in favour of the partition of Palestine, which was regarded as a right and just solution of the problem¹.

Support for the partition plan by both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. paved the way to its success. On 29 November, it received the necessary two-thirds majority in the Assembly. As a result, both American and Soviet prestige was undermined throughout the Arab world. The implications from the American point of view were even worse. U.S. policy towards Palestine, shaped by president Harry S. Truman², angered the Egyptian ruling circles and damaged solid

1. A. Belokon, "O podlinnykh i mnyimykh druz'iakh Arabskikh narodov", Pravda (Moscow), 13 November, 1947. See also commentary by Hassanov, Radio Moscow in Arabic, 31 October, 1947, SWB, U.S.S.R., p. 20. Hassanov said in this connection that "it is stupid to believe that the Soviet representative's declaration at the U.N. can be regarded as a danger to the Eastern countries". Hassanov, "Egyptian Misrepresentation of Soviet Attitude to Palestine, 26 November, 1947, *ibid*, pp. 21-22.
2. Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department (New York: Norton, 1969), pp. 169-171. See also, John Snetsinger, Truman, the Jewish Vote, and the Creation of

American-Egyptian friendship. Furthermore, it led to hostile reactions in other Arab states¹.

Despite the U.S.-U.S.S.R. agreement on key questions concerning Palestine and the Soviet allegation that "everybody was aware that the U.S.S.R. had neither material, nor any other interests in Palestine"² American intelligence reports concluded that the Soviet decision to support partition was derived from a wish to realize the following aims:³

- a. To secure early withdrawal of the British from Palestine;
- b. To participate in the establishment of the Jewish and Arab states, thereafter, to create a situation sure to provoke conflict in Palestine and great unrest throughout the Arab world;
- c. To take an active part in maintaining order in the country.

Broadly speaking, the Soviet interests in the Middle East suffered less damage than the Americans'. While the Soviet Union also voted for partition and therefore incurred some of the blame, the original Soviet stand was in favour of a unified state in Palestine, if it was possible. Indeed, the Soviet Union accused

Israel (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1974). Alan Bullock, Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945-1951 (New York: Norton, 1983), pp. 170-172. Zvi Ganin, Truman, American Jewry, and Israel, 1945-1948 (New York: 1979).

1. "Comment on Paper on Soviet Policy", by Henry S. Villard from the office of the Under Secretary of State, 5 December, 1947, in: Records of the Policy Planning Staff 1947-1953, box 23, National Archives, Washington D.C.; "Indications of Anti-American Bias in Egyptian Mail", Dispatch 97 from American Embassy, Cairo, 5 February, 1948, RG 59, 711.83/2-548. Barry Rubin, The Arab States and the Palestine Conflict (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981), pp. 168-184.
2. Belinkov, "The Soviet attitude to Partition", 2 December, 1947, Radio Moscow in Turkish, SWB, USSR, p.28.
3. Central Intelligence Agency, "Review of the World Situation as it Relates to the Security of the U.S.", 14 November, 1947, in: U.S. Declassified Documents Reference System, U.S., 1977, 179B. Central Intelligence Agency, "The Consequences of the Partition of Palestine", 28 November, 1947, President's Secretary's Files, File Subject: Central Intelligence Reports-ORE 55, 1947, (No. 44-46, box 254), Truman Library.

the British government of implementing a policy of "divide and rule", a policy that had made a unified state impossible and therefore left partition as the only just solution¹. In an article entitled "The Arab East and the Palestine Question" New Times attempted to indicate the consistency of Soviet policy regarding the solution of the Palestine problem. It asserted that, although Soviet representatives in the U.N. had affirmed the advantages of the minority recommendations for a single state, they considered the proposals for division the only course possible under existing conditions and had only one purpose, namely, to hand Palestine over to the peoples inhabiting it. New Times accused "British propaganda" of working on Arab fears of isolation. It promised the Arabs the support of the anti-imperialist camp².

Attempts to justify the Soviets' stand on the partition resolution were made by the Egyptian pro-Communist weekly, Al-Jamāhīr. It pictured the U.S.S.R. as a friend of the Arab and Islamic nations. The Soviet Union supported Egypt at the Security Council: "Gromyko stood up and shouted at the top of his voice that the Soviet Union would never accept a decision which did not secure the unconditional evacuation of the Nile Valley". The first Soviet proposal in May 1947 called for the formation of a democratic independent federal union in Palestine. This proposal was rejected by the "Arab fascists" with remarks about future "bloody battles" and kicking the Jews out of Palestine. By doing so, they paved the way for the partition plan to become the only acceptable

1. Commentary by Hassanov, Radio Moscow in Arabic, 11 December 1947, SWB, USSR, pp. 23-24.
2. Interpretative Report on Soviet Foreign Policy based on the Press for November 1947, prepared by the American Embassy, Moscow, 23 December, 1947, W.N.R.C., RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Documents, File Subject-1947: 800, box 167.

solution¹.

In the period between 30 November 1947 and 14 May 1948 Soviet efforts were mainly focused on preventing attempts to postpone implementation of the resolution of November 29. The U.S.S.R. acted so that the partition plan would be implemented according to the U.N. Assembly resolution. The Soviet Union was satisfied that U.S. influence and prestige in the Arab world had fallen to a low ebb as a result of its support for partition. The unfavourable political conditions for the western powers in the Arab world were largely used by Soviet propaganda which encouraged and supported this tendency. Soviet propaganda tended to attack both British and U.S. policies in the Middle East². The Soviet press claimed that the strife in Palestine was undoubtedly the direct result of 25 years of British trusteeship and of the policy of "divide and rule". The British attitude to the future of Palestine as reflected in its position in the U.N. General Assembly, was evasive and ambiguous. The British press had not only made the gloomiest possible forecasts for the future of the Middle East, but had actually prompted Arab reactionaries to follow a certain policy should the Assembly decide on partition. By instigating the Arabs against the Jews it had in fact been trying to demonstrate that it was impossible to implement the U.N. decision in a peaceful manner³.

Since the very beginning of 1948, owing to an escalation of violence between Jews and Arabs, a process of re-examination of U.S. policy towards Palestine had taken place. The suggestion by

1. Airgram 623 from American Embassy, Cairo, 10 December, 1947, RG 59, 883.00/12-1047.

2. Papers of Harry S. Truman, Naval Aide Files, 26 January, 1948, File Subject: State Dept. Briefs, January-April 1948, box 21.

3. M. Alekseev, "Podozritel'naia voina vokrug Palestinskoi problemy", Trud (Moscow), 7 January, 1948. S. Belinkov, "Intrigi imperialismov na Arabskom Vostoche", Izvestiia, (Moscow), 23 January, 1948.

the Department of State for a provisional trusteeship intending to postpone the implementation of partition was supported by President Truman. The plan was to transfer discussion of the Palestine question from the Security Council to the Trusteeship Council. But this was boycotted by the Soviet Union¹. In the period between 30 March to 14 May 1948, the U.S. acted with determination in the Security Council to prevent the resolution of 29 November from being implemented. However, the U.S.S.R. did all in its power to prevent the partition resolution from being altered. The U.S. change of policy over the partition provoked critical comments from Soviet representatives in the U.N. On April 20, in a statement before the first committee of the U.N. General Assembly, Gromyko expressed concern that partition had not been implemented in Palestine. Gromyko blamed the inaction on the U.S., the U.K., and certain other states, and noted that the U.S. now preferred to revise the General Assembly recommendation rather than implement it. The Soviet Union, said Gromyko, felt that the trusteeship proposed by the U.S. would lead to further fighting and would create a threat to peace². The Soviet Union criticised also the Arab League because of its stand concerning the future of Palestine. The Arab League aggravated the situation, said Radio Tashkent, instead of helping towards a peaceful settlement of the question and reconciling hostile religious and political groups in Palestine. The Arab leaders preferred to act on the orders of the British Government, "recruiting volunteers for the so-called 'Sacred Arab Army', equipped with British armoured cars and U.S. aircraft which was to enter Palestine for the alleged defence of

1. Ro'i, *ibid*, pp. 118, 135.

2. United Nations, Official Records, Second Special Session of the General Assembly, Main Committees, in: Papers of Harry N. Howard, File Subject: Middle East Chronological File (Folder 1), 1948, box 13.

Palestine Arabs". The League defended the interests of U.S. imperialism and supported American plans aimed at the enslavement of the countries of the Near East¹. The actions of 'Abdallah, the king of Transjordan and reactionary Arab leaders against Palestine, said Pravda, were a component of the general Anglo-American plan for the solution of the Palestine problem. The existence of such a plan had become apparent as soon as the U.S. changed its attitude towards the Palestine question. The Palestine Trusteeship plan, said Pravda, was a deliberate reversal and intended to establish "the selfish interests of U.S. oil monopolies". The actions in Palestine of the reactionary Arab leaders were designed to assist the realization of Anglo-American economic plans and to create a fictitious Arab sovereignty which the United States and Britain would recognize *de jure*².

As far as the Arab Communist Parties were concerned, the Soviet policy towards Palestine put them in an awkward dilemma. On the one hand, the vast majority of Arab political groups and the popular feelings were against partition and such support implied swimming against the current. On the other hand, they were bound to the line dictated by Moscow. Officially, the Communist parties expressed their support of partition, yet, their decision to do so was not universally accepted by all of the members. Soon after the outbreak of the Palestine war, these parties were significantly weakened as a result of domestic quarrels and persecution by their respective governments³.

1. Commentary by Nasredinnov, Radio Tashkent, 26 March, 1948, SWB, USSR, p. 30.
2. M. Marinin, "Chto skryvaetsia za krizisom v Palestine", Pravda (Moscow), 4 May, 1948.
3. On the Egyptian Communists attitude towards Palestine see, Selma Botman, The Rise of Egyptian Communism, pp. 86-91. Heikal, Sphinx and Commissar, pp. 48-50. On the Palestine Communist Party response to partition, see, Musa Budeiri, The Palestine Communist Party, pp. 231-242, 264-267.

However, the establishment of the State of Israel on 14 May was an important victory for the Soviet Union in the international arena. Consistent Soviet support for the partition plan had proved to be, in the short term, a wise step compared with the inconsistent stand taken by the U.S.A. The policies of the two powers, from the Arab point of view were about the same. Up to the partition resolution on 29 November 1947, the Soviets could be claimed as the supporters of the unworkable idea of establishing a single state in Palestine, a plan which was widely approved by the Arabs, while the U.S. supported partition as the only practicable solution. From March 1948, the new U.S. policy towards Palestine was intended to appease Arab anger created by its previous policy. At this time the U.S.S.R. acted against Arab interests concerning Palestine. Nevertheless, the Soviet stand did not bring about to a deep rift in its relations with the Egyptian leadership. Determined to express his gratitude for the help the Soviet Union had given Egypt in the U.N., Nuqrāshī Pasha refused to follow Prince Muḥammad 'Alī's advice to sever relations with the Soviet Union and its satellites¹.

The violent clashes between Jews and Arabs in Palestine reached their climax when the Arab countries declared war in May 1948. During the war, the Soviet Union and its satellites supported the Jews in every way in their struggle for survival. According to Professor Ro'i, the military aid which the Soviet bloc extended to Israel, was a major factor in enabling the Jews to gain important military victories; it was also a significant factor in the promotion of Soviet political and strategic ambitions in the Arab

1. Record of conversation between R. L. Buell, American Consul General, Alexandria, and Prince Muḥammad 'Alī, 25 May, 1948, RG 59, 883.00/5-2548. On the King Faruq's anti-Soviet approach, owing to Soviet support of Israel, see, Telegram 1487 from Campbell, Cairo, 29 October 1948, F0371/69177, J7016.

World. To quote him, "The desire that the British be expelled from Palestine and their position in the entire region weakened justified the unusual step of exceeding the bounds of purely political backing in the international arena as well as the political risks involved in strengthening Israel's fighting potential both with personnel and arms supplies"¹. At the very beginning of the war, the Soviet Union justified its support of Israel by claiming that the State of Israel had been proclaimed in accordance with the resolution passed by the U.N. and they therefore recognized its establishment. As to the Arabs, the Soviet mentioned frequently that they had defended and would continue to defend the independence of the Arab states and peoples. The Arab war against the new young Jewish State was not intended to protect Arab national interests or their independence, but was against the rights of the Jews to create their own independent state². Nevertheless, there was much (of) evidence to indicate that arms shipments from the Soviet bloc had been made to Egypt and other Arab states. On 24 February 1948, it was reported by the British Foreign Office that an Egyptian military mission had visited Prague. The Egyptian mission conducted with the approval of the Czech Government, negotiations with individual Czech firms, on the following lines³:

a. The Egyptian Government wished to purchase a considerable

1. Ro'i, *ibid*, pp. 159-160.
2. "K Sobytiiam v Palestine", Pravda (Moscow), 29 May, 1948.
3. Letter No. 126/19/48 from Campbell, 18 March 1948, FO371/69200, J2003/46/16. Secret letter from F.O. to British Embassy, Cairo, 19 April 1948, *ibid*. Minute by R. Johnes from the Egyptian Department in the F.O., 7 May 1948, *ibid*, J3064/46/16. Secret letter No. 126/33/48 from British Embassy, Cairo, 3 May 1948, *ibid*. See also report of the C.I.A. entitled, "Probable Effects on Israel and the Arab States of a U.N. Arms Embargo", 5 August 1948, President's Secretary's Files, File Subject: Central Intelligence Reports- ORE 48-48, box 255, Truman Library. C.I.A. report entitled, "Possible Developments from the Palestine Truce" 27 July 1948, in: U.S. Declassified Documents Reference System, U.S., 1975, 4F. Later on, in July 1951, a

quantity of certain 7.92 mm rifles and the corresponding small arms ammunition;

b. A Czech firm offered to establish in Egypt both a small arms factory and a small arms ammunition factory;

c. Payment was to be half in cotton and half in sterling.

Indeed, it was more than a coincidence that on 3 March 1948, Egypt signed barter agreement with the Soviet Union to exchange 38,000 tons Egyptian cotton for 216,000 tons Soviet wheat and 19,000 tons corns cereals¹.

Fuṣād Ḥāfiẓ, the Egyptian Director of Military Intelligence confirmed that an Egyptian military mission had held talks in Czechoslovakia. He stated, that if the western powers would be unable to supply the Egyptian Government with arms and the necessary factories, Egypt would definitely purchase arms from Czechoslovakia².

Vigorous measures were taken by the Soviet Union to put an end to the Palestine war. These were mainly in debates and meetings in the Security Council. During the second half of May, the Security Council sessions dealt mainly with the Palestine issue. On 15 May

British military report confirmed that the Egyptian armament industry manufactured, under license, the Zlin 381, a Czech light transfer aircraft. The Zlin 381 was described by the British as a light trainer which could not be used as a combat aircraft. See, Draft Memorandum from N.K. Reeve, Ministry of Defence, to R.C. Mackworth-Young, F.O., 3 July 1951, F0371/90174, JE1192/26G. On arms shipments from Czechoslovakia to Syria in the end of 1947, see, Pinhas Vazeh, Hamesimah-Rekesh (The Mission-Arms Acquisition), (Tel-Aviv: Ma'arkot, 1966), pp. 153-157. Vazeh said that towards the end of 1947, a Syrian military mission purchased from Czechoslovakia 8,000 rifles and 6,000,000 cartridges. According to him, the arms was to be given to Arab units who were due to take part in the invasion to Palestine.

1. Telegram 304 from Campbell, Cairo, 4 March 1948, F0371/69249, J1542/1246/16. Telegram 228 from American Embassy, Cairo, 4 March 1948, RG 59, 661.8331/3-448.
2. Letter No. 126/33/48, ibid. The U.S.A. and Britain had first suspended arms shipments to the Middle East in late 1947 pending resolution on the Palestine situation. When war broke up in May 1948, both powers wished to avoid an arms race in the area.

in his reply to an Egyptian statement that the intervention in Palestine was designed solely to restore order and security in that country, Vasili Tarasenko, the Ukrainian delegate, said that, "according to the rules of the international community, each Government has the right to restore order only in its own country"¹. On 20 May, he said that the existence of the State of Israel was a reality. Israel had the right to defend its territory. None of the Arab States whose troops had entered Palestine, stressed Tarasenko, could claim that Palestine formed part of its territory. A day later, Gromyko declared: "The U.S.S.R. delegation cannot but express surprise at the position adopted by the Arab States in the Palestine question, and particularly at the fact that those states...have resorted to such action as sending their troops into Palestine and carrying out military operations aimed at the suppression of the national liberation movement in Palestine"². Later on, on 27 May, Gromyko submitted a proposal to the U.N. Security Council for a cease-fire in Palestine within 36 hours. At the same time, the U.K. representative submitted a draft resolution calling for a cease-fire, calling upon the parties to refrain from introducing fighting personnel or men of military age into Palestine during the cease-fire period, and instructing the U.N. Mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte³, and the Truce Commission to supervise observance of the cease-fire⁴. On 28 May, the U.S.A. supported the Soviet proposal; nevertheless, on 29 May, the Security Council rejected the Soviet proposal and adopted the British proposal, which was condemned by

1. Ro'i, *ibid*, pp. 235-236.

2. See excerpts from statements of the representatives of the U.S.S.R. in the Security Council in 1948, in, ISA, FM2475/7.

3. Count Folke Bernadotte was appointed U.N. mediator on 20 May 1948.

4. Papers of Harry N. Howard, 27 May 1948, File Subject: Middle East Chronological File (Folder 1), 1948, box 13.

Gromyko¹. The Arab representatives denounced the Soviet proposal and criticised the ambivalent policy of the Soviet Union towards the Arab world. The Syrian delegate, Fāris al-Khūrī was quoted as saying²:

"We have always appreciated the Soviet stand on Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, but over Palestine, the Soviet Union is adopting an opposite position. There the U.S.S.R. is supporting precisely the uninvited guests trying to give them more rights than to the owners of the country...From these facts we can conclude that the Soviet stand in the other instances did not result from sympathy for the Arabs but perhaps from hatred of the guests...its stand was not designed to protect weak peoples but to lessen the authority of its opponents. Such a motive will of course lessen our gratitude"

The Soviet press responded to Arab attacks by defending Soviet reasons for supporting Israel. New Times noted that the invasion of Palestine had been by Arab troops financed, armed and trained by Britain. Therefore, Soviet proposals in the U.N. were being so "consistently opposed" to Arab reactionary interests. The Arab countries were "not fighting in defence of national interests or for their independence". Quite the contrary, the State of Israel was the one defending its national freedom owing to Arab aggression³.

In an attempt to implement the U.N. resolution of 29 May, Bernadotte asked the U.S.S.R., the U.S.A. and the U.K. whether they could supply him with observers. The idea of sending British observers was rejected by both the State of Israel and the U.S.S.R.; they considered the U.K. as a party to the Palestine war⁴.

The question of the nature of the observers had been a subject to a considerable disagreements between the powers. On 7 June, Gromyko declared before the U.N. Security Council that the Soviet

1. Ibid, 28 May 1948. See also Ro'i, ibid, pp. 237-238.

2. Ro'i, ibid, p. 239.

3. Tass for abroad, 9 June, 1948, SWB, USSR, pp. 17-18.
Radio Moscow in Arabic, 10 June, 1948, ibid, p.18.

4. Ro'i, ibid, p. 240.

Union was prepared to send observers to Palestine to fulfil the functions provided for in the Security Council resolution of 29 May. During the discussion, Fāris al-Khūrī, the President of the Security Council, declared his understanding that Bernadotte had applied a certain number of military observers from the states which were members of the Truce Commission; the U.S.A, French and Belgian¹ representatives confirmed this statement. Gromyko objected to this and said²:

"If the governments of some countries consider that the mere fact of the U.S.A., France and Belgium being members of the Truce Commission had already determined in advance that these countries are to send their military observers to Palestine, we can not agree to that view. The question arises: why is it that these countries would alone send or would be the ones permitted to send military observers?"

The Soviet attempt to challenge the Security Council formula and allow the U.S.S.R. also to send military observers failed.

The Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs of the State Department argued that Gromyko's statement of 7 June would be directly contrary to United States interests in the area³. The Department of State agreed with the Joint Chiefs of Staff's view concerning the dispatch of Soviet observers to Palestine⁴. They also rejected any involvement of U.S. forces in maintaining peace in Palestine. The Joint Chiefs of Staff summarized their position as follows:⁵

"It would be incompatible with the security interests of the United States to have either United States or Soviet

1. The three countries were members in the Truce Commission.
2. Papers of Harry N. Howard, 7 June, 1948, File Subject: Middle East Chronological File (Folder 1), 1948, box 13, Truman Library.
3. Office Memorandum from Kopper, Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs of the State Dept. (NEA) to Merriam, Division of Near Eastern Affairs at NEA (NE), 8 June, 1948, Records of Policy Planning Staff, box 30, National Archives.
4. This subject was raised up again in the Security Council on 15 July, 1948. See Ro'i, *ibid*, p.247.
5. A Report to the National Security Council by the Secretary of State, 3 September, 1948, President's Secretary's Files, File Subject: N.S.C. Meeting No. 19, box 204, Truman Library.

satellite forces introduced into Palestine. They therefore recommend that the United States policy neither endorse nor permit a decision by the United Nations to employ military enforcement measures in Palestine".

Earlier, on 19 August, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that the entry of Soviet forces into Palestine would have the most far-reaching strategic implications in that the Soviets "would then be entitled to land or sea lines of communication, either of which would entail the very serious consequence of Soviet entry into other Middle East areas". The extent of Soviet forces would be unlimited, because it would be impossible to rule it.

Therefore, the way would be paved for Soviet military domination in the Middle East¹.

The Soviet demand to send military observers to Palestine, and by doing so, to gain a foothold in the Middle East, was never realized. Up to the end of the war, they continued to support Israel and looked forward to its crushing victory over the Arabs. There were several reasons why the Soviet Union decided to support the State of Israel in its formative stage. Soviet interest had mainly been in increasing their influence and the creation of new favourable conditions in the Middle East which would bring about a drastic change. That is to say, the establishment of a new order in an area which was under the domination of western powers whose leaders were anti-Communist and who were an obstacle to any possible rapprochement from the Soviet point of view, even when it supported Arab national aspirations in the international scene. The change in the Soviet position concerning the creation of a single state in Palestine, presumably, derived among other things, from the ingratitude of Arab countries like Egypt, Syria and Lebanon who applied to the U.N. with a demand to liberate their countries from foreign troops, fully supported by the Soviet Union

1. Ibid, 23 August, 1948.

and its satellites; Despite Soviet support, these countries continued to suspect Soviet motives and emphasized their dislike of Soviet Communism, preferring cooperation with western powers. Soon after the Egyptian case was discussed in the Security Council, the Soviet Union changed its stand concerning Palestine and supported the establishment of Jewish and Arab states. The Soviets believed that their support for the Jewish State in its infancy would increase their influence and eventually lead to Soviet domination in a strategic area while the policies of the western powers, particularly Britain, were more or less in favour of Arab interests. Holding Palestine would enable the extension of Soviet domination in the rest of the Middle East by promoting instability and insecurity¹ throughout the neighbouring Arab countries. This plan was not crowned with success mainly because of the development of political events in the young Jewish State. Soon after the war, Israel demonstrated its neutral and independent policy in the inter-bloc struggle. This policy did not fall in line with Soviet interests². The Soviet Union's

1. C.I.A. Report entitled, "Possible Developments from the Palestine Truce", 27 July, 1948, in: U.S. Declassified Documents Reference System, U.S., 1975, 4F. See also C.I.A. Report, "Probable Effects on Israel and the Arab States of a U.N. Arms Embargo", 5 August, 1948, President's Secretary's Files, File Subject: Central Intelligence Reports O.R.E. 1948, No. 48-48, box 255. See also "Monthly Review of Soviet Tactics", prepared by British Foreign Office, 6 February, 1948, FO371/71648, N1509/31/38. Dispatch 204 from American Legation, Jidda, 19 August 1948, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Records, File No. 800 (1948), Box 187.
2. See letter 4349/4114/Z/1 from Israel Foreign Ministry to Golda Meyerson, the Israeli Minister to Moscow, 26 January 1949, I.S.A., FM2513/13. Report on "The world politics and Israel" by A. Levavi (First Secretary of Israel Legation in Moscow), 6 June, 1949, I.S.A., FM2514/15. See also Record of conversation between Necas, the Consul General of Czechoslovakia in Jerusalem and Mikhail Mukhin from the Soviet Legation in Tel-Aviv, on the policies of Israel and the Arab States, 11 July, 1949, I.S.A., FM2457/14. Letter from Gideon Rafael, Israel delegate to the U.N. on his conversation with Tsarapkin, Soviet representative to the U.N., 13 December, 1949, I.S.A., FM2513/14. "Monthly Review of Soviet Tactics", ibid, 16 December, 1948, FO371/71653, N12985/31/G.

conclusion about Palestine was that the way to achieve domination in the Middle East would be not through Israel but through Arab countries, mainly Egypt. Therefore, a significant change in their policy concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict took place. With the ending of the war in Palestine, the pendulum of support had swung back to the Arab side.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOVIET RESPONSE TO WESTERN ATTEMPTS TO PERSUADE EGYPT AND OTHER MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES TO FORM A MIDDLE EAST DEFENCE ORGANIZATION, 1947-1952.

A. The Crystallization of U.S. Containment Policy and its Extension to the Middle East

The end of the Second World War was also the beginning of a new war- the cold war. This war was being conducted between the two primary powers, the United States, the new leader of the western world, and the Soviet Union, the leader of the Eastern bloc. Each side intended to increase its influence and domination in areas which were not fully identified with one of the two camps. One of these areas was the Middle East. The prominent change in Soviet policy towards the Middle East related mainly to Greece, Turkey and Iran; countries which constituted the northern tier of the Middle East.

After the end of the war, the Soviets had been involved by exerting pressure on their Iranian and Turkish neighbours, and by supporting the Communist-instigated civil war in Greece. In 1945, they terminated their twenty-year treaty with Turkey and demanded territory on Turkey's eastern border, and participation in the defence of the Turkish straits. In the meantime, they sought to create a "Democratic National Autonomous Government" in Azerbaijan in northwest Iran as well as in Kurdistan. To prevent a communist take over in these countries, the U.S.A. agreed to a British appeal on 24 February 1947, to undertake the financial and military burden of Western aid to Greece and Turkey, hitherto a British responsibility. The new American policy concerning that part of the world aimed to strengthen and stabilize the existing regimes, to stop the spread of Communism and Soviet influence, and to protect American major economic interests in the Middle East, especially, the development and exploitation of petroleum

resources. This new policy was known as the Truman Doctrine.

The Truman Doctrine, announced on 12 March 1947, acknowledged for the first time, that the United States had to be actively involved as a Middle Eastern power, as the senior representative of Western interests in the northern periphery of the Middle East¹.

The Department of State assessed that the security of the whole Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East would be jeopardized if the U.S.S.R. were to obtain control over any of the above countries². American and British policy-makers³ concluded that the Middle East, in its entirety, was no longer secure from Soviet penetration. Of all the Arab states, Egypt was likely to be the one with the most strategic importance from the Western Powers viewpoint. To quote a C.I.A. report⁴:

"Egypt should normally be considered along with the Arab states, for much of its significance arises from the strategic importance of these states and Egypt's influential position among them. Geographically, however, it is important to the defence of the Eastern Mediterranean. It has the advantage, defensively, of being separated from potentially hostile areas of Europe by sea and land barriers. Offensively, Egypt is a potential base for operations to counteract threats from the north against the Suez Canal area or the oil-rich lands of the

1. Nadav Safran, From War to War (New York: 1969), pp. 92-100. Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, pp. 66-67. Walter Laqueur, The Soviet Union and the Middle East, 136-137, 191. George McGhee, Envoy to the Middle World (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), pp. 18-20. Bernard Lewis, "The United States Turkey and Iran", in: H. Shaked and I. Rabinovich (eds.), The Middle East and the United States (New Jersey: 1980), pp. 165-180. On the historical evolution of United States policy in the Middle East after 1945, see Elie Kedourie, "The Transition from a British to an American Era in the Middle East", in: *ibid*, pp. 3-9. On the American and British economic interests in the Middle East, see, FRUS 1947, Vol. V, pp. 551-558.
2. Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State, Washington, undated, FRUS 1947, Vol. V, pp. 575-576.
3. On the strategic importance of the Middle East to Britain after the second world war see, John Marlowe, Modern Egypt and Anglo Egyptian Relations 1800-1952, 2nd ed. (London: 1958), p. 321. John Campbell, Defence of the Middle East-Problems of American Policy (New York: 1958), pp. 5, 15-16. John Badeau, The American Approach to the Arab World (New York: 1968), pp. 17-22.
4. C.I.A., The Current Situation in Egypt, 16 October 1947, President's Secretary's Files, File Subject: Central Intelligence Reports, O.R.E. 1947, No. 54, box 254, Truman Library.

Middle East. Having been a supply base in two World Wars, Egypt also has housing, air, and transportation facilities which would be valuable factor for any modern military force entering the area".

The Americans and the British were aware of the fact that the economic situation in Egypt and many of the Middle Eastern countries was certainly not healthy. By the end of 1947, both estimated that if some economic and social reforms were not made and if the low standard of living was allowed to continue, a fertile field would be provided for the spread of communism and later on, for Soviet penetration¹.

American policy aimed therefore to take the appropriate measures to promote the political and economic development of the peoples of the Middle East. The Americans stressed that if the obvious Soviet expansionist aspirations in the Middle East would be realized it would have a disastrous outcome not only for American interests in the area but for the general American position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. It was therefore essential that Soviet expansion in the Middle East should be contained². The Americans believed that Britain should continue to maintain primary responsibility for military security. It was made clear by the Americans that, for reasons of regional security and stability, it would be necessary for British troops to remain in the area. The American position concerning the future of British troops in the Canal zone was as follows:

1. C.I.A. No. 54, *ibid*. On the British view see, Memorandum from Bevin, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Marshall, the American Secretary of State (Moscow, undated), FRUS 1947, Vol. V, pp. 503-505.
2. Memorandum prepared by the Dept. of State, entitled, "The British and American positions" (Washington, undated), *ibid*, pp. 513-514. The American Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that in case of war with the Soviet Union, the latter would attach much significance to oil production and resources of the Middle East and to the Suez Canal area. See Memorandum for the Secretary of State by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, undated, C.C.S 600.6 Middle East (1-26-48) 5.1, National Archives, Washington.

"Since under conditions of modern warfare troops in the Suez Canal area can no longer be considered to constitute an adequate defence of the Canal, since their evacuation is ardently desired by the Egyptians and since their continued presence might prove to be a liability rather than an asset from the point of view of possible Russian aggression, we hope they can be removed elsewhere in the area at an early date"¹.

Nevertheless, the Americans stressed that pressure on Britain to evacuate its troops from Egypt, without having an adequate alternative base, would not be in line with American interests².

To review and coordinate their policies in the Middle East and Mediterranean area, official representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States held talks in Washington from 16 October to 7 November 1947. During the course of the conversations, both sides agreed that the security of the Eastern Mediterranean and of the Middle East was vital to the security of the United States and of the United Kingdom. This objective, it was said, could be implemented only if Britain maintained its strong strategic, political and economic position in the region. It was emphasized by both parties, that in order to protect their joint interests in the area, they should respond firmly to any Soviet endeavours to spread or deepen its influence³. On 4 December 1947, Marshall and Bevin held talks in London. The question of the Washington Middle East discussions came up. Both Secretaries confirmed that the American President and the British government had endorsed the

1. Memorandum prepared by the Department of State, entitled, "Specific Current Questions" (Washington, undated), *ibid*, pp. 521-522.
2. *Ibid*. See also footnote no. 3.
3. The American group was headed by R.A. Lovett, Under Secretary of State, and included among others, L.W. Henderson, Director, Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, J.D. Hickerson, Director, Office of European Affairs. The British Group was headed by Lord Inverchapel, the British Ambassador to Washington, and included among others, M.R. Wright, Assistant Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office, London. On the subjects which were under discussions, see, FRUS 1947, Vol. V, pp.563-626. Public Record Office, CAB134/500, M.E.(0)(47) 4th Meeting. F0371/68041.

principal recommendations put forward by respective participants in the conversations. They also agreed that the Soviet Union should be informed that the Middle East was an area vital to British and American interests, but without revealing the substance of their discussions¹.

We do not know whether the Soviet Union was informed of the Anglo-American dialogue or not. However, by the end of 1947, the Soviet press started to attack the activity of the Western powers. It was claimed by the Soviets that Britain and the United States had been working on a plan to form "a Near Eastern bloc". Of all the Middle Eastern countries, most attention was given to Turkey. Turkey's foreign policy, it said, was dictated by its "Foreign Masters". Turkey had made active efforts to persuade the Arab states to form an Eastern bloc with the participation of Iran and Greece².

Considerable efforts to protect British interests in Egypt and to persuade the Egyptian government of the necessity to reach an acceptable solution for the extended conflict, were made by the British government throughout 1948. The fears of Soviet penetration into Egypt and the Middle East continued to engage the shapers and makers of Middle Eastern policy in Britain and the U.S. Britain was willing not to be physically present in this area but asked for certain promises of re-entry in an emergency and the acceptance of its supervision and advice concerning the maintenance of military facilities³.

1. Top secret letter No. 6, from P.J. Dixon (the private secretary of Bevin) to Secretary of State, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, M. Wright, 4 December, 1947, F0371/68041, AN/45/45G. FRUS 1947, pp. 624-626.
2. "Turkish Warmongers and the Formation of a Near Eastern Bloc", 10 November 1947, Radio Moscow in Persian, SWB, USSR, pp. 16-17. "U.S. Domination in Turkey", 11 November 1947, Radio Moscow in Turkish, SWB, *ibid*, p. 17. B. Krymskii, "Komu nuzhen 'Blizhnevostochnyii Blok'", Pravda(Moscow), 19 July 1948.
3. See letter from Alexander, Ministry of Defence to Bevin, 14

The Egyptian position as outlined by Nuqrāshī Pasha, the Prime Minister, rejected the British proposals of linking together the question of evacuation and measures required for the defence of Egypt. Nuqrāshī called for unconditional withdrawal which was the universal wish and desire of the Egyptian people. To allay Western powers' fears of communist infiltration in Egypt, Nuqrāshī said that the policy of the Egyptian government and the sentiments of the people were anti-communist. "The government and the people knew which side they must choose and had made their choice. They knew they must see to their defence in conjunction with of the western democracies, and they would do so". He also said that the anti-communist campaign would reach its climax when British troops withdrew from Egypt. Nuqrāshī stressed that British troops remaining in Egypt was used as an argument by communists in order to attract public opinion and to weaken position of the government. Favourable conditions for the spread of communism and communist influence could thus be created, said Nuqrāshī¹. Nuqrāshī Pasha kept to this position until his assassination at the end of 1948, even when pressed by King Faruq to take a moderate approach in the Anglo-Egyptian dispute. The king instructed Nuqrāshī to accept the principles of siding with the West in case of need and to seek agreement on the requirements of defence on a technical basis at a technical level. Nuqrāshī's position was that he would not agree to any conversations except

January 1948, F0371/69173, J735/G; "Chiefs of Staff Committee-Egypt Military Requirements", 20 November 1947, *ibid*, C.O.S.(47) 238(0).

1. Telegram 242A from Campbell, Cairo, 20 February 1948, *ibid*, J1263. Another pro-western statement was given by Khashaba Pasha the Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs on 25 February 1948, during his conversation with Campbell; see, Telegram 34 from Campbell, Cairo, 28 February 1948, F0371/69193, J1465.

after the evacuation¹.

Increasing attention was paid by the Soviet press to Anglo-American activity in the Middle East during 1948. It claimed that an Eastern Military bloc to include Turkey, Greece and the Arab countries, was being planned under Anglo-American sponsorship. Both powers aimed to conclude a new treaty with Egypt and to form a strong bridgehead in Egypt for attack on the U.S.S.R. The Soviet press attacked Arab and Egyptian ruling circles. It accused them of supporting actively the endeavours of western powers for deepening their political and economic penetration. The statements by Egyptian statesmen that Egypt's interests lay with the western powers arose from the fact that they occupied important posts in various trading companies which were British. King Faruq, said Tass, had expressed a desire that the Anglo-Egyptian defence measures should be converted into "a collective instrument comprising all members of the Arab League"².

A series of steps taken by the Soviet Union in the Middle East by the beginning of 1949, were considered by the western powers as Soviet endeavours to further its political interests in the area. These steps led to increasing fears of Soviet offensive intentions in the area.

According to reliable information given in March 1949, the Polish Minister in Cairo received a top secret telegram from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw warning him, and asking him

1. See record of conversation between King Faruq and Campbell, in Telegram 1484 from Campbell, Cairo, 28 October 1948, FO371/69194, J7002. Telegram 1485, *ibid*, 29 October 1948, *ibid*, J7008. Telegram 1571, *ibid*, 15 November 1948, FO371/69195, J7320/G.
2. M. Melekhov, "Arabskaia Liga i nezavisimost Arabskikh stran", Pravda(Moscow), 24 March 1948. S. Topolev, "American Monopolies in Egypt", New Times, 7 July 1948. "Egypt as a bridgehead for attack on the U.S.S.R.", Radio Moscow In Arabic, 21 December 1948, SWB, USSR, p.22. "The Anglo-Egyptian Negotiations", Tass in Russian, 15 December 1948, *ibid*, pp. 15-16. Radio Moscow in Arabic, 12 November 1948, *ibid*, p. 27.

to warn his staff, to be prepared for any emergency. It was said that recent shifts in the Soviet political high command should be regarded as signifying an increase and not a lessening of tension in the world¹.

At the same time, considerable efforts were made by the U.S.S.R. and East European countries to establish civil aviation connections with Egypt. British and American policy makers concluded that such attempts, made by the Soviet Government in various strategic areas in the world, were intended to extend Soviet influence²:

"The two Governments have been keeping close watch on attempts by the the Soviet Government to extend their influence by the establishment or expansion in certain areas of the world of semi-government Soviet agencies which, under the cover of official or commercial functions, carry on subversive propaganda and espionage. The establishment of Soviet or Soviet controlled services to these areas, apart from being in itself a means for the exertion of this influence, renders the working of such agencies more effective by providing rapid and easy communication between them and the Soviet Union. One of the areas to which particular attention has been paid in this respect was the Middle East".

Soviet efforts were not met with success. The Egyptian Government was not prepared to grant the requested rights³.

The Anglo-American understanding on key issues encouraged Britain to consolidate a framework of cooperation in Middle Eastern affairs to include the U.S.A. and France. Thereafter, attempts were made by Britain in 1949-1950, to crystallize a coordinated policy with these powers⁴.

1. Top Secret letter No. 134/6/49 from British Embassy, Cairo, 14 March 1949, Public Record Office, FO141/1345. A C.I.A. report considered that since the North Atlantic Pact (signed in April 1949) was the most definitive effort the U.S. had made to counter Soviet policy, "a strong Soviet-Communist reaction is already under way". See C.I.A., "Review of the World Situation", 16 March 1949, President's Secretary's Files, File Subject: N.S.C Meeting No. 3-49, box 205, Truman Library.
2. F.O. secret memorandum No. 25(W7748/189/G) to Campbell, Cairo, 10 January 1949, Public Record Office, FO141/1358, 290/1/49G.
3. Minute by Mayall, F.O., 1 February 1949, ibid, W290/1/49G.
4. See FO371/75051 and FO371/81914. See also summary of

Officially, the Americans decided not to participate in the Anglo-Egyptian defence talks. They feared that participation in technical talks with Egypt might implicitly constitute a commitment to Egyptian defence. To quote George McGhee, the Assistant Secretary of State: "We wanted the British to hang on in the Middle East as long as possible. We did not want to have to replace them"¹. However, the American and British Governments agreed on key issues concerning the defence of Egypt. Both powers expressed their shared concern over the expansionist policy of the Soviet Union. They therefore decided to approach King Faruq and to emphasize that the defence of Egypt was a matter of concern to all because the Suez canal and Delta areas would be key objectives for Soviet aggression:²

"the Russian aggressive attitude and potential danger has compelled HMG to take stock of the general defence position and to consider certain preparations to meet Russian aggression...HMG and USG have been keeping in close touch on defence questions..."

Two different and contradictory views existed among the Egyptian leadership regarding this subject. On the one hand, King Faruq claimed that a war with the U.S.S.R. was a real possibility. Furthermore, he was convinced that the U.S.S.R. would not only attack Europe but that it would also attack the Middle East with Egypt as the main target. Egypt must therefore prepare in order to

discussion between M. Wright of the British F.O. and G. McGhee of the American Dept. of State, 19 December 1949, Records of the Policy Planing Staff 1947-1953, box 30, National Archives, Washington D.C.

1. George McGhee, Envoy to the Middle World: Adventures in Diplomacy (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 53.
2. See top secret letter 312/CCL from British Defence Coordination Committee for Chiefs of Staff to Ministry of Defence, 7 March 1949, F0141/1365, W/352/30/49G. Top Secret letter 3126 from F.O. to British Embassy, Washington, 18 March 1949, F0371/73555, J2061/1199/16G. Top Secret report entitled "Appreciation of the Middle East Strategical Situation", prepared by Lieut-Colonel H.B. Calvert, 11 November 1949, F0371/73563, J8337/11922/16G.

play its role in general Middle East defence¹. On the other hand, Ibrāhīm ‘Abd al-Hādi Pasha, the Prime Minister, held the same view as his predecessor, Nuqrāshī Pasha. He claimed that the danger of communism was less in the Middle East than in other parts of Europe and Asia². The former Prime Minister, Ismā‘īl Ṣidqī, attacked the idea of a collective security pact. He declared that, "the conclusion of such a pact would be more dangerous to Egypt than Russia's discovery of the atom bomb"³.

The question of what should be the attitude of Egypt in a future worldwide conflict had engaged many Egyptian politicians. A significant number believed that Egypt should take a neutral position. For instance, Taha Ḥusain Bey, the noted Wafdist author, spoke strongly in favour of Egyptian neutrality in case of war. He stressed that despite the fact that neutrality would be difficult and very expensive, It would pave Egypt's way to independence. Muḥammad Khaṭṭāb Bey, former Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies, advised Egypt to adopt an attitude of neutrality and stated his belief that world war was inevitable. Fuṣād Sirāj al-Dīn Pasha, the Secretary General of the Wafd Party, said that Egypt should adopt the attitude which best suited its national interests. Lutfī al-Sayyid Pasha, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, assumed that war was impossible. He saw no reason to consider Egypt's possible attitude in case of war.

1. Telegram No. 139 from British Embassy, Cairo, undated, F0141/1365, 500/40/49G. Dispatch No. 138, *ibid*, 7 March 1949, 352/29/49G. Top secret letter from Douglas, the American Ambassador in the U.K., 22 March 1949, in: FRUS 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 199-202. Later on, during a conversation between Faruq and Caffery, the American Ambassador, the king express the same apprehension; see dispatch (no number) from American Embassy, Cairo, 28 October 1949, RG 59, 883.001 Farouk/10-2849.
2. Dispatch 169 from American Embassy, Cairo, 21 February 1949, RG 59, 883.002/2-2149.
3. Dispatch (no number) from American Embassy, Cairo, 26 October 1949, RG 59, 890B.00/10-2649.

A pro-western approach was reflected in the words of Mahmud Hasan Pasha, the former Egyptian Ambassador to the U.S. He stated that in the event of war he expected Egypt to take the side of the Western bloc because it could not cooperate with communism. The same line was taken by Fikri 'Abāza Bey, the president of the Egyptian Press Syndicate. He considered that Egypt would align itself with Britain in the event of war because Britain was the closest state to Egypt and would defend Egypt against communism¹.

1. On the debate see dispatch 411 from American Embassy, Cairo, 23 April 1949, RG 59, 883.00/4-2349. See also dispatch 263, *ibid*, 17 March 1949, RG 59, 861.20283/3-1749.

B. Continuity and Change in Soviet-Egyptian Relations after
the Palestine War.

Whether fears of Soviet penetration and the spread of Communism were based on solid grounds or not, Soviet-Egyptian relations remained officially correct. Nevertheless, Egyptian leaders showed no inclination to tolerate any extension of Soviet influence. The vigorous measures taken against communism and the tremendous endeavour to contain its spread, created a tension in the relations between the two countries. Moreover, the Egyptian alignment with the Western powers indicated fear and distrust of the Soviet Union and a basic attitude of unfriendliness towards it. In addition, by the end of 1948, the U.S.S.R. had violated the terms of a cotton-wheat barter agreement signed in March 1948, by selling on the world market the Egyptian cotton it received at a price with which even Egypt could not compete¹.

Soviet policy towards Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict since the establishment of Israel had been bitterly and indignantly received by the Egyptian and the Arab States. This policy found its expression in consistent support given to Israel at the U.N. by the Soviet bloc. In addition to this, the Soviets made possible the emigration of many Jews from Eastern European countries to Israel. According to Něcas, the Consul General of Czechoslovakia to Jerusalem, the U.S.S.R.'s relations with Arab countries remained unchanged because it was impossible to do any real bargaining with them. To quote Něcas, "the Arabs are primitive and think themselves clever; on the one hand, they are threatening the West to join the East, on the other hand, they are bargaining all

1. C.I.A. report entitled "Arab States", 27 September 1949, President's Secretary's Files, File Subject: Central Intelligence Reports SR-13, box 260. See also Policy Statement on Egypt prepared by the Dept. of State, 5 May 1949, in FRUS 1949, Vol. VI, pp. 214-215. On the barter agreement, see, pp. 138-142.

the time with the West and trying to squeeze various concessions out of the British and the Americans. The British have lost very much of their elan but have carefully avoided admitting it or aiding the U.S.A. in Arab countries". Nečas appreciated that it was nonsense that the U.S.S.R. should be seriously thinking of Arabs as allies. He attacked the Arab leaders by saying that, "there are as yet no Arabs (leaders) who have the right to speak for their people and the feelings of the governing classes are well known to the U.S.S.R." Nečas concluded that the Soviet Union did not look upon the Arabs as a nation, or even a group of nations. "The Arab countries are a kind of hereditary estate, in which landlords do what they like"¹.

The Soviet leadership was interested that the Arab-Israeli conflict should not be resolved. It believed that the existence of Israel could serve as a firm barrier which would impede the process of crystallization and integration of the area politically, economically, socially and military under Western control. Soviet activity in the Middle East intended to slow down the efforts of Western powers to found and reinforce Middle East defence organization under their domination. At that stage, the interests of the U.S.S.R. were to preserve the competition between the U.S. and Britain. The U.S.S.R. acted to sharpen the existing conflicts between the Arab countries and between the national and religious minorities living in various Arab countries and their rulers. It also encouraged the awakening of class fermentation².

1. See Record of conversation between Nečas, the Consul General of Czechoslovakia in Jerusalem and Mukhin from the Soviet Legation in Tel-Aviv, on the policies of Israel and the Arab States, 11 July 1949, I.S.A., FM2457/14. The content of the conversation was given to the Israeli Foreign Ministry by Nečas.
2. Report on "The World Politics and Israel" by A. Levavi, 6 June 1949, I.S.A., FM2514/15. See also C.I.A. review of the world

By its continuous and consistent support of Israel, the U.S.S.R. restricted the possibilities of increasing its influence and the prospects that communist propaganda would be successful in the Arab world. These possibilities and prospects which were objectively restricted, had been clearly known to Soviet policy makers. For instance, with reference to the information that the U.S.S.R. decided to reject giving a loan to Israel, Vyshinskii, the Soviet delegate to the U.N., said: "I can say that nothing would prevent us from giving the loan in spite of some foreign pressures...Arab and non-Arab"¹. However, during 1949, there were several indications showing that the Soviet Union was not willing to neglect its interests in the Arab world in favour of Israel²:

a. The insistence that the U.N. partition resolution of 29 November 1947, should be implemented, that is, the establishment of Arab state beside Israel. Israel was accused of inclining to and supporting the U.S. in the international arena. Israel's position at the U.N. had been shown by voting in favour of the Western powers. According to the Soviets, Israel's policy could no longer be considered as neutral.

b. The anti-Zionist line taken by Soviet broadcasts in Arabic.

situation, 21 December 1949, P & O 350.05(21 Dec. 49), National Archives, Washington D.C. Top Secret report entitled "Appreciation of the Middle East Strategical Situation", by Lieut-Colonel H.B. Calvert from the War Office, FO371/73563, J8337/11922/16G. Secret memorandum M.E.(O) (49) 14 on "Economic and Social Development in the Middle East", by Cabinet Middle East Committee, 10 May 1949, CAB134/501.

1. See, "Vyshinskii Comments on U.S.S.R. Loan to Israel", 26 October 1949, I.S.A., FM2457/14. See also a report on recent developments in relations between Egypt and Czechoslovakia, by P. Dixon, the British Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, in letter No. 257/1/49, 4 March 1949, FO371/73487, J2135/10312/16.
2. Letter from Gidon Refael, Israel delegate to the U.N., about his conversation with Matrapkin, Soviet delegate to the U.N., 13 December 1949, I.S.A. FM2513/14. See also, Kh. Grigor'ian, "Anglo-amerikanskoe sopernchestvo na Blizhnem Vostoke", Krasnyi Flot (Moscow), 16 July 1949.

c. Soviet propaganda concentrated in highlighting the differences between the interests of the Arab masses and the policy of the Arab rulers whom they considered to be manipulated by the Western powers.

Throughout 1949, the Soviet policy of promoting instability and insecurity in the Middle East was extended. The Soviet Union rejected the possibility of lifting the arms embargo which was imposed by the U.N. Security Council. It benefited from the existing state of tension in the Middle East by indirectly supplying arms to both sides. Since the beginning of 1949, there had been many reports of Czech arms going via Poland to the Eastern Mediterranean. According to a senior official in the Egyptian government, the U.S.S.R was pressing offers of tanks, guns, ammunition and agricultural implements on the Egyptian government. On 5 July, the Israeli Minister to Czechoslovakia told his British counterpart that he knew for certain that the Egyptian government was making considerable purchases of arms mostly small arms and automatic weapons in Czechoslovakia for export to Egypt. E.A. Chapman-Andrews of the British Embassy in Egypt, confirmed that according to the Joint Intelligence Board's quarterly report on the arms trade for the period mid-January to mid-April 1949, arms to the value of a few thousand dollars, originating in Czechoslovakia had been delivered to Egypt¹.

Through the press and radio, the Soviet Union continued,

1. On the Soviet position concerning the arms embargo, see minute by Beith, F.O., 7 July 1949, FO371/75104, E8780/1192/65. On the supply of Czech arms to Egypt see, Telegram No. 278 from P. Dixon, British Embassy, Prague, 12 May 1950, FO371/81958, E1192/84; Letter from H. Gresswell, Ministry of Defence, to F.O. and War Office, 23 March 1949, FO371/73549, J3020/1194/16; On the conversation between the Israeli Minister and P. Dixon, the British Ambassador to Prague, see, Telegram No. 148 from Dixon, 8 July 1949, FO371/73561, J5640/11919/16; Telegram No. 461 from Chapman-Andrews, Alexandria, 31 August 1949, *ibid*, J7094/11919/16.

throughout 1949 to attack consistently the Western powers' defence plans in the Middle East and the Arab leaders attitude towards these plans. Britain was accused of putting pressure on Egypt for a new alliance based on the 1936 treaty¹. The army paper, Krasnaia Zvezda noted that in Egypt and Iraq the national liberation movement was growing and the people were more and more insistent in their demand for the expulsion of foreign troops and the liquidation of unequal treaties and agreements. The British colonizers, it said, were particularly interested in strengthening their position in the Middle East by suppressing the progressive forces in the Arab countries². The workers of the Arab countries, stressed Krasnaia Zvezda, remembered the U.N. speeches by representatives of the Soviet Union in defence of Egyptian demands for the immediate evacuation of British troops from their lands. As a result of the Soviet position, popular demonstrations of gratitude to the Soviet Government took place in Cairo³.

Much attention was given by the Soviet press to the Anglo-American contradictions in Middle Eastern affairs. It was emphasized that both powers aimed to achieve a maximum political

1. See Radio Moscow in Arabic, 18 February 1949, SWB, USSR, p.38. See also, ibid, 15 May 1949, Part IV-Egypt. In an article entitled "Map of the World", Egypt was placed in the category of nations described by Lenin as "formally politically independent, but in actual fact caught in the snares of financial and political dependence". This situation had been made possible, it said, as a result of the British enforcement of the 1936 treaty on Egypt. See, Kinov, "The Map of the World", ibid, 30 November 1949, SWB, USSR, pp. 29-30. See also, Radio Moscow in Arabic, 22 July 1949, ibid, pp. 28-29.
2. "Angliiskie Voiiska v Akabe", Krasnaia Zvezda (Moscow), 27 March 1949.
3. G. Osipov, "Shpiony daiut interv'iu" Krasnaia Zvezda (Moscow), 17 July 1949. See also, Radio Moscow in Arabic, SWB, USSR, 3 May 1949. Trud blamed the Americans for the suppression of liberation movements and the enslavement of the Mediterranean countries and "their enticement into anti-Soviet adventures for the benefit of Wall Street. See, F. Zviagin, "Sredizemnomorskii Pact- Orudie Amerikanskikh imperialistov", Trud (Moscow), 16 February 1949.

and economic domination. The Middle East, it said, became a place of pilgrimage for many prominent politicians from Britain and U.S.A. The British government had been searching for a way to strengthen its position in this strategically important area, and to create some defensive barriers against the actions of American competitors. But despite of the increasing rivalry between them, said Literaturnaia Gazeta the British and the Americans "are developing the idea of uniting the countries of the Near and Middle East into a military union"¹.

1. G. Osipov, "Zagovor podzhigatelei voiiny na Blizhnem Vostoke", Literaturnaia Gazeta (Moscow), No. 57, 16 July 1949. "Anglo-amerikanskie intrigi na Blizhnem Vostoke", Krasnaia Zvezda (Moscow), 25 June 1949. Kh. Grigor'ian, "Anglo-amerikanskoe soperncestvo na Blizhnem Vostoke", Krasnyi Flot (Moscow), 16 July 1949.

a. First Soviet-Egyptian Commercial Agreements 1948-1949

Prior to the Second World War, trade between the Soviet Union and Egypt had been practically at a standstill because for many years there had been no commercial agreements between the two countries. Under the Egyptian Law No.2 of 14 February 1930, the goods from communist countries were liable upon importation to a 100% surtax. Moreover, the Egyptian governments at that time, discouraged trade with the U.S.S.R. fearing communist infiltration¹. Soon after the end of the Second World War Egypt became interested in developing commercial relations with the Soviet bloc purely for the economic benefits.

In July 1945, the Egyptian press reported the Ministry of Finance's announcement, that Egypt could import from the U.S.S.R. on a Sterling payment basis. However, the practical application was uncertain pending clarification of what items the Soviets could furnish and how shipments were to be made². This announcement marked the beginning of a long but successful negotiation which was concluded on 3 March 1948, with an agreement to barter. The agreement was signed in Cairo, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Egyptian signatory was Ahmad Muhammad

1. See dispatch 73 from Stevenson, Cairo, 14 March 1952, FO371/96925, JE1052/183G. The purpose of the economic chapters in this research is mainly to focus on trade relations between the two countries. It also examines the implications of these relations on the total balance of foreign trade of Egypt. Yet, the economic history of Egypt is a subject of a separate research, and it is not to be reviewed in this study. See for instance comprehensive accounts on this subject in, Charles Issawi, Egypt at Mid-Century, an Economic Survey (London: Oxford University Press, 1954). *Ibid*, Egypt in Revolution, an Economic Analysis (London: Oxford University Press, 1963). For general accounts on the economic history of the Middle East see, *ibid*, An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1982). Elie Kedourie (ed.), The Middle Eastern Economy (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1977)
2. This information was confirmed by the Egyptian Import Permit Department and by the British Embassy in Cairo. See telegram 1440 and airgram A-386 from the American Legation, Cairo, 19 July 1945, RG 59, 661.8331/7-1945.

Khashaba, Foreign Minister, and the Soviet signatory was M. Men'shikov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Commerce. According to this agreement, Egypt would supply the Soviet Union with 38,000 metric tons of cotton¹ from stocks owned by the Egyptian government, in exchange for 235,000 metric tons of grain composed of 216,000 metric tons of wheat and 19,000 metric tons of maize. The goods from both parties were to be delivered to the port of Alexandria in instalments, to be made, within a maximum period of four months, from the date of the signing of the agreement. The values were to be calculated in Egyptian pounds. An account in this currency was to be opened at the National Bank of Egypt, in the name of the Bank of the U.S.S.R. All amounts paid to the U.S.S.R. for the grains imported into Egypt, were to be deposited in that account, while the value of the cotton, exported by Egypt, was to be deducted from that account. A protocol signed simultaneously with the barter agreement provided that the contracting parties, grant each other "most favoured nation" status in their trade in agricultural and industrial products. Soviet and Egyptian trade relations with adjacent countries were not affected. The protocol also provided for continued negotiations with the purpose of concluding another barter agreement for the exchange of 12,000 metric tons of cotton, from Egyptian government stocks, in exchange for ammonium, sulphate, tobacco and especially wood².

1. Cotton crop was Egypt's main product to be exported, and constituted more than 80% by value of all Egyptian exports. On cotton and Foreign trade see, Issawi, Egypt in Revolution, pp. 221-222.
2. During 1946 and 1947 Egypt did not export to the U.S.S.R. at all though it imported from the U.S.S.R. to the value of £E.1,620,000. See figures and details in dispatch 73, *ibid*. On the negotiation see, telegrams 83 and 98 from the American Embassy, Cairo, 27 and 31 January 1948, RG 59, 661.8331/1-2748 and 661.83331/1-3148. Radio Cairo, 10 February 1948, SWB, Middle East, Egypt, p. 62. On the agreement see, F0371/69249, J1542/1246/16, J1953/1246/16, J1795/1246/16, J2089/1246/16, J2442/1246/16. Telegram 228, dispatches 187 and 313 from

This was the first such agreement to be signed between the U.S.S.R. and a member of the League of Arab States.

A few weeks after the signing, Khashaba, the Foreign Minister, outlined the motives behind his government decision to conclude such an agreement with the Soviets. In a conversation with the Greek Ambassador to Cairo, Khashaba accused the U.S.A. and Britain of conducting an anti-Arab policy. He stressed that these two powers made many mistakes, and continuously alienated the Arabs, mainly, by the American attitude to the Palestine question and the British policy regarding Egypt and Iraq. Egypt, said Khashaba, had asked the Anglo-Americans to relieve a local wheat shortage, by exchanging rice for wheat, but this had been refused because of the desire of both these powers to replace the then Egyptian government, with one, which would sign a favourable treaty with the U.K. Under these circumstances, he emphasized, Egypt had been obliged to ask the Soviet Union for wheat "in order to avoid a Communist revolution". However, the Minister stressed that, the talks with the Soviet Commercial Commission in Cairo, had dealt exclusively with the barter of cotton and wheat and were without political content¹.

The Egyptians first experience of barter with the Soviets

American Embassy, Cairo, 4 and 6 March and 17 April 1948, RG 59, 661.8331/3-448, 661.8331/3-648 and 661.8331/4-1748. See full text of the agreement as published by the Soviet Foreign Ministry, in: *Ministerstvo Inostrannykh del SSSR, SSSR i Strany Afriki 1946-1962, Dokumenty i Materialy*, Tom I (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1963), pp. 94-96.

1. On the conversation (the date is not given) see, Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation between Paul Economou-Gouras, Counselor, Greek Embassy, Washington, and Leonard J. Cromie, the Branch of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs of the Department of State, 23 March 1948, RG 59, 783.00/3-2348. It is noteworthy that King Faruq was not happy that negotiations between Egypt and the Soviet Union were taking place. During the talks, he became worried by the presence of the Soviet delegation and suggested the Egyptian government that the negotiations be ended quickly. See, airgram A-878 from American Embassy, London, 14 April 1948, RG 59, 661.8331/4-1448.

was not quite satisfactory. Several months later, Egyptian officials were informed, that some of the cotton delivered to the Soviets, had been offered for resale to various other countries at prices below that of the Egyptian market, and in direct competition with Egyptian sales. According to Egyptian officials, the agreement had prohibited resale¹. They expressed their dissatisfaction telling the Soviets furthermore, that the quality of the goods received from the U.S.S.R. and the values agreed especially relative to the U.S. dollar would make the Egyptian government extremely reluctant to agree to further commerce with the Soviet Union². Reacting to this development, Nuqrāshī explained the advantages of dealing with the Soviets. He stressed that, "it was the Soviets who had really helped Egypt at a critical time by practically preventing starvation through the supply of wheat and maize to Egypt in return for Egyptian cotton. The action of the Soviet Union...had been in marked contrast to the negative attitude of the International Emergency Food Council ... (Which) had been unhelpful to Egypt". Then he criticised the Soviets for breaching the agreement. He said that the Soviet move had persuaded him against any similar dealings³. On 10 September 1948, it was reported in La Bourse Egyptienne that the Egyptian government was preparing a note of protest, for delivery to the Soviet Minister in Cairo. The note said, that the U.S.S.R. had seriously breached the March agreement, which had stipulated that

1. See airgram A-392 from American Embassy, Cairo, 10 June 1948, RG 59, 661.8331/6-1048.
2. See airgram A-625 from American Embassy, Cairo, 11 September 1948, RG 59, 661.8331/9-1148.
3. Nuqrashi said the above mentioned on 3 July 1948, during a conversation with Patterson, the American Ambassador. See telegram 913 from Patterson, Cairo, 6 July 1948, RG 59, 611.8331/7-648..

the Egyptian cotton would be consumed within the U.S.S.R.¹.

The Soviet breaching of the March 1948 agreement had negative implications for the political and economic relations between the two countries. Soviet efforts throughout 1949 to persuade the Egyptian government to further exchanges under the agreement failed. The Soviet offers included, 100,000 tons of wheat, large quantities of agricultural machinery, and Arabic keyboard typewriters, in exchange for Egyptian cotton². In July and August 1949, Egyptian officials from the Ministry of Supply stated that discussions between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. on the exchange of cotton for Soviet wheat were to be indefinitely postponed. They explained that Egypt had already imported large quantities of wheat from Yugoslavia and Syria³. During 1949, however, the Soviets did buy considerable quantities of Egyptian cotton on the open market⁴.

The following tables⁵ show in figures the sharp drop in trading between Egypt and the Soviet bloc during 1948-1949. The rate of exchange was one Egyptian pound (L.E.) to \$4.15 U.S.

1. See airgram A-625, *ibid*. In reaction to the anti-Soviet campaign conducted by Egyptian press, the Soviet press argued that this was "a move by British and Egyptian businessmen" against the U.S.S.R.-Egyptian trade agreement of March 1948. See for instance, Radio Moscow in Arabic, 7 October 1949, SWB, USSR, p.38.
2. On the Soviet offers and the conversations between the two countries throughout 1949, see, airgram A-196 from Patterson, Cairo, 15 February 1949, RG 59, 661.8331/2-1549. Airgram A-618, *ibid*, 27 May 1949, 661.8331/5-2749. A minute by A.N. Cumberbatch from the Commercial Secretariat of the British Embassy in Cairo, 23 February 1949, FO141/1373, 624/1/49G. Letter 624/2/49 from Cumberbatch to the Ministry of Food, 10 June 1949, *ibid*.
3. See airgram A-797 from Patterson, Cairo, 22 July 1949, RG 59, 661.8331/7-2249. Arab News Agency, 3 August 1949, SWB, Arab World, p. 53.
4. See dispatch 73, FO371/96925, *ibid*.
5. The figures were taken from the following sources: Report No. 164, prepared by H.G. Minnigerode, Second Secretary at the American Embassy, Cairo, 23 August 1949, RG 59, 661.8331/8-2349. Enclosure 1 to dispatch 930 from Hazel T. Ellis, Commercial Attaché, American Embassy, Cairo, 18 October 1950, RG 59, 461.74/10-1850.

Imports to Egypt

	<u>January-June 1948</u>	<u>January-June 1949</u>
U.S.S.R.	581,918	314,269
Bulgaria	200,074	154,682
Czechoslovakia	1,010,202	808,064
Hungary	169,221	329,040
Poland	117,210	189,268
Rumania	139,986	310,921
L.E.	<u>2,218,611</u>	<u>2,106,244</u>

Export from Egypt

	<u>January-June 1948</u>	<u>January-June 1949</u>
U.S.S.R.	6,409,764	252,027
Bulgaria	169,630	68
Czechoslovakia	2,339,636	3,342,172
Hungary	382,987	498,861
Poland	302,585	1,416,183
Rumania	69	33
L.E.	<u>9,604,671</u>	<u>5,509,344</u>

The tables show that the volume of Egyptian exports to the Soviet Union fall to a value of only L.E. 252,027 for the first half of 1949 compared with the total of L.E. 6,409,764 for the same period of 1948. The extent of imports from the U.S.S.R. also indicate of a slight fall.

From the tables we can see that Egypt exported much more, to the Soviet bloc than it imported, and also that Egypt had a favourable balance of trade with the Soviet bloc in the first half of 1948 and of 1949. We can also note that during the first half of 1949, there was a significant increase of exports to Poland and Czechoslovakia. However, the total exports to all Soviet bloc countries dropped in 1949 to L.E. 4,095,327 while imports remained stable.

1. The figures were taken from enclosure 1 to dispatch 2042 from American Embassy, Cairo, 26 February 1954, RG 59, 874.00TA/2-2654. By this time imports represented a fifth to a quarter of Egypt's national income while exports were somewhat lower. See, Issawi, Egypt in Revolution, pp. 222-224.

From the following table¹ we learn how very much less business took place between Egypt and the Soviet bloc, than with the Western powers in 1949. The table shows Egypt's trade with foreign countries (in Millions of L.E.), excluding gold or re-exports.

	<u>Imports</u>		<u>Exports</u>		<u>L.E. Balance</u>
	<u>L.E.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>L.E.</u>	<u>%</u>	
United Kingdom	38.0	22.8	23.6	17.4	-14.4
France	10.0	6.0	10.1	7.4	+ 0.1
Italy	14.9	8.9	10.4	7.7	- 4.5
United States	14.2	8.5	3.7	2.7	-10.5
<u>Soviet Bloc</u>					
Bulgaria	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	- 0.2
Czechoslovakia	1.6	1.0	5.8	4.3	+ 4.2
Hungary	0.7	0.4	1.2	0.9	+ 0.5
Poland	0.3	0.2	3.4	2.5	+ 3.1
Rumania	1.0	0.6	1.3	1.0	+ 0.3
Soviet Union ¹	0.7	0.4	3.7	2.7	+ 3.0
<u>Arab League</u>	3.5	2.1	3.3	2.4	- 0.2
<u>Others</u>	81.3	48.9	69.1	50.9	-12.4
<u>Total for</u> <u>All Countries</u>	166.5	100.0	135.7	100.0	-30.8

From these figures we see that 37.3% of Egypt's imports came from the Western powers (Britain, U.S.A. and France) and 27.5% of the exports went to these countries. Only 2.8% of the imports came from the Soviet bloc whilst only 11.5% was exported to them. Nevertheless, from the Egyptian point of view, its trade with the U.S.S.R. proved to be profitable, and 1949 ended with a trade balance in favour of Egypt of L.E. 10,900,000. The balance with

1. The reasons for the differences between the figures given in this table to the ones given in the previous table are twofold. First, the previous one covered only the period between January to June 1949. Second, despite the fact that, no important barter agreement between the Soviet and the Egyptian governments were reported, it was known that the Soviets bought considerable quantities of Egyptian cotton on the open market. See for instance dispatch 73, FO371/96925, ibid. Letter 112.17/1/50 from British Embassy, Moscow, 10 February 1950, FO371/80429, JE11338/1.

the Western powers was unfavourable to the extent of L.E.24,800,000.

From the above we can clearly see, that, trade with the Soviet bloc improved Egypt's overall adverse balance of trade position, ending 1949 with a deficit of L.E.30,800,000. Thus, it becomes clear, why despite Egypt's political reservations, Egypt endeavoured to promote trade with the Soviet bloc¹.

1. On the barter agreements between Egypt and Eastern European countries during 1949, see, report No. 164 from Minnigerode, *ibid.* FO371/73537.

C. The Policy of the Wafd Government towards the East-West Conflict 1950-1952

a. The Formation of the Policy of Neutralism.

The elections which were held on 3 January 1950, returned a Wafdist majority to the Egyptian Parliament. Nahhas Pasha formed a new government which continued up to 27 January 1952¹. The government's foreign policy led to a turning point in Egyptian relations with the Western and the Eastern blocs. For the first time, senior Egyptian ministers declared a neutral policy of non-alignment. This new policy found its expression in Egypt's abstention on the Security Council Resolution of June 27 1950, on the Korean war.

The primary aim of the Soviet government in the Arab world was to eliminate Western influence and to undermine the strategic position of the Western powers in the Middle East. The principle of the definite rejection of any Western presence in Arab lands which, both the Soviet and the Wafd Governments stood for, created a basis for future understanding and cooperation in the international arena. The Wafd victory received little prominence in the Soviet press. The Wafd was described as a "Bourgeois-Nationalist Party". Izvestija cited the French paper 'L'Humanite' which stated that since the Wafd changed its policy by calling for democracy and independence from Britain, they were correcting their previous mistakes, and had thus won the massive support of the population². As early as 1950, the Wafd party was described by the Soviets as "Bourgeois-Reformist Party". This definition reflected a significant change in the Soviet view of the internal

1. On the elections and the formation of a new government, see, Joel Gordon, "The False Hopes of 1950: The Wafd's Last Hurrah and the Demise of Egypt's Old Order", I. J. M. E. S., 21 (1989), pp. 193-214.
2. Izvestiia (Moscow), 7 January 1950.

political situation in Egypt and its readiness to cooperate with non-communist political parties which were supported by the Egyptian masses¹. The explanation of the Soviet positive attitude towards the Wafd party was given in Bol'shia Sovetskaia entsiklopediia². The Wafd, it said, was the party of the national bourgeoisie. After the Second World War, the Wafd occupied "an objectively progressive position on the question of denouncing the enslaving agreements with Britain and Egypt's refusal to participate in the aggressive measures of the Anglo-American bloc in the Near East"³.

To eliminate the influence of the Western powers in Egypt, the U.S.S.R. was willing to cooperate with every group, even if not communist, which acted against or rejected Western domination. Less criticism was therefore directed against the Wafd government than against previous Egyptian governments. This new Soviet approach was generally aimed at all Arab states, but the Soviets began to manifest a marked activity directed particularly towards Egypt as the leader of the Arab states and which coincided with the rising importance of the Arab-Asian bloc in the United Nations. This Soviet approach was reflected clearly in October 1950, when A. Vyshinskii, the Soviet Foreign Minister and I. Malik, the Soviet delegate to the U.N. held a banquet for their Arab counterparts in the U.N. This was intended to win Arab support against U.S. proposals for an international U.N. armed force and the abolition of the veto. The Soviets warned the Arab representatives that if U.S. proposals were adopted the world would be exposed to great dangers and the Arab countries would find themselves occupied by foreign forces. Both Soviet delegates

1. Trud (Moscow), 10 July, 1949.

2. Bol'shia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia, Vol. 15, (Moscow: 1952), p. 461.

3. Yodfat, Arab Politics in the Soviet Mirror, pp. 32-33.

advised their Arab counterparts to adopt the socialist economic system, which they claimed would create a new world in the Middle East. To win Arab goodwill, Vyshinskii attacked Zionism and expressed support for Arab claims to property lost to Israel¹.

In February 1950, the Egyptian and Soviet governments agreed to accept each other's envoys. M. Simeon Kozyrov became the Soviet Minister to Cairo and Anīs al-Azr the Egyptian Minister to Moscow².

As early as April 1950, for the first time, statements of a neutral policy and a call to improve relations with the Soviet Union, were made by senior officials in the Syrian and Egyptian Governments. On 8 April, Al-Ahrām wrote that Egypt informed Western Powers that it was not prepared to commit itself in support of them in the cold war³. On 9 April, during the Arab League session in Cairo, the Syrian Minister of National Economy, Ma'rif al-Dawālībī, proposed the conclusion of a non-aggression pact with the U.S.S.R. On 12 April, Dawālībī stressed that such a pact would "protect the Arab States in case a third world war will break out". He was opposed to reliance on the policy of the Western Powers⁴. Khālid al-'Azm, the Syrian Prime Minister who was also attending the Arab League session, stressed that he knew

1. See Report No. 5450 by the Office of Intelligence Research of the Dept. of State, entitled: "U.S.S.R. Approaches to Arab States and Israel June 1950- January 1951", 12 February 1951, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Documents, 1950-1952, 320:J-5W, box 219. See also, C.I.A. report NIE-3, entitled, "Soviet Capabilities and Intentions", 15 November 1950, Records of the Policy Planning Staff 1947-1953", box 23, National Archives, Washington D.C. Joint Services Staff College paper entitled, "Basic Factors in Soviet Policy: The Communist State in Theory and Practice", in letter No. JSSC/550 from Colonel A.N. Anderson, Joint Services Staff College, Latimar, 19 January 1950, FO371/86731, NS1023/3. Report on "Soviet Intention" by Joint Intelligence Committee, American Embassy, Moscow, 25 April 1950, Records of the Policy Planning Staff 1947-1953, *ibid*.

2. SWB, Arab World, 8 February 1950, p.49.

3. Al-Ahrām (Cairo), 8 April 1950.

4. Al-Miṣrī (Cairo), 9 April 1950. SWB, Arab World, 12 April 1949, p. 49.

nothing of Dawālībī's move. He claimed that Dawālībī had coordinated his move with Salāh al-Dīn, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, and that the latter had taken part in the formulation of Dawalibi's statement¹. From the Soviet reaction to Dawālībī's statement it was impossible to conclude whether the statement was coordinated with the Soviets or if they were informed of its content. Indeed, before and after Dawālībī made his statement, he had several talks with Daniil Solod, the Soviet Minister to Damascus, on the conclusion of commercial agreements between both countries². In fact, Dawālībī's move was welcomed by the Soviet Union. Daniil Solod, told the Arab News Agency: "Syria has extended her hand to us so we extended to her both our hands"³. In a comment made by New Times on Dawālībī's statement, it said, "the whole Democratic camp has sincere sympathy for the Arab states". The statement showed "on whose side the sympathy of the Arab peoples lies in the struggle between the camp of democracy and the camp of imperialism"⁴.

In connection with Dawālībī's statement, 'Azzām Pasha, the Arab League's Secretary General, said that he believed that many Arabs had had enough of U.S. pro-Jewish policy and had received Al-Dawālībī's remarks with satisfaction⁵.

Towards mid-1950, an overwhelming hostility towards the West was being developed in Egypt. According to Jallād Pasha, a member of Faruq's court, many political circles and the press had inclined strongly in favour of the U.S.S.R. However, he stressed that the responsible elements in the country including the King, were opposed to the Soviets. He expressed his concern to

1. Khālid al-'Azm, Mudhakkirāt Khālid al-'Azm (Beirut: al-Dar al-Mutaharir liinashr, 1973), Vol. I, pp. 234-240.
2. See Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, p. 80, and Soviet Decision Making in Practice, pp. 405, 435.
3. SWB, 22 April 1950, *ibid*.
4. New Times was quoted in New York Times (New York), 25 May 1950.
5. SWB, Arab World, 22 April 1950, p. 57.

Caffery, the American Ambassador in Cairo, that "America should redress the balance now going against the West and towards Russia in the Near East by giving some sign that it was genuinely interested in friendship with Egypt and the Arab world"¹.

During April and May 1950, there were many reports, some considered reliable, indicating Soviet offers of arms to Egypt and Syria. On 27 April, C.I.A. reported to President Truman that according to information given by a senior Syrian official, Syria had signed a secret non-Aggression and Economic agreement with the U.S.S.R. under which Syria was to receive Soviet arms via the port of Latakia².

Reports from Caffery, the American Ambassador to Cairo, spoke of rumors that the Soviet government was prepared to furnish arms to Arab countries by way of new barter agreements³. According to Al-Ahrām, The Soviet Union offered Egypt arms on liberal terms including barter for cotton. It said that the Egyptian government "is not unfavourably disposed to purchasing these necessary defensive weapons" from the Soviet Union. The paper stressed that owing to the American and British refusal to sell arms to Egypt, the Egyptian government would consider positively the Soviet

1. Telegram 828 from Caffery, Cairo, 20 April 1950, RG 59, 611.74/4-2050.
2. Memorandum to the President by R.H. Hillenkoetter, Director of Central Intelligence, 27 April 1950, President's Secretary's Files, File Subject: C.I.A. Memorandums 1950-1952, box 250, Truman Library. Dawālībī confirmed that the U.S.S.R offered arms to Syria and talks about a treaty of friendship and commerce had been going on between Farīd Zain al-Dīn, the Syrian Minister to Moscow and Vyshinskyii, the Soviet Foreign Minister. Dawālībī was reported as saying that the Syrian Government had not made any decision about Soviet proposals to supply all Syria's requirements from arms manufactured in the Soviet Union or Czechoslovakia; see telegram 206 from F.O. to Damascus, 13 May 1950, FO371/82794, EY10338/2. Khālid al-‘Azm, the Syrian Prime Minister, said that Syria would obtain its arms from any available sources; see telegram 128 from Damascus, 17 May 1950, FO371/82814, EY11338/2.
3. See Telegram 821 from American Embassy, Cairo, 20 April 1950, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Documents, 1950-1952: 320, box 219.

offer. Al-Ahrām said that the arms were necessary to help Egypt to realize its national aspirations¹. Later, on 22 May, this information was confirmed by the Department of State who informed president Truman that the Egyptian Government "have indicated recently that if necessary, it could secure arms and assistance from the U.S.S.R."².

To make clear Egypt's neutralism, Muhammad Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, the Egyptian Foreign Minister stated that it was not at present in the interests of Egypt to turn towards either the Eastern or the Western bloc³. In an attempt to demonstrate Egypt's independent policy in international affairs, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn told Caffery that the position of the Egyptian government about recognizing Communist China was positive⁴.

b. The Tripartite Declaration and its Implications

Whether the information of Soviet offers of arms to Arab countries was accurate, or not, Western powers were, presumably aware of the dangers inherent in such offers which could lead to an acceleration of the arms race in the Middle East. They were also worried by the recent Arab-Soviet rapprochement and the slight shift in the position of some Arab politicians towards the

1. Al-Ahrām (Cairo), 3 May 1950. The American Embassy and Service Attachés could not confirm or reject this information; see Dispatch 983 from Caffery, Cairo, 3 May 1950, RG 84, Moscow Embassy-Confidential File, 1950: 320 Egypt, box 143. According to the daily paper Al-Asās, a high ranking Soviet diplomat who was asked, what would be the Soviet Government attitude should Egypt or any other Arab state apply to the Soviet bloc for arms? replied, that his country would welcome any cooperation with the Arab states; see telegram 1150 from Caffery, Cairo, 20 May 1950, Cairo Embassy- General Documents, 1950-1952: 320, box 219.
2. Papers of Harry S. Truman-Naval Aide Files, 22 May 1950, File Subject: State Dept. Briefs, May-July 1950, box 22.
3. The statement was given at a meeting of the Egyptian parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, see, SWB, Arab World, 16 May 1950.
4. Telegram 550 from Caffery, Cairo, 24 May 1950, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Documents, 1950-1952: 320, box 219.

East¹.

The tripartite declaration announced on 25 May 1950, by the U.S., Britain and France, recognized the right of Middle Eastern countries to purchase arms needed to ensure their internal security and "their legitimate self-defence and to permit them to play their part in the area as a whole". The three Powers opposed the development of an arms race between Israel and the Arab countries. They agreed that arms would be provided only to countries that abstained from aggression. In case of a violation of frontier or armistice lines by any country, the three Powers would "immediately take action, both within and outside the U.N., to prevent such violation"². The commitment of the U.S. to guarantee Arab-Israeli borders, as outlined by the declaration, was the second stage of the Truman Doctrine of 1947, concerning American commitment to Middle East security.

The immediate Egyptian reaction to the declaration, as expressed by the Foreign Minister, was moderate. He considered it as being of "utmost importance", and said that it was being carefully studied by Egypt and other Arab governments with a view to drafting a common response³. Indeed, on 21 June 1950, after the declaration was discussed, in the course of the session of the Arab League, (which took place from 12 to 16 June), the Arab governments informed the three Powers of their acceptance of the declaration with some reservations. They asked the Powers for assurances that they had "no intention of favoring Israel by their declaration or putting pressure on the Arab states to force them

1. See Record of conversation between Acheson and Bevin, 11 May 1950, FRUS, 1950, Vol. V, pp. 158-160.

2. "Tripartite Declaration Regarding Security in the Near East", Department of State Bulletin, XXII, 5 June 1950, p.886

3. The statement was given by the Foreign Minister in the Chamber Deputies on 30 May 1950, see, telegram 583 from Caffery, Cairo, 31 May 1950, RG 59, 774.00/5-3150.

into negotiation with Israel". More than everything else, the Arabs wanted to have it clarified that the declaration would in no way infringe on the independence and sovereignty of the Arab States. They stressed that "the level of armed forces each state must maintain is a question which must be left to the judgement of that state itself"¹. Later, on 22 June, the Egyptian Foreign Minister justified the Arab reply to the three Powers declaration. He said, *inter alia*, that the Arab reply was quite clear in noting that the three-Power guarantees would not affect the independence and sovereignty of the Arab states².

Although there was no official reaction from the Soviet government to the tripartite declaration, Soviet press comments indicated clearly its anxiety about Western intentions to interfere actively in certain circumstances. The Soviet press expressed its belief that the declaration intended, in the long term, to strengthen the strategic foothold of the Western Powers in the area. A day after the declaration was issued, Tass commented³:

"...The statement abounds with assurances of the three Western Powers' peaceful intentions in the Middle East. However, it is not difficult to discern that the real aim behind this move by the Anglo-American bloc is the complete enslavement of the Middle Eastern countries and their transformation into advanced posts in the war which the imperialists are now preparing".

The Arabs' acceptance, with some reservations, of the declaration did not mean that, they were in favour of the West nor that the new policy of neutralism had been a passing episode. Some Egyptian politicians even stressed, that collaboration between

1. Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, p. 83.

2. Radio Cairo, 22 June 1950, SWB, Arab World, p.34.

3. See the Tass announcement in SWB, U.S.S.R., 26 May 1950, p. 43. For more details on the Soviet reaction to the declaration, see, Lurii Zviagin, "Total Diplomacy in the Near East", New Times, 5 July 1950. Radio Moscow, 1 June 1950, SWB, U.S.S.R., p. 25.

Egypt and the U.S.S.R. was not only possible but necessary¹.

From the Arab point of view, the main advantage of the declaration, was the renewal of arms deliveries. To quote Nāzim al-Qudsi, the Syrian Prime Minister, "the Arab reply to the three-Power declaration did not imply that the Arabs were siding with the West; Syria was still free to purchase arms from any country including the U.S.S.R."². Nevertheless, the positive collective approach of the Arabs towards the declaration, led to a hesitant reaction from Moscow; this may have been due to a desire first to study all possible developments during the implementation of the declaration.

c. The Egyptian Position towards the Korean War

The Egyptian position towards the Korean war which had broken out on 25 June 1950, as reflected at the U.N., was another link in a chain of attempts to adopt and implement a policy of neutralism. On the one hand, on 25 June 1950, Mahmūd Fawzī, the Egyptian member of the Security Council, supported the American resolution that condemned the aggressive activities of North Korea. On the other hand, two days later, Fawzī abstained on the American resolution that recommended collective action to defend south Korea. On 30 June, Nahhās Pasha, the Egyptian Prime Minister, explained in a press conference, the reasons for abstention. First, he said, the present conflict was merely a new phase in the disagreement between the Eastern and the Western blocs. Secondly, said Nahhās, in the past, there had been cases of aggression against peoples, "violations of sovereignty, and of the unity of the territory of states members of the U.N.". These

1. See for instance a declaration given by Bindārī Pasha, the former Egyptian Minister to Moscow, in an article published in Al-Muṣawwar, dispatch 1397, from Caffery, Cairo, 16 June 1950, RG 59, 661.74/6-1650.
2. Radio Baghdad, 22 June 1950, SWB, Arab World, p. 34.

aggressions and violations, he emphasized, were submitted to the U.N. which, "contrary to what it is now doing in the case of Korea, took no action to stop them"¹. The underlying reason behind his words was undoubtedly a criticism for the Security Council's unfavourable handling of the Egyptian appeal of 1947, and later on, the anti-Arab approach taken by U.N. member states before and after the establishment of Israel.

The abstention of the Egyptian government was interpreted in a moderate way by the Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs, who emphasized Egypt's policy of non-alignment by criticising both the Eastern and the Western blocs. *Şalāh al-Dīn* declared that the abstention did not signify a leaning towards communism. Egypt, he said, was one of the few powers which strictly prohibited communist activity. He also declared that Egyptian interests were opposed to those of the Soviet Union and of the Western Powers²:

"Egypt, which combats imperialism and considers it one of the causes of international disturbances and of wars, is equally anxious to combat the hidden imperialism implicit in Communist methods. Like the Western Powers, Soviet Russia seeks to exercise domination by conquering other nations from within and submitting them to dictatorship. Egypt wishes to spare weaker nations and the whole world the ambitions of domination, imperialism and exploitation. All her acts are inspired by true democratic principles. This explains Egypt's refusal to recognize the Communist Government of China...Egypt desires that the U.N. should succeed in its mission and that the Western Powers should succeed in their attempts to stem the Communist danger, but these powers must prove to the world that they are not out for imperialism and exploitation".

A few days later, on 21 July 1950, *Şalāh al-Dīn* stressed that Egypt's attitude on Korea was unchanged. He said that the Egyptian government was adhering to its decision not to support the Security Council resolution to aid South Korea. Furthermore, Egypt

1. Telegram 533 from Sir R. Stevenson, (the new British Ambassador to Egypt), Alexandria, 1 July 1950, F0371/80396, JE1073/1.
2. *Şalāh al-Dīn* made his speech during a press conference on 11 July 1950, see, telegram 559 from Stevenson, Alexandria, 12 July 1950, F0371/80396, JE1073/10.

did not regret doing so¹. On 30 July, he again emphasized that Egypt was anti-Communist and would combat communism².

Soon after the outbreak of War in Korea, the Wafd government, via its press, kept on stressing its neutral policy. On 26 June, the Wafdist weekly, Al-Nidā', reported that the Soviet Union had officially, signified its readiness to supply the Egyptian army with all the necessary light and heavy arms. Furthermore, said Al-Nidā', the Soviets had expressed their readiness to build arms and ammunition factories in Egypt without reservations or conditions. The paper said that this offer was being seriously considered by the government because of the army's urgent need for heavy military equipment³. A day later, Al-Misrī, the leading Wafdist daily, expressed its fears that Egypt might in the inevitable collision between the great Powers, be involved on the side of the West if Britain insists on carrying out the 1936 treaty⁴.

The Egyptian stand during the Korean war led to a great deal of concern in Washington. It raised the question of what had to be done to prevent the increase of the anti-Western tendency in Egypt. Some American statesmen had begun to reconsider their attitude towards the British position in Egypt. For instance, on 19 September, George McGhee, summed up his alarm at increasing

1. See his statement in *ibid*, JE1073/13.

2. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn said this to Caffery on 30 July 1950, during a conversation between them. See Telegram 124 from Caffery, 31 July 1950, RG 59 774.00/7-3150.

3. Dispatch 1531 from Caffery, Cairo, 28 June 1950, RG 59, 774.56/6-2850. In a minute of D.V. Bendall of the F.O., on 7 July 1950, he pointed out that Egypt was believed to have received attractive offers of arms from Czechoslovakia; see, FO371/80396, JE1073/9. See also, secret dispatch from F.O. to British Embassy, Cairo, 14 July 1950, FO371/81921, E10212/1G; the F.O. pointed out that they had had top secret reports that approaches have been made to the Arab representatives in Moscow and that Czech supplies of arms had been cut off from Israel while, at the same time, attractive offers of arms had been made to Syria and Egypt.

4. Al-Misrī (Cairo), 27 June 1950. *ibid*, 28 June 1950.

"Egyptian nationalism". He asked Michael Wright and Roger Allen of the Foreign Office, to consider the possibility of evacuating the Canal Zone and moving their forces to Gaza, Iraq or Cyrenaica. Both officials objected to McGhee's proposal and considered it unworkable¹. Moreover, Britain estimated that the Egyptian position over Korea did not signify any inclination towards communism or a new orientation towards the Soviet bloc. The British Embassy in Cairo judged that there was no "party, in the parliamentary sense of the word", being formed in Egypt which would likely as a matter of policy, side with the U.S.S.R. However, said the Embassy, there was a group of persons, for instance Kāmil al-Bindārī, the former Egyptian Minister to Moscow, who were expressing, both, privately and publicly, sentiments favourable to the U.S.S.R. These men, the Embassy stressed, "might well influence policy in future"².

As appears from statements made by Egyptian senior officials or from American and British reports, there were several reasons why the Egyptian Government decided to abstain:

- a. To put pressure on the Western Powers which would speed up the process of renewal of arms deliveries in line with the tripartite declaration;
- b. To put pressure on the U.S. to force Britain to evacuate, unconditionally, its troops from Egypt
- c. The fears of becoming a satellite of the West automatically supporting Western's interests in the international arena. Such a stand could damage Soviet-Egyptian relations and in case of

1. The discussion between the American Dept. of State and British F.O. officials took place in London on 19 September 1950. See, Memorandum of Informal U.S.-U.K. Discussion, FRUS 1950, Vol V, pp. 296-297. Memorandum of conversation, FO371/80383, JE1055/55. See also memorandum by Allen, head of the Egyptian Department at the F.O., 20 September 1950, *ibid*.
2. Dispatch from British Embassy, Alexandria, to the British Embassy, Ankara, 4 August 1950, FO371/80396, JE1073/17.

global war, Egypt could find itself on the opposite side to the Soviets.

Egyptian fears of a Soviet offensive in the Middle East existed. Indeed, King Faruq summed up his impression of the efficacy of Soviet tanks and anti-aircraft artillery, as reports from Korea had revealed¹. Not long before the outbreak of the Korean war, he expressed, on several occasions, his wish that Egypt should take the side of the West. To quote him, "neutralitY was quite impossible but there were some people who believed in it"². Indeed, several key figures in the Egyptian government, led by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, were determined to seek every political means which would bring about the British evacuation. Ṣalāḥ Al-Dīn held the view that the outbreak of war between the U.S.S.R. and the West was a possibility no longer³. It seems that Nahḥās Pasha, the prime Minister, who, a few weeks before the vote expressed his personal belief that after British evacuation, it would be necessary to adopt a policy of cooperation with Britain⁴, followed his ministers' line without being able to moderate it. It can therefore be claimed that the fears of Soviet attack on Egypt in case of a global war was not considered nor did it constitute a significant argument for or against the decision. Egyptian neutralism was not shaped as a new doctrine based on a strategic view. It was a policy which derived from a strong desire to protest against and to embarrass the Americans and the British

1. See Record of Conversation between King Faruq and Stevenson, took place on 8 August 1950, in, letter No. 327(1041/112/50G) from Stevenson, 9 August 1950, FO371/80452, JE1197/73.
2. Record of Conversation between King Faruq and Field Marshal, Sir William Slim, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, on 4 June 1950, in dispatch 241 from British Embassy, Cairo, 5 June 1950, FO371/80450, JE1197/38G.
3. See a copy of notes on Field Marshal Slim's conversations with Egyptian Ministers in letter No. 249(1041/72/50G) from British Embassy, Cairo, 10 June 1950, FO371/80450, JE1197/45.
4. Ibid, JE1197/44.

for their past and present policy towards Egypt. The Egyptian government presumably believed that its decision would put pressure on both of them which would force them to seek an acceptable solution to the Anglo-Egyptian conflict, and to speed up arms deliveries. But it would be unrealistic to argue that the Egyptian government believed that its action would lead to British withdrawal.

As early as the outbreak of the Korean war, Egypt had been described by the Soviet media as subjected to capitalistic exploitation and the Wafd government was blamed for preparing for talks on the conclusion of a new treaty with Britain¹. Egypt's stand towards the Korean war was welcomed by the Soviet Union. The Soviet press unanimously lauded the Egyptian government for its courageous decision. The Egyptian stand, stressed Radio Moscow, ignored American and British pressures. The Arabs, it said, "had not fallen into the trap set by America"².

A few months after the Egyptian abstention and despite that senior Egyptian officials had declared consistently that Egypt's position concerning the Korean war remained neutral, in January 1951, at the Fifth Regular Session of the U.N. General Assembly, Egypt voted for the resolution that authorized the U.N. forces to cross the 38th Parallel into North Korea³. This decision was presumably made by the Egyptian government as a result of extended pressure from King Faruq to adopt Western proposals. To quote Faruq, "Egypt was completely sound in the matter of support to the United Nations and in approval of the American action"⁴.

1. L. Vatolina, "Manevry imperialistov v Egipte", Izvestiia (Moscow), 12 May 1950. I. Tishin, New Times No. 8, 1950.

2. Pravda (Moscow), 7 July 1950. Radio Moscow, 3 July 1950, SWB, U.S.S.R., p. 30. Ibid, 13 and 14 July, 1950, p. 28. Ibid, 18 July 1950.

3. Ro'i, Soviet Decision Making in Practice, p. 414.

4. Report of an interview between King Faruq and Field Marshal Slim at Alexandria on 12 July 1950, in PRO, FO371/80451, JE1197/58.

Statements made by Egyptian and Soviet statesmen however, indicates the slow but gradual process of rapprochement between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. had been continuing. Satisfied with the Egyptian and Arabs stand towards Korea, Vyshinskii, the Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs, summed up his willingness to negotiate with Arab representatives "any time they showed they had necessary authority"¹. Later on, on 27 November 1950, in an interview to Al-Miṣrī, Vyshinskii was quoted as saying: "We have repeatedly declared that Soviet Russia and its democratic allies will always side with the Egyptian in the struggle against British imperialism"².

At the same time, on the Egyptian side, a series of pro-Soviet statements were made by Anīs al-Azr, the Egyptian Minister to the U.S.S.R. These statements received a lot of attention, because unlike Bindārī Pasha who had preceded him, al-Azr had never been considered sympathetic to communism. On 9 September 1950, on his arrival in Paris to attend a conference of Egyptian diplomats, he said that the Soviet Union was not prepared to enter into war at present. Azr stressed that the intervention of the U.S. in Korea had come as "a hard blow". Regarding the Soviet-Egyptian bilateral relations, he said that great improvements in Egyptian-Soviet trade relations were expected. Azr emphasized that most of his official contacts in Moscow were of an economic rather than a political nature³. A few days later, in an interview in

1. Vyshinskii said that during a conversation with Fāris al-Khūrī, the Syrian delegate to the U.N; see Telegram from Acheson, 18 October 1950, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Documents, 1950-1952: 320, box 219.
2. Telegram 1259 from Caffery, Cairo, 29 November 1950, RG 59, 774.00/11-2950.
3. According to the Egyptian Foreign Minister, the purpose in convening the conference of Egyptian diplomats in Paris was "to become acquainted with the views of the European States with whom Egypt maintained diplomatic relations, especially in connection with the agenda of the forthcoming U.N. session". On Azr and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn expressions see, SWB, Arab World, 9

Al-Ahrām, he declared that the relations between the two countries were cordial, mainly after Egypt's abstention on Korea. He again stressed that these relations focused mainly on economic affairs¹. Indeed, Egypt's trade position with the Soviet Union during 1950 was in fact considerably stronger than that of the same period in 1949. Exports from Egypt to the Soviet bloc were almost 10% of total Egyptians exports while imports from the Soviet bloc increased by 3% during 1950².

Reports from the American Embassies in Moscow and in Cairo which analysed the personal political view of Anīs al-Azr, judged that they had never had the feeling that he was sympathetic towards communism. On the contrary, one report stressed, "he has manifested almost embarrassing admiration for America...we have felt that personally he has been somewhat unhappy over his government's stand on the Korean question". These reports attempted to find the reasons behind Azr's recent statements. They concluded that they may have been dictated by purely political considerations arising from current Egyptian policy, or that he acted under instructions from his government to express Egypt's neutral policy³. Indeed, Azr's expressions did not

September 1950, p. 33. Words in the same spirit were said by Azr in an interview he gave to Akhbār al Yawm; see Dis. 939 from American Embassy, Cairo, 19 October 1950, RG 84, Moscow Embassy-Confidential Files, 1950: 320- Egypt, box 143.

1. On his interview to Al-Ahrām see dispatch 786 from American Embassy, Cairo, 27 September 1950, RG 59, 661.74/9-2750. Later on, during his visit to Egypt Azr continued to give pro-Soviet statements in the same spirit; see dispatch 1484 from American Embassy, Cairo, 23 December 1950, Moscow Embassy, *ibid.* SWB, Arab World, 18 December 1950, p. 37.
2. The economic relations between Egypt and the Soviet bloc during the period under review will be discussed in the following chapters. See for instance statistics on Foreign trade of the Soviet bloc with Egypt for the first half of 1950 in dispatch 930 from Hazel T. Ellis, Commercial Attaché, American Embassy, Cairo, 18 October 1950, RG 59, 461.74/10-1850.
3. Dispatch 151 from American Embassy, Moscow, 7 October 1950, RG 59, 661.74/10-750. Dispatch 191, *ibid.*, 31 October 1950, RG 84, *ibid.* Dispatches 939, 786 and 1484, *ibid.* A few months later, Azr criticised the Soviet Union and its domestic and foreign

indicate any deviation from the political line shaped by the Wafdist government. As Minister to Moscow, Azr served as an effective vehicle for Șalāh al-Dīn to disseminate his policy of neutralism. In the government Șalāh al-Dīn represented a political line shaped by the left wing of his party. The implementation of his policy indicated a significant leaning towards the left among members of the Wafd. Around this political principle a group of various political parties (including communists) gathered during 1950. This group called itself the "Partisans of Peace Movement" (Harakat Anṣār al-Salām)¹. Since Șalāh al-Dīn's policy was supported by many political groups, he was determined to make perceptible the cordial diplomatic relations between the U.S.S.R. and Egypt. For instance, soon after the Egyptian abstention, the Soviet Legation in Cairo protested to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the customs authorities were interfering with packages arriving from Moscow for the Legation. Contrary to the orders of Sirāj al-Dīn, Minister of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered the customs not to examine packages, mainly film shipments, to the Soviet and satellite legations. This decision was made despite allegations from the Ministry of the Interior that the shipments were being censored because they had been given to local communists to promote their interests².

The domestic quarrels within the Wafd weakened the party position vis-à-vis opposition parties. The Wafd was accused by its rivals of failure to carry out its election promises, namely to put an end to the continued presence of British troops in

policy; see dispatch 1582 and 1903 from Caffery, 8 January and 9 February, 1951, RG 84, Cairo Embassy- General Documents, 1951: 350, box 229.

1. See Part I, p. 60.

2. Dispatch 1618 from American Embassy, Cairo, 7 July 1950, RG 84, *ibid.*

Egypt. The year 1951 was characterized by a growing dissatisfaction with the government. Owing to this, currents of unrest were felt all over the country¹.

The power struggle between Sirāj al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn became aggravated during 1951². The first, who represented the Wafdist right wing, rejected and criticised his government's foreign policy, shaped by his younger opponent, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Owing to this rivalry, the Egyptian Government conducted contradictory foreign and internal policies. On the one hand, vigorous measures were taken by the Ministry of the Interior to stop the spread of Communism and Soviet influence inside Egypt. On the other hand, the Foreign Minister reaffirmed and committed himself several times to continue with a policy of neutralism.

Harakat Ansār al-Salām associated itself with the "World Movement for Peace" which was formed and supported by the Soviet Union. This movement had been an important vehicle for furthering Soviet interests beyond Eastern Europe. Harakat Ansār al-Salām supported and adopted the decisions made by the Second World Congress of the movement held at Warsaw from 16 to 22 November 1950³. In the Soviet view of Harakat Ansār al-Salām the movement was composed of "many well-known social and cultured personalities". Since its formation, and despite government repression, Moscow claimed it had been gaining ground among the

1. See memorandum by Webb, Under-Secretary of State, to Lay, Executive Secretary, National Security Council, 26 January 1951, FRUS 1951, Vol V, p. 20. See also dispatch 473 from Caffery, Cairo, 24 August 1951, RG 59, 774.001/8-2451.
2. On the political career of the two and their position inside the Wafd party, see, Joel Gordon, pp. 200-203. See also dispatch 282 from A. Schnee, First Secretary of Embassy, 10 September 1955, RG 59, 774.00/9-1055.
3. Dispatch 1926 from Caffery, Cairo, 12 February 1951, RG 59, 774.001/2-1251.

people, mainly because of its struggle against imperialism¹.

The legal activity of Harakat Anṣār al-Salām was criticised sharply by Sirāj al-Dīn, mainly the fact that some of its members were wafdist. In his campaign against the movement, Sirāj al-Dīn was supported by king Faruq. The Prime Minister Nahḥās Pasha showed indecisiveness concerning the power struggle between his two senior ministers. He supported both contradictory policies and therefore lost his authority; his government was therefore unable to control the events which led the country into anarchy.

d. The strengthening of relations between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. - the collapse of Nahḥās' government.

Egyptian foreign policy during 1951 clearly indicated its neutral stand and its wish to implement the national aspirations. Towards the end of 1951, the relations between Egypt and Britain were at a low ebb as a result of the Egyptian Government decision to abrogate the 1936 treaty. In addition to this, the Egyptian Government rejected the American and British proposals calling for the establishment of a Middle East Command for the protection of the Middle East against Soviet expansion. The relations between the Soviet Union and Egypt improved; several commercial agreements were concluded and more understanding and cooperation found their expression at the U.N. The Soviet media which had been concentrating on Far Eastern affairs, mainly the Korean war, showed, during 1951, growing interest in Egypt and the Arab countries. On 18 April 1951, Radio Moscow increased its Arabic broadcasts to three transmissions daily, extending its time by 50%. On 20 April, it announced that students of the Moscow School of Oriental Studies had resolved to "support the struggle of

1. Radio Moscow in persian, 17 January 1951, SWB, USSR, p. 20.
Radio Moscow in Arabic, 20 and 21 July 1951, *ibid*, pp. 14-15.

Muslim peoples against imperialism for peace". The increase of Soviet interest in the Arab world found its expression in the fact that the Moscow Academy of Sciences established at the end of 1950 an Institute for Oriental Studies, which set up a separate department for Turkey, Iran and the Arab countries¹. A new line, emphasizing the desirability of close contact between Soviet Muslims and Muslims abroad, appeared in Soviet broadcasts. This represented a new Soviet approach as in previous years contacts with Muslims abroad had been considered unacceptable.

The manifestation of friendliness towards the Soviet Union among senior Egyptian politicians was continuing and reached a climax when on 8 August 1951, Şalāh al-Dīn met in Cairo two Soviet diplomats who had arrived from Beirut. The Soviet diplomats' mission was twofold: first, to assess the Egyptian reactions to the new Soviet peace offensive: second, to find out whether Egypt would agree to lead the peace offensive in the Middle East by signing a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union. The Soviets emphasized that opening negotiations with the U.S.S.R. on such a pact would reaffirm Egypt's stand for neutrality between the two blocs. It was also said: "If Egypt were to conduct negotiations with the U.S.S.R., such negotiations would nullify the 1936 treaty and would be the first positive and sensational step towards real neutrality". Şalāh al-Dīn was quoted as replying: "I am also a partisan of peace, of a well-balanced world peace, because peace is our goal and wars will only do good to the imperialistic states"². Şalāh al-Dīn assured the two diplomats that their

1. Francis Ofner, "Soviet voices cordially to Middle East Muslims", Christian Science Monitor, 5 July 1951.

2. This information was given to the American Embassy in Cairo by a source classified as highly confidential; see dispatch 325 from Caffery, Cairo, 10 August 1951, RG 59, 661.741/8-1051. The Egyptian press, with various political views had called for the strengthening of relations with the Soviet Union and fighting by all means to expel British Imperialism. For

proposal would be discussed with his colleagues and refused to commit himself. Although a non-aggression pact with the U.S.S.R. had been considered by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as an essential element in the implementation of his policy of neutralism, he preferred to keep this option as a means of pressure on the Western powers. A few weeks later, the prospects of signing such a pact seemed to be closer than ever before.

On 26 July 1951, Israel and Britain complained to the Security Council against Egypt's long-term policy of imposing restrictions on Suez Canal traffic to Israel. Egypt found itself almost completely isolated during six weeks of U.N. debates on this complaint. The Soviet Union was the only Power to support Egypt. Soviet officials regarded Egyptian policy as legal. For instance, On 25 July 1951, during a conversation between Gromyko and Eliashiv, the Israeli Minister to Moscow, Gromyko said that the Egyptian assertions that Egypt and Israel were in a state of war, were in line with international law. Throughout their conversation, Gromyko sided with Egypt¹. Later on, many efforts to prevent the Soviet veto were made by the Israeli Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem and by Abba Eban, the Chief Israeli delegate to the U.N., who had had several meetings with Semyon K. Tsarapkin, Soviet acting chief delegate to the U.N.²

instance, on 10 May 1951, Al-Sha'b al-Jadīd, the weekly of the Socialist Party said that Britain was to know that the Egyptian government was not afraid to conclude a non-aggression treaty with the U.S.S.R. If Britain itself had such a treaty with the Soviets, why should Egypt hesitate to conclude a similar pact? The same ideas were outlined on the same day by Al-Muṣawwar, the independent weekly. On 20 September 1951, Al-Ahrām, the independent daily paper, said "we must not limit our national struggle to Britain but should enlarge it to include the allies of Britain as well". Britain, said the paper, diffused the false argument, that the Soviet Union was attempting to create another Korea in the Middle East.

1. Report No. 4 from Eliashiv, Moscow, 25 July 1951, ISA, FM2457/14.
2. Ibid. J.T.A. News, 31 August 1951. New York Times, 1 September 1951.

On 29 August, when the Security Council was about to vote on a resolution calling on Egypt to end its restrictions, Tsarapkin intervened in favour of Egypt to delay action against it¹. On 30 August, during a press conference in Cairo, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn regarded the Soviet intervention as a "happy surprise". Nonetheless, his uncertain statement, saying that "active Russian intervention in form of veto will make our task in Egypt measurably more difficult"², did not presumably, encourage the Soviet Union to side with Egypt during the vote. According to certain reports from Cairo, the Soviet move was intended to gain political benefit. These reports claimed that the Soviets asked the Egyptian government to give freedom of action to Harakat Anṣār al-Salām and other fellow-travellers in Egypt and to back the U.S.S.R. in international affairs. When the Egyptian government refused to bargain, the Soviets decided to change their position³.

On 1 September 1951, Egypt was condemned by the Security Council. The Soviet Union abstained. By their abstention, the Soviet Union lost a considerable opportunity to improve their position in Egypt. The Soviets repeated the same mistake made by them during the Palestine conflict. The U.S.S.R. was not willing to sacrifice its interests in Israel by supporting the Arabs, without substantial political assurances from Egypt⁴. Despite

1. W.R. Frye, "Russia woos Arab bloc in UN, balks action on Suez blockade", Christian Science Monitor (New York), 30 August 1951. New York Times, 30 August 1951. Britain complained that all its requests to lift the blockade against the transport of crude oil to its refinery at Haifa, were rejected by the Egyptian government. On this dispute and the debate in the Security Council, see, FO371/90196, JE1261/181-186.
2. Dispatch 272 from Caffery, Cairo, 31 August 1951, RG 84, Moscow Embassy-Confidential File, 1951:320-Egypt, box 157.
3. "Russian prestige slips in Middle East", Christian Science Monitor, 18 September 1951.
4. A few days after the vote, Sobolev, the Press Attaché of the Soviet Legation in Cairo said after a meeting with Husain

the disappointment arising out of Israel's neutral or even pro-Western policy, Israel was still the only country in the Middle East in which the Communist party functioned legally and enjoyed equal opportunities. At that stage, a vote against Israel, while the Western Powers were united in condemning Egypt, could have led to a significant deterioration in the relations between the two countries. In this case, Israel would have probably found firm justification for changing its neutral policy and have officially taken the side of the West. A Soviet vote in favour of Egypt could have been a turning point in their policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. When the relations between Egypt and Britain were at a low ebb, every manifestation of Soviet support could have been a success for Şalāh al-Dīn's foreign policy and would have strengthened his political position vis-à-vis Sirāj al-Dīn. The Soviet Union, presumably, did not pay much attention to the fact that the Egyptian government had spoken with two voices. That is to say, Şalāh al-Dīn could not accept their condition that freedom of action would be given to leftist groups without having the consent of Sirāj al-Dīn, who was in charge on internal affairs and represented the anti-Soviet faction in the Wafdist government. Soon after the vote, Sirāj al-Dīn rejected the accusations which had appeared in the Egyptian press, that owing to his refusal to accept the Soviet conditions, Egypt had lost Soviet support during the vote. He said that he had never had any expectations from the Soviets and summed up his determination to stop any communist activity. To quote him: "These events taught us the lesson that we should depend on ourselves...We will follow the road which will lead to our interests...We never start by antagonizing others..."

Rādiy, the Egyptian Under Secretary for Foreign affairs, that it was still impossible to conclude a non-aggression pact with Egypt, as Egypt was tied to Britain by a treaty of alliance. See Arab News Agency, 16 September 1951, SWB, Arab World, p. 31.

while we combat Communism in our country because it does not correspond with our religion and system, it does not mean that we fight Russia as a state"¹.

The bitter Egyptian reaction and disappointment at the Soviet vote did not have great implications for the improvement of relations between the two countries. The pro-Soviet group in the Egyptian government realized that as long as the Arab-Israeli conflict was the subject under discussion at the U.N. arena, the Soviet government would prefer to hold a neutral position. On the other hand, they understood that the Soviets would take their side in any future conflict with the Western powers. They decided therefore, to control their emotions and to prevent any aggravation in relations with the U.S.S.R.² This move seemed to meet with success. Soon after, the Egyptian government decided on 8 October to abrogate the treaty of 1936 and declared Faruq King of Egypt and the Sudan; the U.S.S.R. supported Egypt.

A few weeks before the decision was made, manifestations of support for the intentions of the Egyptian government were summed up by the Eastern bloc press. The reason behind the new anti-imperialist attitude of the Wafd government, said Radio Budapest, was that "the working masses are having an increasing say in political developments in Egypt". This new development indicated that the struggle for peace was rallying the ever increasing masses³.

As early as the decision was made, a stormy debate was conducted inside the Wafd government between the two rival factions. On the

1. Sirāj al-Dīn was interviewed by Al-Ahram on 9 September 1951. See translation of this interview in dispatch 668 from American Embassy, Cairo, RG 59, 774.00/9-1451.
2. See dispatch 618 from Caffery, Cairo, 8 September 1951, RG 84, Moscow Embassy-Confidential Files, 1951: 320-Egypt, box 157.
3. Radio Budapest, 22 August 1951, SWB, Communist Broadcasts, p. 7. Radio Moscow in Arabic, 23 August 1951, SWB, USSR, p. 18.

one hand, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was determined to make a decision calling for the abrogation of the 1936 treaty. On the other hand, Sirāj al-Dīn endeavoured to prevent such a decision. To force the government to accept his opinion, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn said that if the government did not abrogate the treaty he would resign and undertake a campaign against the government. Sirāj al-Dīn realized that such a move could be disastrous for the Wafd as most of the political groups in Egypt supported abrogation. A few weeks before abrogation was announced, he held the view that there was no alternative to abrogating the treaty¹. Even King Faruq could not alter his government's decision. To quote him: "I cannot set myself in opposition to the whole country and in this instance the whole country is of the same mind as the government". Faruq affirmed that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was responsible for the existing situation. In comparison to Nahhās Pasha, who was described by Faruq as "old and his mind does not work as well as it did", Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, said the King, "was young and impulsive and also has other drawbacks". Despite Faruq's disagreement with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's political views, he admitted that he could not ask for the Foreign Minister's resignation because: "If I [Faruq] broke with him I would stir up a veritable hornets nest, and I do not like hornets"².

The British government's response to the Egyptian decision was restrained. On 13 October, together with the governments, of the United States, France and Turkey, they proposed to the Egyptian

1. The information was given to Caffery by Jallād Pasha. See dispatch 577 from Caffery, Cairo, 5 September 1951, RG 59, 774.00/9-551. See also, Ahmad Ḥamrūsh, Qissat thaurat 23 Yuliyo, Vol. 1, (Cairo: 1983), pp. 152-154.
2. See record of conversation between King Faruq and Caffery, 30 September 1951, FRUS 1951, Vol. V, pp. 388-389. On the political instability and the anti-British struggle in Egypt during the second half of 1951 see, Vatikiotis, The History of Egypt, pp. 370-372. Selma Botman, The Rise of Egyptian Communism, pp. 100-104.

government to join them in establishing a Middle Eastern Command. This command, it was said, intended to protect Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries against aggression from without. The aim was, to prevent the penetration of the region by communism in peacetime and to prepare the defence of the region against Soviet military power in wartime. Egypt was invited to participate as a founder member of the Command on a basis of equality and partnership with other founder members¹. In case of Egyptian participation, the U.K. was willing to abrogate the 1936 treaty and to withdraw from Egypt "such British forces as are not allocated to the Allied Middle East Command by agreement between the Egyptian Government and the Governments of other countries also participating as founder members"².

The Middle East Command proposal was the most significant commitment to the security of the area, made by the Americans, since the Truman Doctrine of 1947. The Americans were aware that the Western Powers were facing a real threat. They realized that under the present conditions of growing neutralism among the ruling circles in Egypt and the crisis in Anglo-Egyptian relations, their commitment to the defence of the area was an essential step³.

On 15 October, the four-power proposals was rejected by the Egyptian government. It said that the acceptance of the proposal meant the substitution of other foreign troops for British ones.

1. Muhammad Khalil, The Arab States and the Arab League A Documentary Record, Vol. II, (Beirut: Khayats, 1962), pp. 314-315.
2. Ibid.
3. Harry N. Howard, "The development of United States Policy in the Near East, South Asia and Africa 1951-1952", 15 December 1952, Papers of Harry N. Howard, File Subject: Near East-South Asia 1945-1955, box 3, Truman Library. C.I.A., "The British Position in Egypt", 15 October 1951, President's Secretary's Files, File Subject:C.I.A. Reports-NATL, Intelligence Estimate, NIE-44, box 253, Truman Library.

To strengthen the government position, the Egyptian Parliament confirmed the abrogation of the treaties of 1899 and 1936¹.

The Soviet Union attacked the four-power proposals. In a Tass bulletin, of 16 October, the Soviet Union claimed that the Middle East Command plan was intended to preserve Egypt as a military base for the "aggressive Anglo-American bloc". That was the reason why this proposal was made immediately after the Egyptian government decided to abrogate the 1936 treaty, which allowed Britain to keep their troops on Egyptian territory. This proposal, said Tass, was regarded by the Egyptian government as "not corresponding to the national aspirations of the Egyptian people", and therefore, rejected by it². A lot of attention was given by the Soviets to the anti-British campaign which was accompanied by strikes and demonstrations as well as terrorist activity against British troops, mainly in the Suez Canal zone³. This activity to liquidate the British imperial rule, said Pravda, was a basic natural task for the Egyptian people⁴. The British imperialists, said Izvestiia, increased their forces in the Canal zone, under the pretext that the Egyptian government had lost its ability to maintain order. The British decision to take responsibility for the maintenance of order in the area, led the Anglo-Egyptian crisis to a climax. Despite the clash of interests, both the U.S.A. and Britain were united in a common aim- to preserve the colonial system. The American attempts to act as mediators in this dispute, said Izvestiia, were intended to strengthen their position in Egypt⁵. The development of the events in Egypt said

1. Ro'i, Soviet Decision Making in Practice, p. 408.

2. Tass transmission, 16 October 1951, SWB, USSR, pp. 11-12.

3. On the anti-British campaign and clashes between British troops and Egyptian guerrilla fighters, see, Vatikiotis, *ibid*.

4. Pravda (Moscow), 23 October 1951. Literaturnaia Gazeta (Moscow), 18 October 1951. Izvestiia (Moscow), 19 October 1951.

5. G. Akopian, "Bor'ba Egipta protiv kabal'nykh dogоворов", Izvestiia, 20 October 1951.

Pravda, "testifies to the further exacerbation of the crisis of the colonial system of imperialism. At the same time, said the paper, it testifies to the unabated attempts of the imperialists to drag the dependent and colonial countries into their aggressive war plans"¹. It is to be pointed out that despite their fervent support for Egypt in its effort to expel Britain from the Suez Canal, the Soviets kept silent about Egyptian claims in the Sudan. From this viewpoint, their approach remained consistent and in line with Gromyko's speech of 20 August 1947 at the Security Council².

The Americans who seemed to believe that their commitments to the defence of the area, would persuade Egypt to accept the Four-Power proposals, were disappointed at the Egyptian response. In a statement on 17 October, Acheson said that the U.S.A. was surprised that "the Egyptian government rejected proposals of such importance without having given them the careful and considered deliberation which they merited". In order to put some pressure on the Egyptian government to reconsider its position, Acheson declared that the Egyptian decision to abrogate its treaties with Britain was considered by the U.S.A. to be without validity³. Despite their anger, the Americans refused to take part in a plan to dismiss Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. The plan was organized by British officials in contact with Sirāj al-Dīn and King Faruq, and was intended to dismiss Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn whom they considered to be chiefly responsible for the present situation. They believed that his removal would create a basis for a mutual understanding and thus prevent a further rift in Egypt relations with the West. The Americans who agreed that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn should go, explained that their refusal to carry out such an action was in order not to

1. B. Korionov, "Mezhdunarodnoe obozrenie", Pravda, 22 October 1951.

2. On Gromyko's speech see p. 98.

3. Khalil, The Arab States, pp. 315-316.

exacerbate the crisis. They believed that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's policy was supported by most of the political circles in Egypt¹.

Indeed, a gradual change towards neutralism had been reflected in statements made by prominent Egyptian politicians, known to side with the West. For instance, in March 1951, ‘Azzām Pasha, the General Secretary of the Arab League, declared in a public lecture that the Western Powers were the enemy of Egypt. He said furthermore, that there were no reasons, "past or present" for hostility between the U.S.S.R. and the Arabs. On 6 October 1951, in a public statement, he encouraged the Egyptian Government to abrogate the 1936 treaty².

American assessment of the existing trend on Egypt's political scene was utterly correct. On 1 November, Sirāj al-Dīn warned Britain, that by cutting off the Suez Canal Zone from the rest of Egypt, they were increasing the possibility of a revolution. This state of affairs, stressed the Minister of the Interior, would lead to "bread riots" and undoubtedly be exploited by the communists³. Indeed, Western Powers had good reason to be anxious about Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's short-and long-term policies. Soon after Acheson had expressed American anger at Egypt's rejection of the idea of the Middle Eastern Command, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn held a meeting with the Soviet Minister in Cairo. During their long

1. See secret telegram from Acheson, Rome, 26 November 1951, and secret letter from Caffery, Cairo, 30 November 1951, FRUS 1951, Vol. V, pp. 427-429. Secret telegram from Gifford, the American Ambassador in London, 7 December 1951, *ibid*, pp. 431-432. Letter from Stevenson, Cairo, 13 November 1951, FO371/90182, JE11910/140.
2. Letter No. 1071/127/51 from British Embassy, Cairo, to African Department, F.O., 15 October 1951, FO371/90144, JE1051/366.
3. O.M. Marashian, "Soviet Bloc backs Egypt on Suez issue", Christian Science Monitor, 2 November 1951. See also a record of conversation between Stevenson and Sirāj al-Dīn, in, letter No. 137 from Stevenson, Cairo, 10 December 1951, FO371/90151, JE1051/525. The turning point in Britain decision to use force took place soon after the Conservative Party returned to power on 26 October 1951. During the election campaign, the labour government was accused by Conservatives of having created the anti-British struggle owing to its weakness and inability to confront Egyptian extremists.

talk, on 24 October, the Egyptian Foreign Minister examined the possibility of signing a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union¹. On the same day, he was attending a meeting of a new organization called the Committee of National Pact. This group was organized to mobilize the "nation behind the conflict with Britain". The organization adopted a resolution calling for a non-aggression pact with the U.S.S.R. and the severing of diplomatic and economic relations with Britain². Șalāh al-Dīn took almost every opportunity to insist that Soviet-Egyptian relations were friendly. In a press conference in Cairo, on 26 October, he did not mention explicitly that a non-aggression pact was to be signed with the U.S.S.R. but hinted at such a possibility. In a statement to the press, he made, *inter alia*, the following points:³

"The relations between Egypt and the Soviet Union are the ordinary relations which exist between friendly states within the framework of the U.N. Charter. It is within the framework of this general principle that we will consider the basis of our relations with the Soviet Union in the future".

Stevenson, the British Ambassador, confirmed that Șalāh al-Dīn clearly said that it was very probable that Egypt would enter into some kind of pact with the U.S.S.R. in the near future. As before, the Egyptian government spoke with two voices and again, the quarrels and contradictions between its two senior ministers became apparent. In a conversation between Caffery and

1. Intelligence Report No. 5691, prepared by the Office of Intelligence Research, Department of State, 8 November 1951, R&A Reports, IR 5691.
2. This group included Hāfiẓ Ramadān Pasha, the head of the Nationalist party, Hājj Amin al-Husaini, exiled Mufti of Jerusalem, various sheiks and the head of the Muslim Brotherhood. See, New York Times, 26 October 1951. See also, *ibid*, 23 October 1951. Following the abrogation, propaganda for a Soviet-Egyptian non-aggression pact was making progress. This propaganda was mainly conducted by Al-Misri, principal organ of the Wafd party. On 22 October, Al-Misri said that in the Second World War, "Britain allied itself with the Soviet Union to save itself from danger, so, it was necessary for Egypt to do the same thing now".
3. *Ibid*. Șalāh al-Dīn's statement was also quoted extensively by Pravda on 27 October 1951.

Siraj al-Din, the latter denied that the Egyptian government had any intention to sign such a pact¹.

The Four Powers appreciated that the only possibility of altering Egypt's rejection of their proposals, would be to make to other Arab states the same proposals. This move, they believed, would be positively received by the Arabs and would therefore put strong pressure on Egypt, which would find itself isolated. The results were however very different. As a result of Egyptian pressure, the Arab states decided to endorse Egypt's rejection. They refused to consider the Four-Power proposals before the Anglo-Egyptian conflict had been settled². Soviet notes to the Arab states and to Israel, on 21 November, warning them against accepting the Four-Power proposals, was an immediate reaction to the approach to the Arabs. Unlike Egypt which rejected the idea of an M.E.C. (Middle East Command), the Arabs placed conditions that, if accepted, could have led to their joining.

Anis al-Azr, the Egyptian Minister to Moscow, was the first to receive the note from Gromyko, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R. On the same day, Gromyko handed analogous notes to the representatives of Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Israel and on 22 November, to the governments of Saudi Arabia and Yemen³. Although the Soviet Government was well aware that

1. Letter No. 844 from Stevenson, Cairo, 26 October 1951, F0371/90182, JE11910/130. A confirmation of the existence of negotiations between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. was also given by Atassi, the Syrian Foreign Minister. See dispatch 269 from American Embassy, Damascus, 8 November 1951, RG 59, 661.741/11-851.
2. On the joint statement by the Four Powers to Arab states on 10 November 1951, see, Khalil, *ibid*, pp. 316-317. On the American decision to apply to Egypt and the Arab states and on the Arab position concerning Four-Power proposals see, Top Secret letter from the Israeli Embassy, Washington, 6 November 1951, I.S.A., FM2551/8/A. See also, United States Government, Office Memorandum, made by Stabler, 26 November 1951, RG 59, 774.00/11-2651.
3. On Soviet notes to Arab countries, see, F0371/91230, E1192/354. On Soviet note to Israel and the conversation between Gromyko and Eliashiv, in the Soviet Foreign Office, on 21 November 1951, see, Report No. 14 from S. Eliashiv, Israeli Minister to

Israel had not been invited to join the M.E.C., and that Israel had no aggressive plans against the Soviet Union, it decided to warn Israel against joining such a command. This decision arose out of the Soviet need to keep a balanced position in their policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. If Israel had not received the note, Egypt could have blamed the U.S.S.R. for a pro-Israeli policy, since Egypt had definitely rejected the Four-Power proposals, in contrast to Israel whose official attitude to the proposals was unknown. Soviet notes to the governments of Israel and Egypt were therefore, more friendly in comparison with the other notes, despite the fact that most of the content was similar. In the note to Egypt, the U.S.S.R. expressed its fears that Middle East Command would lead to the loss of the independence and sovereignty of Middle Eastern countries and "their subjugation to certain big Powers, which are trying to use their territories, their material resources - oil, cotton, etc.- for aggressive ends of theirs". The Soviets rejected the argument made by the Four Powers, that the establishment of Middle Eastern Command was intended to defend the Middle Eastern countries. They stressed that Middle Eastern Command intended "to disguise the drawing of Egypt as well as of other countries...into military measures of the Atlantic bloc directed against the Soviet Union and the people's democracies". The note ended by expressing Soviet appreciation to Egypt for its firm stand against the Four-Power proposals, and with a warning, mainly directed to the other countries, that their joining such an organization would be a grave mistake and lead to severe results:

Moscow, 9 December 1951, I.S.A., FM2457/14. See full text of the note to Israel in, *ibid*, FM2512/27/A. On the reply of the Government of Israel to Soviet note, see draft in FM2457/14 and telegram 393 from Sir F. Evans, British Ambassador in Tel-Aviv, 12 December 1951, FO371/91231, E1192/388.

"The Soviet government fully appraises the stand taken at present by the government of Egypt with regard to the above proposals...and deems it necessary to draw the attention of the government of Egypt to the fact that the participation of countries of the Near and Middle East in the so-called Middle Eastern Command would cause serious damage to the relations existing between the U.S.S.R. and these countries, as well as to the cause of maintaining peace and security in the area of the Near and Middle East".¹

Determined to express its objection to the idea of establishing a Middle Eastern Command, the Soviet government also sent notes on 24 November, to the Four Powers. In the notes, the U.S.S.R. protested against the subordination of the Middle Eastern states through the M.E.C. and the establishment of such an aggressive organization so close to Soviet borders. The idea of a Middle Eastern Command, said the Soviets, represented "nothing but an attempt to draw the countries of the Near and Middle East into the war measures which are being carried by the aggressive Atlantic bloc". The note for the government of the United States ended with a warning emphasizing that²

"The Government of the U.S.S.R. deems it necessary to draw the attention of the Government of the United States to the fact that it cannot overlook these new aggressive plans, expressed in the establishing of a Middle Eastern Command in an area located not far from the frontiers of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Government deems it necessary also to state that the responsibility for the situation which may arise as a result of this will rest with the Government of the United States and the other initiators of the establishing of the above-mentioned Command".

1. See full text of the note, in, Khalil, *ibid*, pp. 317-319. See full text in Russian in, *Ministerstvo Inostrannykh del SSSR, SSSR i Arabskie Strany 1917-1960, Dokumenty i Materialy* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1961), pp. 103-106. See also Tass transmission on 23 November 1951, SWB, USSR, pp. 8-10.
2. See full text of the note to the Government of the United States in, Khalil, *ibid*, pp. 320-321 and in SSSR i Arabskie Strany, pp. 106-108. On the Conversation between Gromyko and Cumming, the American Charge in the Soviet Union, on 24 November, see dispatches 898 and 899 from Cumming, Moscow, 24 November 1951, RG 84, Moscow Embassy-Confidential File, 1951: 350-Near East, box 162. On the note to the British Government, see telegrams 791 and 792 from Sir A. Gascoigne, the British Ambassador to Moscow, 24 November 1951, F0371/91229, E1192/343-344.

The message to both the Four Powers and to Middle Eastern countries was clear - the Soviet Union would take any measure to prevent the establishment of Middle Eastern Command. The Soviets chose the right timing from their point of view. Undoubtedly, Soviet reaction came as a reply after an extended pressure put on Arab countries by the Four Powers to accept their proposals. In the period between 10 to 21 November Arab states were under strong pressure. On the one hand they were required to join the Four-Power plan, on the other Egypt was exerting tremendous pressure on these countries to side with it in rejecting the proposals. The Soviets realized that protesting sharply against both the Arabs and the Western Powers would achieve two goals. First, it would back Egypt and strengthen its position vis-à-vis other Arab countries which inclined to join the plan. Secondly, it would encourage Egypt to continue with the same line and not to surrender to pressure from without. Soviet notes to the Four Powers was inter alia, a proof to Egypt that the Soviet government would support its efforts by all means, and that the Soviets were not in an inferior position vis-à-vis the Western Powers. Soviet notes were also intended to clarify to the Arabs that the U.S.S.R. did not have any expansionist aims in the Middle East or elsewhere. The Soviets stressed moreover that the Arabs should realize that the Middle Eastern Command would bring their independence to an end.

In a period of more than three weeks, the Four Powers discussed intensively the question of a reply to the Soviet Government. During this period, differences of opinions broke out between the Americans and the Turks on the one hand, and the French and British on the other. The bone of contention was that the former argued that the Soviets should be attacked for being aggressive, whereas the latter wanted to confine themselves to a

refutation of the charges levelled against them. In other words, according to the Americans, the British and French approach was too defensive in its tone. Towards the middle of December 1951, after consultations and exchanges of opinion, the Four Powers agreed that they should take a broadly similar line. The Four then decided that it was important from the publicity point of view that there should be no difference in tone and in the broad lines of argumentation¹.

In their reply to the Soviet Government on 18 December 1951, the Four Powers rejected Soviet allegation that Middle East Command was aggressive in intent. The decision whether to join the command or not, was a free choice given to the independent governments of the Middle Eastern states. No pressure, the Four Powers stressed, had been put on any of these countries. In their reply, resolute in tone, the Americans blamed the Soviets for attempting to subvert, externally and internally, the existing regimes in the Middle East². An immediate comment on the British reply was made by Gromyko after receiving the note from Sir A. Gascoigne on 18 December. Gromyko stressed that its terms were quite unconvincing and that he could not agree with the Four-Power contentions³.

The Soviet notes were the major Soviet diplomatic initiative in the Middle East, following the Palestine conflict, aiming to make it clear that the Middle East should remain neutral in the East-West conflict. This official move came about after a long and continuous campaign waged through the Soviet media, against the Western Powers' ideas and plans for a Middle Eastern defence

1. On the dialogue and correspondence between the Four Powers, see FO371/91230, E1192/359-361, 374-375, 377-379. FO371/91231, E1192/381-383, 386-392, 394, 404. FRUS 1951, Vol. V, pp. 250-256.
2. See full texts of the American and British replies in Khalil, *ibid*, pp. 321-323.
3. Telegram 828 from Gascoigne, Moscow, 18 December 1951, FO371/91231, E1192/407.

organization¹.

The Soviet official line of supporting the Wafd government in its struggle against Britain continued until its collapse on 27 January 1952. This support found its expression in the Soviet press which expressed its sympathy with the Egyptian government and people for their justified struggle against the "barbaric British attack" in Suez Canal zone². To quote Radio Moscow: "The anti-imperialist struggle was merging all sections of the populations...highest spiritual leaders and lecturers of Al-Azhar, the Muslim University, and the Egyptian Government". The Soviet Government's notes, said Radio Moscow, had been "received with satisfaction by the varied classes in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries". Now it was clear that the Egyptian people would not be frightened "by the aggression launched by Great Britain with the assistance of other imperialist powers"³.

There was a direct connection between the events at the Suez Canal zone and the new line adopted by the Plenary Session of the Council of "The World Movement for Peace", held in Vienna from 1 to 6 November 1951. The Council developed regional peace campaigns in terms of national liberation and anti-imperialism. More

1. See for instance, L. Vatolina, "Manevry imperialistov v Egipte" Izvestiia (Moscow), 12 May 1950. Vatolina said that both the British and the Americans, tried to realize their aggressive plans and to turn Egypt into one of their military bases in the Near East, by drawing Egypt into the projected aggressive Mediterranean bloc. Krasnaia Zvezda claimed that the visit to Egypt of Slim, the British Field Marshal, was connected with the realization of measures for the preparation of further war and the transformation of the Suez Canal zone into a military base for the imperialists in the Near East. See, "Na Temy Dnia: Fel'dmarshal Slim puteshestvuet", Krasnaia Zvezda, 11 June 1950. See also, Anglo-amerikanskoe sopernichestvo na Blizhnem Vostoke" Vecherniaia Moskva, 11 December 1950; Izvestiia, 13 January 1951; Krasnyi Flot, 7 February 1951; V. Kudriavtsev, "Amerikanskie proiski na Blizhnem Vostoke", Izvestiia, 14 April 1951; V. Kudriavtsev, "Nastuplenie SSHA na Angliiu v Sredizemnomorskem Basseiine", Izvestiia, 24 June 1951; V. Mikhailov, "Egipet i Amerika", Zaria Vastoka, 1 July 1951.
2. Tass transmission, 7 December 1951, SWB, USSR, p. 7.
3. Radio Moscow, 4 December 1951, SWB, USSR, p. 17.

emphasis was given to violence in this struggle. The movement for national independence was to refuse to collaborate "in any sort of defence pact under Western auspices". During the session, Kāmil al-Bindārī, the Egyptian delegate declared: "The Egyptian people had passed the stage of signatures and reached that of battle"¹. Indeed, Harakat Ansār al-Salām of which Al-Bindārī was one leader, played a major role in waging terrorist and guerrilla activities against British troops. The people behind these activities were described by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as "Egyptian patriots"². Their activities achieved the required aims. The British, who were determined to stop these activities by taking military action, including the occupation of the Suez Canal zone, lost their few sympathizers in Egyptian ruling circles. King Faruq, their main sympathizer, said that "they were making it impossible for him or any Egyptian government ever to accept a satisfactory solution of either defence problem or Sudan question"³. British military action contributed to reinforce Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's argument that Britain and not the U.S.S.R was Egypt's main enemy and that Egypt was to reject any military alliance with Britain.

The political and economic relations between Egypt and the Soviet Union were significantly improved in the second half of 1951, mainly in the last quarter, when the two rejected the idea of a Middle Eastern Command, and the U.S.S.R. supported Egypt in

1. See Confidential Report PR/22/23, on Soviet policy in the Middle East, prepared by the British F.O., 5 December 1951, FO371/91231, E1192/408. A few days later, Bindārī stated that if the government of Egypt would give him the orders, he could import "arms for 2 million men from a highly cooperative U.S.S.R". See, dispatch 700 from Caffery, Cairo, 14 November 1951, RG 84, Moscow Embassy-Confidential File, 1951:320-Egypt, box 157.

2. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was quoted by Tass on 17 November 1951, SWB, USSR, p. 14.

3. Telegram from Caffery, Cairo, 24 October 1951, FRUS 1951, Vol. V, p. 409. It is to be pointed out that Faruq was speaking to Caffery whom he must have known to be in favour of the British giving in to Egyptian demands.

its struggle against Britain. This process of rapprochement culminated on 30 November 1951, when Şalāh al-Dīn made statement that nothing would prevent Egypt from obtaining Soviet arms in a commercial exchange as the West had created serious difficulties in supplying and delivering arms to Egypt¹. In his book Qissat thaurat 23 Yuliyo, Abḥmad Ḥamrūsh has confirmed that negotiations for purchasing arms from Eastern European countries took place at the end of 1951. In order to strengthen police forces in the Canal Zone, to be able to maintain order, the Egyptian Government decided to approach the Legations of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Sirāj al-Dīn represented the Egyptian Government in these negotiations. These attempts, said Ḥamrūsh, signified the first contacts between Egypt and the Eastern bloc for the purchase of arms. According to Sirāj al-Dīn, these attempts did not meet with success because these countries feared that such a move would provoke the Western Powers². The reason for the Soviet refusal to supply arms to Egypt as given by Sirāj al-Dīn was not realistic. How could the U.S.S.R. reject such an opportunity, especially when the Western Powers were endeavouring to convince Egypt to side with them and to form a Middle East Command directed against Soviet interests? The Soviet Union was the one who had been provoked by the Four-Power proposals. It would therefore make sense that the Soviets would reply positively to Egypt's request and by doing so, to create the suitable conditions to strengthen their position in this strategic area. The Soviet refusal could be explained in a different way. Sirāj al-Dīn who planned and waged the anti-communist campaign in

1. Şalāh al-Dīn was interviewed by the French paper Paris Presse on 30 November 1951, see dispatch 3273 from American Embassy, Paris, 1 December 1951, RG 59, 774.00/12-151.
2. Ḥamrūsh, Qissat taurat 23 Yuliyo, Vol. 1, p. 155 and *ibid*, Vol. 2, p. 61.

Egypt was known for his anti-Soviet attitude. The Soviets, presumably, estimated that Sirāj's request for arms was a tactical move intended to put pressure on Britain to stop its military activity in the Suez Canal. The Soviets ruled out the possibility of a change in Siraj's anti-Soviet approach and they still considered him as a pro-Western and as the main obstacle in the process of rapprochement between the two countries. Moreover, the Soviets probably assumed that a positive reply to him could have strengthened significantly his position vis-à-vis their main supporter- Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and consequently to weaken the leftist wing inside the Wafdist government.

Whether Sirāj al-Dīn's application for Soviet arms was motivated purely by military needs, his move indicated a complete turning point in Wafd policy. In the short term, it was a victory for Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's neutralism. British complete disregard of the Minister of the Interior's calls to stop their military actions and Sirāj al-Dīn's inability to maintain order, put the latter in an inferior position and made him gradually lose his authority. His application to the Soviets, could be therefore, explained as one of despair.

In its last month in power, the Wafd government worked to tighten its relations with the U.S.S.R. Internationally, the government instructed its representatives to gravitate towards the Soviet orbit, sometimes against their own inclinations. Such was the case with Ahmad Fathī al-‘Aqqād, the Egyptian Ambassador to Kabul. American reports indicated that Fathī al-‘Aqqād and his Soviet counterpart, Artemi Fedorovitch Fedorov, were on much more friendly terms in January 1952 than was previously the case. Privately, the Egyptian Ambassador indicated to both his British and American counterparts his disagreement with his government's anti-British policy. Although, he was seen publicly with the

Soviet Ambassador more and more frequently, and the two were meeting at regular intervals in each other's missions¹. It therefore makes sense that Fathī al-‘Aqqād had acted according to the Foreign Ministry's orders.

The Soviet Union continued to support the Egyptian government in its struggle against Britain and its refusal to accept the Four-Power proposals. During the discussions of the U.N. Political committee, held in January 1952, Vyshinskii expressed Soviet sympathy for "Asian national aspirations". Radio Moscow pointed out that Egypt was one of these nations. Soviet policy, said the broadcast, was compatible with the fundamental national interests of the Near and Middle Eastern countries. Both, Arabs and Soviets were therefore, rejecting Middle East Command and British imperialism with its recent military activity in the Suez Canal zone against the Egyptian people². The Egyptian government, said Pravda, was supported by "Millions of Egyptian patriots" in its policy vis-à-vis Britain. The Egyptian people should look towards the U.S.S.R., the country which sincerely sympathized with their struggle for freedom and independence³. Manifestations of mutual support and understanding between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. found their expression during the session of the General Assembly of the U.N. in January 1952 in Paris. In several meetings between Soviet and Arab delegates, the former promised their support in the Arab efforts to reduce Western influence in

1. Dispatch 257 from John Evarts Horner, American Charge d'Affaires, Kabul, 19 January 1952, RG 59, 661.74/1-1952. In this connection, it is to be mentioned that on 24 October 1951, Salah al-Din said after a meeting with the Soviet Minister to Egypt, that Egypt would support the nomination of a Soviet Judge to the International Court of Justice. See, Radio Cairo, 24 October 1951, SWB, Arab World, p. 19.
2. L. Zimin and D. Davydov, "Za nezavisimost i svobodu", Trud, 12 January 1952; Radio Moscow in Arabic, 4 January 1952, SWB, USSR, p. 29.
3. G. Rassadin, "Egipet Segodnia", Pravda (Moscow), 25 January 1952.

the Middle East. On 20 January, Iakov A. Malik, Deputy Soviet Foreign Minister, held an extended talk with Salāh al-Dīn. The two discussed various subjects including the tactics to be adopted regarding the Tunisian crisis and the admission of Libya to the U.N. A few days earlier, in a meeting between 'Azzām Pasha, head of the Arab League, and Vyshinskii, Soviet Foreign Minister, 'Azzām Pasha reaffirmed his position that the Arab states would like to maintain friendly relations with both East and West despite their internal opposition to communism¹. On 23 January, in an interview to Al-Miṣrī, Vyshinskii expressed Soviet satisfaction with Egyptian and Arab persistence in rejecting military alliance with the West. He said that his government would assist all Middle Eastern peoples "to free themselves of Western economic domination". Vyshinskii was quoted as saying:²

"The unity of Middle Eastern people and their combined efforts are the obstacles halting military preparations to turn these countries into bases of aggression...these peoples must say no to all those who wish to make cannon fodder of them and try to make of them military equipment by means of which they can reach their aim of dominating the world...the struggle of the peoples of North Africa and the Middle East, whether in Egypt or Iran or elsewhere, to win their freedom has begun to shake the foundations of Western domination".

The cordial dialogue between Soviet and Egyptian delegates during the January session of the General Assembly of the U.N. seemed to have borne fruit. On 22 January 1952, Al-Miṣrī reported that Iakov Malik, the Soviet delegate to the U.N. had been invited by the Egyptian Government to visit Cairo and that his visit was expected soon³.

Stevenson, the British Ambassador, indicated a genuine increase of overt interest by the U.S.S.R. in Egypt. He appreciated that in the time of the Wafd government, the U.S.S.R. had gained

1. New York Times, 22 January 1952.

2. Ibid, 24 January 1952.

3. Al-Miṣrī, 22 January 1951. This visit was not carried out as a result of events inside Egypt political scene.

a footing in Egypt. Stevenson considered that the development and the increase of trade relations between the U.S.S.R. and Egypt contributed significantly to the spread of Soviet propaganda and Communism into Egypt¹.

The Wafd government was dismissed on 27 January following the British military actions in Ismā'īlia of 25 January and the Cairo riots of 26 January, (in which mobs looted and burned without restraint for most of the day). In both instances, the Nahās government failed to maintain order. Its helplessness, weakness and inability to control events, gave Faruq an opportunity to get rid of a government conducting a policy which was unacceptable to him. These events introduced a period of disorder and instability in Egyptian politics. During the first half of 1952, Caffery continually warned that Egypt seemed increasingly vulnerable to revolution led by extremists from both the right and left².

The Wafd defeat was a hard blow for Soviet-Egyptian relations. During its period in power, the Wafd shaped and implemented a policy of neutralism, which suited Soviet interests. Towards the end of 1951, both governments found themselves struggling to achieve the same goals. First, to expel the British from Egypt and the Middle East. Second, to prevent Western attempts to form a Middle East Command. The process of rapprochement which temporarily seemed to be gathering momentum, came to an end. The Egyptian governments which came to power from 28 January to 23 July 1952, clearly showed anti-communist and anti-Soviet

1. Dispatch 73 from Stevenson, Cairo, 14 March 1952, FO371/96925, JE1052/183.
2. P. L. Hahn, Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War: United States Policy towards Egypt, 1945-1956 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1987), pp. 351-352. The same appreciation was made by the British Embassy in Cairo. See letter (1012/15/52), 18 February 1952, FO371/96872, E1018/78.

tendencies if they were not actually pro-Western¹.

The Soviet Union summed up its indignation and dissatisfaction about the change of government in Egypt and attacked 'Alī Māhir's new government. Pravda claimed that the Cairo riots were of the nature of a "pogrom" organized for the purpose of "assisting court circles to remove Nahbās Pasha". This was an Anglo-American conspiracy, aiming to bring into power a new government of supporters of a rapprochement between Egypt and the West. 'Alī Māhir's government, said Pravda, was preparing the ground in order to include Egypt in the "Middle Eastern aggressive bloc"². A few weeks later, New Times stressed that the Wafd government collapsed owing to its anti-Western policy. The "upsurge of the national liberation movement", said New Times, compelled the Wafd government to abrogate the 1936 treaty and reject the proposed Middle East Command. These actions made the Western Powers dissatisfied because they feared that "the Egyptian people's national struggle would end in victory". The assumption of power by 'Alī Māhir was therefore, an "Anglo-American intrigue"³. Indeed, the Soviet government believed that the United States and British governments were responsible for the Wafd downfall,

because of the latter's refusal to accept their proposals to form

1. 'Alī Māhir's government (assumed power on 27 January 1952) was described by Caffery as strongly anti-communist. See dispatch 1234 from Caffery, Cairo, 1 February 1952, RG 59, 774.00/2-152. Department of State, Intelligence Report No. 5776, "Significance of the New 'Alī Māhir Cabinet", 5 February 1952. Najib Hilālī's government (assumed power on 1 March 1952), was also described as strongly anti-communist. See Memorandum by Berry, the acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs to the Secretary of State, 3 March 1952, RG 59, 774.00/3-352. On the Egyptian governments policies and the political situation up to 23 July 1952, see FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. IX, pp. 1755-1761, 1770-1773, 1828-1831, 1837-1843. See also Vatikiotis, pp.372-373, 377-378.
2. K. Khabib, "Chto proiskhodit v Egipte", Pravda, 3 February 1952. See also, A. Korzin, "Mezhdunarodnyii Obzor: K Sobytiiam v Egipte", Moskovskaia Pravda 8 February 1952.
3. Miller, New Times, No. 9, quoted in Radio Moscow, 28 February 1952, SWB, USSR, p. 26.

a Middle East Command and for its policy of neutralism. The Soviets who feared that the new government would surrender to Western pressure and join such a Command, reacted quickly. On 28 January, Gromyko handed notes to the British, French, United States and Turkish Ambassadors in Moscow. These notes were apparently the Soviet reply to the notes delivered to them on 18 December by the governments of the Four Powers. In fact, these notes were intended to warn Western Powers against exploiting the existing instability in Egypt in order to promote their interests. The notes reflected Soviet fears of the possibility of forming a Middle East Command and rejected the Four-Power contention that the proposed command was purely defensive. The Soviets branded as false the Four-Power contention that the command was being organized for the purpose of aiding countries of that region to safeguard and protect their freedom and independence. In their reply to the British note, the Soviets asserted:¹

"The Middle East Command is by no means being set up on a voluntary basis or for the purposes of defence, as is asserted in the note of the government of Great Britain, but is being directly foisted on the Middle Eastern countries by Britain the USA, France and Turkey. Nobody threatens the countries of the Near and Middle East and it was not on their initiative that the proposal arose for the creation of a Middle East Command. On the contrary, in the countries of the Near and Middle East serious fears are growing together with outright resistance to the plans for involving these countries in the military measures of such an aggressive group of states..."

The proposed command, said the Soviets, showed that the Western Powers still looked on the Middle East countries as their colonies to be used for their aggressive plans².

Attempts to renew the Anglo-Egyptian dialogue and to promote the

1. See telegram 46 from Sir A. Gascoigne, Moscow, 28 January 1952, F0371/98278, E1193/4. See translation of the note the British government (Similar, but not identical notes were delivered to France Turkey and U.S.) in dispatch 24, *ibid*, 31 January 1952, E1193/7. See also a text of the note to the government of the U.S.A. in, SSSR i Arabskie Strany, pp. 109-113.
2. See dispatch 24, *ibid*.

proposed plan of M.E.C. were made by American and British officials on the one hand and Egyptian officials on the other. In its first month in power, 'Alī Māhir's government seemed to be seeking an acceptable solution to the extended conflict with Britain. This government tended to cooperate and coordinate its policy with the U.S.A. These activities increased Soviet indignation and criticism. On 23 February, Izvestiia asserted that the "American-British imperialists are undertaking new manoeuvres for the purpose of obtaining Egypt participation in the imperialist bloc in the Near East". Despite the sentiments of the Egyptian public, said Izvestiia, the Egyptian government were displaying an inclination to carry out Western demands¹.

The Soviet media criticised the governments that succeeded the Wafd for their suppression of the "national liberation movement" and for siding with the West. However, they continued to support the Egyptian people in their struggle for "national liberation"², in spite of their government's policies.

1. V. Kudriavtsev, "Proiski imperialistov na Blizhnem Vostoke", Izvestiia, 23 February 1952. See also Kudriavtsev's article of 11 May 1952, in *ibid*.
2. See for instance, Tass transmission, 5 February 1952, SWB, USSR, p. 15. "Egypt: the Working Class Struggle", Radio Moscow in Arabic, 9 February 1952, *ibid*, p. 18. "Egypt: the Latest Government Change", Tass, 2 March 1952, *ibid*, p. 30. V. Kudriavtsev, "Protiv militaristskogo obshchego dogovora", Izvestiia, 11 May 1952. "The Egyptian Intellectuals' Struggle", Radio Moscow in Arabic, 18 July 1952, SWB, Communist Broadcasts, p. 4-5.

e. The Improvement in Economic Relations Under the Wafdist Government 1950-1952.

The process of political rapprochement between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. during the Wafdist government of 1950-1952 had important implications for the improvement of the economic relations between the two countries, and commerce steadily increased.

By this time, Soviet policy makers had realized, that the economic factor, could serve as a tool to promote their political interests in the Arab world, and to these ends they rapidly widened their markets for products of the Arab countries. The Soviets quickly understood that barter, i.e., the direct exchange of goods without monetary transactions, was the most suitable method of trading with the Arab countries. Egypt and Syria, meanwhile, were deeply dissatisfied with the development of their trade with the U.S.A. The dollar gap in Egypt's commercial transactions widened from \$192,000,000 in 1948 to \$338,000,000 in 1949. Senior Egyptian officials realised that a significant decrease in American-Egyptian trade would be inevitable as Egypt could not continue to bear such a large trade imbalance¹.

The trade between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. in the first six months of Nahās' government was much greater than in the same period of 1949. Two barter pacts were concluded in this period. The first was signed on 9 April 1950 at the Egyptian Ministry of Supply. In this agreement, Egypt was to exchange 10,000 tons of cotton for 100,000 tons of Soviet wheat. This pact was based on the draft agreement offered by the Soviets in 1949 and which had been refused by Egypt. A few weeks later, another agreement was

1. Egon Kaskeline, "Soviet glow with promises to barter; Egypt sways on fence of uncertainty", Christian Science Monitor, 11 August 1950.

signed under which Egypt was to exchange 8,000 tons of Egyptian cotton for 100,000 tons of Soviet maize¹. It is significant to note that the most influential class in Egypt, the landowners, played an important role in persuading the senior government officials, who represented them, to promote trade with the Soviet bloc. As a very high percentage of the exported cotton came from their private firms, their interest was to sell the cotton wherever it made a profit. The sharp decline in sales to traditional markets, mainly in the West, was the main reason for this position.

The motives of the successive Egyptian governments on one hand, and that of the landowners on the other, to improve the commercial relationship with the Soviet bloc, were utterly different. The governments were influenced by political and economic policy considerations. The landowners² were interested in improving their profits.

The Soviet doctrine under Stalin towards the Arab world, described in depth in earlier chapters, was not designed to promote contact between communist and non-communist governments, in any fields. The commerce between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. illustrates once again the contradictions between doctrine and Realpolitik that existed in Soviet policy.

Statements in favour of improving economic relations with the U.S.S.R. were made by senior Egyptian officials throughout 1951. For instance, In Moscow, 'Abd al-Hasib, the Egyptian Charge

1. On Egypt's commercial agreements with the Soviet bloc in 1950, see, dispatch 930, 461.74/10-1850, *ibid*. On the two barter agreements of 1950, see, Radio Cairo, 10 April 1950, SWB, Arab World, p. 52. Dispatch 755 from Caffery, Cairo, 14 April 1950, RG 59, 461.7431/4-1450.
2. See for instance dispatches 104 and 184 from G.G. Howard, Counselor of American Embassy for Economic Affairs, 29 July 1950, RG 59, 461.7431/7-2950. Dispatch 421 from American Embassy, Moscow, RG 59, 461.7431/2-251.

d'affaires, emphasized to an officer of the American Embassy the importance that his government attached to its trade with the Soviet bloc. He confirmed that private Egyptian interests had recently concluded a deal with the U.S.S.R. for an unstated quantity of Soviet timber and that the Egyptian government also had concluded a deal for Soviet wheat. According to him, more deals were soon expected¹. The Egyptian Ministry of Supply confirmed that an inter-governmental deal had indeed been concluded, under which Egypt was to purchase 150,000 tons of wheat. This, he said, represented an additional 50,000 tons over and above the 100,000 tons purchased by Egypt in December 1950. This was not a barter deal and the payment was made by the Egyptian government in transferable Sterling².

The total trade with the Soviet Union in 1950 amounted to L.E. 14,649,777, which was about 4% of the total value of Egyptian trade. Imports from the Soviet Union amounted to L.E. 5,864,632, accounting for about 3% by value of total imports. Exports amounted to L.E. 8,785,145; approximately 5% of the value of total exports³.

The following table⁴ clearly illustrates the significant increase in the trade between both countries in comparison to 1949. The table shows Egypt's trade with Foreign countries during 1950 (in Millions of L.E.), again excluding gold or re-exports.

1. Dispatch 421, *ibid*. It doesn't say when the conversations were held, but it is pointed out "recently", that is, sometimes towards the end of January 1951. The dispatch was sent on 2 February.
2. See dispatch 1861 from Caffery, Cairo, 6 February 1951, RG 59, 461.7431/2-651.
3. See dispatch 2471 from Hazel T. Ellis, Economic Officer, American Embassy, Cairo, 14 April 1951, RG 59, 461.74/4-1451.
4. The figures were taken from Enclosures No. 1 to dispatch 2042 from American Embassy, Cairo, 26 February 1954, RG 59, 874.00TA/2-2654.

	<u>Imports</u>		<u>Exports</u>		<u>L.E. Balance</u>
	<u>L.E.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>L.E.</u>	<u>%</u>	
<u>Western Countries</u>					
United Kingdom	40.7	21.2	37.9	21.9	-2.8
France	18.0	9.4	14.1	8.1	-3.9
Western Germany	6.1	3.2	5.5	3.2	-0.6
Italy	15.5	8.1	14.9	8.6	-0.6
Netherlands	4.3	2.2	6.2	3.6	+1.9
United States	12.6	6.6	15.4	8.9	+2.8
<u>Soviet Bloc & China</u>					
Czechoslovakia	2.5	1.3	4.0	2.3	+1.5
Hungary	1.3	0.7	1.1	0.6	-0.2
Poland	0.5	0.3	1.0	0.6	+0.5
Rumania	0.8	0.4	0.3	0.2	-0.5
Soviet Union	5.9	3.0	8.8	5.1	+2.9
China	0.3	0.2	1.2	0.7	+0.9
<u>Arab Countries</u>	4.0	2.1	3.7	2.1	-0.3
<u>Other Countries</u>	79.0	41.3	58.9	34.1	-20.1
<u>Total for All Countries</u>	191.5	100.0	173.0	100.0	-18.5

From the above figures we can see that the greatest amount of trade was still with the West (U.K, U.S. and France). In 1950, 37.2% of Egypt's imports came from the West while exports were 38.9% of the total. Egypt imported only 5.9%, by value, from the Soviet bloc and China and exported only 9.5% by value to those countries. Exports to the Soviet Union increased by 2.4% in comparison to 1949 and constituted 53.7% of Egypt's total exports to the Eastern bloc. Imports from the Soviet Union increased by 2.6% compared to 1949 and constituted 50.8% of Egypt's total imports from the Eastern bloc. In 1950 Egypt achieved a favourable balance of trade with the Eastern bloc of L.E.5,100,000. Nevertheless, this surplus was not enough to improve the overall negative balance of trade of L.E.18,500,000, of which L.E.3,200,000 was due Egypt's trade with the West.

Negotiations for barter took place between Egypt and the U.S.S.R., as early as June 1951, on the latter's initiative. The Commercial Counsellor of the Soviet Embassy in Cairo, offered the Egyptian Ministry of Supply, Soviet wheat for Egyptian rice. The offer was first turned down, as the Egyptians preferred to keep their rice in stock for possible domestic use. However, Egypt expressed its willingness to exchange cotton for Soviet wheat. In their reply, the Soviets stressed that they were mostly interested in rice, but that they believed, that Hungary and Rumania, would exchange wheat for cotton, if the prices were fair. In July, the two countries agreed to exchange both rice and cotton for wheat. On 9 July 1951, Ahmad Hamza, the Egyptian Minister of Supply, signed a barter agreement with representatives of The U.S.S.R., Hungary and Rumania¹. According to Hamza, the Egyptian government's decision to accept the Soviet offer was because of an urgent need for wheat, as the U.S.A., Egypt's main supplier, could not furnish Egypt with the necessary quantity. Egypt, therefore, was looking for wheat wherever it could be found². The agreement of 9 July established the following points:³

a. The U.S.S.R. agreed to sell Egypt 72,141.4 metric tons of wheat for L.E.3,174,217.2. Egypt agreed to sell the U.S.S.R. 50,000 tons of rice from stock and 10,000 tons of glazed rice from the 1951-1952 crop (due in December), for L.E.3,185,314. The Soviet wheat was to be shipped between July and December 1951, and the same ships would return with Egyptian rice.

1. On the agreement see, dispatches 41 and 88 from American Embassy, Cairo, 10 and 16 July 1951, RG 59, 461.7431/7-1051 and 461.7431/7-1651. Radio Cairo, 9 July 1951, SWB, 'Arab World, p. 33.
2. See dispatch 60 from Caffery, Cairo, 17 July 1951, RG 59, 461.7431/7-1751.
3. See dispatch 88, *ibid.*

b. Hungary agreed to sell Egypt 10,000 tons of wheat for L.E. 440,000. Egypt would sell Hungary 1,042 metric tons of cotton for L.E. 504,351.98. Shipment of the wheat was to be made between July and December from Black Sea ports, and the same ships were to return with cotton.

c. Rumania agreed to sell Egypt 64,625 tons of wheat at L.E. 2,843,500 against the delivery of 5,500 tons of Egyptian cotton for L.E. 2,926,000. The delivery of Rumanian wheat was to start immediately and be completed by the end of August 1951. The same ships would return with Egyptian cotton.

d. The payment arrangements were as follows: the Egyptian government would open credits in L.E. in Egyptian banks to the accounts of the other countries. The credits would be used to purchase Egyptian cotton. Three days after the official notice to the Egyptian government, that the grain shipments had been made, the sellers would be "free to draw on this account to the value of the grain shipped, and apply the sum towards cotton purchases".

The deterioration in Anglo-Egyptian political relations during 1951, especially after the abrogation of the Treaty of 1936 also had implications on the economic relationship between the two countries. Britain was the traditional supplier of goods Egypt needed. It also, was the buyer of about one-third of Egypt's cotton crop; more than 80% by value of all Egyptian exports. In order to prevent the collapse of the Egyptian economy with its reliance on Britain, both as a market for Egyptian cotton and as a source of imports, the Egyptian searched for alternative markets. At the end of 1951 the Soviet Union offered to sell Egypt what it needed and talks took place. The Soviets were in special

need of cotton in 1951, owing to the failure of the crop in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union therefore aimed to achieve a most-favoured-nation clause and priority in purchasing Egyptian cotton. To counterbalance the effect of the British sanctions imposed against Egypt, the Soviets considered a trade arrangement that would amount to underwriting for some time to come, the continuation of Egypt's post-war prosperity, based on high cotton prices. In the meantime, Egypt was also offered by Eastern European countries oil, grains, arms and ammunition, timber, newsprint, machinery and medicines in return for cotton, rice, manganese and other products¹.

A comprehensive agreement between the Soviet Union and the Wafdist government was not signed, both parties however coming close to doing so. The downfall of Nahhās' government and the coming to power of 'Alī Māhir's government did not hinder the success of the talks started in October 1951. Despite the new government's often stated anti-Soviet approach, the economic policy of the Wafd of tightening relations with the Soviet bloc continued and there was a steadily increase in trade, in the first half of 1952. Trade with the Soviet bloc was motivated purely by economic interests. On 23 February 1952, only a several weeks after the Wafd downfall, 'Alī Māhir announced the conclusion of a barter transaction with the Soviet Union. The agreement was signed on 3 March and covered the exchange of 200,000 tons of Soviet wheat

1. On Soviet-Egyptian economic rapprochement and talks on future agreements, see, "Egypt and Soviet to discuss Trade Pact in another Anti-British move by Cairo", New York Times, 26 October 1951. Christian Science Monitor, 26 October 1951. Arab News Agency, 6 November 1951, SWB, Arab World, p. 26. "Soviet Deal Hinted on Egyptian Cotton", New York Times, 9 November 1951. Dispatch 1206 from J. Wesley Adams, Second Secretary, American Embassy Cairo, 21 November 1951, RG 59, 461.74/11-2151. Dispatch 1208 from Caffery, Cairo, 21 November 1951, *ibid*, 461.74/11-2151. "Egypt, Russia Ready for Final Talks on Trade", New York Herald Tribune, 9 December 1951.

for 20,000 tons of Egyptian cotton. This deal was much smaller than the one planned earlier, by the Wafd. One of the immediate results, of the coming to power of a pro-American government, was that Wafdist plans of replacing the West by the Soviet bloc countries, as Egypt's main suppliers, were cancelled, for the time being. The new agreement established, *inter alia*, the following:¹

- a. Shipments of wheat would be effected from March to June 1952 from the Black sea and/or Azov ports. The dates of the Bills of Lading were to be considered as the dates of shipment.
- b. The weights indicated in the Bills of Lading as well as the qualitative data given in the Certificates of Quality issued by the Grain Inspection Bureau of the U.S.S.R. were to be final and binding on both parties.
- c. Payments were to be effected within three days of the receipt by the BUYERS (the Egyptian Ministry of Supply) of the SELLERS (the Soviets) cable notices of consignments of wheat being ready for shipment. The BUYERS had to pay the full amounts of the invoices in Egyptian pounds to the special account, of the State Bank of the U.S.S.R. held at the National Bank of Egypt.
- d. Any possible disputes arising from this Contract were to be settled in Moscow by the Foreign Trade Arbitration Commission at the U.S.S.R. Chamber of Commerce, whose decisions were to be irrevocable, final and binding upon both parties.
- e. Moscow was considered to be the place of conclusion and fulfilment of the Contract.

1. On the Agreement see, dispatch 1413 from Caffery, Cairo, 24 February 1952, RG 59, 461.7431/2-2452. Dispatch 1838 from C.F. Conover, Assistant Attaché at American Embassy, Cairo, 1 March 1952, RG 59, 461.7431/3-152. Dispatch 70(E) from Stevenson, Cairo, 13 March 1952, F0371/96961, JE11338/1. See a translation of the full text in dispatch 1934 from Caffery, Cairo, 20 March 1952, RG 59, 461.7431/3-2052.

Comparing with the previous barter agreements¹, we see that in this agreement, the Egyptian government was forced to make concessions. For instance, its acceptance of clause b' meant that it had no recourse under the contract if, for instance, half the wheat was rotten, or if the dirt admixture ran to 50%².

Regarding clause d', the previous agreements, established that arbitrations were to be held under the auspices of a professional body, nominated by the Seller, and agreeable to the Buyer, whose decision would be final. That is, in the case of cotton, the chosen body was Egyptian, and in the case of wheat, it was a Soviet body. According to clause d' of the new agreement, all disputes were to be settled only by the Soviet professional body. Another difference between the new transaction and the previous ones, was in the place of conclusion. According to clause e' the place of conclusion of the new agreement was Moscow, while in the previous cases it was Cairo.

The main reason for the concessions made by the Egyptian government was that the Egyptian cotton market was in a state of utter confusion. The government's attempt on 18 February to abolish minimum prices gradually by permitting a 3% variation in prices per day ended disastrously. After one day's trading, when all prices dropped 3% with no buyers, it became clear that continued drops in prices would mean bankruptcy to many traders in "long" positions and resulting losses to growers and holders of cotton.

According to 'Ali Māhir, the new deal would enable the trade to unload without crippling losses; and would, in fact, "solve the critical situation on the 'Ashmouni' cotton market"³.

1. See for instance the full texts of the agreements of March 1948 and July 1951.
2. See the full text in dispatch 1934, *ibid*.
3. See dispatch 1838, *ibid*.

The following tables give detailed statistics of Egypt's trade with the Soviet Union during the second half of 1951. We see from the following figures, that trade with the Soviets gave Egypt a favourable balance of trade of L.E.905,299. However, this was not enough to balance the deficit of L.E.5,169,769 of the first half of 1951¹. As a result of this change, Egypt's overall trade balance with the Soviet Union improved, yet, at the end of 1951, was still negative at L.E.4,264,470². In contrast to previous years, the cotton was only 1.8% of Egypt's exports to the Soviet Union with 98.1% of the exports being rice. However, exports to other Eastern bloc countries during 1951 were of the same products as previous years, but mainly cotton³.

Total Egyptian Exports to the U.S.S.R.
(July-December 1951)

DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY Kilograms	\$	VALUE L.E.
Rice	49,868,722	7,109,165	2,468,460
Cotton	82,982	131,884	45,793
Confectionery	14	12	4
Postal Parcels	2	3	1
TOTAL	49,951,720	7,241,064	2,514,258

1. The table was taken from enclosure No.1 to dispatch 1719 from T. Howard Peters, Economic Attaché, American Embassy, Cairo, 12 February 1952, RG 59, 461.74/2-1252.
2. See dispatch 1719, *ibid*.
3. *Ibid*. See also, dispatch 1955 from *ibid*, 24 March 1951, 461.74/3-2452.

Total Egyptian Imports From the U.S.S.R
(July-December 1951)

DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY Kilograms	VALUE \$	VALUE L.E.
Wheat	32,236,541	3,006,556	1,043,943
Perfume, Raw Materials	9,900	4,378	1,520
Meat Preparations	180	288	100
Caviar	67	1,290	448
Tobacco	180	72	25
Chemical Products	342,456	345,606	120,002
Medicine & Pharmaceuticals	279	4,516	1,568
Cinema Films	249	5,962	2,070
Indigo artificial	32,414	44,712	15,525
Timber of all types	8,273,039	852,034	295,845
Wood, Veneer	552,295	281,943	97,897
Valises	18	92	32
Tires	75	72	25
Tubes	15	14	5
Books & Manuscripts	34	35	12
Unspecified Wares	6,900	1,949	673
Porcelain Wares	23,289	2,972	1,032
Cotton Piece Goods	34,188	70,249	24,392
Glass	57,884	2,713	942
Sheet Iron	4	17	6
Radio Tubes	5	40	14
Radios	375	132	46
Bicycles	1,800	1,106	384
Hydrometers	89	786	273
Cinema & Photographic Apparatus	1,000	5,031	1,747
Postal Parcels	25	6	2
Miscellaneous	8	6	2
TOTAL	41,579,571	4,633,802	1,608,959

The following tables¹ show Egypt's trade with Foreign countries (in Millions of L.E.), again excluding gold or re-exports. Table A' covers 1951 and table B' covers 1952. In 1951 there was no significant change in Egypt's trade with the Soviet Bloc and Communist China. The percentages of export and import trade were relatively unchanged. Egypt's total foreign trade in 1951 valued at L.E.432.7 Millions while the total trade with the Soviet bloc and China amounted to L.E.34.1 Millions, that is, 7.88% of the total value. The trade statistics of the Soviet bloc

1. The figures were taken from Enclosure No. 1 to dispatch 2042, ibid. See also Enclosure No. 1 to dispatch 1452, ibid, 20 January 1953, 874.00TA/1-2053.

and China in 1951 were almost similar to those of 1950. For instance, exports to the Soviet bloc in 1951 were 9.3% of the total exports while in 1950 were 9.5%. In 1951 imports increased by 0.6% compared to the previous year, and were 6.5% of Egypt's total imports in 1951. Against an adverse total balance of trade in 1951, of L.E.31.5 Millions, Egypt had a favourable balance of trade with the Soviet bloc and China of L.E.3.9 Millions.

Table A'

	<u>Imports</u>		<u>Exports</u>		<u>L.E. Balance</u>
	<u>L.E.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>L.E.</u>	<u>%</u>	
<u>Western Countries</u>					
United Kingdom	41.5	17.9	38.6	19.3	-2.9
France	20.3	8.7	19.7	9.8	-0.6
Western Germany	9.8	4.2	8.6	4.3	-1.2
Italy	15.7	6.8	16.2	8.1	+0.5
Netherlands	5.2	2.2	2.6	1.3	-2.6
United States	27.4	11.8	19.5	9.7	-7.9
<u>Soviet Bloc & China</u>					
Czechoslovakia	2.1	0.9	9.5	4.7	+7.4
Hungary	1.8	0.8	2.1	1.0	+0.3
Poland	0.6	0.2	1.1	0.5	+0.5
Rumania	3.2	1.4	3.5	1.7	+0.3
Soviet Union	7.1	3.1	2.5	1.2	-4.6
China	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.2	0
<u>Arab Countries</u>	9.3	4.0	3.8	1.9	-5.5
<u>Other Countries</u>	87.8	37.9	72.6	36.3	-15.2
<u>Total for All Countries</u>	232.1	100.0	200.6	100.0	-31.5

Table B'

	<u>Imports</u>		<u>Exports</u>		<u>L.E. Balance</u>
	<u>L.E.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>L.E.</u>	<u>%</u>	
<u>Western Countries</u>					
United Kingdom	28.8	13.6	6.4	4.5	-22.4
France	14.1	6.7	18.2	12.7	+4.1
Western Germany	12.2	5.8	11.4	8.0	-0.8
Italy	12.2	5.8	15.6	10.9	+3.4
Netherlands	7.8	3.7	1.9	1.3	-5.9
United States	32.9	15.5	16.8	11.8	-16.1
<u>Soviet Bloc & China</u>					
Bulgaria	--	--	0.5	0.4	--
Czechoslovakia	2.6	1.2	7.2	5.0	+4.6
Hungary	1.0	0.4	2.2	1.5	+1.2
Poland	0.4	0.2	1.9	1.3	+1.5
Rumania	0.9	0.4	0.5	0.4	-0.4
Soviet Union	10.8	5.1	10.0	7.0	-0.8
China	0.2	0.1	3.1	2.2	+2.9
<u>Arab Countries</u>	8.9	4.2	2.5	1.8	-6.4
<u>Other Countries</u>	78.8	37.3	44.7	31.2	-34.1
<u>Total for All Countries</u>	211.6	100.0	142.9	100.0	-69.2

In 1952 there was a drastic change in Egypt's trade with the Soviet bloc and China. Egypt's total foreign trade in 1952 was valued at L.E.354.5 Millions. Total trade with the Soviet bloc and China amounted to L.E.41.3 Millions, or 11.65% of that amount. During 1952 exports to the Soviet bloc and China were 17.8% of Egypt's total exports, a growth of 8.5% compared to 1951. Against an adverse balance for total foreign trade in 1952 of L.E.69.2 Millions, once again Egypt had a favourable balance of trade with the Soviet bloc and China, of L.E.9 Millions. During 1952 there was a significant decrease in Egypt's trade with the Western Powers. Exports from Egypt to these countries in 1952 went down by 9.8% compared to 1951. This fall found its expression mainly in Egypt's exports to the U.K. which dropped from 19.3% in 1951 to

4.5% in 1952. Meanwhile, Egypt's imports from these countries went down by only 2.6%. This was because the Soviet bloc was able to supply some raw materials and heavy goods, for example, agricultural machinery, yet, could not supply the large amount of consumer goods demanded by Egypt, and traditionally supplied by the Western powers. Generally, during 1952, there was a fall of L.E. 78.2 Millions in Egypt's total foreign trade compared to 1951.

CHAPTER THREE
SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS UNDER NASIR, 1952-1955

A. Soviet Response to the July 1952 Coup D'état

The "Free Officers" coup d'état on 23 July 1952¹, was understood by the Soviets to be another link in a chain of attempts by the Western Powers to bring into power in Egypt a government which would serve their interests. The Soviets did not pay much attention to the fact that for the first time in the 20th century, the Egyptian army was deliberately involved in politics. The first Soviet comment, issued by Tass on 24 July, did not mention General Muḥammad Najīb's statement explaining the motives behind the coup. It mainly focused on 'Alī Māhir, the new Prime Minister who was described as a tool in the hands of the Americans. Tass remarked that 'Alī Māhir's previous accession to power in January 1952, had followed "consultations with U.S. diplomats aimed at involving Egypt in the aggressive Middle East Command"². The Soviets concluded that the political instability in Egypt had been caused by "the interests of foreign imperialists" and also by the rivalry between the Americans and the British for domination in the Middle East. For instance, the former Prime Minister Hilālī Pasha was known to be pro-British and his successor, 'Alī Māhir was "fully trusted by the Americans". The strengthening of American influence would probably increase the prospects of Egypt's acceptance of the M.E.C. proposals³.

The Soviet image of Egypt's new rulers changed soon after 'Alī

1. On the coup d'etat, see Weekly Summary of Events, in, Memorandum by Alta F. Fowler, the Office of Near Eastern Affairs to the Officer in Charge of Egypt and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan Affairs, 28 July 1952, FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. IX, pp. 1844-1847. Ḥamrūsh, Qisṣat thaurat 23 Yuliyo, Vol. 1, pp. 177-208. Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Haykal, Milaffāt al-Suways (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahrām, 1986), pp. 139-151.
2. Tass report, 24 July 1952, SWB, USSR, p. 12.
3. Ivanov, Tass International Review, 1 August 1952, *ibid*, pp. 3-4.

Māhir's resignation on 7 September. For the Soviets, a series of measures taken by the military rulers to maintain order, was seen as the starting point of a process of establishing a new political structure. To quote ~~Iakov~~ Malik: "Many changes have been taking place in the area, the most prominent one has been the replacement of old kings by babies and youngsters". Malik described this process as a "monarchical dehydration" which preceded the liquidation of the monarchies of the Middle East¹.

The links which were known to have existed between the military officers and the American Embassy in Cairo, had utterly convinced the Soviets that these ties would pave the way for Egypt to take the side of the West. Under the heading "Egypt" in the Soviet encyclopaedia which was published in September 1952, it was written:²

"On the night of 23 July 1952 a reactionary officers' group linked with the U.S.A. and headed by Gen. Najib seized power in Cairo. King Faruq was deposed on 26 July...the Regency Council and the government being controlled by Gen. Najib, who established a military dictatorship...The 1952 coup sharply aggravated Anglo-American differences concerning Egypt. After the coup, Najib began savage reprisals against the workers' movement, setting up drumhead court-martial".

The first Soviet attack on the military rulers came as a result of the Kafr al-Dawwār's incident. On the night of 12 August, a strike of 500 workers broke out at the Misr Textile Works in Kafr al-Dawwār near Alexandria. On 13 August, early in the morning, army troops arrived from Alexandria. In the exchange of fire between the demonstrators and the army, one policeman, two soldiers and four workers were killed and many others wounded. To contain the unrest, the new leaders authorized the arrest 545

1. See record of conversation between Malik and G. Refael, Israel delegate to the U.N., took place on 26 August 1952, in secret letter from G. Refael, 3 September 1952, ISA, FM2410/18.
2. Bol'shaja Sovetskaia Entsiklopedija, 2nd ed., Vol. 15, p. 460, in: Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, p. 103.

workers¹. The military rulers assumed that communists were responsible for inciting the workers to demonstrate against their authority. This development led therefore to strengthening the position of the anti-communist faction vis-à-vis the minor communists and communist sympathizers among the "Free Officers". Vigorous measures to isolate the communists and to remove them from key positions were taken². On 25 September, during a conversation between Najib and Stevenson, the former outlined Egypt's policy towards Communism. Najib said that his government intended to take the strongest measures against Communism in Egypt. According to him, the regime had "recently brought the total of interned communists up to about 200"³.

The Soviet press gave an accurate description of the events. It covered them under the headlines: "Shooting of strikers in Egypt" and "Harsh Suppression of the Egyptian Textile Workers' strike"⁴. The Polish Press Agency concluded that the riots against the British under the Wafd government and the events in Kafr al-Dawwār, had shown the potential strength of "the Egyptian national movement". The new rulers of Egypt and their "hidden American-Nazi advisers", it said, were using bloody methods of terror against the workers⁵.

Soviet criticism of Egypt's new leaders continued even when the latter's social policy intended to improve the status of the peasants through the laws of agrarian reform decreed on 9

1. On the events in Kafr al-Dawwār, see Beinin and Lockman, Workers on the Nile, pp. 421-426. Selma Botman, The Rise of Egyptian Communism, pp. 125-130.
2. Beinin and Lockman, *ibid*, p. 426. See also telegram 406 from Caffery, Cairo, 20 August 1952, FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. IX, pp. 1851-1852.
3. Telegram 1428 from Stevenson, Cairo, 24 September 1952, F0371/96892, 1024/3.
4. Polish Press Agency, 26 August 1952, SWB, Communist Broadcasts, pp. 3-4.
5. Radio Moscow in Arabic, 14 and 15 August 1952, SWB, USSR, p.14.

September 1952. These laws attempted to solve a serious agrarian problem which stood as an obstacle on the road towards social progress and development. In fact, these laws did not lead to a solution of the problem¹. Despite the socialist nature, of the agrarian reform and its goals, Soviet commentators criticised it and indicated that the prospects of considerable change were very small. In a Radio Moscow survey of Egypt, Vinogradov, a Candidate of Historical Sciences, did analyse accurately the implications of the reform. He stressed that despite the land reform which restricted the size of private land holdings and provided that any in excess should become state property within five years, the landowners would be paid by the government with treasury bonds bearing interest at three per cent. He concluded that the reform did not address the situation of the landless peasants and smallholders because they could not pay for the smallest bit of land confiscated from the landowners².

The Soviet negative approach towards Egypt's military regime arose from understandable considerations. It seems that the Soviets knew that close relations between the American Embassy and the Free Officers had been maintained before and after the coup d'etat of 23 July³. Indeed, soon after the coup, American

1. On the agrarian reform in Egypt see, Gabriel Baer, "The Agrarian Reform in Egypt-Consequences and evaluations", Hamizrah Hahadash, Vol. 9, (1958), pp. 1-25. M.H. Kerr, "The Emergence of a Socialist Ideology in Egypt", Middle East Journal, Vol. 16, No.2, (1962), p. 127. Radwan Samir, Agrarian Change in Egypt (London: 1986), pp. 6-10.
2. Vinogradov, "The Map of the World", Radio Moscow, 26 September 1952, SWB, USSR, pp. 12-14.
3. The question whether the American Embassy in Cairo had known of the Free Officers' intentions and that the C.I.A. expected the coup d'etat is disputed among scholars, and cannot be confirmed by American declassified files. On this subject see, Hahn, United States Policy towards Egypt, pp.368-369. On the C.I.A. contacts with the "Free Officers" before the coup, see, Hamrūsh, Qissat thaurat 23 Yuliyo, pp. 182-188. Miles Copeland, The Game of Nations (London: 1969), pp. 51-53. Muhammad 'Abd el-Wahab Sayed-Ahmed, Nasser and American Foreign Policy 1952-1956 (London: 1989), pp. 33-50.

influence in Egypt had significantly increased. On 19 September, Acheson reported to President Truman that Caffery had developed considerable influence and would perhaps be able to get Egypt into the Middle East Defence Organization (M.E.D.O.). He assumed that the creation of a vacuum in Egypt owing to the complete collapse of British influence could be filled by the U.S.A.¹.

Furthermore, the new Egyptian leaders did not hide their sympathy towards the U.S.A. In fact, as they were opposed to Communism and both distrusted and disliked the British, the U.S.A. became their favoured alternative. Soon after the coup they declared publicly and officially their intentions to be affiliated with the West, under conditions. In a message from General Najib to Caffery, handed by Colonel Amin, on 18 September, the former made the following points:²

- a. The new regime was completely on the side of U.S. and unalterably opposed to Communism.
- b. The military officers wished to create favourable conditions for "selling the U.S. to the Egyptian public". This development could only come about if the U.S.A. would supply arms and support Egypt financially. In this case, Egypt would commit itself to the Middle East Defence Organization.

Later on, the new rulers went further in their pro-Western approach. In a conversation between Najib and Zāfir Rifā'ī, the Syrian Foreign Minister, during the Arab League session in Cairo,

1. Papers of Matthew J. Connelly, Set I, File Subject: Cabinet Meeting Friday, 19 September 1952, box 1, the Truman Library. See also report by Lakeland, American Embassy, Cairo, 5 November 1952, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Documents, File Subject: 320 US/Egypt, box 219.
2. Telegram 730 from Caffery, 18 September 1952, FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. IX, pp. 1860-1861. See also a statement made by Najib, in reply to the first installment of ex-King Faruq's memoirs, in which Faruq blamed the Free Officers of being communist. Dispatch 728 from Caffery, 20 October 1952, RG 59, 774.00/10-2052.

Najib was quoted as saying that:¹

"It was impossible for the Arabs to remain neutral and effective defence against Russia must be organized, particularly as the Arabs have nothing in common with Russian Communism. The British were not the enemies of the Arabs...".

These manifestations of sympathy and the wish to link Egypt with the West did not receive the requisite attention from the West. While the U.S. Government had welcomed the new regime and close contact had been established with it, the U.K. Government's attitude had been more cautious. Najib's attempts to persuade the U.S. Government to prove its good intentions by supplying Egypt with military and economic aid were not met with success. The Department of State agreed that military assistance to Egypt was essential for stabilizing Egypt's new regime and for the settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute. Yet, President Truman, supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, refused to give Egypt military equipment, as he believed this would create pressure from Israel and other Arab countries for similar assistance². Truman's decision was a serious failure for both Acheson and Najib who hoped that substantial American aid would strengthen Najib's authority and later on would pave the way for Egyptian participation in M.E.D.O.

By late 1952, it seemed that Egypt's new leaders no longer spoke with one voice. For the first time since the coup d'état, criticism of U.S. policy towards Egypt, was expressed by 'Abd

1. Letter from British Embassy, Damascus, to British Embassy, Cairo, 3 October 1952, F0371/96933, JE1052/422. On Najib's anti-communist approach, See FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. IX, pp. 1894-1895.
2. On the Anglo-American appreciation of Egypt's new leaders see, secret report from British Embassy, Cairo, 30 September 1952, F0371/96892, JE1024/3. On the Anglo-American difference of views regarding military aid and the contradictory approaches among American policy makers, see, R.J. Watson, History of the Joint Chiefs of Staffs, Vol. V, (Washington: Historical Division Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1986), pp. 326-329. Hahn, United States Policy towards Egypt, pp. 371-391. The Anglo-American dialogue took place in London from 31 December 1952 to 7 January 1953.

al-Nāṣir, the strongest figure among the officers. In a conversation with William Lakeland, a Political Officer of the American Embassy, Nasir blamed the Americans for taking Britain's side in its dispute with Egypt. The British, he said, "are losing this country and you with them because you are tied to their policy". Nasir stressed that if the U.S. was to take the same stand in the future, it would lose its advantages and prestige in Egypt and the Arab world¹. On 15 January 1953, Najib hardened his approach towards a defensive alliance with the West. He declared that "Egypt will never join a Western alliance for the defence of the Middle East so long as British troops are in the Suez Canal Zone". Najib went further and confirmed that Egypt was selling cotton to all countries including "Communist China", because the U.K. had stopped purchasing Egyptian cotton². In the book In search of Identity, Anwar Sadat said moreover that owing to the American refusal to supply Egypt with arms, the Free Officers contacted the Soviets early in 1953, before Stalin's death. The Soviets, stressed Sadat, refused Egypt's request for arms because: "Stalin's principles prevented him from supplying weapons to non-communist states"³.

B. Stalin's Successors' Policy Towards Egypt

Two significant events took place on the international scene during the first quarter of 1953. First, the end of Truman's presidency and the accession of President Eisenhower in January 1953. Second, the beginning of a new era in the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin in March 1953. For the long term, these changes were to have great importance for both super-power policies towards Egypt and the Middle East. As far as American

1. Dispatch 954 from Caffery, Cairo, 15 November 1952, RG 59, 774. 00/11-1852.

2. New York Herald Tribune, 16 January 1953. Christian Science Monitor, 16 January 1953.

3. Anwar Sadat, In Search for Identity (London: 1978), p. 127.

Middle Eastern policy was concerned, the basic postwar goal which opposed Communism and sought its containment was intensified. The new administration, which reconsidered the American defence policy came up with an alternative approach, called "The New Look Policy". Briefly, this policy determined that the U.S. reaction to communist aggression would no longer be restricted to the place of its occurrence, or to the use of conventional weapons only. The U.S.A. would react with massive retaliation by means and at places of its own choosing. American second strike capacity, depended therefore on establishing bases placed near Soviet borders. The importance of the Middle East in implementing this policy was mainly its nearness to Soviet borders. American interests in the area thus significantly increased. Consequently, the Department of State, headed by John Foster Dulles, went much further in its endeavours to form a Middle East Command¹.

The downfall of the Wafd in January 1952 inaugurated a period of mutual suspicion and distrust in Soviet-Egyptian relations. In his last months in power, however, Stalin moderated his negative attitude towards the officers' regime in Egypt. The new tactic adopted by the Soviets was one of wait and see. Eventually, the officers position vis-à-vis Western powers did, to some extent, satisfy Soviet policy makers. They believed that Western failure would serve Soviet interests. In the meantime, the Soviet media supported Egypt and the Arabs in their "just struggle" and "right" to a full independence.

At the 19th congress of the Soviet Communist Party, held in Moscow from 5 to 14 October 1952, Soviet statesmen called for the full liberation of the colonial and dependent countries. They therefore increased their efforts to encourage disorder and to

1. On the American New Look Policy see, Nadav Safran, From War to War, pp. 103-105. Louis L. Gerson, John Foster Dulles (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1967), pp. 241-300.

stir up revolts against the West in the Arab world. The Wafd period in power taught the Soviets how to exploit the substantial opportunities created by the opposition between Egypt and the Western powers, in order to promote their interests. They realized that Egypt could be effectively denied to the West without being brought under direct Communist control. To improve its position in the Arab world and to demonstrate goodwill towards the Arabs, the Soviets attacked Israel and Zionism. On 11 February 1953, two days after a bomb exploded in the courtyard of the Soviet Legation in Tel-Aviv, the Soviet government decided to break off relations with Israel. Officially, the Soviets explained that their move was a result of the anti-Soviet campaign, conducted by the Israeli government¹. Pravda claimed that the explosion was directly connected with subversive activity which the Intelligence services of Israel were carrying out against the Soviet Union². It can be assumed that the Soviet decision to sever relations with Israel derived from a desire to win over the Arabs. The Soviets believed that their move would improve their position in the Arab world for two reasons. First, Arab disappointment with the American stand concerning the Anglo-Egyptian dispute and the Arab-Israeli conflict as reflected in their refusal to supply arms to the Arab countries. Second, the Soviets realized that the new American administration was determined to form a Middle East Command and therefore, the Arab countries were going to be under great pressure to

1. Ro'i, Soviet Decision Making in Practice, pp. 378-379. On the motives behind the anti-Israeli policy taken by the Soviets, see notes of conversation between William Epstein, officer in the Secretariat of the U.N., and Pavel Shakhov, senior Soviet member of the Secretariat of the U.N., 27 January 1953, I.S.A., FM2457/14. Shakhov blamed the Israelis for "becoming more and more identified with the U.S.A. and the West and have become in effect an agent of theirs". He spoke in favour of the Arabs, and denied his colleague's allegation that the Arabs were interested in getting American arms. Shakhov claimed that the Arabs "were more neutral than the Israelis".
2. IU. Zhukov, "Terroristicheskii Akt v Tel-Avive i Fal'shivaia Igra Pravitelei Izraelia", Pravda, 14 February 1953.

carry out the project. An anti-Israeli policy and the expression of friendliness towards the Arabs would refute the Western argument of Soviet aggressive and expansionist intentions in the Middle East. The Arabs might therefore reject Western pressure¹.

The Egyptian and Arab official reaction to the Soviet move, presumably, did not satisfy Soviet policy makers. To conclude from the immediate Arab official statements, the Soviet move did not, for the short term, seem to have drawn the Arab world any closer to the Soviet bloc. For instance, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman said on 18 February, that the breaking off of relations was the result of the explosion in the Soviet Legation and not the outcome of any change in Soviet policy towards the Palestine question or Israel. This move would not affect relations between the Arab states and the U.S.S.R. and its satellites. Quoting "a military source", the spokesman stressed, that this state of affairs would not lead to any rapprochement between the Soviet Union and the Arab countries. The spokesman blamed the Soviets for sending intentionally, Jewish emigrants, who were "partisans of Communism", to Israel; for constituting a source of subversive activities in "the bosom of the Arab world"².

After the death of Stalin on 5 March 1953, a slow and gradual change in Soviet foreign and domestic policy took place. Stalin's successors established a collective leadership with G.M. Malenkov

1. On the implications of the breaking off relations between the Soviet Union and Israel on Soviet Middle Eastern policy, see, memorandum by A. Levavi, director-general of the Israeli Foreign Office, 29 January 1953, I.S.A., FM2512/27/A; dispatch 775 from American Embassy, Tel-Aviv, 18 February 1953, RG 59, 661.84A/2-1853; letter 14303/3/53 from British Embassy, Damascus, 20 February 1953, FO371/104197, E1072/2; dispatch 1773 from American Embassy, Cairo, 3 March 1953, RG 59, 774.00/3-353.
2. See his statement in dispatch 1695 from Caffery, Cairo, 21 February 1953, RG 59, 661.84A/2-2153. On the Arab reaction see also, Michael Clark, "Arab World Wary of Soviet Moves", New York Times, 17 February 1953.

as Chairman of the Council of Ministers and N.S. Khrushchev as First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. A change of personnel also took place in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. V. Molotov returned as Minister of Foreign Affairs (a post he had handed over to Vyshinskii in 1949) thus replacing his successor who was appointed as First Deputy to Molotov and permanent delegate to the U.N. Molotov's appointment did not seem to promise rapid change as he had always pursued a persistently anti-Western line and was one of the main shapers of Soviet foreign policy during Stalin's last period. However, on 15 March 1953, Molotov outlined before the Supreme Soviet what was seemed to be the new approach of Soviet foreign policy. this approach said that problems between the Soviet Union and all foreign countries could be solved peacefully¹. The main principles of Soviet foreign policy as shaped by Stalin's successors were outlined by Kommunist, in an article entitled: "The foreign policy of the U.S.S.R. is a policy of peace and international cooperation". The article repeated Malenkov's statement of 15 March and emphasized that Soviet foreign policy was fulfilling its national and international tasks. It defended peace for the peoples of the U.S.S.R. and extended assistance to the "toiling masses" of all countries in their struggle for peace.

1. On the implications of Stalin's death for Soviet foreign policy and information about the Soviet new leadership, see, dispatch 29 from British Embassy, Moscow, 6 March 1953, F0371/106515, NS10110/33; C.I.A., "Probable consequences of the death of Stalin and of the elevation of Malenkov to leadership in the U.S.S.R.", 10 March 1953, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Records 1952-1961, File Subject: NSC Series, Miscellaneous (March-August 1953), box 5, Eisenhower library, Abilene; Bohlen, "Policy implications of Stalin's death, 10 March 1953, Records of the Policy Planning Staff 1947-1953, box 23, National Archives, Washington; F0371/106517, NS10111/5-11, F0371/106525. See also, Isaac Deutscher, Stalin (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 556-615; Isaac Deutscher, Russia, China and the West 1953-1966 (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 1-40.

The Soviet Union, stressed the article, rejected the false assertions that it did not desire peaceful cooperation between countries which maintain different social and economic systems. The Soviet Union proceeded from the fact that there was no disputed or unresolved question which could not be settled peacefully on the basis of mutual understanding of the countries concerned. This concerned relations of the U.S.S.R. with all states including the U.S.A. The article repeated Malenkov's statement to the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R., that the Soviet friendly attitude and support for the peoples of the colonial and dependent countries would continue. Special reference was made to the "toiling Muslims" of the East¹.

On 8 August 1953, Malenkov reaffirmed his commitment to a Soviet peaceful initiative. He held the view that the statesmen on both sides who were responsible for the conduct of relations between the Communist bloc and the "outside world" must take into account the existence of a certain equality of power, and he therefore accepted the principle of "peaceful co-existence"².

As far as Soviet policy in the Arab world was concerned, considerable emphasis was put on presenting the Soviet Union as a friend of the Arabs. Stalin's successors attempted to persuade the Arabs that they had no reason to consider the Soviet Union as a potential enemy, or to be afraid of Soviet imperialist intentions. On the contrary, they used Egypt's failure to reach an acceptable solution to its extended dispute with Britain, as a

1. A. Nikonov, "The Foreign policy of the U.S.S.R. is a policy of peace and international cooperation", Kommunist, No. 7, May 1953. See translation in F0371/106526. See also, "For the peaceful settlement of international questions", *ibid*, No. 13, September 1953. See translation in F0371/106527, NS1021/114.

2. Dispatch 221 from British Embassy, Moscow, 29 September 1953, F0371/106527, NS1021/107.

proof that Britain and not the Soviet Union was the real enemy of Egypt. The Soviet media attacked all Western proposals for settling the Anglo-Egyptian dispute¹. The American efforts to seek a solution throughout 1953, by eliciting substantial British concessions when necessary, led the Soviets to the conclusion that this policy was intended to pave the way for Egypt to accept the M.E.C. proposals. On 8 April 1953, P. Kozyrev, Soviet Minister to Egypt, called upon Maḥmūd Fawzī, Egyptian Foreign Minister, to discuss "matters which concern relations between the two countries". The principal matter to be discussed was the Soviet view on Egyptian participation in an M.E.C. During the course of their conversation Kozyrev spoke in moderate terms. However, he made it clear that his government would look unfavourably on the formation of an M.E.C. and Egyptian participation in it². From the Soviet viewpoint, the timing for this move was correct. It was a few weeks before Dulles' visit to Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries. The Soviets appreciated that this visit was designed to prepare the ground for Egypt participation in an M.E.C. Soviet expression of peaceful intentions and a precise resistance to the formation of an M.E.C., could achieve three purposes. First, Egypt could reject Dulles' argument of Soviet expansionist plans. Second, it could claim that by joining a Western defence organization it would no longer be considered neutral. In the case of a global war, it would find itself facing a real threat

1. These attacks continued the campaign conducted by the Soviet press against the Anglo-Egyptian agreement on the Sudan, signed on 12 February 1953. The agreement was described by Izvestiia as a victory for the American diplomacy which urged Egypt and Britain to reach an agreement. See, I. Potekhin, "K Itogam Anglo-Egipetskikh Peregovorov o Sudane", Izvestiia, 19 February 1953. See also, Radio Moscow in Arabic, 24 February 1953, USSR, pp. 27-28.
2. Robert Doty, "Soviet bids Egypt shun defence pact", New York Times, 9 April 1953.

near its frontiers. Third, to make it clear to the Egyptian rulers that the U.S.S.R. would stand behind them if they remained strict in their rejection of the Western proposals¹. So far, the Soviets were pleased with Egypt's position. Several steps which were taken by the Egyptian government indicated clearly that it wanted to improve its relations with the Soviet Union. For instance, on 2 March 1953, it appointed as Minister to Moscow 'Azīz al-Miṣrī, a well-known nationalist figure. This was a reversal of previous practice when only second-rank diplomats were sent. Al-Miṣrī was known for his anti-British record and after the officers' coup, he was frequently mentioned in the press as a candidate for some important diplomatic assignment². On 7 March 1953, a surprising comment, following Stalin's death, was made by General Najib. He described Stalin as "a unique hero" and said that, "his name will be immortalized among the great heroes of history who had unusual talents. Neither the greatness and glory he registered for his country during the Second World War nor the love of peaceful policy for which he was known, will be forgotten"³. A few weeks later, on 23 March, in an interview with United States News and World Report, Najib made the following points: a. He refused to say whether Egypt, in case of evacuation,

1. This assumption can be also based upon information given by the Egyptian army organ Al-Tahrīr. The organ quoted Egyptian official circles who said that "the recent steps taken by the Russians for promoting peace have strengthened Egypt's position by refuting the arguments of the West concerning the need to maintain military bases". See Radio Moscow in Arabic, 8 May 1953, SWB, USSR, p.19.
2. Al Miṣrī had been retired from the army since 1941 when he was dismissed at British insistence because of suspected pro-Axis activities. He was tried on charges of treason in 1942 but had to be released because of lack of evidence. In November 1951, after the abrogation of the treaty of 1936, he was chosen to lead the non-official "Liberation Battalions" formed to fight the British forces in the Canal zone. This information was given in dispatch 1771 from Caffery, Cairo, 3 March 1953, RG 84, Moscow Embassy-Confidential Files, 1953: 320, Egypt, box 172.
3. Radio Cairo, 7 March 1953, SWB, General Arab Affairs, p.32.

would join a Middle East Defence Organization; b. Egypt must be careful of U.S. offers of economic or technical assistance, since they might lead to domination; c. He did not know whether N.A.T.O. forces would be allowed to move into Egypt in time of war. To quote him: "why should N.A.T.O. forces rather than Egyptian forces defend Egypt?"¹. Similar words were uttered by Nasir in a speech at Mansura, on 9 April 1953. He called for an immediate evacuation of British troops and declared: "We shall not allow a single foreign soldier to remain in our land. The Egyptian army is capable of defending its country"². The Soviets could also be satisfied with the positive reaction of the Egyptian media to their statements in favour of peace. A remarkable succession of events, said Radio Cairo, since Stalin's death clearly demonstrated a change of attitude in Soviet internal and external policy³. Al-Ahrām said that Malenkov had given the world proof of the Soviet desire to make peace and reduce tension between East and West⁴. From the economic aspect, very important agreements were signed on 10 March 1953, between Egypt on the one hand and the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Poland on the other. The agreements covered the exchange of 12,670 tons of Egyptian cotton against 115,000 tons of wheat⁵. After Egypt had abrogated its 1936 treaty with Britain, the latter stopped buying cotton from Egypt. As cotton was Egypt's principal cash crop and foreign exchange earner, it was necessary to find new markets. The agreement with

1. See telegram 546 from Stevenson, Cairo, 25 March 1953, FO371/102780, JE1072/4.
2. Nasir speech was quoted by Radio Moscow in Arabic, 11 April 1953, SWB, USSR, p. 20.
3. Radio Cairo in English, 6 April 1953, SWB, Egypt and the Sudan, pp. 29-30.
4. Radio Cairo, 8 April 1953, ibid, p. 31.
5. Dispatch 1870 from American Embassy, Cairo, 13 March 1953, RG 59, 461.7431/3-1353.

the Soviet bloc came therefore at the right time for Egypt.

When talks between Egypt and Britain were opened in April 1953, the Soviet media attacked Britain and the West for demanding to link British evacuation with the establishment of an M.E.C.

The Soviet view on the development of the events in Egypt and the Middle East was outlined in an article, published by New Times.

The article established that the situation in the Middle East was subject to contradictions which derived from the nature of the capitalist system. It indicated three different kinds of contradictions. First, contradictions between the interests of the Western capitalist powers and the Middle Eastern states which were politically and economically dependent on them. Second, contradictions between the policies of the Western powers which were competing for domination of the Middle East. Third,

domestic social conflicts inside Middle Eastern countries. New Times claimed that the first group of conflicts was the sharpest.

To quote it, "A proof of the growth of the national resistance struggle is the stubborn fight waged by the peoples of the Near East against the imperialists' plan to set up a so-called Middle East Command, a plan calculated to bring about in practice the occupation of the countries concerned by the armed forces of the imperialist Powers". The article stressed that a proof of the existence of the second group of contradictions lay in the acute rivalry between the U.S.A. and Britain over the exploitation of Middle Eastern oil resources. This rivalry was under the cover of "technical aid"¹. The talks between Britain and Egypt were also subject to considerable discussion in Pravda. The paper's main argument was that the talks were a failure as the Egyptian government refused to surrender to British pressure to link the

1. Skuratov, "The Near East Tangle", New Times, No. 17, April 1953, in Radio Moscow, 23 April 1953, SWB, USSR, pp. 20-21.

evacuation with a mutual defence system, and insisted on unconditional evacuation. This stand, said Pravda, was a result of pressure brought by Egyptian "public opinion"¹. The underlying reason behind this emphasis was presumably derived from Soviet inability to foresee what position was to be taken by the Egyptian government in the following stage of talks. In case that the Egyptian government would surrender to Western pressure, the Soviets could easily criticise it, and blame the government for making decisions which contradicted the people's will. Indeed, the Egyptian rulers made frequently contradictory statements regarding Egypt's future relations with the West and its participation in an M.E.C. For instance, a few weeks before the talks with Britain took place, Nasir expressed his anti-communist feelings and stressed that he did not agree with the "neutrality campaign that some people were running in Egypt". Any agreement, he said, would have "to have the support of the people of Egypt...the people would not allow this regime to make less favourable bargains than the ones their predecessors had declared were acceptable"². On 26 April, a day before the talks with Britain started, Nasir declared that the Arab states opposed the Four-Power proposals for an M.E.C. These proposals, he said, were regarded as another form of occupation. The only way to defend the Middle East, Nasir emphasized, "was by means of an Arab security pact and Egypt was ready to maintain the Suez Canal zone as an Egyptian base for its purpose". Nasir then went further by pointing out that Communism would be the only winner should the talks fail. British occupation, he said, played "Russia's game by exacerbating Arab

1. I. Plyshevskii, "Prekrashchenie Anglo-Egipetskikh Peregovorov", Pravda, 10 May 1953. See also Radio Moscow, 9 May 1953, SWB, USSR, p. 25

2. See record of conversation between Selwyn Lloyd, British Minister of State and Nasir, held in Cairo on 28 March 1953, FO371/102803, JE1192/160.

nationalist feeling". This happened, he said, despite Egypt being anti-communist¹. On 29 March 1953, Nasir said to the British Oriental Counsellor that in the event of war, Egypt could not defend its frontiers alone nor could the Middle East as a whole be defended without Western help. Consultation and planning on a military level could start immediately, Nasir said².

After several days of talks between Britain and Egypt, the gap between the representatives of both countries was still significantly wide. To keep the talks going, the Americans proposed their mediation. This move was described by the Soviets as one intended to press Egypt to keep the Canal zone as a base for a military bloc headed by the U.S.A. Behind the scenes, noted Trud, "an Anglo-American struggle is going on for control of the Suez region, the great strategic and economic significance of which is generally known"³.

On 9 May 1953, Dulles left Washington for a three-week visit to the Middle East and South Asia. Dulles said that the visit was intended to "express the friendship of the American people for the governments and people of the countries we visit". He emphasized that he did not bring with him specific plans and that he was going to listen and to learn the problems as they would be introduced by his hosts. Egypt was his first stop, and there he stayed for three days. After a series of meetings with Egypt's rulers, Dulles concluded that a Middle East Defence Organization was no longer a possibility. He stressed that the U.S.A. was therefore to avoid "becoming fascinated with concepts that have no

1. Nasir interviewed by Reuter correspondent in Cairo on 26 April 1953; see the interview in FO371/102806, JE1192/233.

2. See telegram 578 from British Embassy, Cairo, 29 March 1953, FO371/102802, JE1192/129.

3. M. Nadezhdin", "Pereryv ili Proval?" Trud, 22 May 1953. Radio Moscow, 9 May 1953, SWB, USSR, p. 25. See also, Pravda, ibid.

reality". At the end of his visit, he put forward an alternative to a M.E.D.O. According to him, the new efforts were to be concentrated upon building a defensive alliance in the northern tier. This tier was to include Pakistan, Iran, Syria, and Turkey. After his return to Washington, Dulles engaged in spreading his new doctrine. He tried hard to persuade Eisenhower, the Pentagon and the British of the realism behind his ideas. They however all stood firm by the old idea of a M.E.D.O. with Egypt's participation as the key state¹.

In spite of Dulles' conclusion that a M.E.D.O. was no longer a possibility, the Soviet view regarding his visit was utterly different. The Soviets believed that this visit was connected directly with plans for establishing a military bloc in the area. The Soviets considered that as Anglo-Egyptian relations were at a low ebb, the Americans aimed to take the opportunity to act as mediators, "since both of the negotiating parties had hoped he [Dulles] would intervene in their favour"². By taking such a stand, the Soviets stressed, Dulles hoped to improve and increase American influence and prestige and later on to replace British domination³.

Commenting on Dulles' report on his visit, Izvestiia said that

1. On Dulles visit to Egypt and its consequences see, John Foster Dulles Papers, Selected Correspondence and Related Material: 1953 (Mi-Oz), box 73, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University (hereafter cited as Dulles Papers with appropriate reference). FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. IX, pp. 2-29; FO371/102731, JE10345/10, JE10345/14-16; FO371/102732, JE10345/27, 10345/30. FO371/104257, E10345/1, E10345/23; FO371/102807, JE1192/273. See also, Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, Milaffat al-Suways, pp. 259-269. Hahn, United States Policy towards Egypt, 1945-1956, pp. 401-405.
2. Zelyagin, "Behind the Screen of Anglo-U.S. Cooperation", New Times, May 1953.
3. On the Soviet reaction to Dulles' visit, see, V. Korionov, "Arabskie Strany dlia Arabov", Pravda, 25 May 1953; V. Kudriavtsev, "Angliia i Egipet", Izvestiia, 23 May 1953; "K Poezdke Dallesa", Literaturnaia Gazeta, 2 June 1953. Radio Moscow, 18 May 1953, SWB, USSR, pp. 10-11.

Dulles was compelled "to admit the difficulties of implementing imperialist plans" in the area visited. However, the paper went on, his aims remained unaltered. His final proposals were "only in this or that way a revision of the means of their achievements"¹. The Soviet media gave a lot of prominence to the results of Dulles' visit. The common appreciation was that the trip had been a failure from the military and commercial points of view. To quote Radio Moscow: "his attempts to form "a Middle Eastern branch of N.A.T.O. had completely failed as had his attempt to increase the influence of U.S. monopolies" throughout the areas visited².

The failure of both the U.S.A and Britain to move forward with their plans to establish a M.E.D.O. in the first half of 1953 was, according to the Soviets, due to the change which was taking place in the Arab world. This change found its expression in the growth of "the national liberation movement" of the Near Eastern peoples. This movement frustrated the intentions of the "imperialist powers". To quote Izvestiia, "the struggle of the Near Eastern peoples for national independence is becoming such a factor that any state which does not want to take it into account will inevitably fail in its policy in the Near East"³. Although it was clear to the Soviets that Egypt's policy was made only by its ruling circles and influenced by their own needs, not by other factors, they kept following Stalin's line. This line as outlined by Stalin in his book Problems of Leninism, said that the national liberation movement in dependent territories had a vital part to play in the movement towards world revolution.

1. M. Mikhailov, "Posle Poezdki Dallesa", Izvestiia, 6 June 1953.

2. Radio Moscow in Arabic, 5 June 1953, SWB, USSR, p. 25. See also, Izvestiia, ibid; B. Leont'ev, "Zarubezhnaia Pechat o Poezdke Dallesa po Stranam Blizhnego i Srednego Vostoka", Pravda, 5 June 1953.

3. Izvestiia, ibid, 23 May 1953.

The implications of using an old concept in analysing the development of the events in Egypt and the Arab world after Stalin's death were twofold. First, the Soviets could not find ideological justifications which would enable them to express support to a military regime as such regimes were deemed reactionary in the Stalinist doctrine. Second, a revision in Soviet doctrine towards the Arab world had not yet been made. At this stage, when the dialogue with Egypt's military rulers was in its infancy, the Soviets seemed to be waiting to see what the next steps taken by Egypt's leaders would be. Practically, the Soviets' immediate intention in the Middle East was the neutralization of the area. They therefore were assuring the Egyptian government of all possible support against the "Anglo-American imperialists"¹. The process of rapprochement between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. several months later, was a result of Egyptian insistence on conducting a policy of neutralism.

The Soviet initiative to resume relations with Israel, announced on 20 July 1953, was a step forward in implementing Soviet policy of neutralizing the Middle East. In a period when Western efforts were focusing on persuading Middle Eastern countries of the real danger of Soviet expansionism, it was necessary for the Soviets to refute this contention by creating a base for cooperation and improving relations with all Middle Eastern countries including Israel. The Soviet Union expressed clearly its strong opposition to any form of a defence organization in the Middle East, particularly the participation of the Western powers. The Soviets claimed frequently that such defence arrangements in

1. See report by Allen Dulles, the Director of C.I.A. to the National Security Council at the 145th Meeting, 20 May 1953, in, Eisenhower, Dwight D. Papers as President of the U.S.A. 1953-1961, N.S.C. Series, File Subject: 145th meeting of N.S.C., box 4, Eisenhower library.

an area contiguous to their borders, would be considered as aggressive plans and that the U.S.S.R. would react accordingly. Because of its strategic location and its tendency to side with the West, the continued Soviet severance of relations as well as their support of the Arabs, might have convinced Israel of what the West was claiming, i.e., that the Soviet Union was a potential aggressor. Consequently, the way would be paved for the participation of Israel in a Western military alliance. Such a development could have spoiled Soviet plans of neutralizing the Middle East. In this connection, it is to be noted that one of the Soviet pre-conditions for resuming relations with Israel was to receive assurances from Israel that it would not agree to support aggressive actions or make preparations against the U.S.S.R.¹

In a speech before the Supreme Soviet on 8 August, Malenkov reaffirmed that the new Soviet government wished to win international support and to spoil Western defensive plans wherever and whenever it could. To refute Western contentions of Soviet expansionism, he stressed that the Soviet Union had no territorial claims against any state and this included every neighbouring state. The principle of Soviet foreign policy was to respect the national freedom and sovereignty of every country, great and small. The difference in the social and economic systems of the U.S.S.R. and some neighbouring states was not an obstacle

1. On the resumption of relations between the U.S.S.R. and Israel see, memorandum 696 from the Israeli Foreign Office to Israel missions abroad, 22 July 1953, ISA, FM2410/18. According to M.S. Divon, the Israeli Charge d'Affaires in Paris, contrary to the impression created by Israel Foreign Minister Sharett's note of 6 July 1953 to Molotov, the initiative in raising the question of the resumption of relations came from the Soviets. On the dialogue between both sides see dispatch 423 from American Embassy, Paris, 30 July 1953, RG 59, 661.84A/7-3053. On Soviet policy towards the Middle East, see, memorandum by Jefferson Jones III, First Secretary, American Embassy, Cairo, 17 July 1953, RG 59, 661.80/7-1753.

to strengthening friendly relations with them. The Soviet government, he said, had undertaken steps to strengthen "good-neighbour relations" with such states, and now it was up to the governments to show their readiness to take an active part, "not in words but in ideas, in bringing about this friendship, which presupposes mutual concern for strengthening peace and the security of our countries"¹. According to him, The resumption of relations with Israel was part of this policy. He explained that this move came about because

Striving to ease the general tension, the Soviet government agreed to restore diplomatic relations with Israel. It took thereby into consideration the pledge of the government of Israel that Israel will have no part in any union or agreement pursuing aggressive aims against the Soviet Union. We consider that the restorations of diplomatic relations will promote cooperation between the two states².

Malenkov made it very clear that the renewal of diplomatic relations with Israel did not mean that the Soviet government would not continue to strengthen its cooperation with the Arab countries. To quote him, "The activity of the Soviet government will be directed also in the future toward the strengthening of friendly cooperations with the Arab states"³. Soon after, in order to demonstrate its sincere intentions, the Soviet government instructed its diplomatic representatives in the Arab capitals to deliver copies of Malenkov's speech to each government. Considerable emphasis was put on the passages dealing with the relations between the U.S.S.R. and the Middle Eastern countries⁴.

A turning point in Soviet-Egyptian relations took place in the second half of 1953. Soviet political activity in the Middle East

1. Malenkov was quoted in Papers of Harry N. Howard, File Subject: Middle East chronological File, 1953, box 14, Truman Library. See full text of his speech in Radio Moscow, 8 August 1953, SWB, USSR, pp. 1-21.
2. Ibid. See also, Jewish Telegraph Agency, (New York), 11 August 1953, Vol. XX No. 154-35th year.
3. Ibid.
4. Radio Cairo, 12 August 1953, SWB, General Arab Affairs, p. 17.

was gathering momentum and it can be claimed that the Middle Eastern pot was moved from the back of the Soviet stove to the front. One of the most important moves made by the Soviet government was the appointment of Daniil Solod on 11 October 1953, as Ambassador to Egypt. Solod who had served as the Soviet Minister to Syria from 1946 to 1950, was regarded as one of the top Middle Eastern experts in the U.S.S.R. He played a leading role in the process of rapprochement between the Soviet Union and Syria and Egypt in 1950. Solod succeeded Semen P. Kozyrev, who was transferred "to other work"¹.

By this time, Stalin's successors' decision to join the U.N. programme of granting technical assistance to underdeveloped countries, and Malenkov's call to tighten cooperation with the Arab states, had fallen on attentive Egyptian ears. Western restrictions on supplying arms to Egypt, and Britain's refusal to evacuate its troops and to buy Egyptian cotton, had led Egypt's rulers to seek for other sources of supply, exports and outlets. Negotiations with some European countries were held during 1953, for instance, with Germany, Italy and Yugoslavia². An official survey of Egypt's trade prospects, prepared by the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, assessed that, "great gaps can be filled in Egypt's needs for arms, coal and heavy industry", by trading with the Eastern bloc. The report stressed that a Soviet-Egyptian trade agreement providing for the exchange of Egyptian cotton for Soviet wheat, coal and industrial equipment, had already been initialled by representatives of both sides³. La Bourse Egyptienne

1. New York Times, 12 October 1953. Radio Cairo, 14 October 1953, SWB, Egypt, p. 42.
2. See F0371/102828, JE1193/68-70, 96. On the visit of Egyptian military delegation to Yugoslavia in August 1953, see, F0371/102829, JE1193/102, 102A, 102B.
3. New York Times, 10 August 1953.

confirmed on 30 July, that a trade and payments agreement between Egypt and the Soviet Union was initialled on 25 July in Cairo by Victor Aleksenko, the Commercial Counselor of the Soviet Embassy, and Kāmil 'Abd al-Nabī, the Director of the Economic Department in the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs¹. On 11 August, the Egyptian Council of Ministers approved the payments agreement, and on 18 August, the agreement was signed by both sides². An Egyptian official in the Foreign Ministry said that in the course of talks for a payments agreement, the Soviet Union had agreed to furnish Egypt with military equipment if requested to do so. The official clarified that the payments agreement authorized each signatory to purchase freely from a list of available products submitted by the other so long as trade remains within a \$1,000,000 balance. He also said that Egypt had already begun negotiations to purchase arms from the "Skoda works" in Czechoslovakia³.

The highlight of this process of rapprochement occurred in December 1953, when an Egyptian trade mission headed by Hasan Rajab, Deputy War Minister, commenced a three-month tour to Eastern Europe. The delegation spent nearly two months in the Soviet Union and the rest in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and East Germany⁴. Although the purpose of the visit was to widen cooperations in the fields of economics and industry with the Eastern bloc, Hasan Rajab emphasized that the visit was also a proof that Egypt's new regime "wished to work

1. This information was confirmed by a responsible official of the National Bank of Egypt. See, dispatch 287 from American Embassy, Cairo, 31 July 1953, RG 59, 461.7431/7-3153.
2. Dispatch 398 from American Embassy, Cairo, 12 August 1953, RG 59, 461.7431/8-1253. Dispatch 444 from *ibid*, 18 August 1953, RG 59, 461.7431/8-1853. See also, Radio Cairo, 18 August 1953, SWB, Egypt and the Sudan, pp. 25-26.
3. New York Times, 18 August 1953.
4. On the commercial aspect of the visit, see Chapter Five.

with all peoples for the insurance of peace"¹. The delegation was warmly welcomed by the Eastern European governments. For instance, a few days after its arrival in Prague, the Czechoslovak Telegraph Agency reported on 16 December:²

"The main aim of the visit...is the strengthening and development of goodwill already existing between the two countries, as far as co-operation in the field of economy, technique and national industry is concerned. The delegation wants to make use of this favourable opportunity to convey to the Czechoslovak people and government the sincere and irrevocable desire of the new Egyptian government to cooperate without difference with all nations of the world on the maintenance of peace, if these nations cherish the same desire".

Although not clearly mentioned, the Egyptian decision to send Brigadier Rajab, "Undersecretary for War Factory Affairs at the Ministry of War", as the head of an economic delegation composed of industrial experts and economists was twofold. First, as officially stated, it was to widen economic relations with the Eastern bloc by sending a senior official. Second, in order to seek for alternative sources of arms, it was necessary to send a high ranking military man who specialized in armament affairs. Indeed, reports from Prague confirmed that during its five-day visit, the delegation visited several arms factories and the firm which manufactured the fighter-plane "Mig". As early as the delegation's departure from Egypt, it was reported, that Egypt had ordered "Migs" from Czechoslovakia³.

According to the Israeli paper Yediot Ahronot of 19 January 1954, a first shipment of Czech and Polish arms which was

1. See Radio Cairo, 20 December 1953, SWB, Egypt, p. 35.
2. The delegation arrived in Prague on 12 December 1953, after staying first in Warsaw. See report on their visit to Czechoslovakia in, Czechoslovak Telegraph Agency, 16 December 1953, SWB, Communist Broadcasts, p. 3.
3. On the "Migs" order, see letter 3896/PR from Israel Legation, Prague, 8 December 1953, ISA, FM2506/5/A; and letter 421/408/D from the Eastern European Department, Israel F.O., to Israel Legation, Prague, 27 December 1953, ibid. On the Egyptian Legation visit to Arms factories, see letter 601/PR, from Israel Legation, Prague, 29 December 1953, ibid.

purchased by the Egyptian commercial delegation, arrived in Egypt and was to go through a routine inspection. The shipment contained rifles and machine-guns. The paper referred to "political circles" in the Middle East who considered the purchase as a move intended to put pressure on the U.S.A. and Britain to supply arms to Egypt¹. Whether the sources quoted were reliable or not, the question of purchasing arms from Soviet bloc countries had come up during the three-month visit². On 14 February 1954, Al-Misri quoted a statement made by Salāh Sālim, that Egypt had already submitted its requests for arms to various countries, including the Soviet Union. Sālim revealed that there was a possibility that the Soviets would agree to supply some of Egypt's requests³.

In his book Qissat thaurat 23 Yuliyo, Hamrūsh claimed that one of the main reasons for dispatching the commercial delegation, was to put pressure on the Western powers to change their attitude towards Egypt. He said that attempts to purchase arms from the Soviet bloc were made by both Hasan Rajab in Prague and Muhammad Najib in Cairo. According to him, in December 1953, Najib held

1. See letter 412/408/Z from Eastern European Department, Israel F.O., to Israel Legation, Prague, 26 January 1954, *ibid*.
2. Several months later, the Israeli Embassy in Moscow reported that the Egyptian request for arms was refused by the Soviet Union. No reasons or explanations were given. See, letter 3/1702/SM from the Israeli Embassy, Moscow, 3 August 1954, ISA, FM2506/4. On the dialogue with the Czechoslovak government see, Hamrūsh, Qissat thaurat 23 Yuliyo, Vol. 2, p.64. Hamrush claimed that after considering the Egyptian request for arms, the Czechoslovak government replied negatively. It said: "We are a peace loving state and will not supply arms to others". See also Intelligence Report No. 7292 entitled: "The evolution of Egyptian Neutralism", 9 July 1956, R&A Reports, N.A., Washington. In his book Soviet Foreign Policy after Stalin (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1961), p. 389, David Dallin said that the purpose of the visit was to submit and discuss various Egyptian industrial projects; under the heading of "agricultural machines" the Egyptians included arms. The Egyptian proposals, said Dallin, were coolly received by the Soviets.
3. Hamrūsh, *ibid*, p. 65.

talks with Daniil Solod, the Soviet Minister to Cairo. During these talks, Najib checked on the possibility of purchasing arms from the Soviet Union. Several weeks later, in January 1954, Solod replied positively by expressing Soviet readiness to commence furnishing the Egyptian army with arms. Najib told Solod that he would ask 'Abd al-Ḥakīm 'Āmer, the Commander in Chief of the Egyptian armed forces, to supply him with a list of the required equipment. Yet, this dialogue was not crowned with success, because of Nasir's objection¹. This objection arose out of the following internal and external political considerations.

When the existence of a power struggle between Najib and Nasir became known, the Soviets, understandably, misjudged Najib's power as he was the key figure behind the contacts with them. Towards the end of 1953 and at the very beginning of 1954, Najib was still considered the strongest figure in Egypt. In fact, he was supported by most political circles in Egypt including the radical groups, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Communists. Furthermore, when the power struggle gathered momentum during February and March 1954, it appeared from the outside that Najib had the advantage over Nasir, owing to the massive demonstrations of support in his favour. Yet, inside the Revolutionary Command Council (R.C.C.), practically the ruling body, Najib found himself isolated. The R.C.C. was fully controlled by Nasir and of all its members, Khālid Muhyī al-Dīn, the well-known communist, was Najib's only supporter. The Soviet decision to reply positively to Najib's request for arms was derived, *inter alia*,

1. Hamrūsh, pp. 64-65. Several years later, Nasir confirmed that Egypt's decision to break up the Western monopoly of arms supplies to the Middle East, had been first made in 1954. In his speech in Alexandria, on 26 July 1962, he said *inter alia*: "In 1954 and 1955...we did not hesitate to break up the arms monopoly". See quotation in, Uri Ra'anana, The USSR Arms the Third World (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1969), p. 42.

from a wish to strengthen his position vis-à-vis Nasir who was known for his anti-Soviet and anti-Communist approach¹. It was therefore, not an accident, that both Najib and Muhyī al-Dīn were the only R.C.C. members who attended the opening of the Hungarian industrial exhibition in Cairo on 29 January 1954². The Soviets and the Egyptian communists who believed that Najib was to take over, assumed that owing to their firm support for him their interests would be promoted in the long term. At the beginning of 1954 the Soviets consistently expressed their satisfaction with Egyptian foreign policy. A special reference was made by Izvestiia to a statement made by Najib concerning the U.S. policy towards Egypt. Najib was quoted as saying that he was wrong when he thought, soon after the coup, that the U.S.A was the friend of the Arabs; he also expressed Egypt's disappointment with the U.S.A.³. On the other hand, Nasir was attacked indirectly by the Soviets for his willingness to reach an agreement with Britain and to cooperate with the West. The struggle of the peoples of the Near and Middle East for freedom and independence, said Radio Moscow, was progressing under difficult conditions:⁴

"The reactionary circles of these countries, acting under pressure from without, have intensified their reprisals against the democratic forces, against the courageous fighters for peace and national independence...all attempts by Britain

1. On the power struggle between Najib and Nasir during the first quarter of 1954, see, P.J. Vatikiotis, Nasser and his Generation (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 138-149. Jean Lacouture, Nasser (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1972), pp.86-92 (Hebrew). Mohammed Neguib, Egypt's Destiny (London: 1955), pp. 213-236. See also, FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. IX, pp. 2222-2229, 2242-2245. Dispatch 1022 from Cafery, Cairo, 3 March 1954, RG 59, 774.00/3-254. Dispatch 161 from *ibid*, 28 July 1954, RG 59, 774.00/7-2854.
2. Radio Cairo, 29 January 1954, SWB, Egypt, p. 46-47.
3. "Zaiavlenie Prezidenta Egipta Nagiba", Izvestiia, 14 February 1954.
4. Radio Moscow, 7 January 1954, SWB, USSR, p. 14. See also A. Kvintnitskii, "Sredizemnoe More-Uzel Amerikano-Angliiskikh Protivorechii", 9 January 1954, Krasnaia Zvezda. Radio Moscow, 23 January 1954, *ibid*, p. 5-6

to bind Egypt with a new military agreement...have failed... the persistent attempts by Britain, with U.S. support, to maintain military control over the Canal zone at all costs, have inclined Egyptian public opinion still further towards neutrality, that is, non-participation in any military plans of the Western Powers".

Najib's inability to persuade the members of the R.C.C. to welcome Soviet approval to furnish Egypt with arms, reflected his weakness. From this stage on, the Soviets learned the lesson and insisted that every official negotiation with Egypt was to be "subject to Colonel 'Abd al-Nasir's personal approval"¹. The Soviets also avoided publicly supporting either Najib or Nasir when the power-struggle reached its climax. Their news reports on the February-March events and on the removal of Najib from his posts in November, were objective and balanced².

The conclusion of the Turkish-Pakistani pact, under Western inspiration, on 2 April 1954, was a hard blow to the U.S.S.R. They therefore concentrated their efforts on persuading other Middle Eastern countries not to take part in such a move. The Soviets warned Egypt and other Arab countries that they would consider the conclusion of any military pact oriented to the West as "an unfriendly and even hostile act" directed against the U.S.S.R.³.

Nasir who criticised and vigorously attacked the pact proved that Egypt under his rule was not ready to join any military pact

1. See dispatch 902 from Caffery, Cairo, 12 February 1954, RG 59, 661.74/2-1254.
2. Most of Soviet reports on the events were based upon Egyptian and Western reports. See for instance, Tass, 25 and 27 February 1954, SWB, USSR; and *ibid*, 9 March 1954. See also reports on the R.C.C.'s announcement of the removal of Najib, in Radio Moscow, 14 and 15 November 1954, *ibid*, p. 30.
3. The Soviet warning to Egypt was given on 23 March 1954. During March 1954, the Soviets exerted a lot of pressure on Middle Eastern states to avoid of joining any military pacts sponsored by the West. The Soviet media vigorously attacked the Turkish and Pakistani governments for their move. On the Soviet response, see, letters 411/409/Z from Eastern European Department, Israel Foreign Ministry to Israel legations in Eastern Europe, 30 March and 6 April 1954, ISA, FM2506/9/A. See also, New York Times, 23 March 1954.

inspired by Western powers. Moreover, Nasir declared consistently that Egypt was to follow a policy of neutralism in international affairs.

Nasir's main concerns in the second half of 1954 were: First, to strengthen his control over the Egyptian army and through it to establish his hegemony over the country. Second, to reject any military alliance between the Arab world and the West as long as the Anglo-Egyptian conflict was continuing. Nasir believed that once the conflict with Britain was over, arms deliveries from the West would be renewed. The dialogue with the Soviets during the first quarter of 1954 was therefore intended mainly to put pressure on Britain and the U.S.A. Nasir responded negatively to the Soviet agreement to supply Egypt with arms, because he did not want to provoke Britain and the U.S.A. while talks on British evacuation were due to start. This move seemed to meet with success. Soon after Britain and Egypt initialled the agreement on 27 July 1954, Britain agreed, in August, to supply Egypt with arms. There was therefore no need, for the time being, to seek for arms in the Soviet bloc, a matter which could have provoked the West¹.

From the economic aspect, Rajab's visit was a great success. On 11 February, an Egyptian official, described as reliable, told an officer from the American Embassy that Kabanov, the Soviet Minister of Trade had made an attractive offer to the Rajab delegation in Moscow. He had offered Soviet assistance to Egypt in constructing the High Dam in Aswan. The source said that two members of the Egyptian mission returned to Cairo to transmit the Soviet proposals to Nasir. Nasir's comment was: "That is all very fascinating". Nasir then ordered the mission to return with fullest information on the Soviet offers, and stressed that

1. Hamrush, *ibid.*

"careful consideration" would be given¹.

During the visit of the Egyptian economic delegation in Moscow, special mention was made in the Soviet press of a statement made by 'Aziz 'Alī al-Miṣrī, the Egyptian Minister to Moscow, on his arrival in Cairo on 4 January. Al-Miṣrī was quoted as saying: "there are not the slightest anti-Egyptian sentiments in Russia... Russia wants to cooperate with all nations in the interests of progress of humanity"². On 15 February, Tass reported that Mikoian, Deputy Chairman of U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers, Kabanov, the Soviet Trade Minister, Kuznetsov, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, and other Soviet senior officials, were attending a reception at the Egyptian Embassy in Moscow on the occasion of the visit of the economic delegation³.

Soon after the delegation returned to Cairo in March 1954, Rajab said that the visit to the U.S.S.R. revealed that the possibilities of economic cooperation were unlimited⁴. Indeed, during March 1954, several agreements with the Soviet Union and its satellites were signed. For instance, on 27 March 1954, a barter agreement for the exchange of Soviet industrial equipment, petroleum and other products for cotton and other Egyptian products, was signed between Egypt and the Soviet Union⁵. At the signing ceremony held at the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, V.D. Alekseenko, the Soviet signatory expressed willingness to widen commercial relations with Egypt as the agreement would open an

1. Dispatch 902 from Caffery, Cairo, 12 February 1954, RG 59, 661.74/2-1254.
2. Tass in English, 6 January 1954, SWB, USSR, p. 15; see also Radio Cairo, 5 January 1954, SWB, Egypt, p. 28.
3. Tass, 15 February 1955, SWB, Communist Broadcasts, p. 2-3.
4. See dispatch 2362 from American Embassy, Cairo, 2 April 1954, RG 59, 661.74/4-254.
5. On the agreement see, FO371/108403, JE11338/1-3. Dispatch 1169 from American Embassy, Moscow, 30 March 1954, RG 59, 461.7431/3-3054. Dispatch 2232, *ibid*, 20 March 1954, RG 59, 461.7431/3-2054. Dispatch 2157, *ibid*, RG 59, 461.7431/3-1254.

advantageous field for economic cooperation.

The trade agreement [he said]...is to work on the basis of equal treatment insofar as concerns rights and advantages and it will certainly help fostering and promoting the trade relations between the two countries. For the promotion of trade between the two countries, to their mutual benefit, there have been laid down all the conditions on which the Soviet Union will be able to supply Egypt all the goods it is in need of, whereas the Soviet Union will purchase from Egypt the commodities it requires. The Soviet Union is also able to supply Egypt...complete equipments for various industrial enterprises together with technical assistance.¹

Kāmil 'Abd al-Nabī, the Egyptian signatory replied that the agreement would help to establish economic cooperation and would start a new era in the relations between the two countries².

There is no doubt that the three-month visit opened a new era in the relations between Egypt and the Soviet bloc. The visit contributed to the renewal of the cordial understanding interrupted with the downfall of the Wafd government in January 1952. The visit took place at the right time for both Egypt and the Soviet Union. Soviet willingness to supply Egypt with arms unconditionally, had undoubtedly strengthened Nasir's rejection of any military alliance with the West before British evacuation. Nasir realized that the Soviet option might be useful for two purposes. First, as a bargaining card for weakening the British position in the coming talks for a future agreement. In the meantime, it would also decrease American pressure on Egypt to take part in a military pact. Second, in case of deterioration of relations with the West, and the latter's refusal to support Egypt financially and militarily, Egypt could use the Soviet alternative. The visit uncovered the great latent possibilities of purchasing arms from the Soviet bloc. Egypt had no longer to surrender to Western pressure to join a military alliance in

1. Alekseenko was quoted in Al-Ahrām, 28 March 1954, in dispatch 2362 from American Embassy, Cairo, RG 59, 661.74/4-254.

2. Ibid.

order to get arms. The arms could be received unconditionally from the Soviet bloc while Egypt could maintain its neutral policy without being committed to particular bloc. There is no clear evidence to establish that the arms deal was concluded during the three-month visit. However, basic inspection of the Eastern armaments industry and the possibilities of adjusting it to the requirements of the Egyptian army, was indeed made. Hasan Rajab who specialized in military industrial projects was not chosen by Egypt's leaders by accident. His visits to military factories and his hosts' requests to exchange Egyptian cotton for arms, laid down the basis for the arms deals of 1955.

C. Nasir's Neutralism and the Baghdad-Pact

Towards the end of 1953 many calls were heard within Egyptian political circles for adopting both a policy of neutralism and of nurturing relations with the Soviet Union. Anti-Western feelings increased steadily owing to the continuous British refusal to evacuate their troops from Egypt. The inability of the military regime to implement the main clause of Nasir's political programme, i.e., the liberation of Egypt, made the political atmosphere in the country revert to what it had been during the Wafdist government. Nasir and his partners could not ask for less than Şalāh al-Dīn, the last Wafdist Foreign Minister. After the end of 1953, it did seem that the new rulers decided to adopt the doctrine of neutralism as shaped and implemented by Şalāh al-Dīn¹.

During the second half of 1953, the Egyptian press launched a massive campaign explaining why Egypt should adopt a neutral policy. For instance, Muhammad Hassanein Haykal, the editor of Akhir Sa'ah, an independent anti-British weekly, advocated on 20 August, that Egypt should immediately recognize Communist China and Albania. To quote him: "One can hardly overlook the fact that the government which truly represents the Chinese people and is evidently supported by them is the government of Mao Tse Tung". Since Egypt recognized the U.S.S.R., he said, it cannot possibly claim that the reason for non-recognition of Mao's government was that it was communist. "We are entitled to fight against Communism in our country. We have no right to do so elsewhere", concluded Haykal. A call to improve relations with the U.S.S.R. was made by

1. Muhammad Şalāh al-Dīn the former Wafdist Foreign Minister was one of the only pre-coup politicians not to be hurt by the R.C.C. in its first years in power. See Jean Lacouture, Nasser, p. 85. See also Jean and Simonne Lacouture, p. 242.

the weekly, Al-Liwa' al-Jadid. The paper stressed that Egypt's attitude toward the Soviet Union should be similar to its attitude toward the U.S.A. and France. The paper made the following point: "We want to adopt a foreign policy which will convince Britain that we will not devote our lives to the West, and that we are perfectly willing to stretch forth our hands to the East so long as this is to our advantage"¹. The Soviet media paid much attention to these views and quoted frequently Egyptian papers which wrote on this subject².

On 29 December 1953, New York Times reported from Cairo that 'Aziz 'Ali al-Misrī, had been ordered to return to Cairo for consultations. According to the paper, Nasir said that al-Misrī was recalled to advise the government regarding its prospective new policy of neutralism in the "cold war". This position was taken up, said the paper, because of Egypt's disappointment with the West³. Egypt's new line of neutralism was clarified soon after by members of the R.C.C. For instance, 'Ali Sabrī, director of Egyptian Air-Force Intelligence, said that Egypt's new policy intended to maintain a position of independence from both the Soviet or Western bloc and to obtain what it could from both sides without becoming committed to either⁴. Further clarification of Egypt's neutralism was given by Nasir on 19 April 1954, during a press conference in Kafr al-Dawwār. Nasir made the point that neutrality was of no avail, particularly in time of war, "for in order to preserve your neutrality, you must have sufficient strength. Our policy is one of non-cooperation with those who

1. See dispatch 473 from Caffery, Cairo, 21 August 1953, RG 59, 661.74/8-2153. See also Al-Balagh of 13 August in dispatch 421 from *ibid*, RG 59, 661.86/8-1453.

2. See for instance, Tass, 11 December 1953 and Radio Moscow in Arabic, 12 December 1953, SWB, USSR, p. 11.

3. New York Times, 30 December 1953.

4. See dispatch 1635 from Caffery, Cairo, 12 January 1954, RG 59, 774.00/1-1254.

occupy our territory or encroach on our sovereignty". Nasir stressed that Egypt was working to strengthen the Egyptian army and to supply it with heavy weapons in spite of all obstacles. He explained that weapons could only be obtained from the Big Powers but the Western powers, he emphasized, refused to supply Egypt with such weapons¹. The underlying idea behind Nasir's words was that under the present circumstances, Egypt would not rule out the possibility of obtaining heavy weapons from the Soviet bloc. Although not clearly stated, this could be deduced from the new dialogue between Egypt and the Soviet bloc.

Towards the end of 1953, the international situation created a basis for more understanding and cooperation between the Soviet Union and Egypt. A pro-Arab stand was taken by the Soviets in the U.N. debates dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict. Soviet delegates at the U.N. also frequently attacked Western powers for exerting pressure on Egypt and other Arab countries to join a military pact with them. As usual Britain was again attacked for its refusal to evacuate its troops from Egypt. In a speech before the U.N. General Assembly on 22 September 1953, Vyshinskii, the Soviet Ambassador to the U.N., attacked the Western policy of setting up military bases in foreign countries. Vyshinskii suggested that the General Assembly should rule that the establishment of military bases by certain states in foreign countries increased the threat of war. He asked the Assembly to recommend to the Security Council the adoption of the necessary measures for the evacuation of Foreign bases. His speech was received warmly by Hilmie Bahgat Badawi, the Egyptian chief delegate to the U.N., who said that following Vyshinskii's speech, he would ask the General Assembly to revise the U.N. Charter on several

1. See dispatch 2519 from Caffery, Cairo, 20 April 1954, *ibid*, 674.00/4-2054. See also, telegram 536 from Stevenson, Cairo, 20 April 1954, FO371/108349, JE1022/15.

parts. For instance, "that no member of the U.N. should be permitted to place troops and forces in foreign territory against the wishes of its population, unless this is based upon provisions of a treaty between two independent states and provided that no pressure is exerted by one party on the other"¹. Badawi believed that if such a revision were adopted, probably with Soviet support, the presence of British troops in Egypt would no longer be legal. Several weeks later, referring to Western proposals for the solution of the Anglo-Egyptian conflict, Vyshinskii told Al-Misri correspondent in Washington on 9 November, that foreign forces were not more capable than the Egyptian themselves of effectively defending Egypt. To quote him: "the Western forces can't fill the vacuum if the citizens of Egypt are hostile to them. Only the Egyptians themselves could fill the vacuum because they defend their country". Vyshinskii expressed his government's wish to strengthen friendly relations with the Arabs².

The Soviet policy of supporting Arab causes brought before the Security Council resulted from the growing interest of Stalin's successors in the Middle East. This development was discussed during a conference of American Chiefs of Mission on Regional Security in the Middle East held in Istanbul on 14 May 1954. The participants were convinced that one of the objectives of the Soviet Union was "to bring the Middle East behind the Iron Curtain and that the Soviet Union is constantly manoeuvring with the purpose of facilitating the attainment of this objective". Many reports indicated that the Soviets might be able to turn the increasing tension on the Arab-Israeli frontiers to their

1. See Radio Cairo, 22 and 23 September 1953, SWB, Egypt, p. 26. Such a revision had never been adopted by the General Assembly and the situation remained as before despite Soviet support.

2. See F0371/102730, JE10338/2.

advantage¹. During the last quarter of 1953 and the first of 1954, as a result of a Soviet veto, Israel did indeed lose its cases in the Security Council. The first case introduced on 19 October 1953, was the dispute between Israel and Syria on the Benot Yaacov Project². On 22 January 1954, the Soviet Union voted against a draft resolution which was submitted by the three Western powers. Generally, this draft criticised Syria for interfering with regional development projects and censured Israel for ignoring instructions issued by General Bennike, the Chief of Staff of the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization.³

The second Soviet veto came two months later on 29 March 1954, two days after Egypt and the U.S.S.R. signed a trade agreement. This time the subject under discussion was a complaint, made by Israel to the Security Council, on 28 January 1954, against Egypt. The latter was accused of renewing its 1951 policy of imposing restrictions on Suez Canal and Gulf of Aqaba traffic to and from Israel. After several weeks of discussions, a draft resolution, based on the one adopted by the Security Council, on 1 September 1951, was submitted by New Zealand. This draft was not adopted when it was put to a vote as a result of Vyshinskii's veto. He explained that the previous resolution was no longer effective. Vyshinskii insisted that there could be no advantage in adopting again a resolution which had proved

1. On the conference and its conclusions, see, White House Office, National Security Council, Staff Papers 1948-1961, File Subject: OCB 091.4 Near East(File 1), box 77, Eisenhower Library.
2. On the Benot Yaacov Project and the dispute behind it, see, Ro'i, Soviet Decision Making in Practice, p. 484.
3. During the continuous discussion, the Western draft underwent certain alterations to satisfy the Soviets. However, the Soviets rejected it and in fact took the side of Syria. On the Soviet stand as summed up by Vyshinskii during the discussions, see, *ibid*, pp. 484-488.

unsatisfactory¹.

The Soviet veto demonstrated the change which had taken place in the Soviet attitude towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. On the vote of 1 September 1951, the Soviets abstained because they were not willing to sacrifice their interests in Israel by supporting the Arabs without substantial political assurances from Egypt. During 1954 the situation was quite different. Both the Soviet Union and Egypt had been going through domestic political changes which had an impact on their foreign policies. The two countries were in a process of tightening their economic and political relations. On 21 March 1954, Tass reported from Moscow that the governments of the U.S.S.R. and Egypt "with the aim of consolidating and developing relations between both countries, have decided to raise the legation of the U.S.S.R. in Cairo and the legation of the Republic of Egypt in Moscow to the status of Embassies"². This was the result of a Soviet initiative.

Two months later, on 20 May 1954, Daniil Solod became the first Soviet Ambassador to Egypt⁴, While 'Aziz 'Alī al-Miṣrī became the Egyptian Ambassador to the U.S.S.R. While presenting his credentials, Miṣrī expressed the wish that the two countries would develop cultural, commercial and economic relations.

Voroshilov replied that this would meet with complete support

1. Ibid, pp. 488-490. See also dispatch 839 from American Embassy, Cairo, 8 February 1954, RG 59, 674.84A/2-854. Dispatch 1896 from Caffery, Cairo, ibid. The same line was summed up by Grigorii Zaitsev, the Head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Middle and Near East Department, during his conversation with Eliashiv, the Israeli Minister to Moscow; on the conversation see, letter 54418/Z from the Eastern European Department of the Israeli Foreign Ministry to the Israeli legations in Eastern Europe, 6 April 1954, ISA, FM546/7/A.

2. Tass, 21 March 1954, SWB, USSR, pp. 4-5.

3. Radio Cairo, 14 March 1954, ibid, Egypt, p. 41. On 18 March Radio Cairo announced that the decision was made; see, ibid, p. 25.

4. See, Radio Cairo, 20 May 1954, SWB, Egypt, p. 29; and Radio Moscow in Arabic, 21 May 1954, ibid, USSR, p. 33.

from the Soviet government, which "was exerting efforts to protect and consolidate peace and to develop cordial relations and economic links with all countries"¹.

The Soviets made attempts to counterbalance this friendly decision by taking similar action in Israel. The resumption of relations with Israel and, soon after, the raising of diplomatic representation to the rank of embassies, indicated the Soviet intentions to maintain normal relations with Israel. However, to promote their growing interests in the Arab world the Soviets, in their short-term policy, took the Arab side in international disputes, even when they concerned the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Soviet leadership believed that by doing so, their positive image in the Arab world would be enhanced. This would enable them to gain a foothold in a very strategic area, and in the meantime, Western hegemony would be weakened for two reasons. First, they were committed to Israel and attempted to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict peacefully, despite Arab opposition. In contrast to this, the Soviets were willing to sacrifice their limited interest in Israel for the sake of gaining the friendship of the whole Arab world. Second, the Soviet short-term tactic of giving unconditional support to the Arabs in international disputes and in improving bilateral relations intended to demonstrate to the Arabs how friendly Soviet intentions were. This move aimed to refute the Western argument of the existence of a continuous Soviet threat to the Arabs and therefore the need to defend the area by forming a military alliance with the West. Indeed, the Soviet veto on the Suez Canal dispute, was hailed by the Egyptian press as a bright sign of Soviet goodwill for Egypt, and a powerful rebuke for the West who "did nothing to gain the

1. Radio Moscow in Arabic, 28 April 1954, SWB, Communist Broadcast, p. 2.

Arabs' friendship"¹.

The main goal of Soviet policy in the Middle East throughout 1954 intended first and foremost to prevent a military pact between the West and the Arab world. Egypt's leaders had indeed expressed frequently their refusal to join such a pact². Their talks with Britain and the U.S.A. on future settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian conflict caused some concerns to Soviet policy makers. The latter feared that Egypt would be tempted to join a military alliance with the West as the price of a full evacuation of the British troops. The basis for the Soviet fears was the change which took place in U.S. policy towards the Anglo-Egyptian dispute. During the second quarter of 1954, U.S. involvement in this conflict had markedly increased. They exerted pressure on both Egypt and Britain to achieve a compromise settlement³. In July 1954, when the Anglo-Egyptian negotiation was at an advanced stage, the Soviet Union endeavoured to discourage Egypt from granting Britain re-entry rights to the Suez Canal zone in a future war in the Middle East. During the course of a meeting in

1. Christian Science Monitor, 14 May 1954. A special reference to the Arab positive reaction to the Soviet veto and justifications to this move were made by the Soviet press. See for instance, New Times, 24 April 1954, in ISA, FM2503/14/B. See also Henry Byroade (Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs), "Facing Realities in the Arab Israeli Dispute", a speech addressed before American Council for Judaism, Philadelphia, 1 May 1954; in, Selected Correspondence and Related Material, File Subject: Re Israel 1954, 1954 (Ha-Jz), box 82 (dup), Dulles Papers.
2. See for instance dispatch 2754 from Caffery, 24 May 1954, RG 59, 774.00/5-2454. See also Nasir's speech at a press conference held on 24 July, for foreign correspondents on the second anniversary of the revolution, in dispatch 158, *ibid*, 28 July 1954, 774.00/7-2854. An interview with Nasir in Newsweek, 26 July 1954.
3. The Soviet press paid much attention to the Anglo-Egyptian talks. A special reference was given to the increasing influence of the U.S.A. in Egypt. See for instance, Radio Moscow in Arabic, 28 June 1954, SWB, USSR, p. 23-24; S. Losev, "Popytki SSHA Rasshirit Agressivnyii Turetsko-Pakistanskii Blok", Izvestiia, 30 June 1954; Radio Moscow in Arabic, 7 July 1954, *ibid*, p. 15; "Imperialism's unchanged aims", New Times, 12 July 1954.

Cairo, between Nasir and Daniil Solod, on 9 July 1954, the latter made it clear that the Soviet government would not look with favour on any agreement that would give the "British and other Western forces the right to return to the Canal zone in the event of an attack on a state in this area". Nasir replied that Egypt was pursuing its own interests in the Canal zone negotiations¹. In the meantime, Soviet diplomats in Cairo and Tehran made unsuccessful efforts to get formal commitments from the Egyptian and Iranian leaders to renounce any intent to join the Western defence pacts in the future². On 31 July, soon after the initialling of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty, Daniil Solod was received by the Egyptian Foreign Minister, and left Cairo on his way to Moscow for consultations with the Soviet leaders on the implications of the new development³.

The initialling of the agreement between Britain and Egypt on 27 July 1954, created, temporarily, a better atmosphere in Anglo-Egyptian relations. It also strengthened the Anglo-American alliance, after a period of disagreements. Both Britain and the U.S. hoped that the agreement would stop the spread of neutralism and that Egypt would remain with the Western camp.

In the last quarter of 1954, however, U.S. policy towards the Middle East did not fall into line with Nasir's views. Nasir rejected the main basic ideas of the U.S. plan, which were as follows: a. to organize a mutual defence pact between states along the northern tier of the Middle East. b. to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict, in order to prevent the Soviets from using this conflict for creating tension and instability in depth behind

1. On the meeting see, Robert C. Doty, "Soviet rebuffed in plea to Egypt", New York Times, 15 July 1954.
2. Robert C. Doty, "Old Middle East disputes appear near settlement", New York Times, 18 July 1954.
3. Radio Cairo, 1 August 1954, SWB, Egypt, p. 36.

the Northern tier. c. to create conditions which would bring about a rise in the general economic welfare. d. to work for the preservation and strengthening of democracy¹.

In his public speeches and interviews, Nasir made the point that Egypt "stands in every respect with the West". However, he made it clear that Egypt had been opposed to any form of Middle East defence organization, in which the U.S.A. and Britain participated. Nasir stressed that the most effective way of defending the Middle East was to leave it in the hands of the peoples of the area. Egypt, Nasir emphasized, was ready to cooperate with all who sought its friendship but that foreign control, whether British or Communist, would be rejected. He defended the provision in the Anglo-Egyptian agreement permitting the British to return to their bases within seven years in the event of an attack on Turkey or any Arab state. He urged his people to be "realistic" in siding with the West if the U.S.S.R. attacked Turkey. Nasir had frequently attacked the Egyptian communists who were stirring up the people against the government for its agreement with Britain. He often stressed that ideologically, Egypt was outspokenly anti-communist. In his view, the communists were working under Soviet direction². In a conversation between Nasir and Colonel Harrison A. Gerhardt of the

1. On U.S. policy towards Egypt during 1954 and the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations and its immediate results, see, Hahn, United States policy towards Egypt, 1945-1956, pp. 435-458. John C. Campbell, Defence of the Middle East (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), pp. 67-70. Henry Byroade, "The Middle East in New Perspective", speech before Dayton World Affairs Council, Dayton, 9 April 1954, in, Dulles Papers, *ibid*.
2. See his interview with the American weekly United States News and World Report on 5 August 1954, in dispatch 246 from Caffery, Cairo, 13 August 1954, RG 59, 674.00/8-1354; and in telegram 190 from Stevenson, Cairo, 3 September 1954, FO371/108349, JE1022/20-22. See also an interview with AP, in dispatch 158 from Caffery, Cairo, 4 August 1954, RG 59, 674.00/8-454. New York Times, 23 August and 2 September 1954. Christian Science Monitor, 2 and 4 September 1954. Dispatch 296 from Caffery, Cairo, 3 September 1954, *ibid*, 674.00/9-354.

C.I.A., on 23 November 1954, Nasir summed up his understanding of the strategic importance of the Middle East and of Egypt in particular. He realized that a vacuum existed between the northern tier of defence and the Egyptian base. Nasir appreciated that "the Soviets would strike first at the oil fields and as a second priority, the Egyptian base cross roads". In the course of the conversation, Nasir argued that he did not accept the view of "neutralist elements in Egypt who felt that with a strong national army the frontiers could be defended and the Soviets would bypass Egypt". In his opinion, Egypt did not have the "capability of developing a sufficiently strong force to deter a Soviet attack on Egypt". Nasir's conclusion was that the vacuum between the northern tier and Egypt must be filled. But, he stressed, the defence arrangements for the Middle East "must be based upon indigenous factors". A Middle East defence organization with a superimposed command structure, Nasir said, was out of the question. That is to say, Nasir accepted the idea of forming a defence arrangement for Egypt and the Middle East, and he believed that the Soviet Union was a potential aggressor. Nevertheless, in his view, the structure of a M.E.D.O. was to be different from the one offered by the West, yet, it was to be oriented towards the West¹.

Soon after the initialling of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty, the Soviet media criticised it without attacking Nasir directly. The agreement, it said, was received with anxiety by many of the newspapers and prominent figures in Egypt and the Arab world. Special emphasis was put on the following clause: "In the event of an armed attack by an outside power on Egypt or any country which at the date of signature of the present agreement is a party

1. See Editorial Note No. 1374, FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. IX, pp. 2319-2320.

to the treaty of joint defence between Arab League states...or on Turkey, Egypt will afford to the United Kingdom such facilities as may be necessary in order to place the base on a war footing and to operate it effectively. These facilities will include the use of Egyptian ports..."¹. The Soviets claimed that this clause could mean that Egypt, despite its alleged rejection of the Turkish-Pakistani pact, would participate in it, if not directly, then indirectly. The Soviet press emphasized that the treaty was a victory for American diplomacy. American interest in the Middle East, said Izvestiia, derived not only from the area's wealth in raw materials but also from its strategic importance. American pressure on both Britain and Egypt to reach agreement was part of a plot to transform the Near and Middle East into a link in the chain of blocs, alliances and military bases under American hegemony. This agreement intended to remove the obstacles to Egyptian participation in a Middle Eastern military bloc².

Towards the end of 1954, after the period of uncertainty, which began in July 1954, the Soviets who paid great attention to Nasir's statements and moves³, realized that he was determined

1. See a full text of "Anglo-Egyptian Agreement Regarding the Suez Canal Base: Heads of Agreement", 27 July 1954, in, Khalil, Vol. II, pp. 729-730.
2. V. Kudriavtsev, "Vokrug Novogo Anglo-Egipetskogo Soglasheniiia", Izvestiia, 8 August 1954. See also, I. Aleksandrov, "Anglo-Egipetskoe Soglashenie i Plany SSHA na Srednem Vostoke", Pravda, 8 August 1954. USSR, p. 25. Radio Moscow in Arabic, 13 August 1954, SWB, USSR, p. 15. "The Anglo-Egyptian Agreement", New Times, 17 August 1954. Radio Moscow and Tass, 20 and 21 October, 1954, SWB, USSR, p. 7. Tass, 6 December 1954, ibid, p. 15.
3. During this period and according to the nature of his statements, Nasir was intermittently attacked or praised by the Soviet media. The Soviets' main concern was of Nasir considering the U.S.S.R. as a potential aggressor in a future war and his statements that Egypt was naturally oriented with the West. On the Soviet ambivalent attitude towards Nasir, see for instance, Radio Moscow in Persian, 1 September 1954, SWB, USSR, p. 15-16. "O Podlinnoi i Mnimoii Ugroze Egiptu", Pravda, 8 September 1954. K. Petrov, "Pod Flagom Amerikanskoi 'Pomoshchi'", Izvestiia, 16 November 1954.

to implement a policy of non-alignment. Considerable support was therefore given to Egypt by the Soviets, in order to back Nasir in his coming conflict with Western powers.

Soviet policy in the Middle East throughout 1954 was a reaction to the challenge made by the West. The formation of the Turkish-Pakistani pact and Western attempts to extend its membership constituted a direct threat to Soviet interests. The Soviets realized that the state of affairs created by the Western powers required drastic changes. It became clear that the tactic of sending warning notes had not proved successful. It was therefore concluded, that the only way to contain and to nullify Western hegemony was to encourage and in every way support those elements in the Arab world who opposed Western military pacts and expressed a wish to go in a neutral direction. The Soviets therefore increased their activity in the area, focusing it on three levels. First, supporting the Arabs against Israel in order to create tensions which would carry with them real danger of an outbreak of war. This tactic, they hoped, would put an end to the extended efforts made by the West to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict peacefully and thereafter to unite the rival parties under a Western military alliance. American security officials appreciated that the vetoes cast in the U.N. Security Council against resolutions to which the Arabs objected, provided the U.S.S.R. with an effective and inexpensive means of improving its position. They moreover claimed that, "should Israeli aggression occur and the Western powers fail to restore the situation a decisive movement of the area away from the West and possibly into the Soviet sphere of influence must be anticipated"¹. Second, the

1. "U.S.A. objectives and policies in respect to the Near East", Proposed Amendments to Statement of Policy in NSC 155/1, 6 July 1954, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant

Soviets were engaged in a long-range campaign intended to rally the world's underdeveloped countries to their side by extending commercial relations and supplying technical assistance to these countries. The Middle Eastern countries were considered by the Soviets as an integral part of this group of nations. According to a plan outlined by the Soviets, the U.S.S.R. was to become an international commercial centre, and eventually a political lodestar, for underdeveloped countries¹. Third, there was an increase in cultural exchange between the Soviet Union and Middle Eastern countries; two groups of Soviet Muslims visited Cairo between 6 to 9 September 1954. They were received by the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Sheikh Makhluf and other Muslim key figures in Egypt². At the beginning of November, the Soviet football team "Torpedo" arrived in Beirut and was received by the President and the Foreign Minister of Lebanon. Later on, on 19 November, the team played a game in Damascus³. A large number of invitations to conferences and exhibitions in the Soviet Union were distributed by Soviet representatives in Arab countries. For instance, 'Izzat al-Saqqal, the Syrian Foreign Minister, described these invitations as "so couched as to be difficult to refuse". He said that when he had refused because of the expense involved, the

for National Security Affairs, Records 1952-1961, File Subject: NSC 155/1- Near East (1), box 5. This policy was approved by the President on 11 July 1953. See, *ibid*, 29 July 1954. This appreciation proved to be accurate a few months later, when in February 1955, an Israeli military attack in Gaza was used by Nasir as a pretext to justify his decision to buy arms in the Soviet bloc. This subject will be discussed in the next chapter.

1. On Soviet economic policy towards the underdeveloped countries see, Paul Wohl, "Soviet Strategists use trade bait in traps for underdeveloped areas", Christian Science Monitor, 12 June 1954.
2. On the visit see, Radio Moscow in Arabic, 12 September 1954; and Tass, 15 September 1954, SWB, USSR, pp. 11-12. See also, Akhbār al-Yaum (Cairo), 7 August 1954.
3. Al-Hayāt (Beirut), 20 November 1954. On the visit of a Soviet basketball team to Egypt in October, see, Radio Moscow in Arabic, 8 October 1954, *ibid*, p. 42.

Soviets offered to pay all expenses¹.

The initialling of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty was a turning point in Nasir's foreign policy. Satisfied with his recent success in putting an end to the presence of foreign troops in Egypt, Nasir formulated the principles of his new foreign policy. This policy aimed to achieve two objectives. First, to bring Egypt and the Arab world to complete independence from foreign influence and interference. Second, to unite the Arab world under the political leadership of Egypt. Nasir aspired to export the ideas of the "Egyptian revolution", to the rest of the Arab world, the Islamic world and Africa. Contrary to Western defence plans in the Middle East, Nasir held the view that the area was to be defended by forming a collective security pact to include all members of the Arab league. He expected to lead such a pact².

The development of the events in the area, between December 1954 and February 1955, led to a significant change in Nasir's attitude towards the Northern tier security arrangement. During this

1. On the Soviet invitations to the Syrian government see, letter 21901/22/54 and telegram 340 from Sir John Gardiner, British Embassy, Damascus, 13 and 21 September 1954, F0371/111168, VY2191/1-2. It is noteworthy that after Shishakli's downfall in February 1954 the Soviet and Communist influence and activities increased in Syria and the various governments which were in power were unlikely to take determined action to counter this development. On this subject see, F0371/111144 and F0371/110846. On the Soviet Embassy's efforts to increase cultural influence in Egypt, see, dispatch 1221 from Caffery, Cairo, 22 December 1954, RG 59, 661.74/12-2254. See also Patrick Seale, The Struggle for Syria (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 148-185.
2. On Nasir social-political credo as issued soon after the coup, see, Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir, The philosophy of the Revolution (Tel-Aviv: Ma'arakot, 1961) (Hebrew). R.H. Dekmejian, Egypt Under Nasir (New York: 1971), pp. 122-123. Louis Awad, "Cultural and Intellectual Development in Egypt Since 1952" in: P.J. Vatikiotis (ed.), Egypt Since the Revolution (London: 1968), p. 143. Fayed Sayegh, "The Theoretical Structure of Nasser's Socialism" in: S.A. Hanna and G.H. Gardner (eds.), Arab Socialism (Leiden: 1969), pp. 100-102. Morroe Berger, The Arab World Today (New York: 1962), pp. 387-388. Rami Ginat, Medina Vehevra Behaguto shel Lutfi Al-Khūlī (State and Society in Lutfi Al-Khūlī's Thought) (Tel-Aviv: Thesis submitted to the Tel-Aviv University, 1987), pp. 14-18.

period, the struggle to lead the Arab world reached a climax. Nasir's plans to become the master of the Arabs did not fall in line with the ambitions of the Iraqi leader, Nuri al-Said, who became Nasir's main rival in this struggle. Nuri took the initiative and separately bargained with the West. He wished that the establishment of a Turkish-Iraqi alliance as the nucleus for a regional security network, would attract further Western support and arms. This he assumed, would put Iraq in a position of hegemony in the Near East¹. The signing on 24 February 1955 of a mutual defence pact between Iraq and Turkey, known as the "Baghdad Pact", put an end to Western efforts to win Egyptian support for the Northern Tier security arrangement. This development led Nasir to change his view of future cooperation with the West. He blamed the West for violating a "gentlemen's agreement that Egypt should be permitted to take the lead in constructing a purely Arab defence alliance free from formal links with outside powers"². Indeed, Only a few months earlier, the R.C.C. issued its programme for cooperation with the West which was based on the following principles:³

"Left to themselves, the Arabs would naturally gravitate to the West in the quest for arms and assistance. By the same token, they would build their entire defensive system against a possible communist aggression- the only serious aggression actually threatening the Middle East. With time, the masses would be convinced that the West is no longer trying to conquer the Arabs, and ties built on solid friendship will arise that are stronger than any written pact".

For these reasons Egypt wanted that the initiative for military collaboration with the West should come from the Arab side at the appropriate time. Egypt's leadership needed moreover time to prove

1. Patrick Seale, The Struggle for Syria, pp. 186-212. Uri Ra'anan, The USSR Arms the Third World, pp. 14-16.

2. Uri Ra'anan, *ibid*, p. 16.

3. See "Background Paper Number 1" released to foreign correspondents on 2 September 1954, by R.C.C. press officer; in: dispatch 296 from Caffery, Cairo, 3 September 1954, RG 674.00/9-354.

to their people and to the Arabs that the agreement for British evacuation was a great success; that from then on, Egypt would deal with the West on an equal footing; the matter of future cooperation with the West was to coincide with Egypt's interests and the latter would decide on the right time. Nasir's refusal to accept American military aid offered in the second half of 1954, derived from similar motives. During their talks, the Americans demanded that a military mission should be permitted to come to Cairo to supervise it. Nasir argued that the U.S.A. should look for "some means to extend military aid without forcing him to accept a military mission". He explained his refusal in "domestic political terms, specially extremist opposition to his compromise base with Britain"¹. The American failure to grant Egypt military aid and its activity behind the scenes, in encouraging the northern tier countries to promote the Dulles plan, created a gloomy atmosphere in the relations with Egypt. The extension of military and economic aid by the Americans, to induce Turkey and Pakistan to sign a mutual defence pact in April 1954, and their encouragement of Iran and Iraq to take part in this arrangement proved successful. Although the signing of the "Baghdad Pact" seemed to be a great success for the Dulles diplomacy, the State Department however decided not to join the pact. The State Department stated that the signing of the pact came as a surprise and it knew nothing of it². The U.S.A. gave its blessing to the

1. Hahn, United States Policy towards Egypt, pp. 462-473.

2. John R. Beal, John Foster Dulles (New York: 1959, p. 249. The Baghdad Pact was signed on 25 February 1955. Britain joined it in April, Pakistan in September and Iran in October 1955. See, J.C. Hurewitz (ed.), Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East (New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand, 1956), pp. 390-391. The State Department argument that it knew nothing was not accurate. In Full Circle (London: 1960), pp. 335-336, Anthony Eden, argued that the Americans were fully informed. He stressed that the American refusal to join the pact constituted the main factor of its later collapse. Stevenson said that shortly before 7

pact but refused to join it despite urgings from country members of the pact. By taking this stand concerning the Baghdad Pact, the American containment policy was to be the most damaged. The main reason for their decision not to join the pact was due to their wish to appease Nasir. The latter felt hurt as his leadership in the Arab world had been seriously challenged by his rival, Nuri al-Said. For the U.S.A., Egypt was still strategically important in securing the Middle East against Soviet encroachment. The Americans believed that, as the most influential Arab state, Egypt could determine the attitudes of other Arab states toward the defence of the area. American attempts to appease Nasir, however, did not meet with success. After the signing of the "Baghdad Pact", Nasir became its principal Arab opponent. He interpreted it as a Western attempt to isolate Egypt in the Middle East and to bring the Arab world under Iraqi leadership. He therefore deemed the pact to be directed mainly against Egypt. As early as the conclusion of the pact, Egypt's efforts were focused on establishing a united Arab front against Iraqi plans. These efforts did not meet with great success and split the Arab world into rival camps¹.

January 1955, "my former American colleague, on instructions, informed the Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs that the United States Government were in favour of a pact between Turkey and Iraq and that if the Egyptian Government were opposed, they (the U.S.A.'s Government) could only regret it". See letter No. 24 (1195/18/55G) from Stevenson, 10 February 1955, FO371/115489, V1073/244. See also, Campbell, Defence of the Middle East, p. 60. L.L. Gerson, John Foster Dulles (New York: 1967), pp. 258-259.

1. Wishing to unite the Arab countries in condemning the proposed Iraqi-Turkish pact, Egypt held a conference of Arab Prime Ministers in Cairo from 22 January to 6 February 1955. The conference ended without substantial results. Just a few weeks later (owing to domestic political changes in Syria, and the old rivalry between Iraq and Saudi Arabia), Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia, announced on 6 March agreement on measures to "strengthen the Arab structure politically, militarily and economically". In the long term, politically and economically, it proved to be an unworkable alliance. However, in the short

In his struggle against the Baghdad pact Nasir found a new ally, the Soviet Union. The immediate interest of both was to prevent its growth. Yet, the basic argument against the northern tier was different. For the Soviets, this was the second link in a chain of actions conducted under Western inspiration and intended to harm Soviet strategic interests. Since the conclusion of the Turkish-Pakistani treaty, the Soviet media had focused its massive attacks mainly on the Western powers. The Soviet government newspaper Izvestiia, stressed that the Turkish-Pakistani treaty was not an isolated agreement but a basis and a nucleus for the aggressive Middle Eastern bloc. The creation of such a bloc was part of a global American strategy intended to close the ring of U.S. military bases and aggressive blocs around the democratic camp¹. The American aim, argued the Soviets, was to replace British domination of the Middle East. The American plan, said Izvestiia, was first to convert the Arab collective security pact into a reliable instrument dominated by the U.S.A., and then to join it to the Turkish-Pakistani axis. The Americans were blamed for acting behind the scenes in carrying out this plan. This tactic was intended to cover the extensive pressure put by the U.S.A. on the Arab states to accept its defence arrangements, and thereafter to claim that this development was a result of a "local

term, it succeeded in containing Iraq's aspirations of becoming the Arabs' leader. On Egypt campaign in the Arab world against the Baghdad Pact and on its motives, See, Patrick Seale, The Struggle for Syria, pp. 213-226. FO371/115484, 115486/7, 115489. ISA, FM/2603/8, 9531/3. Robert Doty, "Egypt says Iraq binds Arab Unit", New York Times, 23 January 1955. O.M. Marashian, "Iraq-Turkey Pact widens Arab split", Christian Science Monitor, 21 January 1955. Robert Doty, "Three of Arab States join in Military-Economic plan", New York Times, 7 March 1955. ibid, "Arabs split sharply on plans for defence", 13 March 1955. Ibid, "Nasser says West stirs Arab Fears", 4 April 1955.

1. "Podgotovka Agressii pod Flagom Oborony", Izvestiia, 3 August 1954.

initiative"¹. A few weeks before the Iraq-Turkey pact was concluded, Pravda said that in order to extend the Turkish-Pakistani alliance the U.S.A. pretended to be the friend of the Arab peoples. The Americans and their imperialist ally, said Pravda, were basing their policy on the local bourgeoisie and the land-owning classes. To some extent, this policy succeeded as some of the Arab political leaders were already advocating cooperation with the West².

The Iraqi government decision of 3 January 1955 to close its legation in Moscow and to terminate diplomatic representation with the Soviet Union, was severely attacked by the Soviets. A few days later, the Soviet government responded by recalling its diplomatic mission from Iraq, and placed responsibility for this move and its future consequences on the Iraqi government³. Such actions, said Izvestiia, testified to the Iraqi government's dependence on imperialist powers. They "will inevitably lead to tension in international relations, and in this way they threaten peace and security in the Near East"⁴. Soviet anger increased when on 12 January Turkey and Iraq officially announced that they had decided to conclude a military treaty. The final text of this treaty, it said, would be released shortly⁵. This treaty means, said Izvestiia, "indirectly, if not directly, Iraq's adherence to the Turko-Pakistan pact and its having been drawn into the system of American military groups". Iraq, said

1. V. Kudriavtsev, "Agressivnye Zamysly SSSR na Blizhnem Vostoke" Izvestiia, 23 October 1954.
2. V. Medvedev, "Kto Ugrozaet Narodam Arabskogo Vostoka", Pravda, 28 December 1954. Despite the fact that the paper did not mention the name of the Arab political leaders, it certainly meant to Nuri al-Said, who was the main Arab leader to push the Arabs to cooperate with the West.
3. Tass, 8 January 1955, SWB, USSR, p. 20. See also, V. Sergeev, "Vopreki Interesam Irakskogo Naroda", Pravda, 10 January 1955.
4. S. Losev, "Dlia Chego Menderes Posetil Irak", Izvestiia, 14 January 1955.
5. Tass, 13 January 1955, SWB, USSR, p. 17.

Izvestiia, had become the Western Powers' weapon for dividing the Arab countries, and "for destroying the solidarity of the Arab East which has in many ways assisted the Arab states in their resistance to imperialist plans". The Turko-Iraqi military treaty was "hostile to the cause of the peace and independence of the people"¹. The hostile orientation of these Western blocs to the Soviet Union, emphasized Pravda, was doubted by no one. The Soviet public cannot be indifferent to the "machinations of the aggressive circles of the U.S.A., Britain and their accomplices, which are taking place on the borders of the U.S.S.R."². The Soviets praised the Syrian and Egyptian governments for their determined refusal to participate in military blocs. In this connection, Pravda said that the policy of "neutrality and national independence" conducted by these countries had served as a "serious obstacle to the aggressive forces in implementing their claims"³. Nevertheless, the Soviets were disappointed that owing to "pressure from the Western Powers", the Cairo conference of Arab Prime Ministers refused to "satisfy the demands of the public which insisted upon resolute and open condemnation of the Turko-Iraqi treaty". Yet, Soviet reports on the conference emphasized that the majority of Arab countries, "first and foremost Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia, are inclined against Nuri al-Said's treacherous machinations". Special mention was given of Nasir's sharp criticism of Iraq's actions. Nasir was described as the leader of Egypt, "the most important and influential country in the Arab East"⁴. To strengthen and to back these countries in their struggle against the Baghdad Pact, the Soviets

1. S. Losev, *ibid*.

2. V. Medvedev, "Turetsko-Irakskii Voennyii Sgovor", Pravda, 19 January 1955.

3. *Ibid*. See also S. Losev, *ibid*.

4. "Iraksko-Turetskii Voennyii Sgovor", Izvestiia, 15 February 1955.

often repeated that their policy towards the Arab countries was based on respect for their independence and territorial immunity; and on "profound sympathy for their struggle against the imperialist yoke and profound understanding of their national problems"¹. These principles were summed up by Molotov on 8 February 1955, in his report at the session of the supreme Soviet. He promised the Arab countries that the U.S.S.R. "have always given and will give reliable support in the defence of their sovereignty and national independence"².

From the Soviet strategic point of view, Syria, of all Arab countries, was the one to be paid the most attention owing to its proximity to Soviet borders. The Soviets were pleased with the downfall of Fāris al-Khūrī's government on 7 February. This government, stressed Izvestiia, collapsed as a result of its tendency to approve the policy of military blocs in the Arab East³. It is noteworthy that during the Cairo conference, the Soviets praised Fāris al-Khūrī for his firm insistence upon condemnation of the Baghdad Pact, and his refusal to join it⁴. The reason for this Soviet ambivalence was to be explained by developments on the Syrian political scene. This was the coming to power on 13 February 1955 of a government headed by Șabrī al-Asalī and dominated by Khālid al-‘Azm, the Minister of Defence and Foreign Affairs, who was known for his

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid. See also, F. Fedorov, "Turetsko-Irakskii Voennyii Pakt-Pridatok Severo - Atlanticheskogo Bloka", Krasnaia Zvezda, 4 March 1955.
3. V. Osipov, "Ne Myt'em, Tak Katan'em, Novyi Nazhim SSHA na Siriu", Izvestiia, 2 March 1955.
4. See Izvestiia, 15 February 1955. On 9 January 1955, Pravda expressed Soviet satisfaction of Fāris al-Khūrī's statement that Syria was against participating in aggressive blocs. He was quoted as saying: "We reject any alliance and any agreement contradicting the interests of the country or able to deprive it of sovereignty, independence and freedom". See, V. Medvedev, "Naglye Domogatel'stva SSHA v Sirii", Pravda, 9 January 1955.

pro-Soviet approach. Al-'Azm was supported by the two leftist parties, the Ba'th and the Communist. However, he explained that his positive attitude towards the Soviet bloc was derived only from their mutual understanding in international affairs. He stressed that his cooperation with the Communist Party was confined to international, and excluded domestic socio-political affairs¹. The primary item in the political programme of 'Asali's government was the re-confirmation of the principle of Syrian's non-participation in foreign military blocs. This Syrian stand caused a great deal of satisfaction in Moscow and Cairo, and indignation in the West, Iraq and Turkey. The Soviet press had frequently reported that the U.S.A., Britain, Iraq and Turkey were exerting pressure on the Syrian government to join the Baghdad Pact and warned that the Soviet Union would not remain indifferent². The threat from Turkey and Iraq to Syria reached a climax soon after the latter signed an agreement with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The Syrian government received warning notes from Turkey and Iraq and on 20 March it was reported that these countries had concentrated their forces near the Syrian borders³. The Soviet Union which appreciated Syria's neutral policy responded quickly to the Turkish threat. On 23 March Molotov invited Farid al-Khani, the Syrian Minister to Moscow, who was informed that the U.S.S.R. supported Syria's attitude

1. On the new government and its policy towards the Soviet Union and the Baghdad Pact, See Patrick Seale, The Struggle for Syria, pp. 219-237. On the motives behind Khalid al-'Azm's pro-Soviet approach, See, Khalid al-'Azm, Mudhakkirat Khalid al-'Azm, Vol. II, pp. 48-49, 427-433, and Vol. III, pp. 28-30. In this connection, see his quotation in Seale, *ibid*, pp. 219-220.
2. See for instance, V. Osipov, *ibid*. V. Bogoslovskii, "Proiski Imperialistov na Blizhnem Vostoke", Trud, 30 March 1955. M. Afonin, "Vdokhnoviteli i Ispolniteli", Pravda, 31 March 1955.
3. Patrick Seale, *ibid*, p. 233-234. On the Turkish note and the deterioration of the relations between the two countries, see FO371/115501, V1073/560.

vis-à-vis Turkey and was prepared to intervene if necessary to assist Syria in maintaining independence and freedom¹. On the same day, Khālid al-‘Azm received the Soviet Minister to Damascus, in order to learn about the Soviet stand towards the dispute with Turkey².

On 16 April, just a few days after Britain had joined the Baghdad pact (on 5 April 1955), and a day before the opening of the Bandung Conference, the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued an official statement on "Security in the Near and Middle East". The statement made it clear that the Soviet Union was no longer indifferent to political developments in the Middle East. The statement opened by declaring that recently the situation in the Middle East had considerably deteriorated owing to Western pressure for participation in military pacts. In this connection it was said:

"Ultimatums have begun to be made that Syria should join the Turco-Iraqi alliance, and these demands are accompanied by threats calculated to intimidate the government and people of Syria and to force Syria to change its position of non-participation in aggressive military blocs...Great pressure is also being brought to bear on Egypt, on whom demands are being made that she change her negative attitude to the Turco-Iraqi bloc and that she should not support Syria..."³.

The Western powers' allegation regarding the existence of a "Soviet threat" to the countries of the area, it said, intended to cover up their aggressive plans. Soviet foreign policy rested on the desire to strengthen peace among peoples on the basis of the "observance of the principles of equal rights,

1. See telegram 286 from British Embassy, Moscow, 24 March 1955, FO371/115501, V1073/566. Dispatch 523 from American Embassy, Moscow, 25 March 1955, RG 59, 661.83/3-2555.
2. See telegrams 127 and 128 from British Embassy, Damascus, 25 March 1955, FO371/115502, V1073/576, 578. Telegram 135, *ibid*, 28 March 1955.
3. See the full text in, SSSR i Arabskie Strany, pp. 116-120. See translation of the full text in enclosures to letter 2231/18/55 from British Embassy Moscow, 22 April 1955, FO371/115508, V1073/733A.

non-interference in internal affairs, respect for national independence and state sovereignty". The Soviets made it clear that they could not be indifferent to the setting up of foreign military bases on Middle Eastern territory. Such actions had a direct bearing on their security owing to the near proximity of those countries¹. The statement ended with a warning that:

"If the policy of pressure and threats against countries of the Near and Middle East continues, this matter will have to be considered in the United Nations... the Soviet Government... will defend the freedom, independence and non-interference in the internal affairs of the states of the Near and Middle East"².

The Soviet statement was warmly welcomed by Syria and Egypt. On 23 April, Farid al-Khanī called on Molotov to express his government's gratitude for the Soviet statement. Molotov assured him that the U.S.S.R. would firmly maintain its position³. Two months later, in an interview in Al-Jumhūr, Khālid al-‘Azm said that the Soviet attitude towards Syria had had a definite effect in easing foreign pressures on his government. The Soviet Union, he said, had informed the Western powers that it would retaliate in the event of pressure on Syria by any other country. The Soviets, he stressed, were undoubtedly a friendly country which Syria respected. He repeated his argument that there was a difference between the Soviet Union as a country and communist doctrine. Syria did not approve of Communism as a social system, emphasized al-‘Azm⁴.

1. Ibid. The same argument was made by S. Semenev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R., on 17 June 1955, during his conversation with Y. Avidar, Israeli Ambassador to Moscow. See letter from Avidar, 17 June 1955, ISA, FM546/7/A.

2. FO371/115508, *ibid*.

3. See telegram 400 from British Embassy, Moscow, 24 April 1955, FO371/115509, V1073/753. Dispatches 1902 and 424 from American Embassy, Moscow, 25 and 28 April 1955, RG 59, 661.83/4-2555 and 661.83/4-2855. On the Egyptian press comment, see telegram 90 from British Embassy, Cairo, 21 April 1955, FO371/115509, V1073/756.

4. See the interview in letter 11901/762/55 from British Embassy, Damascus, 15 June 1955, FO371/115513, V1073/876.

D. Nasir and the Non-Alignment Camp

Nasir's plans to promote his political ambitions throughout 1955 did not fall into line with the Western powers policy. The bone of contention was mainly centred on two issues. First, the Western efforts to strengthen and enlarge the Baghdad Pact by exerting pressure on Arab countries to join it. Second, the Anglo-American endeavours to promote their joint plan, known as Alpha¹, to develop proposals for a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace settlement. The solution of these issues constituted a pre-condition for Egypt's acceptance of military and economic aid from the United States.

The rapprochement between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. which had been resumed at the end of 1953 started to gather momentum during 1955. Nasir believed that being supported by one of the two main blocs did not mean that such support would create a state of inferiority and dependency. Egypt, Nasir believed, had to search for new sources of political and diplomatic support. His meetings with Nehru and Tito, the chief spokesmen of neutralism before the Bandung Conference, convinced him that there was another way for him to conduct his foreign policy. Their policy of non-alignment suited him². A few weeks before his departure to Bandung, he

1. This project played a central factor in shaping and implementing the American and British policies in the Arab-Israeli scene throughout 1955 and early 1956. On Project Alpha see, FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. IX, pp. 1683-1741, 1730-1731. FRUS 1955-1957, Vol. XIV, pp. 1-401. See also, Shimon Shamir, "The Collapse of Project Alpha", in: R. Louis and R. Owen (eds.), Suez 1956, The Crisis and its Consequences (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 73-100. Hahn, United States Policy toward Egypt, pp.481-487.
2. On Nasir's meeting with Tito and Nehru in February 1955, see, Mohamed H. Heikal, Cutting the Lion's Tail (London: Andre Deutsch, 1986), pp. 60, 68. Robert St. John, The Boss, The Story of Abdel Nasser (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1960), pp. 190-191. Jean Lacouture, Nasser, p. 103. According to Patrick Seale, p. 229, the two expressed publicly their support of Nasir's policy.

put forward the principles of his new foreign policy which reflected an inclination towards neutralism. In a long speech before Egyptian army officers, on 28 March, he made it clear that Egypt would adopt an independent policy which would serve its interests. To quote him: "All we want today is to create for ourselves an independent personality which will be strong and independent, which will be free to direct its domestic policy the way it wants and direct its foreign policy in a way which serves its interests". Communism had been considered a danger, but, he stressed, "I still believe that imperialism or our being dominated by the other side [the West] represents another danger". According to him, Egypt's foreign policy was based on these principles. First, Egypt was for self-determination. Second, it was against imperialism and foreign domination. Third, it was for the freedom of the peoples¹. These were also the guiding principles which he followed during the Bandung Conference.

The Afro-Asian conference, known as the Bandung Conference (held in Bandung on 18-24 April 1955), succeeded in demonstrating that there was an Afro-Asian consensus. Being a prominent figure at the conference and fully involved in formulating its resolutions, Nasir was convinced that the Afro-Asian bloc was a great power and could play a crucial role on the international stage. Nasir came to the conclusion that having an influential role in this bloc would enable him to conduct an independent foreign policy which would suit his interests. Indeed, in the course of the second half of 1950's, the bloc of the "Non-Aligned Countries" was consolidated, when the axis Nasir-Tito-Nehru constituted a central element in its leadership. During the conference, Nasir developed friendly relations with the

1. See the text of the speech in dispatch 1899, from Byroade, Cairo, 4 April 1955, RG 59, 674.00/4-455.

communist leader, Chou en-Lai, who headed the Chinese delegation. Chou en-Lai expressed his sympathy and support for Egypt's struggle against foreign intervention in Egypt and in Arab domestic affairs. He likewise, took the Arab side when the subject of the Arab-Israeli conflict came up. Chou en-Lai made it clear that China was prepared to make a major effort to improve its relations with Asian and Arab countries and to develop peaceful relations with other countries regardless of ideologies. Indeed, Nasir and Chou discussed the possibility of a trade exchange between their countries and in August 1955 an Egyptian trade mission in China concluded a three-year Sino-Egyptian trade and payment agreement¹. It is noteworthy that when the question of Egyptian recognition of Communist China came up during their talks, Nasir explained that under the present circumstances he

1. On the conference see, intelligence report entitled "Results of the Bandung Conference: a Preliminary Analysis", 27 April 1955, R&A Reports, IR 6903, N.A. Washington. ISA, FM2564/8. David Dallin, Soviet Foreign Policy, pp. 296-302. David Kimche, The Afro-Asian Movement (Tel-Aviv: 1973), pp. 59-79. Rami Ginat, Medina Vehavra, pp. 16-17. On Nasir's talks with Chou, see, Haykal, Milaffat al-Suways, pp. 344-346. St. John, *ibid*, pp. 196-202. Lacouture, *ibid*, p.105. In April, soon after the conference ended, the Egyptian Minister of Waqf visited China in response to an invitation received at Bandung. On his visit and on the trade agreement, see, intelligence report, "The Evolution of Egyptian Neutralism", 9 July 1956, R&A Reports, IR 7292, *ibid*. Arab News Agency, 16 April 1955, SWB, Egypt's Cotton Sales to Communists, p. 29. *Ibid*, 27 April 1955, SWB, Egyptian Economic Affairs, p. 19. Radio Moscow in Arabic, 28 April 1955, SWB, USSR, p. 14. It is to be pointed out that this was not the first time that Chou had expressed sympathy and support for Egypt. In a message to the Egyptian people during an unofficial visit to Egypt on 24 June 1954, he said inter alia: "The Chinese people sympathize wholeheartedly with the Egyptian people in their struggle for independence". See Radio Cairo, 24 June 1954, SWB, Egypt, p. 34. Throughout 1954 there were many rumours that Egypt was considering recognition of Communist China. When this subject came up during a conversation between Caffery and Fawzi, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, on 22 May 1954, the latter said that his government was pursuing a policy of strengthening relations with all countries. This policy, he said, proceeded primarily from consideration of the country's economic interests. See Tass report (based upon the Egyptian paper Al-Jumhūriyya), 24 May 1954, SWB, USSR, pp. 32-33.

could not commit himself.

In his speech at the conference, on 18 April, Nasir called for expanding the scope of co-operation among the Afro-Asian peoples. "It is my deep conviction", he said, "that cooperation among the Asiatic-African nations can play a dominant role in the lessening of the present international tension and the promotion of world peace and prosperity". In his call to the big powers to stop using small nations as tools for their selfish interests, Nasir was undoubtedly referring to the Western powers. Small nations, he said, "are entitled and bound to play independently their constructive role in improving international relations and easing international tension". Nasir ended his speech by calling for the liquidation of colonialism wherever it existed¹.

Nasir succeeded in having his resolutions passed. For instance, on the Palestine issue, the conference expressed its support of the rights of the Arab people of Palestine and called for "the implementation of the U.N. resolutions on Palestine"². By following a middle path which appeared to be neither pro-West nor pro-Soviet, he improved his prestige with the uncommitted Afro-Asian states. His success in Bandung increased also his prestige on the Arab and international scenes and strengthened his position domestically.

Referring to the expected conference in Bandung, Molotov said in a speech before the Supreme Soviet, on 8 February 1955, that it symbolized the positive changes "which have taken place lately in Asia away from colonialism"³. The American failure to prevent

1. See text of his speech in letter 2033 from Henry A. Byroade, the American Ambassador, Cairo, 28 April 1955, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Records, 1955: 050-321.3, File Subject: 310 Afro-Asian Conference Bandung, box 262.

2. R&A Reports, IR 6903, *ibid*.

3. See intelligence report entitled: "Developments Relating to the Bandung Conference", 21 February 1955, R&A Reports, IR 6830.1, N.A. Washington.

its taking place was marked by the Soviets as a great victory. The Soviet positive approach towards the conference, was derived from the following considerations¹. First, the conference was a rebuff to the U.S.A. which tried to prevent it. Second, it would serve the cause of peace, friendship and mutual understanding in Asia and Africa, and consequently, would unite the Afro-Asian nations against colonialism.

On 16 April, two days before the opening, Vasily V. Kuznetsov, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, addressed the conference with the following statement²:

"The peoples of the U.S.S.R. are watching with full understanding the struggle of the Asian and African countries against any form of colonial domination, and for their political and economic independence. The Soviet Union invariably sympathises with and supports the desire of the Asian and African countries to see relations between all countries based on principles of equality, non-interference in internal affairs, non-aggression and the renunciation of claims against the territorial integrity of other states, as well as on full respect for sovereignty and national independence".

A day later, Voroshilov, the Soviet president, sent his greetings to the conference, as did the Presidiums of the five Soviet republics of Central Asia³. During and after the conference, the Soviet press continued to praise the reason for the success of the conference. It was often argued that the conference was an expression of the tremendous progress which was being made in the life of the Afro-Asian countries. The Soviets disregarded those pro-Western delegates who criticised the new Soviet colonialism. Most of the resolutions adopted by the conference satisfied the Soviets. Especially pleasing was the one which called for the abolition of collective defense arrangements which serve the interests of a big power; and the abstention by any country

1. Ibid. See also, ibid, 4 March 1955, IR 6830.2; ibid, 18 March 1955, IR 6830.3.

2. Radio Moscow, 16 April 1955, SWB, USSR, pp. 8-9.

3. Dallin, Soviet Foreign Policy, p. 299.

from exerting pressure on other countries¹. An accurate evaluation of the new international state of affairs created as a result of Bandung is given by David Dallin in his book, Soviet Foreign Policy After Stalin. He argued that the conference was a great success for Soviet foreign policy. To quote him, the conference represented "a landmark in post-Stalin foreign policy, a symbol of communist-neutralist cooperation, and a step forward into the Asian and African world"².

1. See for instance, "Otkrytas Konfereniiia Stran Azii i Afriki", Izvestiia, 19 April 1955. Radio Moscow 21 and 22 April 1955, SWB, USSR, pp. 29-30. Tass reports, 19 and 20 April 1955, *ibid*, pp. 28-30. On the resolutions and their implications from the Soviet and Western blocs viewpoints, see, IR 6903, *ibid*. Dallin, *ibid*, pp. 300-302.
2. *Ibid*, pp. 301-302.

CHAPTER FOUR
EGYPTIAN ARM DEALS WITH THE SOVIET BLOC AND THEIR
IMPLICATIONS

The Egyptian-Czechoslovak arms deal, officially announced in September 1955, has been the subject of many studies. Most of these studies have indicated that the deal was concluded as a result of the following events: The Baghdad Pact, the Israeli attack on Gaza on 28 February 1955, the Bandung Conference and the Western refusal to supply Egypt with arms. These studies have also argued that the first discussions on this subject between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. were initiated by Egypt during the Bandung Conference when Nasir first met Chou En-Lai and checked with him the possibilities of getting Soviet arms. The next contacts, according to these sources, took place in May when Nasir met Daniil Solod in Cairo. These studies have based their accounts on Egyptian sources considered to be primary sources. However, the versions given by these sources do not conform to the facts¹.

A few studies have rejected this assumption and argued correctly that the above mentioned events were later used by Nasir as a pretext to justify his application to the Soviet bloc for arms. For instance, Uri Ra'anana claimed that the arms deal was concluded in mid-February, i.e., two weeks before the Israeli attack on Gaza. He argued that the first contacts between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. were conducted clandestinely and took place at the very beginning of 1955. According to him, by 12 January 1955, when the

1. A logical and acceptable criticism of these sources was made by Uri Ra'anana. He clearly proved that the two main Egyptian sources, Muhammad H. Haykal and Salāh Sālim, were not primary sources containing full and precise information. Moreover, their versions regarding the genesis of the arms deal did not correspond with the facts. See Ra'anana, The USSR Arms the Third World, pp. 62-68.

Turkish-Iraqi military pact became publicly known, the interests and policies of Egypt and the U.S.S.R. came to be temporarily parallel, although not identical. The rapprochement between the two countries was a result of this development in the Middle East, and coincided with domestic political changes in the Soviet leadership which led to the conclusion of the arms deal in mid-February¹. A similar view, by Professor Vatikiotis, in his book, Nasser and his Generation, held that by January 1955 Nasir's and the U.S.S.R.'s interests in opposing Western policy seemed to converge. This suggested to Nasir, said Vatikiotis, the "possibility of challenging Western arrangements with Soviet support, while the Soviet Union saw its chance to break up the strategic-political monopoly of the West in the region"².

In The Soviet Union and the Middle East, Walter Laqueur argued that the explanation for the motives behind the arms deal and the dramatic change in Egyptian policy towards the powers required going back at least a number of years, perhaps several decades. He focuses on two points: the evolution of anti-Western feeling and the growing radicalization of the Arab intelligentsia from the late 1930's. His argument that the idea of an alliance and even an arms deal with the U.S.S.R. was not at all new, is indeed quite correct. However, this theme is only sketched, and moreover, regarding the genesis of the arms deal, Laqueur bases his arguments on the same disputable Egyptian sources³

Quite an exceptional and a partly acceptable approach is made by Mohrez Mahmoud El-Hussini. In his book, Soviet-Egyptian Relations, 1945-85, he claims that it is not quite clear whether the Soviets

1. Ra'anan, *ibid*, Part I.

2. Vatikiotis, Nasser and his Generation, p. 232.

3. Walter Laqueur, The Soviet Union and the Middle East, pp. 213-217.

or the Egyptians were the first to initiate the arms dialogue. He however stresses that "from circumstantial evidence it seems plausible that the U.S.S.R., motivated by certain ideological and strategic requirements, made the first move". According to him, the Soviet offer of arms to Egypt was part of a Soviet long-term plan of gaining naval and air facilities in Egypt¹. The strategic arguments put forth by Hussini make sense. However, it would be a mistake to disregard the political and economic considerations which were the motive power behind the arms deal and constituted the cornerstone in the Soviet-Egyptian entente.

The present study argues that during 1955 Egypt concluded two separate arms deals with Soviet bloc countries. The first and smaller one, was concluded with the Czech government in the first quarter of 1955, and the second, bigger and more famous one, was concluded with the Soviet government at the end of July 1955, and was signed on 20 September 1955. These deals were a result of continuous contacts and negotiations between Egyptian and Soviet bloc officials which had begun sometimes towards the end of 1953. These contacts were conducted on official and unofficial levels and were motivated and affected by the political and economic climate which prevailed between the two countries.

1. Mohrez Mahmoud El-Hussini, Soviet-Egyptian Relations, 1945-85 (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1987), pp. 55-64.

A. Negotiations for Arms 1954-1955

As we have seen, high-level official dialogue between the Soviet Union and Egypt about arms sales took place in the first quarter of 1954. This subject had also been discussed with other East European countries and according to some reports Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union expressed their agreement to supply Egypt with arms. Nasir's decision to abort Najib-Solod dialogue was a tactical move intended to promote his personal ambitions. This move was not a result of Nasir's anti-Soviet policy as only two months earlier, he had supported the decision to dispatch Rajab's delegation to the Eastern bloc to seek arms¹. In fact, Nasir continued his contacts with the Eastern bloc for getting arms on the diplomatic and clandestine levels throughout 1954. In Moscow, 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī, held talks with the Soviets on this subject throughout 1954, yet, these were general discussions which did not involve a higher official level, or particular requests². These contacts gathered momentum towards the end of the year as a result of political events in the Middle East³. In October, after the conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement, Ahmad Lutfī Wakd, Nasir's Office Director, approached the Soviet Embassy in Cairo to discuss Nasir's plan to be present at the Bandung Conference. During his talks, the question of Soviet arms sale came up. Again, this dialogue remained on a low level and was intended more to learn about the Soviet attitude towards this issue than to formalize the frame of discussions⁴. Another attempt was made towards the end of 1954, while Nasir asked Husain 'Arafa, then of the Egyptian Military Police, to check the

1. See previous chapter pp. 228-237.

2. Hamrūsh, Qissat Thaurat, p. 65.

3. See previous chapter, pp. 210-268.

4. Hamrush, *ibid.*

possibility of purchasing arms from the U.S.S.R. The results of 'Arafa's inspection remain unknown¹.

The ascendancy of Khrushchev during January-February 1955 after a continuous power struggle with Malenkov, the then Prime Minister², contributed significantly to the acceleration of the Soviet-Egyptian clandestine dialogue. As far as foreign policy was concerned, Khrushchev maintained that the attitude towards neutral countries had to be revised, "rapprochement with their nationalist (though bourgeois) governments was imperative if the course pursued by these governments was to be directed against the West; abundant economic help, in addition to political rapprochement, must lead to the emergence of a firm coalition Communist-controlled nations with the 'neutrals'"³.

In fact, from the end of 1954, Khrushchev had ultimate control over clandestine operations. He dominated the Central Committee apparatus, controlled the K.G.B., and maintained a close alliance with leading Red Army cadres, a matter which paved the way for a direct channel of communication with Soviet military intelligence⁴.

1. Ibid.

2. On 8 February 1955, Malenkov announced his resignation. A new government was formed, headed by Bulganin. However, the regime was dominated by Khrushchev who continued to hold the post of the First Secretary of the C.P.S.U. On his ascendancy and on the internal power struggles and their influences on Soviet foreign policy, see, Ra'anen, *ibid*, pp. 86-130. Ra'anen claims that a power struggle between Khrushchev and Molotov continued after Malenkov's downfall. According to him, Soviet foreign policy was in fact conducted by Khrushchev, while Molotov remained passive. The question of selling arms to Egypt was one of the bones of contentions between the two. Molotov was skeptical as to Nasir's intentions and feared that dangerous results might arise from such a move. However, as the Soviet high authority, Khrushchev made the decision to sell arms to Egypt. See also, Dallin, Soviet Foreign Policy After Stalin, pp. 218-223. Isaac Deutscher, Russia, China, and the West 1953-1956 (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 28-38.

3. Dallin, *ibid*, p. 222.

4. Ra'anen, *ibid*, p. 72.

By that time, clandestine activities and contacts had already been taking place between Egyptian and Soviet intelligence. Soviet activity was handled by Soviet military intelligence, the Glavnoye Razvedovatelnoye Upravleniye (G.R.U.) [The Chief Intelligence Administration], which was attached directly to the General staff. The G.R.U. collected and evaluated military field intelligence and extensive foreign espionage. It was also in charge of Soviet military shipments to other countries. By that time, the organization was interested in using Egypt "as an anti-capitalist military power in the Near East"¹. Egyptian clandestine activities were directed by 'Alī Ṣabrī, Director of Egyptian Air-Force Intelligence, who, according to some reports, negotiated Egypt's military requirements with a military representative, probably a member of the G.R.U. at the Soviet Embassy in Cairo². Clandestine contacts between diplomatic representatives of the two countries in Turkey also continuously took place in Ankara at the very outset of 1955. Despite the Egyptian Embassy's denial, American and British reports from Ankara, based on reliable sources, stated that such contacts were taking place. According to these reports, one of these meetings took place on 6 February: two diplomatic cars met at the Cubuk water reservoir, eight miles outside Ankara. The Egyptian Ambassador descended from the one car, and five officers from the Soviet Embassy headed by the Charge d'affaires from the other .

1. See Ra'anan, pp. 70-72. On the G.R.U. see, Barton Whaley, Soviet Clandestine Communication Nets (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T., Center for International Studies, 1969), pp. 84-108. American intelligence reports confirmed that details of the nature and extent of Moscow offers were obtained through intelligence channels. See, Report on the Near East by the Director at the White House to a bi-partisan Congressional group, 9 November 1956, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary Records, 1952-1961, in: U.S. Declassified Documents Reference System, U.S., 1978, 18A.

2. Ra'anan, *ibid.*

All met, walked together for some time in the adjoining park, then parted¹. This information was also confirmed by Menderes, the Turkish Prime Minister, on 8 February, during his conversation with Sir James Bowker, British Ambassador to Turkey. Menderes blamed the Egyptian government for conducting a continuous violent campaign against Iraq and Turkey. Egypt, he said, aimed to isolate the Arab states from any defence association with the West. He believed that several moves made recently by the Egyptian government clearly indicated that Egyptian policy had basically taken a pro-Soviet orientation which could affect the security of the Canal Zone; he therefore called for the closest observation. According to him, this oscillation in Egypt's policy found its expressions in:

- a. statements by Egyptian political leaders that Egypt should furnish the Arab states with all the arms they required.
- b. Egyptian criticism of Iraq for breaking off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.
- c. The recent clandestine contacts between Egypt and the U.S.S.R.².

Despite Menderes' evaluation which was based on solid grounds, the British Ambassadors in both Cairo and Ankara ruled out the possibility that Egypt's moves indicated a pro-Soviet reorientation. The two believed that Egypt would remain on the side of the West and that its present anti-Western policy derived from fears that Iraq was going to become the main ally of the West and therefore would replace Egypt as leader of the Arabs³. It is

1. See dispatches 894 and 903 from American Embassy, Ankara, 9 and 10 February 1955, RG 59, 661.82/2-955 and 661.82/2-1055. Telegram 93 from Bowker, Ankara, 9 February 1955, FO371/115489, V1073/193. Letter 1073/289/55 from Bowker, Ankara, 14 February 1955, FO371/115493, V1073/311. Telegram 9, *ibid*, 18 February 1955, V1073/318. See also, Ra'anana, pp. 72-73.
2. See telegram 93, *ibid*.
3. See telegram 220 from Stevenson, Cairo, 10 February 1955, FO371/115489, V1073/212, and also V1073/220.

quite possible that Egyptian statements on furnishing the Arab states with arms, presumably, came after they had received Soviet assurances that they would supply the arms. By that time, the interests of both the U.S.S.R. and Egypt were to prevent other Arab states from joining the Turko-Iraqi pact. As Iraq received new modern weapons from the Western powers in return for siding with the West, the Soviets realized that this state of affairs required them to take counteraction in order to back the Arab states opposed to this. It therefore makes sense to argue that the Soviets stood behind these statements and encouraged the Egyptian government to continue in the same direction.

On 28 January 1955, in a message to the American diplomatic missions, Dulles informed them that: "In recent months there have been several reports of Soviet bloc offers to provide technical assistance and equipment to non-communist countries, particularly to less developed countries"¹. Intelligence reports which were being received as early as March 1955 indicated that Moscow was in direct contact with the Arabs, and was offering them economic and military aid². But although American and British policy makers were informed that the relations between Egypt and the Soviet Union were in a process of convergence and tightening, they did not pay the necessary attention to this development.

1. See message CA-4913 from Dulles to all American Missions, 28 January 1955, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Records, 1955, File Subject: Soviet Bloc Trade, 511.12.
2. See, Report on the Near East given by the Director of the White House, 9 November 1955, *ibid*. The Egyptian War Minister and Commander-in-Chief, Major General 'Abd al-Hakim 'Amer, confirmed, on 27 June, during a conversation with the British Oriental Counsellor that a Soviet offer of arms had already been made in March 1955. See dispatch 161 from Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, British Ambassador to Cairo, 24 October 1955, FO371/113680, JE1194/368. See also telegram 812 from British Embassy, Cairo, 28 June 1955, FO371/113672, JE1194/107. Sir Humphrey Trevelyan also claimed that the Soviets had offered Nasir arms in the spring after the conclusion of the Baghdad Pact. See, telegram 1325 from Trevelyan, Cairo, 26 September 1955, FO371/113674, JE1194/161.

B. The Conclusion of Arms Deals with the Soviet Bloc

The so called Czech-Egyptian arms deal, officially announced in September 1955, was in fact a combination of two separate deals. The first was concluded in the first quarter of 1955 between Egypt and Czechoslovakia and the second was concluded towards the end of July with the Soviet Union, and signed in September 1955 with Czechoslovakia. In fact, the second deal was a direct continuation of the first. Both deals were the result of several stages in negotiations which started at the end of 1953, gathered momentum at the end of 1954, and reached their final stage in 1955. The two deals were actually concluded by the Soviets while Czechoslovakia was given the green light to go ahead with sales¹. The first deal was concluded in Cairo in February 1955. This information

1. British and American reports from Cairo claimed that the negotiations were with the Soviet Government. Some of these reports suggested that there were two separate contracts, one with Czechoslovakia and one with the Soviet Union. Referring to this information, Trevelyan said: "This is quite possible, but I have no confirmation of this". See letter 1191/123/55 from Trevelyan, Cairo, 29 September 1955, FO371/113675, JE1194/241. The French Military Attaché in Cairo confirmed that there were two separate deals; one with Czechoslovakia and one with the Soviet Union. See telegram 1455 from American Embassy Paris, 29 September 1955, RG 59, 774.56/9-2955. The American Embassy in Prague thought that it was quite possible that the question of selling Czech arms to Egypt, or other Arab states, was under study in Prague from the end of 1954, or the beginning of 1955. The Embassy suggested that owing to the need of the Czech industry for new markets, other than in Eastern Europe and China, in order to expand its exports, the Middle East was in fact a good choice for the Czechs. Indeed, in the second half of 1954, Syria purchased 44 German Mark IV tanks from Czechoslovakia at extremely favourable prices. Towards the end of 1955, it was reported by the American Embassy in Prague, that 50 tanks of the same type but with modifications had already been delivered to Egypt. See telegram 128 from American Embassy, Prague, 5 October 1955, RG 59, 774.56/10-555. "U.S.A. Objectives and Policies with Respect to the N.E.", 2 November 1955, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Records 1951-61, File Subject: NSC 5428, Near East (Deterrence of Arab-Israeli War) (2), box 12, Eisenhower Library. Seale, The Struggle for Syria, p. 233. Telegram C-121 from American Embassy, Prague, 6 December 1955, RG 59, 774.551/12-655. On the extent of trade relations between Czechoslovakia and Egypt, see pp. 143-144, 194, 202-203, 306-309.

was first officially revealed by the Soviets, a decade later, when their semi-official organ International Affairs, confirmed that "Nasser's government concluded in February 1955 a commercial agreement with Czechoslovakia for the delivery of arms"¹.

Indeed, on 10 February a Czech trade delegation arrived in Cairo for the reported purpose of general trade discussions and negotiation of the trade and payments agreement. The Czech delegation left Cairo towards the end of February, without any official announcement regarding the results of its visit. Soon after its departure, on 24 March 1955, a Czech trade exhibition was opened in Cairo². This move was presumably intended to demonstrate that relations between the two countries were based mainly on commercial interests. Such an industrial exhibition could be used as a cover for clandestine negotiation for arms, and to refute some Western reports which claimed that the purpose of the recent dialogue was to negotiate a barter agreement to exchange of Egyptian cotton for Czech arms. For instance, a correspondent of the Agence France Presse, reported on 14 February 1955:³

"It is learned from a well-informed source that czechoslovakia is ready to exchange heavy arms for Egyptian cotton. A Czech mission headed by Dr. Otakar Teufer, Director General of the Prague Foreign Trade Department arrived in Cairo and had its first conference on February 14 at the Foreign Ministry with Egyptian Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Sami Abu al-Futuh and General Hassan Rajab, Under Secretary of the War Ministry."

The New York Herald Tribune reported that talks on this subject were going on between the two countries when the Czech government

1. K. Ivanov, "National Liberation Movement and Non-Capitalist path of Development", International Affairs, 1965, No. 5, p. 61; quotation taken from Ra'anana, *ibid*, p. 76.
2. See report on Egypt economy for the first quarter of 1955, in, dispatch 1937 from American Embassy, Cairo, 11 April 1955, RG 59, 874.00/4-1155.
3. Quoted in Ra'anana, *ibid*, p. 79.

opened the industrial exhibition in Cairo in March¹.

In a report which evaluated Egyptian-Soviet bloc relations, Henry Byroade, the American Ambassador to Cairo, stressed that in the spring of 1955, following the Gaza incident of 28 February, Hasan Ibrāhīm, the Egyptian Minister of Production, and Hasan Mar'ī, Ex-Minister of Commerce, visited Eastern Europe in search for arms. According to him, they were apparently successful in obtaining tanks and possibly jet planes in Czechoslovakia. Later on, he said, in May 1955, Daniil Solod, the Soviet Ambassador to Cairo, in response to Nasir's request, offered to furnish "heavy artillery" to Egypt. In both cases, the arms were to be exchanged for Egyptian cotton and "without strings" as to its potential use. Byroade said that Solod's offer was not immediately accepted by Nasir since "he would prefer for political and other reasons to obtain arms in the West if possible". Byroade concluded incorrectly that, "It is apparent that Nasir would be most reluctant to accept the (Soviet) offer since it would, of course, involve Egypt even more deeply with the Soviet bloc than

1. Ansel E. Talbert, "Nasser Effort to Lessen Mid-East Tension Seen", New York Herald Tribune, 7 April 1955. On 19 July 1955, after the six-week visit to Egypt of a Czech trade mission, it was announced officially in Cairo, that a new trade and payments agreement between the two countries was concluded. The fact that the arms deal was concluded before its official announcement, was first revealed by a senior Czech official on 28 November 1955. In a press conference in Cairo, Richard Dvorak, Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Trade, who headed a Czech trade delegation that visited Egypt in November 1955, said that the agreement to supply arms to Egypt was a part of the trade accord between the two countries. As aforesaid, officially, the talks on trade agreement had begun in February 1955. On the July agreement, see, report on Egypt economy for the third quarter of 1955, dispatch 448 from American Embassy, Cairo, 22 October 1955, RG 59, 874.00/10-2255. Dispatches 125 and 126 from George C. Moore, Second Secretary at American Embassy, Cairo, 28 July 1955, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Records, 1953-1955, File Subject: 510.1, Trade Agreement, box 4, and File Subject: 510.1 Trade Agreements & Missions, box 266. I.S.A. FM2506/5/B, 421/408/Z. On Dvorak's statement see, dispatch 598 from James N Cortada, Second Secretary at American Embassy, Cairo, 29 November 1955, *ibid*, File Subject: 510.1 Trade Agreements, box 4.

is now the case as a result of the current exchanges of cotton for petroleum and industrial goods"¹.

From Byroade's report and from other intelligence and non-intelligence reports, it may be concluded: a. That an arms deal between Czechoslovakia and Egypt was indeed concluded in February 1955. Under this agreement Egypt was to exchange cotton for military equipment. b. That soon afterwards, the Soviets offered Egypt military equipment which could not be supplied by the Czechs. This specific Soviet offer was made only in May 1955.

This conclusion however requires elucidation. A close examination of Egypt's dialogue with Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R. after February 1955 will simplify this complex issue.

The mission of Ḥasan Mar‘ī and Ḥasan Ibrāhīm in Eastern Europe was not in order to obtain arms because of the Gaza incident. Two simple reasons indicate the opposite. First, the arms deal had already been concluded a few weeks before the Gaza incident; the visit was therefore undoubtedly made in order to discuss and complete technical details arising from the need to implement the already concluded deal. The decision to send the ex-Minister Ḥasan Mar‘ī was probably due to his previous experience and familiarity with the subject. As the former Minister of Commerce, he had conducted the talks with the Czech delegation in February². Second, during

1. Dispatch 95 from Byroade, Cairo, 20 July 1955, RG 59, 661.74/7-2055. The Office of Intelligence Research (OIR) of the Department of State, confirmed that soon after the Gaza incident, Egyptian officials purchased some arms from Czechoslovakia. The Czechs, it also said, "have recently also offered military planes in exchange for cotton". See, United States Government, Office Memorandum by Philip H. Trezise (OIR), "Soviet Arms Offer to Egypt", 6 September 1955, in: U.S. Declassified Documents Reference System, U.S., 1976, 182E. According to the British Embassy in Cairo, the Soviet Ambassador in Cairo had already offered arms to Egypt in March 1955, shortly after the Gaza incident. See dispatch 56(10321/50/56) from British Embassy, Cairo, 19 April 1956, FO371/118846, JE1024/1. On the commercial agreement for the exchange of Egyptian cotton for Soviet petroleum and industrial goods, see pp. 303-305, 309-311.
2. Radio Cairo, 13 February 1955, in: Ra'anān, p. 78, f.n. 23.

Rajab's mission to Prague in 1954, he visited several arms factories including the firm which manufactured the "MIG" aircraft. This means that, during his talks with the Czech delegation in February 1955, he already knew what the Czech armaments industry could supply. There was therefore no need to dispatch another Egyptian delegation to the Eastern bloc countries in order to get some more information about their armaments industries. With his previous experience, Rajab could undoubtedly conclude such a deal.

By the time that talks with the Soviets for modern arms had been concluded at the end of July, Egyptian technicians had already flown to Prague to check the first consignment of "MIG 15"¹. On 19 July, a week before the technicians' departure, it was officially announced that Egypt and Czechoslovakia had concluded a trade and payments agreement. In fact, they signed two separate agreements on the same date. The first agreement was for one year and provided for the exchange of Egyptian cotton, rice and other products for Czech machinery and equipment, chemicals, rubber products, glass, timber and sugar. The Egyptian government also agreed upon the dispatch of Czech technical advisers. A three-year agreement was the second to be signed. It applied "only to government purchases", with \$7 million total exchange value. The agreements were concluded after a six-week visit by a Czech trade mission, headed by Kohout, Vice-Minister for Foreign Trade, who handled in March 1955 the Czech industrial exhibition in Cairo. As officially announced by Dvorak, Czech Minister of Foreign Trade, the arms deal was a part of the trade accord². Thus, it follows that the second agreement which related to "government purchases"

1. This information was given by Salāh Sālim. See his statement in Patrick Seale, The Struggle for Syria, pp. 234-236.
2. On the agreement and Dvorak's statement, see, f.n. 1, p.280. See also, "Soviet Bloc Economic Activities in the Near East and Asia as of November 25, 1955", Report, Office of Research, Statistics, and Reports, Clarence Francis Papers, Eisenhower Library.

was probably a cover for the arms purchases.

From a close examination of similar barter deals between Egypt and other Eastern bloc countries in the 1950's, it follows that the conclusion of such deals did not require such a long period of negotiation. It is therefore certain that during the six-week visit, technical and financial details arising from the conclusion of the arms deal of February, were discussed and concluded before the departure of Egyptian technicians to Prague.

The Egyptian government's consent in the first agreement to facilitate the work of Czech technicians, was in contrast to its policy of not allowing foreign advisors into the country. Its decision to allow many of the Czech technicians who entered Egypt in March 1955 (in connection with the industrial exhibition) to stay in Egypt (despite the end of the exhibition), and its consent to the arrival of some more, was intended to prepare the ground for the acceptance of the new military equipment some of which had already arrived in Egypt.

The Soviets were certainly involved, both directly and indirectly, in the Czech-Egyptian clandestine negotiations which led to the agreement. Their complete control of their allies' legations in Cairo, was well described by Zakariyā Muhyī al-Dīn, Egypt's Minister of Interior. According to him, "more and more persons of Russian nationality are handling Soviet Bloc affairs in Egypt", whereas in the past, he emphasized, the Soviets had left the handling of Middle East affairs to the "Satellite representatives"¹. It can also be deduced that the Soviets were fully aware of Egypt's military needs from the fact that on 23 May, during a meeting between Solod and Nasir, on the latter's

1. See a report which made by an anonymous American officer, on his conversation with Zakariyā Muhyī al-Dīn, took place on 19 June 1955, in dispatch 2298 from American Embassy, Cairo, RG 59, 674.00/6-2155.

initiative, Solod provided a list of available military equipment and terms of purchase. They undoubtedly, played a crucial role in the first half of 1955, in bringing the arms deal between Egypt and Czech to a conclusion. Solod's offer was made after the conclusion of this deal and included a list of military equipment some of which was similar and in addition to the Czech equipment, and some, like submarines, heavy tanks and jet bombers, which could not be supplied by Czechoslovakia¹.

Soon after the Nasir-Solod meeting, clandestine negotiation between Egypt and the Soviet Union took place in Cairo. 'Alī Sabrī again represented the Egyptian government and his Soviet counterpart was Colonel Nimoshenka, Military attache at the Soviet Embassy in Cairo. This negotiation was kept secret and only a few officials from both sides knew about it². An American intelligence report indicated on 5 June that Nasir had designated Hasan Rajab to head a mission to the Soviet Union "to negotiate the purchase of artillery items offered for barter against cotton"³.

This deal was concluded at the end of July 1955 during a visit by D.T. Shepilov, editor of Pravda, C.P.S.U. Central Committee Secretary, a specialist in Foreign affairs, and a favourite of Khrushchev's. The decision to send Shepilov and not a

1. According to the British Assistant Military Attaché in Prague, the Czechs did not themselves produce very heavy tanks (T-34), though they did assemble them. However, they produced lighter tanks of their own design, 75mm. self-propelled guns, other armour and artillery as well as MIG 15 aircraft. See letter 1192/2/55 from British Embassy, Prague, 28 September 1955, FO371/116193, NC1192/1.
2. From a conversation between Nasir and Byroade which took place at Nasir's home, on 16 June 1955, it follows that even Mahmūd Fawzī, Minister of Foreign Affairs, had known nothing about the negotiation. A memorandum of the conversation is attached to dispatch 2311 from Byroade, Cairo, 23 June 1955, RG 59, 674.00/6-2355. See also Hamrush, p. 69; and M.H. Heikal, Nasser: The Cairo Documents (London: New English Library, 1972), p. 55.
3. See Philip Trezise, "Soviet Arms Offer to Egypt", *ibid.*

representative of the Foreign Ministry to handle the final stage of the deal, was well-calculated by Khrushchev. Shepilov arrived in Cairo on 21 July, while talks on relaxing international tensions were going on in Geneva between the leaders of the East and West. Shepilov was in fact one of the main key figures in shaping Soviet foreign policy, and was Khrushchev's choice. Officially, he was invited by the Egyptian government as the editor of Pravda, to attend Egypt's Liberation Day celebrations, on 23 July. The argument put forth by David Dallin in his book Soviet Foreign Policy After Stalin¹, that "with Shepilov rather than a representative of the Foreign Ministry conducting the negotiations, the proceeding would appear less official in case the issue should come up at Geneva", is fully acceptable. During his visit, all the details of the arms deal were decided upon, although the deal itself was not yet signed. Shepilov brought a message from Khrushchev that the U.S.S.R. was prepared to assist Egypt in every field. In his talks with Nasir, Shepilov made it clear that his government was willing to increase its latest offers substantially, and would provide Egypt with MIG aircraft and with the latest weapons. He promised quick delivery and agreed to a barter with Egyptian cotton. The Soviets agreed to sell to Egypt among others, 100 MIGs, 200 tanks, and jet bombers. The military shipments could begin to arrive within 30 days. The U.S.S.R. was also willing to finance the building of the high dam in Aswan, and Egypt could repay in cotton over a period of up to thirty years and in terms suitable to Egypt. Shepilov promised that the Soviet Union would also be of great assistance to Egypt

1. Dallin, Soviet Foreign Policy After Stalin, p. 394. The Geneva Summit Conference opened on 18 July. The Soviet Union was represented by Nikita Khrushchev, C.P.S.U. First Secretary and Nikolai Bulganin, Soviet Prime Minister.

in economic development and technical assistance¹.

On 10 August Solod handed Nasir an invitation to visit the U.S.S.R. On the same day, it was announced by Egyptian officials that Nasir had accepted the invitation and that the visit would take place in the spring of 1956². This was the first Soviet invitation to an Arab leader and was, in effect, the Soviet official recognition of Egypt's military regime. On 8 September, just a few days before the official conclusion of the arms deal, an accurate picture of the existing state of affairs in Egyptian-Soviet relations, was outlined by Lidiia Vatolina, a well-known Soviet orientalist. Referring among other things to Nasir's decision to accept the visit, she said:³

"The announcement that the Prime Minister of Egypt, Jamal Abdel Nasser, has accepted an invitation to visit the Soviet Union was received with deep interest in our country. It is a source of particular satisfaction to one who, like myself, has devoted many years to a study of Egypt...Nasser's visit...will undoubtedly further strengthen Egypt's international position. The realization is rapidly gaining ground in Egypt that the principles of Soviet foreign policy stem from a genuine desire

1. On the visit and its results see, Philip Trezise, "Soviet Arms to Egypt", *ibid*. See also an interview made by David J. Dallin with ranking employees (Gilin, Chase, Johnston and Dick Mitchell) of the External Research Division of the State Department, Washington D.C., 15 December 1958, David J. Dallin Papers, File E, MSS. & Archives Section, New York Public Library. See also a record of conversation between Byroade and Ahmad Husain, Egyptian Ambassador to U.S., in Cairo, on 14 August 1955, in dispatch 234 from Byroade, Cairo, RG 59, 774.56/8-1555. *Hamrūsh*, p. 70. In a press statement before his departure on 29 July 1955, Shepilov expressed his satisfaction about the visit and thanked the Egyptian government for its hospitality. He said, *inter alia*, "They [the Egyptians] have demonstrated their great energy in the struggle against the imperialist oppressors. They have shown their implacable resolve to defend their national rights, their freedom...The sentiments of the Soviet people are wholly on the side of the Egyptian people's aspirations". Tass announcement, 29 July 1955, SWB, USSR, p. 36. See also Daily Telegraph, 5 November 1955, in: FO371/113680, JE1194/368(A).
2. Walter Laqueur, The Soviet Union and the Middle East, p. 219. O.M. Marashian, "Cairo Sees Prestige Boost in Soviet Invitation of Nasir", Christian Science Monitor (Boston), 27 August 1955. Tass, 10 August 1955, SWB, USSR, p. 12.
3. Lidiia Vatolina, "The new Phase in Egypt", New Times, 8 September 1955, in: Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, pp. 140-142.

for peace and consistent support of all countries and peoples that strive to fortify their political independence and to uphold their national rights".

Nasir made it clear that the coming visit did not contradict "our anti-communist principles". He emphasized that Solod assured him that the Soviet government had nothing whatever to do with the Egyptian communists. To quote him: "Nothing prevents us from strengthening our economic ties with Russia even if we arrest the communists at home and put them on trial"¹. It is noteworthy, that throughout his period in power, Nasir, consistently, made such a distinction between his close relations with the U.S.S.R. and his hostile policy towards local Communism, a matter which more than once created a tension between the two countries.

Nasir's invitation was a subject of considerable discussion in both the Soviet and the Egyptian press. The Soviet press concentrated on the importance of this move and its contribution to strengthening the "Geneva Spirit". On 24 August, at a big ceremony, Muḥammad 'Awwād al-Qūnī, Egypt's new Ambassador to Moscow, presented his credentials to M.P. Tarasov, Vice-President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. The Soviet press made special reference to this ceremony, and al-Qūnī was quoted as saying:²

"The great sympathy and good will of the government and the people of the Soviet Union towards my country which is fully resolved to uphold its independence and freedom, are unquestionable highly gratifying. We are deeply grateful for it. The lofty principles which are promoted by the Soviet Union which consist in respect for the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and equality of countries, big and small, and non-interference in their affairs have lately been proclaimed in many parts of the world. These principles are particularly highly valued by the Egyptian people after their recent liberation".

1. Laqueur, *ibid*, pp. 219-220.

2. See letter 35/120/SM from the Israeli Embassy, Moscow, 26 August 1955, ISA, FM/2506/4, 411/408/Z.

By the end of August the Egyptian government decided to sign an agreement with the Soviet Union. The deal was signed on 20 September 1955 in Warsaw¹, officially, with the Czech government, deputed by the Soviet government for this purpose. In fact, three communist countries were involved: the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Poland². Under this deal Egypt was to receive from the Soviets and the Czechs the following military equipment:

a. Between 120 and 200 MIG 15 fighters; b. between 30 and 60 IL 28 bombers; c. small numbers of training aircraft; d. small numbers of transport aircraft; e. 200 medium and heavy tanks; f. light and heavy artillery and ammunition. Under this deal, Poland and the U.S.S.R. were to supply the naval equipment. This included two Skory class destroyers, two minesweepers T-43, twelve MTBs-P6 and three submarines, two W-class and one Malutka class. The total arms purchase was estimated at \$140 million³.

1. This information is taken from the Egyptian Naval Archives, "A Collection of Special Reports and Messages on Armaments", 5 November 1955, in: M.M. El-Hussini, Soviet-Egyptian Relations, 1945-85, pp. 57, 235-236. Byroade reported on 21 September: "last night we were told by highly reliable source that Egypt's arms deal with Russia was now definitely decided". See telegram 518 from Byroade, Cairo, 21 September 1955, RG 59, 774.56/9-2155. A week later Byroade pointed out that the actual agreement was with Czechoslovakia. However, he emphasized, the Soviet Union was behind the agreement. According to him, Daniil Solod had told Nasir that the deal could be arranged through "satellite country if this is better from Nasir's point of view". See telegram 600 from Byroade, Cairo, 29 September 1955, RG 59, 774.56/9-2955.
2. C.I.A., "The Communist Economic Campaign in the Near East and South Asia", 30 November 1955, in: U.S. Declassified Documents Reference System, U.S., 1986, 002516. El-Hussini, *ibid*, p. 57.
3. Intelligence Report No. 7117, "The New Soviet Approach to Syria: Diplomacy rather than Ideology", 15 December 1955, Office of Intelligence Research, Department of State, in, memorandum to the Secretary of State, 21 December 1955, RG 59, 661.83/12-2155. "Soviet Bloc Economic Activities in the Near East and Asia", *ibid*. See also, Annual Report (No. 6) on the Egyptian Air Force during the year 1955, prepared by Air Commodore C.M. Heard, former Air Attaché at the British Embassy in Cairo, in dispatch 111(1221/8/56G) from British Embassy, Cairo, 19 July 1956, FO371/119009, JE1224/4. Egypt: Annual Report for 1955, in dispatch 13(10113/1/56), from British Embassy, Cairo, 31 January 1956, FO371/118830, JE1011/1. The

On 27 September 1955, the day of Nasir's announcement of the conclusion of the arms deal with Czechoslovakia, a shipload of small arms, including machine guns, reportedly arrived in Egypt. According to this source, another shipment, including 60 heavy tanks, was to arrive within the week¹. The arrival of these shipments, only a few days after the conclusion of the main deal, could be a result of two things. First, since the report concerned shipments of small arms, and according to the September deal Egypt was to receive heavy equipment, it makes sense that these shipments were part of the military equipment supplied by the Czechs under the agreement of February 1955. Second, the Soviets could make available for delivery, without special preparations, surplus stocks of military equipment, including tanks and planes, owing to their recent armed forces' re-equipment programme. As a result of the new programme, the Soviets could offer to Egypt huge quantities of arms surplus with quick delivery². Nevertheless, it is pointless to try to establish which shipment came from which country. One thing is certain, the decision to dispatch arms shipments from Soviet bloc countries

data on the naval equipment were taken from El-Hussini, *ibid*. The first submarine for Egypt was on its way from Poland when Israel launched its attack in Sinai. see, "Status Report on the Near East given by the Director at the White House to a bi-partisan Congressional group", 9 November 1956, *ibid*.

1. "Soviet Bloc Economic Activities in the Near East and Asia", *ibid*.
2. See dispatch 56(10321/50/56), F0371/118846, *ibid*. United States Government, Office Memorandum, "Soviet Intentions Regarding Egypt", from William A. Crawford, Eastern European Department to Wilkins, Near Eastern Department, 17 August 1955, RG 59, 774.56/8-1755. In addition to the re-equipment programme, Crawford said, that the Soviets were apparently engaged in reducing the size of their ground forces, as indicated by their recent announcement of a cut of 640,000 men in the Soviet armed forces. This move, he stressed, would undoubtedly free considerable amounts of military equipment for use elsewhere. He concluded that the initial stocks of weapons and equipment to Egypt were probably available. Both the British and the Americans suggested that this equipment might not be of the very latest models, yet, it could be serviceable and not entirely obsolete.

to Egypt was definitely made by the Soviet leaders.

Soviet and Egyptian official announcements of the conclusion of the arms deal, said that it was a barter agreement between the Czech and Egyptian governments. The question that arises is, why Czechoslovakia? There could be several explanations. First, the announcement was made shortly after the successful end of the Geneva Summit Conference of July 1955, between the leaders of the Eastern and Western blocs. In the summit, both blocs agreed to "relax international tensions", and to establish a peaceful atmosphere in East-West relations, known as the "Geneva Spirit". The Middle East area was not a subject under discussion during the summit, and the Soviet Union was not committed to any restrictions of arms supply in this area, such as the tripartite declaration of May 1950; however, Soviet official confirmation that the deal was concluded with them, could spoil the "Geneva Spirit", and might be sharply criticised by the Western powers who considered the Middle East as their zone of influence. The Soviets always could argue and indeed, they did before and after Nasir's announcement, that "if any state friendly to the Soviets wished to sell (arms) to Egypt, this was solely matter for it to decide as an independent state"¹. Second, previous arms agreements which were concluded between Egypt and Czechoslovakia, did not attract much attention and were almost disregarded by the Western powers,

1. See telegram 129 from American Embassy, Prague, 6 October 1955, RG 59, 774.56/10-655. In a conversation between Yosef Avidar, Israeli Ambassador to Moscow, and Grigorii Zaitsev, Head of the Middle Eastern Department at the Soviet Foreign Ministry, on 12 September 1955, a few days before Nasir's announcement, the latter denied reports suggesting that the Soviet bloc was to sell arms to Egypt. However, he said that the U.S.S.R. was not ruling out the possibility of selling or buying arms if intended for defensive purposes. Moreover, arms transactions, stressed Zaitsev, were considered an integral part of normal commercial relations between two independent countries. See, letter 40/130/SM from Avidar, Moscow, 12 September 1955, ISA, FM546/7/A.

even though they knew about them. Third, Czechoslovakia had an impressive armaments industry which manufactured much of the military equipment to be supplied to Egypt by the Soviets. The Soviets could therefore argue in any future controversy with the West, that the arms shipments to Egypt came from Czechoslovakia. Fourth, as far as the Arab-Israeli conflict was concerned, Czechoslovakia was the best choice for the Soviets, as it was well-known that in the past it had furnished arms to both the Arabs and Israel, and therefore it could not be accused for siding with the Arabs. It follows from this, that the Czechs could argue that the deal was purely commercial, and that there was nothing special compared to previous transactions. Indeed, a few days after Nasir's announcement, The Voice of the Arabs used this argument in order to justify the deal. To quote: "Czechoslovakia, it is reported, at one time agreed to supply arms to Israel; and what did the USA do at that time? Once again, we say that we have enough of hypocrisy and deception"¹. Fifth, the Soviet Union wanted to dispel Arab fears that they were getting involved with a new great power after a long struggle to get rid of Western domination.

Nasir's decision to accept the Soviet offer, despite the fact that, in August, the Americans had replied positively to his request for arms, requires explanation. Since Byroade was told by Nasir in June 1955, about the arms offer made by the Soviets, he had concentrated his efforts on persuading Dulles to respond favourably to Nasir's request for American arms. He endorsed Nasir's request to purchase \$28 million worth of B-26 fighter planes, light tanks and other equipment. Byroade considered that

1. The Voice of the Arabs (Cairo), 29 September 1955, SWB, Cairo on Middle East Arms, p. 13.

in the absence of favourable response, Egypt might accept the Soviet offer. "The West must meet, or better, the Soviet offer of arms and assistance", he warned, "or Nasir will either be overthrown or forced to accept the Soviet offer"¹. Dulles dismissed Byroade's appreciation after he was assured by Khrushchev at the Geneva summit in July 1955, that the Soviets were not contemplating an arms deal with Egypt². Neither Dulles nor Byroade read the map correctly. The first suggested that providing arms to Egypt at that stage would spark an Egyptian-Israeli arms race that would destabilize the region. In a conversation with Allen Dulles, on 17 August 1955, he said that "he did not know how seriously we should take the Russian proposals about Egypt"³. On the other hand, Byroade's appreciation was in fact anachronistic, as the deal with the Soviets was already in its final stage. As early as August 1955, Dulles decided to reply positively to Egypt's request. In a conversation with Eisenhower on 5 August he explained the motives behind his decision⁴:

"I told the President that we planned to notify Nasser that we would sell certain military equipment to Egypt as desired by him. I said that this had perhaps been put up as a test of our

1. Hahn, United States Policy Toward Egypt, P. 486. Dispatch 2311, 674.00/6-2355, *ibid*. Dispatch 95, 661.74/7-2055, *ibid*. See also Top Secret letter from Herbert Hoover, Acting Secretary of State to Charles E. Wilson, Secretary of Defence, 21 July 1955, RG 59, 774.5-MSP/7-2155. See also telegram 234, 774.56/8-1555.

2. Hahn, *ibid*, 486-487.

3. On the conversation see, Telephone Conversations Memoranda: File Subject: Telephone Conversations - General, 2 May 1955 - 31 August 1955 (2 of 8), box 4, Dulles Papers. From a later conversation between the two, on 24 September, arises that he was not quite sure if the deal was indeed concluded. He told Allen that the U.S. made Egypt "a big and liberal offer of arms". The Secretary stressed that "he really wanted to know how solid the facts were. Maybe we should wait". On the conversation see, *ibid*.

4. See Memorandum of Conversation between Dulles and Eisenhower, 5 August 1955, Dulles John Foster Papers, 1951-1959, File Subject: John Foster Dulles Chronological, August 1955 (7), box 12, Eisenhower Library.

friendly relations and with the suggestion that if Egypt cannot buy here, they might buy in the Soviet Union."

This move was useless and indicated a confusion among American policy makers, who were surprised by Nasir's intentions. The argument put forth by American officials that Nasir's position in the R.C.C. might be weakened if refused to accept the Soviet offer¹ was unfounded, because he was the key figure behind the continuous dialogue with the Soviets since the end of 1953. As has already been said, the motives behind Nasir's decision to approach the Soviets were political rather than tactical. However, his application for American arms in June 1955 was indeed made for tactical reasons. He knew that the Americans would not agree to furnish Egypt with all the required items, or to accept Egypt's payment proposal, that is, a long-term credit, repayable in goods or soft currency; and this would enable him to justify his decision to accept the Soviet offer. Practically, the Soviet offer was much more attractive; it was on very favourable terms, and with no strings attached. In comparison to the American offer, it included a much larger quantity of arms and an easier mode of payment, with Egyptian goods, mainly cotton, spread over a period of several years. While the worth of the American military equipment offered to Egypt was \$27 million, the Soviet offer had an estimated value of \$140 million².

On 27 September 1955, in a speech at the armed forces exhibition in Cairo, Nasir officially announced that Egypt had

1. See for instance telegram 233 from Byroade, Cairo, 15 August 1955, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Records, File Subject: 350 Egypt, box 263.
2. "Soviet Bloc Economic Activities in the Near East and Asia", ibid. Philip Trzise, "Soviet Arms to Egypt", ibid. Ra'anana, ibid, pp. 55-56. Dallin, Soviet Foreign Policy After Stalin, pp. 393-394. IR 7117, 661.83/12-2155, ibid. See also, Memorandum of Conversation between Dulles and Ahmad Husain, Egypt Ambassador to Washington, 29 July 1955, RG 59, 774.5/7 -2955.

concluded an arms deal with Czechoslovakia. Explaining the motives behind his decision, he accused the Western powers of a consistent refusal to supply Egypt with arms. These powers, he said, deliberately put forth unacceptable conditions for arms sale.

In his speech of 27 September and his interview with Arab News Agency of 30 September 1955, Nasir put forth, inter alia, the following arguments: First, he claimed that the U.S.A. expressed its readiness to supply Egypt with arms if the latter joined a military alliance with the West. Second, he stressed that Egypt did not conclude a deal with the U.S.S.R. since it accepted the Czech offer which was on a purely commercial basis. Third, he emphasized that he did not "intend to introduce foreign technicians into the Egyptian army. This is a matter which touches me more than any other person"¹. These assertions, as we have already seen, did not correspond with the facts. Their main purpose was to justify Nasir's new policy of neutralism, by lessening the political significance of the deal, and by introducing it as a commercial transaction without conditions or restrictions. He repeated several times that this was not a great victory for Soviet influence in Egypt and that this move did not indicate of a turning point in Soviet-Egyptian relations.

The Tass announcement on 1 October 1955, four days after Nasir's

1. The speech of 27 September, announcing officially the conclusion of the deal, was made at the Egyptian armed forces exhibition in Cairo. See full text in, Radio Cairo, 27 September 1955, SWB, Egypt's Arms Offers, p. 16-18. On his interview to Arab News Agency on 30 September 1955, see, SWB, Nasir's Statement, p. 9-10. As for Nasir's statement about foreign technicians, we have already seen that since March 1955, Czech technicians were already in Egypt and more arrived later on. Towards the end of 1955, the number of Czech and Soviet technicians amounted to hundreds. See a paper on "The Opportunities for Communist Penetration of the Egyptian Armed Forces Resulting from the Recent sale of Communist Arms to Egypt", enclosed to letter 1191/291/55 from Trevelyan, Cairo, 7 November 1955, F0371/113682, JE1194/401. See also Dallin, *ibid*, p. 397.

announcement, was the first Soviet comment concerning the deal. It gave the impression that the U.S.S.R. had had nothing to do with the deal, which was described as a regular commercial transaction between two independent countries. The Soviet Government, it said, "holds the opinion that every state has the legitimate right to look after its defence and to buy arms for its defence needs from other states on the usual commercial terms, and that no foreign state has the right to intervene in this or to present any one-sided claims that would infringe the rights or interests of other states"¹. The Soviets rejected the Western powers' argument that the arms deal violated the balance in the Middle East. They repeatedly stressed that behind this argument lay hidden expansionist intentions. The Western powers, said Izvestiia, had no grounds for preventing Egypt or any other country from concluding commercial transactions which fall in line with their interests. The Western powers were accused of launching a new campaign against the freedom and independence of the Arab countries, by working out a plan to expand the Baghdad Pact. Such a move, it said, might spoil the "spirit of Geneva"².

The Soviets often argued that economic considerations were a crucial factor in the decision of the Czech and Egyptian governments to conclude the deal. Egypt, it was said, paid for the arms by exporting its surplus of cotton, a product which did not find a good market in the West. Quoting the Lebanese paper al-Hadaf, Radio Moscow said, "Any commercial deal...concluded by any Arab state with another state on the basis of the sale of its own produce is profitable"³.

1. See full text of Tass announcement in, Ministerstvo Inostrannykh del SSSR, SSSR i Arabskie Strany, 1917-1960, pp. 123-124.

2. Izvestiia, 3 November 1955.

3. Radio Moscow, 29 October 1955, SWB, USSR, pp. 23-24.

C. British and American Response to the Arms Deal

On 27 September, soon after the news of Nasir's announcement, Dulles and Macmillan, the British Foreign Secretary, discussed the subject in New York. They declared an agreed policy for supplying arms to the Middle East. This policy was based on the following principles. First, the desire to enable the countries of the Middle East to provide for internal security and defence. Second, to avoid an arms race which would inevitably increase the tensions in the area. The two ministers hoped that other governments would also be guided by these principles¹. A day later, Dulles sent George Allen, Assistant Secretary of State, to Cairo in order to emphasize Dulles' own deep personal concern over the situation, and to deal with the following issues:²

a. The factual situation regarding to the arms deal with the Soviet bloc. b. The Egyptian Government's policy and intentions in this regard. c. To explain the United States point of view.

Allen carried with him to Cairo a letter from Dulles to Nasir. This was not a warning letter as expected, but a letter which reflected American confusion, insult and surprise, brought about by Nasir's move. In his letter, Dulles wrote, *inter alia*:³

"I wish to bring to you most urgently my deep concern over reports of the conclusion of an agreement by the Egyptian Government for the purchase of arms from the Soviet Union. It is possible that you may not have realized fully the seriousness with which such a transaction will be viewed in the United States and the consequent difficulty of preventing it from marring the existing good relations between our two peoples...We have placed full confidence in your repeated assurances regarding Egypt's identification with the West..."

1. Department of State, "U.S. Policy in the Near East, South Asia, and Africa-1955", Papers of Harry Howard, File Subject: Near East South Asia, 1945-1955, box 3, Truman Library. "Egypt to Buy Arms from Russia", Manchester Guardian, 28 September 1955.
2. George Allen, "Talking Paper for Discussion with Nasir regarding Arms Deal with Soviet Bloc", RG 59, 774.56/10-655.
3. See letter from Dulles to Nasir, 27 September 1955, Dulles John Foster Papers, 1951-1959, File Subject: John Foster Dulles Chronological September 1955 (1), box 12, Eisenhower Library.

our economic assistance programmes...approval of arms purchases, and my statement of August 26 on the Arab-Israel situation are all based on the same general thought. We have tried to handle our cotton surplus in ways which will not prejudice Egypt's economy and have otherwise sought to support that economy¹. I am convinced that the economic and social progress you so deeply desire for the Egyptian people can come best through continued association with the West. The proposed agreement...cannot be considered a simple commercial transaction. It has deep political meaning. The record of the Soviet Union in this respect is clear. Initial, supposedly friendly gestures, lead quickly to subversion, inextricable involvement in the Communist orbit, and loss of that independence of action which Egypt rightly values so highly... I am hopeful that, as in the past, we will together find a way further to promote close association between our two countries.

As early as October 1955, both Dulles and Macmillan came to the conclusion that there was no need to take any threatening or drastic steps for the time being. Macmillan considered that the Western powers must accept their diplomatic defeat and try to narrow or limit it. He suggested the Americans that "we should now talk to Nasir more in sorrow than in anger and tell him that we must endeavour to reduce his commitment with the Soviet bloc"². On 4 October, Dulles noted that as a result of Allen's visit to Cairo, there was a better understanding of the problem, although he had no reason to believe that the arms transaction would not be implemented. He stated that the Arab countries were independent governments and free to act according to their interests. He expressed his wish that although the deal was concluded, it would still be possible, to avoid getting into an arms race in the Middle East. Dulles declared that as far as Soviet-American relations were concerned, "such deliveries of arms would not contribute to relaxing tensions"³.

However, a few weeks later, Soviet promises of extending economic and technical assistance to Egypt and other Arab

1. On this subject, see the economic sub-chapter, p.

2. See Memorandum of Conversation between Macmillan and Dulles, 3 October 1955, RG 59, 774.56/10-355.

3. "U.S. Policy in the Near East, South East, South Asia...", *ibid.*

countries, complicated the situation. On 10 October, Solod announced that the Soviet Government had decided to offer industrial and cultural equipment and technical assistance to all underdeveloped Arab and Asian countries that wanted it. To quote him, "We will send economic missions, scientific missions, agricultural missions, meteorological missions and any other kind of mission you can imagine that will help these countries"¹. These promises were intended to send signals to the Western powers that the arms deal was not a passing episode, but part of a long-term plan for increasing Soviet influence.

On 30 October, In a conversation between Dulles and Molotov, in Geneva, the Middle East was the main subject under discussion. Dulles made the point that owing to the arms deal, the risk of war between Israel and its Arab neighbours had greatly increased. He also stressed that the Soviet move of selling arms to Egypt, had created a wave of anti-Soviet sentiment in the U.S. and produced a sharp reaction from the atmosphere following the Geneva summit of July 1955. These two developments, concluded Dulles, "do concern us and should be, we think, a matter of concern to the Soviet Union"². In his report to Eisenhower, Dulles wrote that "Molotov was entirely non-committal. I feel he was impressed by my presentation and it may have some good consequences although we shall probably never know for sure"³.

1. Kennett Love, "Moscow Offers Technical Help to Middle East", New York Times, 11 October 1955.
2. This conversation took place during the conference of the foreign ministers of the Four Powers, opened in Geneva on 27 October 1955, and ended three weeks later on 16 November. See Memorandum of Conversation between Dulles and Molotov, 30 October 1955, Dulles John Foster Papers, 1952-59, General Correspondence, File Subject: Memos of Conversation, box 1, Eisenhower Library.
3. See letter from Dulles to Eisenhower (undated), Eisenhower Dwight D. Papers as President of the U.S.A. 1953-61, Dulles -Herter series, File Subject: Dulles John Foster, Oct. 1955, box 4, Eisenhower Library.

In two conversations between State Department and Israeli officials, on 11 and 20 October 1955, in Washington, the latter revealed some information on discussions between Israeli representatives and their counterparts from Soviet bloc countries. According to this information, the arms deal with Nasir had not been only commercial. The Soviets stressed that they had also obtained from Nasir assurances that he would not link Egypt in any way with the West. As for the Anglo-Egyptian agreement of 1954, Nasir told the Soviets that he considered the agreement a dead letter. From the Israeli accounts it follows that the Soviet decision to supply arms to Egypt was a move which intended to achieve two goals: First, to counter Western efforts to obtain alliances and bases in the area for an aggressive attack on the Soviet Union. Second, to establish influence in an area which had hitherto been a Western preserve¹. However, this information was not sufficient for the Americans and British policy makers. They needed some more proofs in order to realize that a concrete change had been taking place in Egypt's relations with the powers. Their plan to appease Nasir and to draw him back into the Western camp by offering him economic support to build the Aswan High Dam, proved to be unworkable and unsuccessful. Egypt's efforts, at the end of 1955, to consolidate a front of anti-Western Arab nations, as a counterbalance to the Baghdad Pact were crowned with success. The support of the Soviet Union for the new front, which included Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and the attractive Soviet offer to build the High Dam, indicated clearly of their long-term

1. See Memorandum of Conversation between Abba Eban, Israel Ambassador to Washington, Gideon Rafael, the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Katriel Salmon, Military Attaché at Israel Embassy, and George Allen and Donald Bergus, Office of Near Eastern Affairs, Department of State, 11 October 1955, RG 59, 774.56/10 -1155. Memorandum of Conversation between Abba Eban, Reuven Shiloah, Minister at the Israeli Embassy, and George Allen and Donald Bergus, 20 October 1955, RG 59, 774.56/10-2055.

plans in the area. The flow of arms shipments into Egypt without interference by the Western powers taught the Soviets that they could deepen their penetration into the Middle East. On 31 October 1955, they signed in Cairo a "friendship pact" with Yemen. They also offered arms to Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Sudan. In November 1955, negotiation with Syria for arms were conducted and in March 1956, arms from the Soviet bloc began to arrive in Syria¹.

1. Dallin, Soviet Foreign Policy after Stalin, 396-397.

CHAPTER FIVE
SOVIET-EGYPTIAN ECONOMIC RELATIONS UNDER THE MILITARY REGIME,
1952-1955

In their first months in power, the Free-Officers who were engaged in consolidating their new administration, continued the same policy of trade established by their predecessors. In fact, the improvement in trade with the Soviet bloc and China during 1952, was brought about mainly as a result of the long-term economic policy- shaped by the Wafdist government- of seeking markets, other than Britain, to sell cotton and other Egyptian products. The first trade talks, between Egypt's new rulers and Soviet officials were held in Cairo at the end of 1952, and continued through the first quarter of 1953¹. On 10 March 1953, the Egyptian Ministry of Supply and representatives of the Soviet, Bulgarian and Polish governments signed agreements covering the exchange of 12,670 tons of Egyptian cotton against 115,000 tons of wheat. Ninety thousand tons were to come from the U.S.S.R. The text of the contract between the Soviet Union and Egypt was identical to the one signed on 3 March 1952; however, there was a slight difference in payment terms, and Egyptian officials expressed their satisfaction with the new deal².

Some months later, on 18 August, after a long secret negotiation, payment agreements relating to the exchange of goods and other current transactions were signed between the two countries³. In order to create an atmosphere of mutual confidence, and to prevent any of the contracting parties

1. See dispatch 1288 from American Embassy, Cairo, 30 December 1952, RG 59, 461.7431/12-3052. Dispatch 3651 from American Embassy, London, 5 January 1953, *ibid*, 461.7431/1-553. Dispatch 1587 from Cairo, *ibid*, 6 January 1953, 461.7431/1-653. Radio Cairo, 1 February 1953, SWB, Egypt and the Sudan, p. 49.
2. See the full text of contract in enclosure No. 2 to dispatch 1870 from Carroll F. Conover, Assistant Attaché, American Embassy, Cairo, 13 March 1953, RG 59, 461.7431/3-1353.
3. See Chapter Three, pp. 228-229.

re-selling to third parties without the approval of the exporters-as the Soviets did in 1948- the agreement established clearly that: "it is not permitted to proceed with barter operations without prior approval from the competent authorities of the two governments. Likewise, re-export of imported goods from one of the two contracting countries, to a third country, can only be effected after approval from the exporting country". The agreement was to be valid for one year with automatic renewal, unless three months' notice of non-renewal was given¹.

A long visit by an Egyptian economic delegation to Eastern Europe, begun in December 1953², brought a turning point in the long-term political and economic relations between Egypt and the Soviet bloc. The timing was right as both the Soviet, and Egyptian governments were reviewing their economic policies aimed at widening their trade, with as many countries as possible. The new economic programme of Stalin's successors in their first year in power, called for slightly increased imports of consumer goods, and for a considerable increase in imports of capital goods, largely but not exclusively intended for the industries producing consumer goods and foodstuffs³. The Egyptian market could offer the Soviets two important items- cotton and rice, which supported, to some extent, this Soviet goal. For Egypt, the sending of experts in various fields to the Soviet bloc was intended to explore and discuss the various possibilities of increasing trade and barter. It should be pointed out that this visit was

1. See full text of the agreement in dispatch 444 from American Embassy, Cairo, 18 August 1953, RG 59, 461.7431/8-1853.
2. On the visit, see, Chapter Three, pp. 23-31.
3. See a review of developments in the U.S.S.R. since Stalin's death, in, dispatch 22 from British Embassy, Moscow, 5 March 1954, FO371/111671, NS1015/18A. David Dallin, Soviet Foreign Policy after Stalin, pp. 187-188.

one link in a broad chain of visits to other countries, for the same purpose.

In March 1954, Egypt signed two separate agreements with the Soviet Union and Rumania. The first agreement was signed on 9 March, at the Egyptian Ministry of Commerce and Industry between Egypt, and the U.S.S.R. and Rumania, under which Egypt was to exchange cotton for Soviet and Rumanian petroleum and petroleum products. Hasan Baghdādī, the Egyptian Minister of Commerce and Industry, said that the agreement was not exactly a barter deal, as the Egyptian cotton to be exported to the Soviet Union and Rumania, would be sold at market prices. According to him, " no fixed amount of cotton is provided for, and as petroleum products are imported from the two Soviet bloc countries credits will be set up, against which, their imports of Egyptian cotton will be debited, to a limit of L.E.3 Million"¹. The agreement established that 340,000 tons of oil products were to be imported from the two countries and would have a value of L.E.4,157,757 including L.E.424,000 covering freight charges. The petroleum shipments were to be delivered from March 1954 to February 1955². The second agreement was initialled on 10 March and signed on 27 March between the U.S.S.R and Egypt³. Egypt was to exchange cotton, rice, rayon yarns and other products for Soviet petroleum and petroleum products, timber, iron and steel products, tractors and agricultural implements, and other goods. The payments were to be made according to the agreement of 18

1. See dispatch 2144 from John Fitzgerald, Second Secretary at the American Embassy, Cairo, 10 March 1954, RG 59, 461.7431/3-1054. Radio Cairo, 9 March 1954, SWB, Egypt, p.32.
2. See dispatch 2232 from *ibid*, 20 March 1954, 461.7431/3-2054.
3. See Chapter Three, pp. 236-237. See also, SSSR i Arabskie Strany, pp. 113-114.

August 1953. The agreement contained a most-favoured-nation clause, which covered customs duties, import and export regulations and quotas. Both governments undertook to endeavour to exchange goods other than those mentioned in the agreement, bearing in mind the requirements of both countries. The agreement was for one year, automatically renewable for further periods of one year, unless three months notice was given by either of the parties for its termination or amendment¹. Kāmil 'Abd al-Nabī, the Director of Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Egyptian signatory, said that with the signing of this agreement and the payments agreement of the previous year, economic relations between the two countries had been freed of the restrictions which had previously existed, and this would help to promote trade between both countries². 'Abd al-Nabī also said, on 30 March, to the American Embassy's Public Affairs Officer, that the Soviets had offered Egypt economic aid via the U.N. The Soviet Union had recently joined the U.N. programme of technical assistance to underdeveloped countries³.

In an interview with the Cairo correspondent of the Hearst newspaper group, Nasir explained that the oil deal had been negotiated with the Soviet Union and Rumania, because of British threats to cut off Egypt's petroleum supplies. According to him, the threats were aimed at pressing Egypt to moderate its approach towards the settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian conflict⁴.

1. See footnote No. 5, Chapter Three, p. 236. See a full text of the agreement in, Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del SSSR, SSSR i Strany Afriki, pp. 274-276.
2. See telegram 64(E) from British Embassy, Cairo, 13 March 1954, FO371/108403, E11338/2.
3. *Ibid.*
4. See dispatches 2339 and 2362 from Perry Ellis, Cairo, 31 March and 2 April 1954, RG 59, 661.74/3-3154, 3-3154.

These deals were, a part of a new oil policy made by the Egyptian Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Egypt's oil mainly came from Western sources, and the distribution was mainly handled by the facilities of British and U.S. oil companies operating in Egypt. The government believed that augmenting the oil supply, by purchasing it from the Soviet bloc at prices below the world market, and increasing competition among distributors by establishing private Egyptian carrier and distribution companies, would have two important results. First, the price might go down. Second, it would strengthen Egypt politically in future disputes with the West¹. Indeed, several months later, the Egyptian paper Al-Musawwar, declared that the important result of importing oil from Rumania and the U.S.S.R., was, that it "played a great part in reducing the prices of petroleum products"².

The payments agreement of 18 August 1953 between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. were renewed by both parties in March 1954 and provided for the same terms of validity and renewal. That is, the agreement was to be renewed for an additional year by the tacit consent of

1. See on this subject dispatches 2232, 2401, 2468, 2588, 2719, 381, 596, 846, 1079, from John Fitzgerald, Cairo, 20 March, 8 and 15 April, 1 and 19 May, 4 September, 2 October, 2 November and 4 December 1954, RG 59, 461.7431/3-2054, 4-854, 4-1554, 5-154, 5-1954, 9-454, 10-254, 11-254, 12-454. After the agreement was signed, the Western marketing companies expressed their dissatisfaction with the agreement which from their viewpoint meant the loss of profit on oil imports and on tanker transport. Yet, they were asked by the Egyptian government to handle these products through their distribution facilities and were threatened that if they did not agree, their facilities might be requisitioned. This threat was intended to ensure that there would be no barriers during the implementation of the agreement, at least in the first stages, until the newly established companies could take part in this operation. In the end, the Western companies agreed to the government's request. See also, dispatch 1888, *ibid*, 2 April 1955, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Records, 1955, File Subject: Soviet Bloc Trade, 511.12, box 267.
2. Al-Musawwar was quoted by Radio Moscow in Arabic, 28 November 1954, SWB, USSR, p. 38.

both countries¹. The agreement of 27 March 1954 was renewed once again in March 1955².

The following tables³ show Egypt's military regime trade (in Millions of L.E.) during its first years in power. Table A' covers 1953 and exncluding gold or re-exports. Table B' covers 1954 and includes re-exports and gold.

Table A'

	<u>Imports</u>		<u>Exports</u>		<u>L.E. Balance</u>
	<u>L.E.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>L.E.</u>	<u>%</u>	
<u>Western Countries</u>					
United Kingdom	17.4	9.9	14.8	11.8	-2.6
France	15.4	8.8	18.0	14.3	+2.6
Western Germany	18.3	10.5	9.0	7.2	-9.3
Italy	12.5	7.2	10.1	8.0	-2.4
Netherlands	5.3	3.1	4.7	3.7	-0.6
United States	27.6	15.8	5.7	4.5	-21.9
Canada	8.8	5.0	1.9	1.5	-6.9
<u>Soviet Bloc & China</u>					
Bulgaria	0.8	0.5	0.7	0.6	-0.1
Czechoslovakia	3.3	1.9	3.3	2.6	0
East Germany	--	--	1.1	0.9	+1.1
Hungary	1.1	0.6	2.0	1.6	+0.9
Poland	2.0	1.2	1.5	1.2	-0.5
Rumania	1.0	0.6	0.5	0.4	-0.5
Soviet Union	4.9	2.8	4.1	3.3	-0.8
China	0.2	--	3.6	2.9	+3.4
<u>Arab Countries</u>					
India	3.6	2.0	15.9	12.6	+12.3
<u>Other Countries</u>					
	44.8	26.0	26.4	21.0	-18.4
<u>Total For All Countries</u>					
	174.2	100.0	125.7	100.0	-48.5

1. See dispatch 2161 from George G. Moore, Second Secretary at the American Embassy, Cairo, 20 May 1955, RG 84, 'Cairo Embassy-General Records, 1955, 500-511.12, File Subject: Trade Agreements and Missions, 510.1, box 266.

2. Ibid.

3. The figures were taken from enclosure No. 1 to dispatch 2042 from American Embassy, Cairo, 26 February 1954, RG 59, 874.00TA/2-2654. Dispatch 1573, ibid, 12 February 1955, 874.00/2-1255.

Table B'

	<u>Imports</u>		<u>Exports</u>		<u>L.E. Balance</u>
	<u>L.E.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>L.E.</u>	<u>%</u>	
<u>Western Countries</u>					
United Kingdom	20.1	12.6	14.5	10.5	-5.6
France	16.0	10.0	16.0	11.5	0
Western Germany	17.8	11.1	11.5	8.3	-6.3
Italy	12.5	7.8	10.5	7.6	-2.0
United States	17.8	11.1	6.6	4.8	-11.2
<u>Soviet Bloc & China</u>	9.3	5.8	19.6	14.2	+10.3
<u>Other Countries</u>	66.4	41.5	59.6	43.1	-6.8
<u>Total For All Countries</u>	159.9	100.0	138.3	100.0	-21.6

At the end of 1953, a year and a half after the coup, there was a significant drop in Egypt's trade compared with 1952. Egypt's total foreign trade in 1953 was valued at L.E.299.9 Millions, a drop of L.E.54.6 Millions against the previous year and of L.E.132.8 Millions compared to 1951. In 1954 there was no significant change and Egypt's total trade was valued at L.E.298.2 Millions. In this period trade with Britain improved and exports to that country in 1953 increased by 68.2% compared to 1952. The relaxation of controls on the use of sterling was largely responsible for the increased imports from Britain¹. However, the percentage of export and import trade between the two countries had declined since the Wafd government abrogated the treaty of 1936 in October 1951. It is worth noting that the percentages of export and import trade with the West in 1952, 1953 and 1954 were relatively unchanged. Imports from these countries were approximately 35% of Egypt's total imports while exports were approximately 30% of Egypt's total exports. This shows of a

1. See dispatch 1573, ibid.

decline of approximately 6% in Egypt's total trade with these countries in comparison to 1950 and 1951. Egypt's balance of trade with these countries since 1948 consistently shows an adverse balance. Moreover, it was a principal component of Egypt's consistently negative trade balance in that period. In the meantime Egypt's balance of trade with the Soviet bloc since 1948 was steadily favourable and contributed to the improvement of the overall balances and in 1954 was the only favourable balance in Egypt's foreign trade. Of the total sum of L.E.19.6 Millions of exports to the Soviet bloc countries, L.E.6 Millions came from exports to Czechoslovakia and L.E.4 Millions from exports to China. Exports and imports to and from the Soviet Union were the largest thus far in 1954. Raw cotton continued to be the principal Egyptian export to the Soviet bloc countries particularly and to the other countries generally. In 1954 the value of the cotton was 82% of the total value of exports and re-exports (85% in 1953). Petroleum products were the principal products imported in 1953 (L.E.13.76 Millions) and 1954 (L.E.15.1 Millions)¹. Petroleum products at the total sum of L.E.4.154 Millions² came from the Soviet Union and Rumania, that is, 27.5% of the total imports of oil products. Parallels can be seen when examining 1951 and 1954. The total trade between Egypt and the Soviet bloc during these years did not reach a high value, despite the process of political and economic rapprochement. The explanation is, that during these years both countries established the basis for future agreements. Positive results can be seen each time one year later, that is, in 1952 and in 1955 as will be shown.

1. Ibid.

2. See dispatch 2232, ibid.

During the first quarter of 1955 several economic missions from Soviet bloc countries arrived in Cairo to discuss commercial deals. In this period these countries increased their purchases of cotton and stepped up other economic activities with Egypt. At this period, sales of cotton to the Soviet bloc countries were approximately 30% higher than the parallel period in 1954. Payment difficulties arising from the chronic excess of Egyptian exports over imports, from these countries were eased by the relaxation of credit limits in payments with Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia and the conclusion of barter agreements with the U.S.S.R. Rumania and Hungary. A trade delegation from Czechoslovakia was the first to arrive in Cairo on 10 February 1955, for the purpose of general trade discussions and negotiation in order to modify their trade and payments agreement of 24 October 1951. However, the agreement was signed in Cairo only several months later, on 19 July 1955. On 24 March, a Czechoslovak trade exhibition opened in Cairo¹.

The agreements between Egypt and the Soviet bloc which had been concluded in previous years and limited to a year at a time were renewed automatically in 1955. The agreement of 27 March 1954 was renewed for a year on 12 May 1955. Egypt was to deliver rice, cotton, textiles and hides and leather products, in exchange for Soviet grain, petroleum, lumber, agricultural machinery, tractors,

1. See reports on Egyptian economy cover the first and third quarters of 1955, in, dispatches 1937 and 448 from American Embassy, Cairo, 11 April and 22 October 1955, RG 59, 874.00/4 -1155, 10-2255. Dispatch 2080 from George C. Moore, Cairo, 7 May 1955, RG 84, Cairo Embassy-General Documents, 1955, File Subject: Soviet Bloc Trade, 511.12, box 267. During 1955 a lot of trade agreements were signed between Soviet bloc countries, including China, and Egypt. This review concentrates mainly on the trade agreements signed with the U.S.S.R., however, it refers partly to some other deals with Eastern European countries.

automotive vehicles and medical supplies. The total value of the exchange was L.E.14,930,555¹.

A tripartite barter agreement concluded on 28 April 1955 between Egypt, and the U.S.S.R and Rumania, provided for the exchange of Egyptian cotton and yarn with a value of L.E.3 Millions for Soviet and Rumanian kerosene and crude oil of same value².

On 11 August the Egyptian Minister of Finance announced to the press that a new barter transaction with the Soviet Union had been concluded. Egypt was to exchange 60,000 tons of rice valued at L.E.2.5 Million for 500,000 tons of Soviet crude petroleum at the same value. This agreement was signed on 6 September 1955³.

In 1955 the Egyptian government continued with the same oil policy adopted in 1954. The government decision to import petroleum from Soviet bloc countries was part of a comprehensive policy of improving political and economic relations with these countries. This decision was also derived from purely economic considerations viz: Egypt's need to dispose of cotton surpluses after having had difficulties selling to its traditional Western market. These difficulties were caused by two developments. First, a continued deterioration in Egypt's political relations with the West throughout 1955. Second, Egyptian officials maintained that uncertainty among Egypt's traditional Western customers, about American cotton policy, had

1. "Soviet Bloc Economic Activities in the Near East and Asia as of November 25, 1955", Report, Office of Research, Statistics, and Reports, Clarence Francis Papers, Eisenhower Library. Dispatch 2161, *ibid*.
2. On the agreement, see, "Soviet Bloc Economic Activities...", *ibid*. Dispatch 2080, *ibid*. Dispatch 2067 from John Fitzgerald, 6 May 1955, RG 84, *ibid*.
3. On the agreement, see, "Soviet Bloc Economic Activities...", *ibid*. dispatch 448, *ibid*. dispatches 171 and 268 from John Fitzgerald, 13 August and 10 September 1955, RG 84, *ibid*.

led to a considerable reduction in purchases by these buyers¹. As far as Western oil companies operating in Egypt were concerned, their position towards Soviet bloc oil shipments in 1955 was utterly different from their previous position. Undoubtedly, under the then current political state of affairs, and because of a worldwide shortage of kerosene, they could have faced difficulties in meeting the large Egyptian need for this product from the free world market, let alone from Western sources. The companies, therefore, adopted a moderate approach regarding imported oil from Soviet bloc countries. Moreover, they accepted the government's request to take part in handling Soviet and Rumanian oil shipments².

The Soviet offer to assist Egypt to finance the High Aswan Dam, which was first made in 1954, during the visit of Rajab's delegation to Moscow, was made again in June 1955. According to Egyptian officials, the Soviet government offered to supply generating and transmission equipment for the project, together with financial assistance and engineering services. A part of the Soviet offer included an invitation for Egyptian engineers to make a trip to the Dnieper Dam, in order to inspect the equipment and methods employed there by the Soviets. Despite the fact that Egyptian engineers were reported to have accepted the invitation, officials showed a preference for obtaining equipment and

1. Uncertainty regarding future American cotton prices had significantly reduced world trade in cotton, and disposals of American surplus cotton for foreign currencies had had the effect of limiting, even in this shrunken market, the scope in which Egypt might compete. See telegram 95 from Byroade, Cairo, 20 July 1955, RG 59, 661.74/7-2055.
2. Dispatch 2295, *ibid*, 20 June 1955. Until 1955, two-thirds of Egypt's oil requirements came from local oil fields and the rest from various sources, mainly Westerns. In 1955 the "Belayim Field" in the Sinai Peninsula was discovered and American oil experts estimated that it might make Egypt self-sufficient in crude oil. See, report on Egypt's economy throughout 1955, in, dispatch 984 from American Embassy, Cairo, 27 March 1955, RG 59, 874.00/3-2756.

engineering services from other sources; they explained that in case of war between the Soviet bloc and the West, there might be serious difficulties in getting replacements and repairs from the U.S.S.R. Financial and payment terms for carrying out this project were put forward by the Soviets on 29 October 1955. They offered a 30-year loan of an unspecified amount at 2% interest, payable in Egyptian cotton and rice. The estimated cost of the dam was approximately \$480 Million, while the amount of the proposed loan was assumed to be \$275 Million¹.

Nothing came of the Soviet offers during 1955. In December 1955, the U.S. government proposed to help financing the project together with the British government and the World Bank. However, on 19 July 1956, Dulles announced that the American government was withdrawing its offer owing to disagreements with Nasir. Thereafter, the ball returned to the Soviet court, and Nasir decided to conclude the deal with the U.S.S.R.

Egypt's total foreign trade in 1955 was valued at L.E.319.3 Million. Imports exceeded exports by a considerable margin in 1955. Imports were 57% (L.E.182.3) of the balance while exports were 43% (L.E.137). Egypt's exports were more or less the same as in 1954, while imports increased by 14% compared to 1954. In 1955 there was a change in the mix of commodities exported from Egypt. Less cotton was shipped compared to 1954, however, exports of textiles, yarns and rice increased considerably. Imports in 1955 were composed of as wide a range of goods as in 1954, but there was a significant increase in imports of capital goods for

1. "Soviet Bloc Economic Activities in the Near East...", *ibid*. See also, C.I.A. intelligence memorandum entitled: "The Communist Economic Campaign in the Near East and South Asia", 30 November 1955, in: U.S. Declassified Documents Reference System, U.S., 1986, 002516.

economic development projects¹.

Egypt's exports to China and Soviet bloc countries increased steadily in 1955. These countries took 27% of Egypt's exports (L.E.37 Million), by value. This was an increase of L.E.11.6 Million compared to 1952, until then, the record year, and of L.E.17.4 Million compared to 1954. On the other hand, these countries supplied Egypt with only 7% (L.E.12.76 Million)² of its total imports in 1955, a marginal increase of 1.2% compared with 1954. The large gap between exports and imports in Egypt's foreign trade with Soviet bloc countries in 1955, gave Egypt a favourable balance of trade of L.E.24.24 Million with these countries. However, this did not bring about any significant change in Egypt's adverse trade balance, which increased significantly compared to 1954.

1. See dispatch 984, *ibid*. See also dispatch 56(10321/50/56) from British Embassy, Cairo, 19 April 1956, F0371/118846, JE1024/1.

2 This excluded the value of Soviet arms.

CONCLUSION

From the end of the 1940's, the U.S.S.R. and to a lesser extent the local communist parties were appealing to Middle Eastern nationalist groups, to concentrate on the task of putting an end to Western influence in the Middle East. The ideas of revolution or reform were relegated to second place. The Soviet Union introduced itself not as the supporter of revolutionary and subversive elements but as the benefactor and champion of any regime which inclined towards a neutralist and anti-Western policy. The Soviet leaders, therefore, nurtured relations with governments which followed such a line, even if domestically, these governments often declared their anti-communist policy. This Soviet pragmatic approach proved to be a pattern of success in the Arab world.

The Soviet policy makers took full advantage of the objective disabilities which the Western powers faced in handling their Middle Eastern policy. Britain and France were considered by most of the Arab countries as imperialist powers whose interests remained to exploit and to bring the Arab world under their control. The emergence of the United States as the new superpower after the Second World War, raised hopes and expectations in the Arab world. There was a belief that with American support their liberation and full independence would soon be achieved. Arab manifestations and expressions of goodwill towards the United States, gradually changed to bitterness and disappointment. This was a result of mainly three factors. First, the U.S.

policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Second, America's ambiguous stand during the years of bitter struggle against Britain, particularly, concerning the Anglo-Egyptian conflict. Third, the exertion of pressure on Arab countries to ally themselves with the West by establishing a Middle East Command. In contrast to the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R., while not necessarily considered trustworthy, was viewed by the Arabs as a power which was never linked with Western imperialism, and did not have an imperialist record in the Middle East. Moreover, the Soviets, consistently and without reservations, gave full support to the Arabs in their struggle to liberate their countries from foreign powers. As far as the Arab-Israeli conflict was concerned, the Soviets, from the beginning of the 1950's, firmly took the side of the Arabs. The Soviet Union, like Egypt and other Arab states, although for entirely different reasons, opposed the northern tier arrangement and other Western pacts. Soviet fears greatly increased with the establishment of the Baghdad Pact. The prospect that a weak neutralist Syria might be taken over by Iraq which was firmly allied to the West, was the Soviet Union's main concern. The Soviet interest was therefore, to prevent the emergence of such a vast potential base area for Western military forces, especially air forces, near the southwestern borders of the Soviet Union. Yet, it would be a mistake to think that the Baghdad Pact was the main development which led the Soviets to review their Middle Eastern policy. The process of rapprochement between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. had begun long before the formation of the Baghdad Pact. As we have already seen, Soviet interest in the area had been steadily increasing since the second half of 1940's. Towards the end of Stalin's period in power, many attempts were made

by the Soviets to improve relations with Arab governments which conducted an anti-Western policy or declared neutralism. This was the case with the Wafdist government (1950-1952). *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, the Wafdist Foreign Minister, shaped and implemented Egypt's new policy of neutralism. He resolutely rejected the Western proposals for establishing a Middle East Command, and was the motive power behind his government's decision to abrogate the treaty of 1936 with Britain. As a result of this policy, the relationship between Egypt and the Soviet Union significantly improved; several commercial agreements were concluded and more understanding and cooperation found expression at the U.N. During the second half of 1951, the idea of concluding a non-aggression pact between the two countries, had been seriously considered. In fact, the roots of the later Soviet-Egyptian honeymoon originated in this period.

After the end of 1953, owing to Nasir's inability to implement his political credo, and primarily his disappointment with the U.S. policy towards Egypt, it would appear he adopted *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*'s policy of neutralism. Nasir pursued such a policy in order to manipulate both American and Soviet interests which he would then in turn utilise to his own advantage, that is the furthering of Egypt's Foreign policy. The rapprochement between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. which had been resumed at the end of 1953 gathered momentum during 1955. Nasir believed that being supported by one of the two main blocs did not imply inferiority and dependency. Egypt, he believed, had to search for new sources of political and diplomatic support. His meeting with Nehru and Tito before the Bandung Conference, convinced him of the advantages of their policy of non-alignment.

The significance of the Bandung Conference was that it succeeded in demonstrating that there was an Afro-Asian consensus. Being a prominent figure at the conference and fully involved in formulating its resolutions, Nasir was convinced that the Afro-Asian bloc was a great power and could play a crucial role on the international stage. Nasir came to the conclusion that by playing an influential role in this bloc it would enable him to conduct an independent foreign policy which would fall into line with his interests. By following a middle path which appeared to be neither pro-West nor pro-Soviet, his prestige improved with the uncommitted Afro-Asian states. His success in Bandung also increased his prestige on the Arab and international scenes and strengthened his domestic position.

The question of arms sale was not at all new. Arms from Soviet bloc countries had already arrived in Egypt and Syria during the Palestine war and soon after. During the first half of the 1950's, this subject had come up several times when high and low level dialogues between Egyptian and Soviet bloc officials took place. Soviet approval to supply arms to Arab countries had already been given in 1954. Some reports suggested furthermore, that shipments of tanks from Czechoslovakia arrived in Syria that year. Shipments of small arms, including tanks and machine guns, from this country to Egypt had arrived in the first quarter of 1955 and possibly before.

From 1948, commercial relations between Egypt and Soviet bloc countries, especially, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, had steadily increased. Gradually, the Eastern bloc opened its markets for Egyptian goods, and by the mid-1950's, these markets became the main consumers of Egyptian exports. At the same time, Soviet bloc countries gradually became Egypt's main supplier of

industrial equipment, petroleum, etc., traditionally supplied by Western countries.

In 1955 commercial relations between Egypt and the Soviet bloc had reached a climax and a great quantity of arms from Soviet bloc countries flew into Egypt. However, this was not a turning point but the pinnacle of a long and gradual process.

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