

**SOVIET POLICY TOWARDS THE PALESTINE
LIBERATION ORGANISATION
(PLO): 1964-80**

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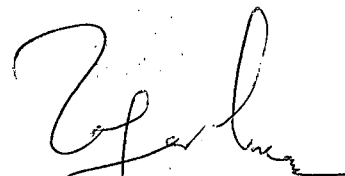
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PREFACE

During the last thirty years Middle East has become a region of conflict and instability. The origin of this conflict is rather well known. Creation of Israel in Arab lands of Palestine and subsequent displacement of Arabs became one of the most volatile flashing points endangering the world peace.

The conflict in the Middle East has acquired a multi-dimensional character over the years. One of them is the emergence of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and its role in leading the Palestinian struggle against the State of Israel. Although it was established in 1964, it was not before 1969 that the PLO acquired the position of a 'force' in the Arab-Israel conflict. And eventually it emerged as almost a government in exile and was granted official recognition by a number of third world countries as well as the Soviet Union.

With its growing involvement in Arab cause vis-a-vis US-Israeli-Egyptian trio, Soviet policy towards the PLO has today become an important indicator of Soviet conduct and behaviour in this crisis ridden region in general, and its view of national liberation movements in particular.

The present study attempts to make a concise analysis of Soviet policy towards the PLO against the background of the Palestine Problem, since both are inseparable. The study relies mainly upon published source materials available in English and adopts a historical analysis approach.

The first chapter, which is the introduction deals with the historical background of the Palestinian problem as such, its origin and development and consequently discusses the emergence of the PLO as a viable force of the Palestinian resistance.

The second chapter discusses the Soviet view of Palestine problem and the PLO, in its formative years, against the background of intra-Arab politics within the framework of Arab nation-state system.

The third chapter focusses on the transformation of the PLO after the 1967 War and corresponding changes in the Soviet policy against the background of changing political alignments in the Arab world.

The
The fourth chapter deals with the goals and objectives of Soviet policy of diplomatic and political support the PLO against the background of Middle-Eastern politics during 1973-80.

Finally, we conclude that Soviet policy towards the PLO succeeded in transforming the PLO as a viable entity struggling for its legitimate rights through a negotiated settlement. Moreover, Soviet policy towards the PLO is an important indicator of Soviet attitude towards the Middle-East crisis during the period 1964-80.

I would like to avail this opportunity to acknowledge all those who helped me directly/indirectly in completing this study. First of all, I would like to express my indebtedness to my supervisor Dr Zafar Imam for bearing and guiding an incorrigible student like me with patience.

I am also highly grateful to Dr Pushpesh Pant and Mr Ravindra Tomar for all the help they rendered, which in one way or the other assisted me in completing the present study.

My most sincere thanks are due to Bir Bahadur of the ICWA Canteen for all those cups of tea he brought for me with

that naughty smile and to Mr Menon of the Centre of Spanish Studies, School of Languages, for having read my almost illegible hand and having typed this study at ^avery short notice, even at the cost of personal inconveniences.

And finally, my vocabulary, for once, is inadequate to express my feelings for my D.D., who will always remain a constant source of inspiration, for all the coaxing and everything else, without which and without whom this study could have never been completed.

However, for all omissions, errors and shortcomings in the study I hold myself responsible.

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CHAPTER - I

~~HISTORICAL~~ ^{The} BACKGROUND : THE PALESTINE PROBLEM.

Perhaps no other issue in modern times has generated such diverse opinions and view-points as the Palestinian Problem. The roots of this problem can be traced to the pre-historic times,¹ when Palestine was a scene of continual clashes between various emerging tribes. The region continued to witness several incursions by different races before as well as after the birth of Christ.² However, Palestine, as a modern territorial and political unit, was

- 1 For early history of Palestine, see Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol.17, 1969, pp.927-55. Ilene Beatty, "The Land of Canaan" in Walid Khalidi (ed) From Haven to Conquest (Beirut, 1971), pp.3-24. Cecil Roth, A Short History of Jewish People (London, 1948), George E.Kirk, A Short History of Middle East (London, 1948), W.S. Desai, "Israel in History" in M.S.Rajan (ed), Studies in Politics (New Delhi, 1971), pp.369-96. Frank H. Epp, Whose Land is Palestine (Michigan, 1970). Anny Latour, The Resurrection of Israel (Ohio, 1968). James Parkes, Whose Land ? (Penguin, 1970). William R. Polk et al., Backdrop to Tragedy (Boston, 1957). Theodore Huebener, This is Israel (New York, 1956). William B. Zeff, The Rape of Palestine (London, 1948).
- 2 For detailed account, see Rev. Charles T. Bridgeman's letter to the President of Trusteeship Council, 13 January 1950, General Assembly Official Records (hereinafter referred to as GAOR), Vth Session, Supplement no.9, UN document A/1286. James W. Parkes, A History of Palestine from 135 AD to Modern Times (London, 1949). Jacob Mann, The Jews in Egypt and Palestine Under Fatimid Caliphs (London, 1920-22). Israel Cohen, A Short History of Zionism (London, 1951). Moshe Menuhin, The Decadence of Judaism in our Times (New York, 1965).

a result of political manoeuverings by great powers at the League of Nations.³

In simplest terms the Palestine problem has its origin in, what in present day jargon is called, the 'Refugee Problem'. The story begins with famous 'pogroms', which followed the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881.⁴ The renewed outburst of anti-semitism was followed by a mass exodus of Jews from Russia and Poland.⁵ About 3000 Jews, who left Russia, emigrated to Palestine⁶ and founded a colony near Jaffa in 1882.⁷ The same year Leon Pinsker, a Russian Jew, established a movement known as 'Chibbath Zion' (Love of Zion)⁸ and its followers called themselves

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- 3 For history of Palestine Mandate, see The Palestine Royal Commission Report, Great Britain Parliamentary Papers 1936-37, Cmd.5479, Royal Institute of International Affairs, Great Britain and Palestine (London, n.d.). E.L.Woodward & R. Butler (eds), Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1938, Series I, vol.IV (London, n.d.). Lloyd George, The Truth about Peace Treaties, vol.2 (London, 1938). The ESCO Foundation for Palestine Inc., Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab and British Policies, 2 vols. (New Haven, 1949). George Antonius, The Arab Awakening (London, 1955). Nahum Sokolow, The History of Zionism 1600-1918, 2 vols. (London, 1919). Nevill Barbour, Palestine: Star or Crescent ? (New York, 1947). JMN Jefferies, Palestine: The Reality, (London, 1939). Fanny Fern Andrews, The Holy Land under Mandate, 2 vols, (Camb, Mass., 1931). Albert M. Hyamson, Palestine under the Mandate (London, 1950). J.C. Hurewitz, The Struggle for Palestine (New York, 1950). Fred J. Khouri, The Arab-Israeli Dilemma, (New York, 1971) Chapter I, Richard P. Stevens, Zionism and Palestine Before the Mandate (Beirut, 1972).
- 4 See J.W.Parkes, op.cit, n.2, p.267.
- 5 Chaim Weizmann, Trial and Error (New York, 1949).
- 6 JMN Jefferies, op.cit, p.36.
- 7 F.F.Andrews, op.cit., vol.1, p.303.
- 8 J.W.Parkes, op.cit., n.2, p.267.

'Choveve Zion' (Lovers of Zion).⁹ This was the beginning of Political Zionism, the rise of which subsequently met with wide-spread resistance by non Zionist Jews¹⁰ and which got its ideological foundation and organisational structure from Theodore Herzl, a Paris based Austrian Jew.¹¹

Herzl succeeded in convening the first Zionist Congress at Basle from 29-31 August 1897, where Zionists resolved to establish "a publicly and legally secured home in Palestine".¹² Herzl, who was more concerned with a 'solution of anti-semitism',¹³ rather than prophecies of Moses,¹⁴ would have accepted, like Leon Pinsker,¹⁵ any territory for the purpose.¹⁶ The idea of return to home-land

9 Ibid., p.268.

10 See Israel Cohen, The Zionist Movement (London, 1945), p.70 and A Short History of Zionism, op.cit, pp.35-36.

11 See Israel Cohen, Contemporary Jewry: A Survey of Social, Cultural, Economic and Political Conditions (London, 1950), p.312.

12 For the text of Basle Programme, see "The Basle Program" in Walid Khalidi (ed), op.cit., p.89.

13 See F.F.Andrews, op.cit., vol.1, p.311.

14 Jews hold that Palestine was promised to "the seed of Abraham" (Chapter XIII:13). On the basis of Old Testament prophecies they claimed "Return to homeland". For an excellent analysis of Divine Promise and Zionist claims, see Institute for Palestine Studies, Palestine and the Bible (Beirut, n.d.). Also H.S. Haddad, "The Biblical Bases of Zionist Colonialism", Journal of Palestine Studies, vol.III, n.4, pp.97-113. Alfred Guillaume, "Zionists and the Bible" in Walid Khalidi (ed), op.cit, pp.25-30.

15 Leon Pinsker was the first to put forward the idea of a Jewish National home, though not necessarily in Palestine. See F.F.Andrews, op.cit, vol.1, p.301.

16 Theodore Herzl advocated the establishment of British sponsored. Jewish colonisation of Argentina with a view to eventual creation of a Jewish State. See Theodore Herzl, The Jewish State: An attempt at a modern solution of the Jewish Question. Tr.by Sylvie D.Avigdor, (New York, 1943), p.30.

was not for the fulfilment of the prophecies of Old-Testament, but to stir the Jewish masses and only the legend of Palestine had this capability.¹⁷

Despite the opposition by non-Zionist Jews, Herzl tried to gain support for Zionism and for Jewish colonization of Palestine by various means including unsuccessful attempts to acquire legal rights to colonise Palestine through German and Turkish assistance.¹⁸ Having failed in his attempts with two Great Powers of the time, Herzl proceeded to create the instruments of systematic colonisation in the form of a Jewish National Fund. The funds were used to buy land from feudal Arab landlords and subsequently native population (Arabs) was excluded from labour on the Jewish lands.¹⁹ The economic colonisation

17 See Hans Kohn, "Zion and the Jewish National Idea", The Menorah Journal (Autumn-Winter 1980).

18 Herzl met Kaiser Wilhelm II in October 1898 and proposed the creation of a Chartered Land Development Company which would be administered by Zionists under German Protectorate. Kaiser, however, declined to buy the idea. For details, see ESCO Foundation for Palestine Inc. op.cit., vol.1, p.43. Herzl also tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Ottoman Authorities to facilitate Jewish immigration to Palestine along with certain degree of autonomy. See Henry Cattán, Palestine: Arabs and Israel (London, 1969), p.10. M.V. Seton-Williams, Britain and the Arab States (London, 1948), p.123.

19 For a Jewish point of view, see S. Levenberg, The Jews and Palestine (London, 1945). For a concise analysis of the economic colonisation of Palestine by the Zionists. See Y.M. Primakov, The Anatomy of Middle East Conflict (Moscow, 1978), pp.9-17. For the genesis of Jewish National Fund, see David Hirst, The Gun and the Olive Branch (London, 1977), pp.25-30.

of Palestine continued gradually and at the outbreak of World War I fiftynine Jewish colonies had already come into existence.²⁰

To make the colonisation programme successful Jewish immigration to Palestine was accelerated by the Zionists.²¹ The immigrants were used to replace the Arab labour on the Jewish lands. This put thousands of Arab farm labourers out of work and tenant farmers were subsequently ousted.²²

Along with the 'conquest of labour', Zionists continued to strive for international recognition of their right over Palestine. They concentrated their attention on Great Britain²³ as well as actively continued to seek an agreement with the Germans.²⁴ In 1903 Britain offered Uganda to Zionist Organisation for the purpose of colonisation.²⁵ However, the offer was turned down by the Zionist Congress in 1905, which once again resolved to create a Jewish national home only in Palestine.²⁶

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- 20 See F.F. Andrews, op.cit, vol.1, p.321. For a list of these colonies, see N.Sokolow, op.cit, vol.II, p.328.
 21 See Walid Khalidi (ed), op.cit, Appendix-I and compare the Jewish immigration into Palestine during the period.
 22 David Hirst, op.cit, p.25.
 23 N.Sokolow, op.cit, vol.1, p.295.
 24 For details, see N.Barbour, op.cit, p.55-56.
 25 For details, see N.Sokolow, op.cit, vol.II, pp.296-97.
 26 For details, see F.F.Andrews, op.cit, vol.1, p.316.

During the same period Arabs, who had suffered considerably at the hands of Ottomann authorities at the political, social and cultural levels, sought sovereign national status. The idea of Arab nationalism was gradually developing. In the years preceding the World War I the Arab nationalists had a significant following in Asian Arab lands including Palestine.²⁷ When the war broke out Turkey sided with Germany. Britain's aim in the war coincided with the Arab aspirations.²⁸ Since the force of Arab nationalism constituted a major challenge to supra-national Ottomann Empire, Britain sought to win Arab support by recognising Arab independence in Arab areas including Palestine.²⁹ It assured Arab nationalists to grant sovereign independence after the defeat of Axis Powers.³⁰

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- 27 For a concise analysis of the development of Arab Nationalism, see G. Antonius, *op.cit.*, p.101-25. Also M.V.Sheton-Williams, *op.cit.*, pp.10-16.
- 28 For Britain's policy and interest in the Middle East, see Elie Kedourie, England and the Middle East (London, 1956). M.V. Shelton Williams, *op.cit.* For a brief account of Britain's interest in Palestine during the period, see Isaiah Friedman, The Question of Palestine 1914-18 (London, 1973), pp.164-77.
- 29 G.E. Kirk, *op.cit.*, p.146.
- 30 These assurances appear in the correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner in Egypt and Sherif Hussein, Emir of Mecca, during 1915-16. See British Government, Correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and Sherif Hussein of Mecca, Parliamentary Papers, Cmd.5957 (1939). The text of correspondence also appears in G. Antonius, *op.cit.*, Appendix-A, pp.413-27. For detailed account and discussion, see Isaiah Friedman, *op.cit.*, pp.65-96. Also G.Antonius, *op.cit.*, pp.165-83.

Simultaneously, Britain also negotiated with their French allies the respective territorial desiderata in Ottomann Empire. The negotiation culminated in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 16 May 1916. According to which Palestine was to have,

an international administration the form of which is to be decided upon after consultation with Russia and subsequently with other Allies and the representative of Sherif of Mecca.³¹

By the end of 1916 Germans were pressing hard on the Allied army. The only hope for Allies lay in continued involvement of Russia in the War. In order to encourage Jewish leaders in the Russian Duma to keep Russia in the War, Britain sought to placate the Zionists,³² who had seized the opportunity to represent to British Government the advantages of winning Jewish support by helping Zionist ambitions.³³ Moreover, the apathy of American Jewry towards the war was also a source of British concern.³⁴

31 The text of Agreement appears in E.L.Woodward & R. Butler (eds), op.cit, pp.241-51. For text of Anglo-French Section of the Agreement see Lloyd George, op.cit, vol.II, pp.1023-24. G. Antonius, op.cit, Appendix B, pp.428-30. For discussion, see Elie Kedourie, op.cit, Chapter 2. G. Antonius, op.cit, pp.244-51. Isaiah Friedman, op.cit, pp.97-118.

32 See the text of Memorandum to Sir Edward Buchanan, the British Ambassador in St Petersburg in ESCO foundation for Palestine Inc. op.cit, vol.1, p.84.

33 See Herbert Side-Botham's article in Walid Khalidi (eds), op.cit, pp.128-42.

34 See Christopher Sykes, Two Studies in Virtue (New York, 1953), pp.178-79.

As a result, Britain undertook another major commitment regarding the future of Palestine in the form of a letter dated 2 November 1917, signed by the then British Foreign Secretary, Sir Arthur Balfour.³⁵ When Arab nationalists became anxious over the contents of the Declaration and viewed it as being contradictory to British pledges, they were assured that a "Jewish settlement in Palestine would only be allowed in so far as it would be consistent with the political and economic freedom of Arab population".³⁶ They were also told that Britain was "determined that the Arab-race shall be given a full opportunity of once again forming a nation in the world."³⁷ Nevertheless, by the end of 1918 Zionists succeeded in precipitating official acceptance of the Balfour declaration in France, Italy and Japan.³⁸

When the war ended Great Britain and France imposed upon the Arabs a 'settlement' which violated both the promises specifically made to them and the principles of which the Allies had enunciated as the foundation of

35 For text of the letter, see David Hirst, *op.cit.*, p.38. For analysis of 'Balfour Declaration', see JMN Jeffries, "Analysis of the Balfour Declaration" in Walid Khalidi (ed), *op.cit.*, pp.173-88. David Hirst, *op.cit.*, pp.37-42. Isaiah Friedman, *op.cit.*, pp.309-32.

36 G. Antonius, *op.cit.*, p.268.

37 F.J. Khouri, *op.cit.*, p.9.

38 See F.F.Andrews, *op.cit.*, vol.1, pp.341-42.

future peace. The first action taken by the Paris Peace Conference in regard to Palestine was the provision contained in Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, calling for the establishment of temporary mandates in "certain communities formerly belonging to Turkish Empire". President Woodrow Wilson of the USA was the only one who thought that the people of Palestine should have the right to determine their own political future.³⁹ With utter disregard to the Arab sentiments and the King-Crane Commission and Article 22 of the Covenant, the Supreme Council assigned the mandate for Palestine to Great Britain on 25 April 1920.⁴⁰

The Draft Mandate, which was presented to the League Council by Balfour represented the Zionist proposals.⁴¹ The proposals in a nutshell were that the Mandate for Palestine be dedicated to the creation of a Jewish-State. Although the final document, issued on 24 July 1922, was not exactly what the Zionists wanted, it certainly represented Zionist victory.⁴² The same day the League of

39 Woodrow Wilson had sent Henry C. King and Charles Crane to the Middle-East to assess the situation. The report, which was submitted by them on 28 August 1919 was not considered by the Peace Conference. For the recommendations of King-Crane Commission, see Walid Khalidi (ed), op.cit, p.213-18. For its non-consideration by the Paris Peace Conference, see F.J.Khoury, op.cit, p.13.

40 M.V.Seton-Williams, op.cit, p.125.

41 For Zionist proposals, see the ESCO Foundation for Palestine Inc. op.cit, vol.1, pp.164-71.

42 For the text of Mandate, see Jacob C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near Middle East (New Jersey, 1956), vol.II, pp.106-11.

Nations officially designated Great Britain as the Mandatory Power in Palestine.

A paradoxical relation between dream and reality was thus established. The League established the Zionist right to colonise Palestine and above all it opened the way for Jewish immigration to the country, which was most needed to make the establishment of a Jewish State possible.

The advent of Hitler in 1933 and subsequent persecution of Jews tremendously increased Jewish immigration to Palestine. In 1935 alone nearly 62,000 Jews entered Palestine.⁴³ By 1946 the number of Jews living in Palestine was 6,08,225 which was 35.1 per cent of the total population of the territory.⁴⁴

The process of importing Jews had to be carried on hand in hand with the process of finding land for them. The Churchill White Paper of 1922 provided the Zionists with the instrument needed for it.⁴⁵ It provided for "economic absorptive capacity" as the criterion on which the upper

43 A Survey of Palestine (Palestine, 1846), vol.1, p.185.

44 Walid Khalidi (ed), op.cit, Appendix I, p.843. Compare this number with the Jewish population of Palestine at the end of World War II in 1919, which was about 57,000. The Jewish population at that time was a small fraction (9.7 per cent) of the total population of Palestine, 590,000. See also, Albert M. Hyamson, op.cit, p.108.

45 For the text of Churchill White Paper, see, J.C. Hurewitz, op.cit, n.42, vol.II, pp.103-6.

limit of Jewish immigration was to be fixed. As a result, Jews, who owned total 650,000 dunums in 1919,⁴⁶ had accumulated 15,85,365 dunums by 1946.⁴⁷

Not that the Jewish-Zionist encroachment on Arab lands was not being resisted by the Arabs, however, it was not before 1939 that British Government succumbed to the Arab Nationalists and issued the McDonald White Paper on 17 May.⁴⁸ It restricted the purchase of land and Jewish immigration.

The Zionists received the White Paper with expected hostility.⁴⁹ Thereafter, they could no longer depend upon the British Government as their protectors and they turned to US for assuming the role of sponsors of Zionist plan to establish a Jewish State in Palestine.⁵⁰ The new Zionist orientation reflected in the 'Biltmore programme'.⁵¹

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- 46 Walid Khalidi (ed), op.cit, pp.841. Y.M. Primakov, op.cit, p.17. Idunum equals 1,000 sq.m.
- 47 Walid Khalidi, op.cit, p.843. For analysis of this increase, see A. Granoff, "The Strategy of Land Acquisition" in Walid Khalidi (ed), op.cit, pp.389-98. Also Michael Ionides, "Zionists and the Land" in Ibid., pp.255-71.
- 48 See George Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs (New York, 1953), p.269. For an analysis see, Nevill Barbour, "The White Paper of 1939" in Walid Khalidi (ed), op.cit, pp.461-74.
- 49 Weizmann viewed it as an act of betrayal and as a death sentence. See Charles Weizmann, op.cit, pp.499-503.
- 50 See Ben Gurion, "We look Towards America" in Walid Khalidi (ed), op.cit, pp.481-94.
- 51 For text of the Programme, see "Biltmore Program" in Ibid., pp.495-97.

The end of World War II witnessed a fresh lease of the Zionist terror,⁵² which had began with the McDonald White Paper, with a green signal from their newly acquired benefactors, the United States, against the Mandatory Power.⁵³

Britain which was unable to allow further Jewish immigration into Palestine despite the pressure of the White House⁵⁴ and harassed by the Zionist campaign of violence⁵⁵ based on powerful and highly organised Zionist military establishments in Palestine,⁵⁶ referred the question of the future of the country to the United Nations in February 1947. It requested the General Assembly to consider the appointment of a Special Committee "to make recommendationconcerning the future government of Palestine".⁵⁷

In September 1947 UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNCOP) recommended a partition plan of Palestine into a

- 52 For details of Zionist crimes and Terrorism, see George E. Kirk, The Middle East in the War (London, 1953), pp.321-22. Sami Hadawi, Crime and No Punishment (Beirut, 1972), David Hirst, op.cit, pp.108-12.
- 53 See White Paper on Violence-1946 in Walid Khalidi (ed), op.cit, pp.601-4.
- 54 President Truman had made the request that 1,00,000 Jews be allowed into Palestine. See Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Years of Trial & Hope (New York, 1956), vol.II, pp.138-39.
- 55 G.E.Kirk, op.cit, n.1, p.210.
- 56 See "The Zionist Military Organisations" in Walid Khalidi (ed), op.cit, pp.595-600.
- 57 GAOR, 1st Special Session, Plenary, Gen.Assembly, UN Document A/286.

Jewish state, an Arab state and an international zone of Jerusalem.⁵⁸ The Jews supported the Partition Plan while the Arabs opposed it. Arabs even questioned the Legal competence of the UN to recommend partition.⁵⁹

Despite Arab opposition the General Assembly endorsed the partition of Palestine on 29 November 1947.⁶⁰ The resolution triggered off the final chapter of the tragedy. Great Britain announced that it would terminate the Mandate on 15 May 1948, several months before the time envisaged in the UN Plan.⁶¹ Zionist attacks were launched against the unarmed and unorganised Arabs.⁶² It was the Jewish policy to encourage Arabs to leave their homes and then to eject those who clung to their villages,⁶³ while others were "encouraged to move by blows, or by indecent acts".⁶⁴

58 GAOR, IInd Session, Supplement No.11, UN document A/364 (Report of the UNCOP).

59 See Henry Cattán, *op.cit.*, Appendix XI, pp.242-76. Also "Binationalism, not Partition" in Walid Khalidi (ed), *op.cit.*, pp.645-702.

60 General Assembly Resolution No.181 (II). For a concise review of the Palestine Question before the UN, See The Origins and Evolution Palestine Problem - 1917-1971 UN Publication (New York, 1978), Part-II, pp.10-38. Surendra Ehutani, Hope and Despair (New Delhi, 1980), pp.3-15.

61 Origins and Evolution of Palestine Problem, *op.cit.*, p.39.

62 For a comparative analysis of Zionist and Arab military forces in Palestine, see Henry Cattán, *op.cit.*, pp.32-34.

63 See Edgar O'Ballance, The Arab-Israeli War 1948 (New York, 1957), p.64.

64 Sir John Bagot Glubb, A Soldier with the Arabs (New York, 1957), p.251.

On 14 May 1948 the British High Commissioner left Palestine and the British Mandate formally came to an end.⁶⁵ The same day National Council representing the Palestine Jewish community declared Israel as an independent state.⁶⁶ The US was the first to extend 'de-facto' recognition to Israel, just eleven minutes after the proclamation of the statehood.⁶⁷

The declaration of State of Israel was followed by the First Arab-Israel War between Arab armies of the neighbouring countries of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon on one side and Israel on the other. When the armistice agreements were signed in 1949 over 80 per cent of Palestine had been taken over by the Israelis, leaving the rest -- the Gaza strip and West Bank in Egyptian and Jordanian hands respectively.

This was the beginning of what is now known as the Palestine problem. Subsequent tension and armed conflict between Arabs and Israelis have only aggravated this problem

65 Henry Cattau, op.cit, p.34.

66 Harvey H. Smith, et al., Area Handbook of Israel (Washington, 1970), pp.163-65.

67 Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, op.cit, vol.II, p.164.

and rendered the situation increasingly more explosive. Every year thousands of Arabs were forced to leave their homes and seek refuge either in the camps or in other countries.⁶⁸

3 Consequently, the problem of Palestinian Arabs ceased to be only a local problem. It became a pan-Arab problem and Palestinian movement became a part of the pan-Arab politics. The Palestinians were precluded from using their own initiative and became pawns on the chess-board of Arab-politics.

As a result between 1948 and 1967 the question of an independent Palestinian entity remained essentially dormant. The most characteristic feature of the Middle Eastern politics in this decade was that "more Arab States were at each other's throats at once than ever".⁶⁹ Regional issues such as the Iraqi revolution of 1958 and the subsequent feud between Kasseem's Iraq and Nasser's Egypt, the rapid

68 Number of disposed refugees in different camps was estimated to be about 13,45,000 by May 31, 1967. See UN Document A/6713, Tables I & II, pp.59-69. By June 30, 1972, the number had risen to 15,40,694, See UN Document A/9013, Supplement No.13 (UNRWA Report) By June 30, 1977, total number of refugees registered with UNRWA was 17,06,480. See The Europa Year Book 1978: A World Survey, vol.1 (London, 1978), p.72.

69 Malcolm Kerr, The Arab Cold War: 1958-67 (London, 1967), p.127.

dissolution of United Arab Republic between 1958 and 1961, the Sudanese Civil war and the Yemeni civil war precluded an United Arab front against Israel.

Moreover, the Palestinians themselves served as good soldiers for various Arab regimes and were manipulated first by one or the other of these regimes in inter-Arab politics. Al-Fatah, the first major political organisation of the Palestinians was formed in 1958.⁷⁰ It was largely dependent upon Syria and after 1961 it was used by that country as a means for competing with Egypt. In contrast, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was officially established on 28 May 1964 in Jerusalem,⁷¹ when the Palestine National Congress met, in order to provide leverage to Nasser over the Palestinian Arabs.⁷² This group claimed to be official voice of the Palestinian Nationalism.⁷³

The PLO stressed political activity that fitted Egypt's policy at that time. Accordingly, the PLO did not

70 Mehmood Hussain, The Palestine Liberation Organization (Delhi, 1975), p.20.

71 The Arab World (Beirut), 28 May 1964.

72 The principle of projection of the "Palestinian Entity" was initiated by Egypt at the Arab Summit Conference held in Cairo in January 1964. The principle was accepted and accordingly the PLO was eventually established. See Mehmood Hussain, op.cit, p.15.

73 See Sahrough Akhavi, "The Middle East Crisis", in Alan M. Jones (ed), The US Foreign Policy in a Changing World (New York, 1973), p.205.

enjoy any real power to conduct independent activities. Practically every thing, from appointments to policies, was decided by the Egyptian Government.

On the other hand, Al-Fatah, emphasised that the movement be conducted through military operations. However, it could achieve also little by its operations in Israel.

However, after the June 1967 war the Arab thinking underwent drastic change and Al-Fatah was considerably strengthened by friendly Arab regimes to replace the PLO. Ahmad Shugairy was made to resign in December 1967 and Yahia Hamuda was elected acting Chairman. In July 1968 Fatah joined the PLO's principal bodies and in less than a year was in a dominant position. In February 1969 the Palestinian National Congress meet at Cairo Fatah took over the PLO leadership in this Congress and its leader Yasser Arafat became the Chairman of the PLO executive committee.⁷⁴

Al-Fatah opted for "small-war" tactics and attempted to build an image of a military organisation unaligned to any ideological or political tendency. It simultaneously called for the unity of all forces in the struggle against

⁷⁴ For details of the Cairo Conference, see David Hirst, op.cit, pp.295-300.

Israel. It also demanded that the Palestinians must co-operate with all Arab countries. Nevertheless, it also pointed out that the Palestinians should try to use the support of Arab regimes and not be used by them.⁷⁵

As a result of the initiatives taken by Al-Fatah, most of the hitherto independent Palestinian organisations joined the bodies of the PLO by 1970. Consequently, the PLO was transformed into an umbrella organisation for the Palestinian resistance movement. It thus became the official spokesman of the Palestinians.

A synoptic view of various Palestinian Organisation is given in the Table below.

⁷⁵ For details, see Y. Harkabi, "Fedayeen Action and Arab Strategy", Adelphi Papers No.53 (London, 1968), pp.26-27.

TABLE**MAJOR ORGANISATIONS COMPRISING THE PLO**

| Name of the Organisation | Year of Establishment/Began Activities | Active Members estimated | Social Ideology by | Independent Palestine Vs Arab Unity | Arab States Patronage | Leader |
|--|---|---------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------|---|
| The Palestine National Liberation Movement (Al Fatah) | 1958/1965 | 10,000 | Lacking but gradually turning to Left | Stress on Palestinism; Arab States only help and support | None in particular | Yasser Arafat |
| Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)* | 1967 | 800 (excluding militia) | Marxism-Leninism | Palestinism comes before Arabism | Initially Iraq now none. | George Habbash |
| Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP) | 1969 | 2,000 | Marxism-Leninism | Internationalists | Libya | Na'if Hawatimah |
| Vanguards of the Popular Liberation War (Al Sa'iqah) | 1968 | 5,000 | Scientific Socialism | Arabism under Syrian Ba'ath Party | Syria | Zuhayn Muhsin (Killed on 25 July 1979 in France). |
| Arab Liberation Front (ALF) | 1969 | 3,000 | Socialism coming from Arab nationalism | Arabism under Iraqi Ba'ath Party; Stress on Palestinism considered anti-national | Iraq | Abd Al-Rahim Ahmad |
| Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) | 1977 | 300 | Marxism-Leninism | Arab nationalism predominates | Libya & Iraq | Mahmoud Zeidan (Abu Al-Abbas) |

* See next page

PFLP MERGERS AND SPLIT

Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), Ahmad Jibril, Ahmad Za'rour (1962)

Heroes of the Return Ahmad Al-Yamani Shafiq Al Hut (1966)

The Vengeance Youth Palestine branch of the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM), George Habbash (1967)

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), George Habbash (1967)

PFLP General Command Ahmad Jibril (1968)

Arab Palestine Organisation (1969)

Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), Abu Al-Abas (1977)

Popular Organisation for the Liberation of Palestine (1969)

Popular Democratic Front for Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP) Na'if Hawatimah (1969)

Palestinian Revolutionary Left League (1969)

CHAPTER - II

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS: 1917-1969

A) Soviet View of Palestine Problem: 1917-1948

Russian interest in Palestine has its roots in the past, in the concern which Tsarist Russia showed for the Holy Places, in the affinity between Orthodox Church and Patriarchate of Jerusalem and in the activities of Russian - Palestine Association.¹

The Bolshevik leaders too did not overlook the significance of this problem. As a result even prior to the Russian Revolution they condemned the Zionist aspirations of creating a Jewish National Home in Palestine. "The ethnic element (of the Zionist movement) impregnated, and Judaism as a religion....made the Jewish ethnic group a reactionary formation, basically hostile to...Communism."² Lenin wrote in 1903: "The idea of a Jewish nationality is manifestly, reactionary...it is in conflict with the interests of the Jewish proletariat, for it engenders in

- 1 A Survey of Tsarist foreign policy towards the Middle East from 1552 to 1914 may be found in Ivor Spector, The Soviet Union and the Muslim World: 1914-58 (Washington, D.C. 1959). For collection of documents, see J.C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near & Middle East (New Jersey, 1956), vol.1.
- 2 Ferdyanand Zweig, Israel: The Sword and the Harp (London, 1969), p.282.

its ranks a sword hostile to assimilation, a 'ghetto' mood".³ Stalin denounced Zionism as "a reactionary and nationalist movement recruiting its followers from among the Jewish petty and middle bourgeoisie... Its aim is to organise a Jewish bourgeois state in Palestine and it endeavours to isolate the Jewish working class mass from the general struggle of the Proletariat".⁴

After the October Revolution, the Soviet Government proclaimed complete civil and political emancipation of Russian people, including the Russian Jewry.⁵ The general attitude towards Zionism, however, continued to be hostile and soon it came under attack. The anti-Zionist campaign was carried out by men and women who were themselves Jews.⁶ The main focus of this attack, which was started in March 1919 and went on for several years, was on the 'Labour Zionism'.⁷

When Palestine was assigned to Great Britain as a mandate, the Soviet Union viewed it as a cover for the

- 3 V.I.Lenin, Collected Works (Moscow, 1952), vol.7, p.83.
- 4 J.V. Stalin, Collected Works (Moscow, 1952), vol.2, p.335.
- 5 See The Zionist Review (London), vol.2, no.3, July 1918, p.34. The American Jewish Year Book 5680 (New York), vol.20, pp.202-203. S. Levenberg, The Jews and Palestine (London, 1945), pp.22-27.
- 6 Walter Z. Laquer, The Soviet Union and the Middle East (London, 1959), p.33.
- 7 Ibid., for a Jewish Socialist View on Labour Zionism, see, S.Levenberg, op.cit.

colonial expansion by the Western Powers.⁸ The plan to make a Jewish National Home was vehemently opposed by the Soviet writers, mainly on two grounds, first, that it was the essence of Zionism to which the Communists were ideologically opposed and second, because the plan was envisaged and sponsored by the Great Britain as a part of the wider plans to control the Middle-East.⁹ Palestine, according to the Soviet writers was to eventually become a British base from where Britain would check French expansionism.¹⁰ A more recent objection to the plan was the argument that Palestine was an exclusively Arab-State.¹¹ This view worked up in conjunction with the idea that Jews do not constitute a nation and that the whole plan was based on fiction.¹²

As a result, at the Congress of Peoples of the East, held in Baku in September 1920, under the auspices of the Communist International, Soviet Russia put forward the slogan of 'Liberation of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples from the imperialist yoke.'¹³ As a part of this

8 See V.G. Kryazhin, "The National Liberation Movement in the Arab East", Novyy Vostok No.1 (1922), pp.45-85, Cited in ARC Bolton, Soviet Middle East Studies (Oxford Mimeographed 1959), VIII Parts, Part VI, p.1.

9 See Ibid.

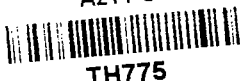
10 See V.G. Kryazhin, "The Struggle Inside and around Palestine", Mezhdunarodnaya Letopis, Nos 10-11 (1925) pp.103-19. Cited in ARC Bolton, op.cit, p.1.

11 See V.B. Lutskiy, The Palestine Problem (Moscow, 1946).

12 Great Soviet Encyclopaedia (2nd ed), Vol.15, 1952, pp.277-379. Also vol.39, 1956, p.138.

13 An account of the Baku Congress may be found in George Lenczowski, Russia and the West in Iran: 1918-1948 (New York, n.d.), pp.6ff.

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slogan the Baku Congress condemned the 'Anglo-Jewish' capitalists for driving the Arabs of Palestine out of their lands in order to transfer their lands to the Jewish-settlers.¹⁴ A few months later Congress of the Comintern passed a resolution condemning Zionist activities in Palestine.¹⁵

However, practically no direct relationship existed between the Soviet Union and the Arab countries including Palestine in the inter-war period.¹⁶ The entire Arab East at that time was under the direct or indirect control of Britain and France and there was no reason why these two powers should have facilitated any contact between revolutionary Russia and their colonies or semi-colonies.

Deprived of any direct diplomatic relations, the Soviet Union acted through Comintern and through the small and rather inefficient communist parties in Arab lands and in Palestine.¹⁷ The official party line was to support

14 Ivar Spector, op.cit, p.52.

15 Walter Z. Laquer, op.cit, n.6, p.34.

16 For general surveys of the Soviet involvement in the Middle East, see Walter Z. Laquer, The Struggle for Middle East (New York, 1969). Aaron Klieman, Soviet Russia and the Middle East (Baltimore, 1970). M.S. Agwani, Communism in Arab East (Bombay, 1969). George Lenczowski, Soviet Advances in Middle East (Washington, D.C., 1972). and Walter Z. Laquer, op.cit, no.6. For an analysis of Soviet policy, toward Middle East between 1917 and 1945, see Ivar Spector, op.cit, no.1. For a Soviet view of the USSR's policies in the region, see OM Gorbatov and L.I. Cherkasskii, Sotrudnichestvo SSSR so Strahami arabaskogo Vostika i Afriki (Moscow, 1973).

17 For an analysis of Soviet policy toward Communist parties and radical movements of the Middle East in the inter-war period, See, Walter Laquer, op.cit, no.6, pp.1-134.

Arab nationalists and side with it against Zionism. The latter, officially described as a "petty bourgeois capitalist ideology"¹⁸ was considered an instrument of British imperialism and as such it was vigorously opposed both in Palestine and in Russia itself. This, however, did not prevent Soviets from sponsoring a communist party among Jews in Palestine.¹⁹ But care was taken to keep it separate from the Arab Communists in the same country.²⁰

In August 1929, when the riots broke out in Jerusalem and soon spread all over the Palestine,²¹ the Communist Party of Palestine (CPP), the only active branch of the Comintern in Middle East at that time, had called for peace between the people, and it published leaflets, opposing racial incitement in the name of proletarian internationalism.²² In October the Soviet press published a long manifesto by the CPP, in which masses were called upon not to fight against each other but with one another against imperialism, Zionism and the Arab-nationalist traitors.²³

18 J.V.Stalin, Marxism and the National Question (Moscow, n.d.), p.289.

19 See Martin Ebon, "Communist Tactics in Palestine", Middle East Journal (July, 1948).

20 For a general discussion of possible Soviet objectives, see AS Becker and AL Horelick, Soviet Policy in the Middle East (Santa Monica, Cal. 1970), pp.63-64.

21 For a concise analysis of these riots, see JC Hurewitz, Struggle for Palestine (New York, 1950), pp.21-22.

22 Walter Z. Laquer, op.cit, n.6, pp.101-102.

23 Inprecorr, September 27, 1929, p.1163. Cited in Walter Z. Laquer, op.cit, n.6, p.102.

But even before this new line could be given a trial the events following the riots underlined the isolation of communists from the mass movement. A CPP Congress was convened in 1930 to review the entire situation. Quoting from the Comintern's open letter, the Congress decried Zionism as "the expression of the exploiting and great power oppressive strivings of the Jewish bourgeoisie, which makes use of the persecution of the Jewish national minorities in Eastern Europe for the purpose imperialistic policy to ensure its domination".²⁴

In 1935 the VII Congress of Comintern echoed the same view and reiterated the stand it had taken in 1929. It proclaimed, "our task is to show the Jewish workers that their national and class-interests are connected with the victory of the Arab Liberation movement."²⁵ However, another line of thought also existed simultaneously, the spokesman of which, said, "The Jewish minority in Palestine is a colonizing minority by its very nature."²⁶

Following the Arab revolt of 1936-39 the CPP-- weak and disorganised as it was, almost disintegrated.²⁷ It must

24 For text of the Congress Resolution, see Ivor Spector op.cit, n.1, pp.91-94.

25 Tajar Quoted in Walter Z. Laquer, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London, 1956), p.97.

26 Ibid.

27 See Ibid., p.100 & 104.

be however, pointed out here that despite serious handicaps, the CPP was the only political party in Palestine, which strove for Arab Jewish co-operation from a doctrinaire motivation.

The famous White Paper of 1939 and the World War II, came almost together. The White Paper made it clear that the Zionism was no longer closely wedded with the British Imperialism. The Comintern declared that the British Empire no longer had any use for Zionism, "In an ignominious fashion those lackeys have been flung aside..."²⁸ The CPP welcomed the White Paper as "an achievement of Arab Liberation movement and.....a first step towards full liberation of the country."²⁹

Nevertheless, with the signing of Nazi-Soviet non-Aggression Pact in 1939, the Soviet Union also had no use for Zionism and the willingness of the Zionists to fight Hitler and Fascism. The Soviet contention was that "the support which Zionist leaders are giving to the war aims of British Imperialism makes it abundantly clear that they want to repeat the first World War, and to drag one section of World Jewry into the vortex of conflicting imperialist

²⁸ Cited in Walter Z. Laquer, op.cit, n.6, p.127.

²⁹ Cited in M.S.Agwani, op.cit, p.13. Also Walter Z. Laquer, op.cit, n.25, p.101.

power politics."³⁰ This attitude underwent a change after the Soviet Union was drawn into the War.

During the World War II, Palestine problem received very little attention, either in the Soviet foreign ministry or in the Soviet Press. The focal points of interest for the Soviet Union were Iran and Turkey which formed part of its 'security zone'.³¹

After the World War II, Palestine problem once again figured on the agenda of Soviet Foreign Ministry. When the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry on Palestine was set up in December 1945, perhaps due to its exclusion from the deliberations of the Committee, the Soviet Union opposed the plan, declaring that the settlement of the problem had to come from United Nations and that it could not be dealt with in any other framework.³² On the other hand, the establishment of the Arab League in March 1945 was described by a Soviet commentator as the first stage in

30 L. Renej, in World News and Views (1939), p.1152.

31 For a detailed examination, see Howard M. Sachar, Europe Leaves the Middle East, 1936-1954 (New York, 1972) Chapter 9. For an analysis of Soviet Struggle in Iran see George Lenczowski, op.cit, n.13, pp.9-11, 86-91 and 138-41. For a discussion on Soviet Turkish relations, see David J. Dalin, Soviet Russia's Foreign Policy: 1939-1942 (New Haven, 1942), pp.105-11.

32 See K. Sarezhin, "A Seat of Unrest in the Middle East", New Times (Moscow), no.1 (1946).

the Arab Nations's struggle towards independence.³³

V.B. Lutskiy was of the opinion that "the Palestine Problem cannot be solved by the imperialist means. The majority of the population of Palestine regards the country as an Arab country, and regard the Jews as citizens of an independent and democratic Palestine."³⁴

Thus, the Soviet Union was of the opinion that (i) the Palestine Problem should be dealt with by the United Nations; (ii) the character of Palestine State should be Arab with Jews enjoying equal civil and political rights, and (iii) the withdrawal of British forces should be the first step towards the settlement of the Problem.

Here it is relevant to point out that the Cold War had already begun and Soviet policy towards Middle East was being increasingly conditioned by Cold-War exigencies. After the initial criticism of the idea of partition of Palestine on the grounds that it would help Britain consolidate its stranglehold in Palestine, the Soviet Policy underwent a radical change.³⁵ The first indication of this change was

33 See K. Serezhin, "The Problems of Palestine", New Times, no.3 (1946).

34 V.B.Lutskiy, op.cit, p.30.

35 For various possible explanations for this shift in Soviet Foreign Policy, Arnold Kramer, "Soviet Motives in the Partition of Palestine", Journal of Palestine Studies, vol.II, No.2 (1973), pp.102-19. Soviet News, 25 May 1948. Michael Bar Zohar, The Armed Prophet (London, 1967), p.85. Walter Z. Laquer, op.cit, n.6, p.146.

given by A. Gromyko on 14 May 1947. He made it clear in the Special Session of General Assembly that what Soviet Union wanted was a dual or bi-national state in Palestine and that only if this were not feasible on account of any deterioration in the relations between Arabs and the Jews, should a partition scheme be considered.³⁶

Thus, the Soviet Union supported the recommendation of the majority of the UNSCOP to divide the country into two separate states.³⁷ The Soviet delegate declared in the debate that under existing conditions this was the only practical solution. He made it clear that he was fully 'alive' to the merits and advantages of the minority, which recommended the establishment of a joint Arab-Jewish State on the federal lines. But an overriding defect of this proposal, he said, was that it was incapable of realisation at the present time, when the situation in Palestine was so strained and when there was no effective likelihood of reconciling the views of the Jews and the Arabs.³⁸

36 For statement by A. Gromyko, see GAOR Session 2, Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestine Question, pp.62-64. For a discussion see M.S. Agwani, "The Great Powers and the Partition of Palestine" in M.S. Rajan (ed), Studies in Politics (Delhi, 1971), pp.348-68.

37 For the recommendations of the UNSCOP, see GAOR, session 2, Supplementary No.11, UN Document A/364, Vol.I, pp.40-57.

38 See Tsarapkin's statement in J.C. Hurewitz, op.cit, n.21, p.293.

The Arab criticism of Soviet stand was decried by Gromyko on 26 November as being inadmissible. He said:

The representatives of the Arab States claim that the partition of Palestine would be an historic injustice. But this view is inadmissible, if only, because, after all, the Jewish people have been closely linked with Palestine for a considerable period in history.³⁹

The Partition Plan was introduced in the General Assembly on 26 November 1947 and was adopted three days later with the concurrence of the Soviet Union.

However, support to Israel did not mean support to Zionism also, the Soviet Union continued its criticism of "reactionary Zionism and called the Palestine Communists to fight both the Zionist and the Feudal Arab Leaders.⁴⁰

On 14 May 1948, the British Mandate ended and the State of Israel came into existence. On 18 May 1948, the Soviet Union accorded it 'de jure' recognition and thus became the first Great Power to do so.

When Arab countries invaded Israel, the Soviet Union supported latter against, what it described as, lackeys

39 Quoted in M.S.Agwani, op.cit, n.16, pp.39-41.

40 See L. Vatolina, "The Palestine Problem", Mirovoye Khoziaystvo i Mirovaya Politika, no.12, 1947, pp.62-77. Quoted in ARC Bolton, op.cit, part VI, p.5.

of imperialism".⁴¹ During the war the Soviet Union was the strongest supporter of Israel.⁴² Ben Gurion acknowledged this in following words:

And if you come to think of it, it was only the Russians and the Czechs who stood by us from the beginning to the end of the 1948 War without weavering -- they had their own reasons, of course, but that was not important to us.⁴³

Thus, the Soviet Union helped Israel not only to emerge as a state against heavy odds, but also to survive the first challenge to its existence. Such a policy was, however, essentially the result of the then characteristic Soviet view of the Cold-War.

B) *Policy Towards the*
Soviet Union, Palestine Problem and Emergence of the Palestine Liberation Organisation: 1948-1969

Soviet recognition of the State of Israel in 1948 and its diplomatic and military support, however symbolic, seem to have been primarily aimed at weakening Britain's

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- 41 P. Khazov, "A Trip to Israel", New Times, no.35 (1951), pp.22-25 and No.36, pp.25-29.
- 42 For a discussion on Soviet behaviour during the 1948 War, see Robert O Freedman, "The Partition of Palestine: Conflicting Nationalism and Power Politics" in Thomas Hackey (ed), Partition: Peril to World Peace (New York, 1972).
- 43 Jon and David Kimche, "Ben Gurion Reconsidered 1948", New Middle East (June, 1969), pp.15-17. See also Chaim Weizmann's Welcoming Speech to the new Czech Ambassador to Israel, Dr Edouard Goldstucker on 18 January 1950. Full text quoted in The Jewish Agency's Digest, vol.II, no.18 (27 February 1950), pp.782.83.

position in the Middle East and depriving it of key military bases.⁴⁴ But in the bargain it did not improve the position of the Soviet Union among the Arab States while the period of good relations with Israel was also of a very short duration.⁴⁵

The Palestine issue was transformed after the 1948 War. The essence of the issue -- the Palestinian Arabs versus Zionism -- was transformed and assumed a broader Arab character. The Palestine Problem became 'Arab-Israel' conflict. The Palestine Arabs in the bargain lost their freedom of action and became participants in the conflict. Although the Arab countries adopted the Palestinian issue as their own, they did not assume specific responsibility for it.

With the intensification of the Cold War in West Asia the Arab-Israel conflict soon became a part of the rivalry between the two 'Super-Powers'. Initially, Israel decided to adopt a neutral attitude in order to retain the support of both sides.⁴⁶ This marked the beginning of the

- 44 See Strobbe Talbott (ed), Khrushchev Remembers (Boston, 1970), p.431. A collection of Soviet documents pertaining to ~~the~~ its relations with the Arab World from 1917 to 1960 may be found in The USSR and the Arab States (Moscow, 1960). And from 1945 to 1971 may be found in The USSR and the Middle East (Moscow, 1972).
- 45 For detailed analysis of Soviet Israel relations, during the period, see Avigdor Dagan, Moscow and Jerusalem (New York, 1970), Judd L. Teller, The Kremlin, The Jews and the Middle East (London, 1957).
- 46 In January 1949, Moshe Sherett, the Foreign Minister of Israel said, "The United States ought to understand that Israel cannot join any bloc against Russia and the Soviet Union should be aware that Israel cannot forego the sympathy of the West". See The Jewish Agency's Digest (Jerusalem), 21 January 1949.

deterioration in the relations between the Soviet Union and Israel.

Nevertheless, Israel's adoption of neutral attitude towards the Cold War did not come in the way of Soviet support of Israel's application for the membership of the United Nations. The Soviet representative to the UN Jacob Malik felt that once Israel was admitted, "a democratic spirit would lead the Arab States to contribute to a lasting peace."⁴⁷

However, with the conclusion of the Tripartite Agreement in May 1950,⁴⁸ the Soviet Union began to criticise not only the three nation declaration as "a threat to the vital interests and independence of the peoples of the Near East",⁴⁹ but also Israel. The Israeli stand on Korea brought about adoption of a new line of passive neutrality towards Israel by the Soviet Union. Avigdor Dagan concludes:

The new line -- undoubtedly Moscow's reaction of Israel's stand on Korea -- was certainly falling away in comparison with the original line. It was a turn of the screw. But was yet not anti-Israeli or pro-Arab.⁵⁰

47 Security Council Official Records (hereinafter referred to as SCOR), Year 4, meeting 207, pp.307.

48 On 25 May 1950, the United Kingdom, France and the United States undertook that the Western powers would not tolerate any renewal of the Arab Israel War or any punitive action against Jordan. The text of the Declaration may be found in J.C.Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East (New Jersey, 1956), vol.II, pp.308-309 (1950).

49 Y. Zvyagin, "Total Diplomacy in the Near East", New Times, no.27, p.15.

50 A. Dagan, op.cit, p.55.

The real change in Soviet Policy emerged after Khrushchev succeeded Malenkov as premier in 1955. At the same time Israel's relations with the West became closer and the Soviet Union sought to remove Western presence from the Middle East.⁵¹ This could be done only by attracting the attention of the nationalist regimes of the Arab World. And in order to win the Arabs 'Czechoslovak Arms Deal' was announced in 1955.⁵² This signified a completely new stage in the Soviet foreign policy towards the Middle East.⁵³ The Suez crisis and its aftermath proved setback to Britain and France, while a gain to the Soviet Union. From 1956 onwards Soviet role in the Middle East steadily became a reckoning factor in the region, counter-balanced by the US efforts to fill in the vacuum for the West.

— Add from S.U. & Arab Nationalists' p. 120 (marked)

Egypt, which then was the strongest, most populous and influential of the Arab states, became the corner stone

- 51 For details see Jaan Pennar, The USSR and the Arabs: Ideological Dimension (New York, 1973).
- 52 Whereas Ra'anani claims that only reason for the deal was the conclusion of the Baghdad Pact, and that all the rest were pretexts, see Uri Ra'anani, The USSR Arms the Third World (MIT Press, 1969), pp.113-58; Miles Copeland points out that President Nasser had warned the United States, as early as January 1955, that Egypt would conclude an arms deal with the Soviet Union, if the US did not furnish the Egyptian Army with the arms it asked for. (see, The Game of Nations (London, 1969), pp.132-33.
- 53 Yair Evron, The Middle East: Nations, Super-Powers and Wars (London, 1972), p.134.

of Soviet policy in the region and remained so until the Soviet exodus from that country in July 1972.⁵⁴ In general Soviet policy in the Middle East was oriented on the Arab state system, wherein there was no elbow room left for such non-state movement, like the PLO.

It may be pertinent to point out here that the Soviet Union in its bid to counter the Western influence in the area, did not care for the World communist movement at that time⁵⁵ much less for the Palestinian resistance.

Against this scenerio, official Soviet support for the Palestinian resistance was further complicated due to several factors. First, the Soviet Union viewed the Arab world as one entity with a common language and culture made of different nations. Accordingly, it preferred not to commit itself to a firm opinion on the Palestinian Arabs.⁵⁶

54 In July 1972, Sadat announced the "termination of the mission of the Soviet military advisers and experts, placing of all military bases in Egypt under Egyptian control and the call for a Soviet-Egyptian meeting to work out a 'new-relationship' between the two countries". Text of the Statement in New York Times, 19 July 1972.

55 Nasser, after having declared the Egyptian Communist Party illegal had boasted, as early as August 1955, "nothing prevents us from strengthening our economic ties with Russians even if we arrest the Communists at home and put them on trial." Al Jerida (Beirut) 16 August 1955, cited in Walter Z. Laquer, The Soviet Union and the Middle East (London, 1959), pp.219-20.

56 For the Soviet position on the subject, see Aryeh Yodfat, Arab Politics in Soviet Mirror (New York, 1973).

Second, since 1947, the Soviet Union recognized the existence of two peoples in Palestine -- Arabs and the Jews -- both deserving recognition of their national rights. Andrei Gromyko, the then Soviet representative to the UN, said on 14 May 1947, "It is essential to bear in mind the undisputable fact that the population of Palestine consists of two peoples, the Arabs and the Jews. Both have historical roots in Palestine. Palestine has become the homeland of both these peoples, each of which plays an important part in the economy and cultural life of the country."⁵⁷ And accordingly throughout the fifties, Soviets treated Palestine issue as a refugee problem without a political dimension.⁵⁸

Third, the official support for the Palestinian resistance was further complicated by the ambivalent approach of the Soviet Union towards the Palestine Problem itself. In spite of all-out support to the Arab regimes, the Soviet Union remained a supporter of Israel's right to

57 See GAOR, Special Session-I, Plenary Meetings, Meeting-78, UN Document A/307, pp.132-34.

58 See Oles M. Smolansky, The Soviet Union and the Arab East under Khrushchev (1974), p.36. It was not before 1964 that Khrushchev first talked about the "inalienable and lawful rights of the Palestinian Arabs". See Galia Golan, "The Soviet Union and the PLO" in Gabriel Ben Dor (ed), The Palestinians and the Middle East Conflict (Ramat, 1978), pp.229-32. Also Pravda, 2 September 1965.

exist as a state,⁵⁹ a stand which was diametrically opposed to the Arab objectives vis-a-vis Israel.

These significant divergences from the objectives of the Palestinian struggle, prevented the Soviet Union from pronouncing a clear-cut policy towards it.

A clear position on the subject began to emerge towards the end of 1960's. The 1967 Middle East War was a water-shed in Soviet policy towards the Middle East. The Soviet Union unequivocally supported the Arabs after the war, while its long-term objective was defined in the UN resolution on the withdrawal of Israel from occupied Arab territories as a result of the war. On the Palestine problem itself Soviet theoreticians and politicians while commenting on the draft programme of the Syrian Communist Party put the ball rolling.⁶⁰ The Soviets advised the Syrians to accept the existence of Israel and that "there must be no talk about the eliminating Israeli State".⁶¹ As a solution to the Palestinian problem they suggested the return of the Palestinian Arab refugees⁶² and that

59 See the remarks made by Soviet theoreticians and officials on the Palestine Problem during an attempt by the CPSU to settle the dispute in Syrian Communist Party, in "The Soviet Attitude to the Palestine Problem", Journal of Palestine Studies, vol.III, no.1, pp.187-212.

60 Excerpts on Palestine may be found in Ibid, pp.188-202.

61 Ibid., p.193.

62 Ibid.

Israel had to withdraw from all territories occupied in June 1967.⁶³ It was stressed that "the struggle will continue and aim its bayonets at the Zionism."⁶⁴ They said:

The slogan of right to return must be maintained. After the return there will be right to self-determination, meaning: determining for themselves the administration and the form and character of the State.⁶⁵

However, official Soviet spokesmen did not go that far. They merely spoke of "ensuring the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine", without defining what those rights were.⁶⁶

Thus, while the sincerity of the Soviet Union for a peaceful settlement of Palestine problem remained unquestionable, its commitment to the struggle for Palestine was uneven, if not inconsistent. Although it had close ties with a number of Arab states, it seldom referred to the Palestinian problem as a political one.

63 Ibid, p.197. Also A. Gromyko quoted in Yaacov Ro'i, "The Soviet Attitude to the Existence of Israel" in Yaacov Ro'i (ed), The Limits of Power (London, 1979), p.232.

64 Ibid., p.192.

65 Ibid.

66 See SCOR, UN Document S/PV 1822. Also see Report of XXIV-CPSU Congress.

A joint statement during Nasser's visit to the Soviet Union in August 1965, spoke about the Soviet support for "the unalienable legal rights of the Palestinian Arabs",⁶⁷ i.e. the Arabs of that country and not as a separate entity. Again during his visit to Egypt, Kosygin, on 17 May 1966 said that the Soviet Union understands "the ardent interest of the Arabs....and we favour its settlement on a just basis. As before, the Soviet Union has a sympathetic attitude towards the struggle for the restoration of the inalienable, legal rights of Palestinian refugees."⁶⁸

Thus, on the whole, the Soviets viewed the problem of Palestine as a problem of refugees and ignored its socio-political significance. This position was, among the other things, an expression of their negative attitude towards the PLO and its leader Ahmed Shuquairy, with whom Kosygin, during his visit to Egypt in May 1966, had met uneventfully and who was denounced by the Soviets as a "nationalist hot-head who no one had ever taken seriously."⁶⁹

67 Pravda, 2 September 1965.

68 See the report of Kosygin's visit by Hedrick Smith in the New York Times, 18 May 1966.

69 Walter Laquer, The Struggle for Middle East (London, 1970), pp.73-74.

Moreover, Shuquairy was being hailed by the Chinese and in return the PLO was proclaiming pro-China slogans,⁷⁰ This obviously, at the initial stage, served to increase the Soviet indifference, if not displeasure, towards both the PLO and its head, Ahmed Shuquairy.

The Soviet condemnation of Shuquairy became more explicit after his removal. His slogans -- "Throw all the Jews into the sea" and "Destroy Israel" -- were said to have damaged the Arab interests.⁷¹

The Soviet Union has expressed, in most explicit terms, its reservations in regard to "the armed resistance movement" on more than one occasion.⁷² It also opposed the Guerrilla warfare as being inconsistent with the UN resolution of 22 November 1967. As noted earlier this UN resolution had called for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of implicit recognition by the neighbouring Arab States of Israel's right to exist.⁷³

- 70 See The PLO and the PRC, PLO Publication (Cairo, 1966). Also Peking Review, No.21 (23 May 1969), pp.28-30.
- 71 See Pravda, 22 December 1967, Izvestia, 28 December 1967.
- 72 See the emergency programme of pro-Soviet Jordanian Communist Party in the Arab World Weekly, 24 May 1969. Also a TASS release on World Conference of Communist Parties, held in Moscow from 5 June to 18 June 1969, in which eight Arab Communist Parties participated, in the Arab World Weekly (Beirut), 28 June 1969, pp.15-19. For an analysis of the Moscow Conference, see Jaan Pennar, op.cit, pp.13-15. For a direct expression of Soviet opposition, see Pravda, 15 June 1969.
- 73 Text of the resolution may be found in the Appendix-I below.

This approach, however, was rejected both by the PLO and the Al-Fatah. They maintained that even if a political solution were achieved, they would continue to struggle until the 'liberation of Palestine'. Fatah called for "the abolition of the state of Israel as an entity based on race and religion and its replacement by a democratic state in which Moslem, Jewish and Christian populations would enjoy equal rights of citizenship".⁷⁴ This theme still remains unchanged.⁷⁵

Nevertheless, despite its reservations on guerrilla movement the Soviet Union, could not play down its significance for long due to several factors. Firstly, the growing power and popularity of the Palestinian movement had steadily become a factor in the Middle Eastern politics, particularly after they emerged victorious from the battle of Karameh on 21 March 1968.⁷⁶

Secondly, Egypt, which at that time, was the corner stone of Soviet policy in the Middle East, was also the patron of the PLO and acted as the middle man between the

74 Cited in George Lenczowski, Soviet Advances in the Middle East (Washington, D.C., 1971), p.72.

75 See Yasser Arafat's speech in the General Assembly of the United Nations on 13 November 1974.

76 For details of the battles, see John Cooley, Green March, Black September: The Story of Palestinian Arabs (London, 1973), pp.100-101.

PLO and the Soviets. As the Egyptians began to take PLO more seriously after the 1967 Middle East War, they certainly affected Soviet stance on the PLO.

Finally, it found difficult to overlook the growing influence of China on the guerrilla organisations. By providing military equipments and ideological training to a number of guerrilla organisations, China, the Soviets felt, was seeking to increase its influence in the Middle East vis-a-vis these organisations.⁷⁷ As a result, after the battle of Karameh, the Soviet mass-media started taking interest in the PLO and the Palestinian movement within the Israeli occupied territory.⁷⁸ The PLO was now described as a legitimate resistance movement with modest political aims. The idea of complete "Liberation of Palestine" or "Liquidations of Israel" was presented as an objective of certain radical factions within the PLO and not of the movement as a whole.⁷⁹

Yasser Arafat visited Moscow though unofficially in July 1968. The visit went unannounced since he was only

- 77 For detailed analysis of the relations between the Peoples' Republic of China and the Palestinian Organisations, see, Sevine Carlson, "China, the Soviet Union and the Middle East", New Middle East, no.27, 1970 ~~xxxxxxx~~, pp.32-40. Also R.Medezini, "China and the Palestinians", New Middle East, no.32, 1972, pp.34-40.
- 78 See V.Kudriavtsev, "The Plot against Jordan", New Times, no.14, 1968, pp.11-12.
- 79 Pravda, 19 November 1969.

accompanying Nasser. Although neither the PLO nor Al-Fatah (Arafat was only the leader of Al-Fatah at that time) did receive any material help from the Soviet Union, the visit was not completely fruitless. They got what they most needed -- the recognition as a political entity. It was only after this visit that the Soviet mass media began referring positively to the Palestinian 'partisans', as the resistance movement, and specially lauding Al Fatah's operations.⁸⁰ As for the material assistance PLO and Al Fatah were already in receipt of abundant aid from Arab regimes, particularly those who were then close to the USSR.

By 1969 Soviet Jurists even started trying to define the status of guerrilla organisations vis-a-vis the international law and concluded that Palestinian guerrilla activities as a lawful expression of the Arab peoples' right of self-defence in the conditions of continued aggression.⁸¹ And accordingly, the PLO's Zurich raid in February 1969 was hailed as an act carried out by patriots defending their "legitimate right to return to their homeland".⁸²

80 See for example, V.Kudryavtsev, "Middle East: Military Situation", New Times, no.14, 1969, pp.14-15.

81 Cited by Jean Riollot, "The Soviet Attitude toward the Palestinian Organizations", Radio Liberty Research Paper, CRD, 46/70, Munich, 1970.

82 See Current Digest of Soviet Press, 19 May 1969, p.21. Also New York Times, 28 February 1969.

In October 1969 Aleksander Shelebin came out with the first sign of Soviet support for guerrillas at the Seventh World Trade Union Congress held at Budapest. He said:

We consider the struggle of the Palestinian patriots for the liquidation of the consequences of Israeli aggression, a just anti-imperialist struggle of a national-liberation and we support it.⁸³

This change in the Soviet stance must necessarily be seen against the background of developments inside the PLO itself. As mentioned earlier, the Al-Fatah leadership had been catapulted to the forefront of the Palestinian resistance at the Cairo Conference of the Palestine National Congress in February 1969,⁸⁴ this might have heralded 'a new optimism on the part of Soviet leadership with regard to the PLO'. Moreover, after observing how clashes with the guerrillas had shaken both the pro-Western Lebanese and Jordanian governments, the Soviet leadership may have viewed the Palestinian movement as yet another viable force against the pro-Western Arab regimes.⁸⁵

83 Quoted in Ibid. Also quoted in Paul Wohl, "New Soviet Revolutionary Stance in the Middle East", Radio Liberty Despatch, 25 May 1970, p.2. Also Trud (Moscow), 29 October 1969.

84 For details of the Cairo Conference, see David Hirst, op.cit., pp.295-300.

85 For analysis of the Soviet policy towards the Palestinian organization, see Y. Yodfat, "Moscow Reconsider Fatah", New Middle East, no.15, 1969, pp.15-18; John Cooley, "Moscow Faces a Palestinian Dilemma", Mid-East, vol.11, no.3, June 1970, pp.32-35 and "The Soviet Union and the Palestine Guerrillas", Mizan, January-February 1969, pp.8-17.

By the end of 1969 the Soviet Union, though continued to see the PLO as a secondary element of its policy in the region and regarded it essentially as a means to influence the Arab regimes, viewed the importance of the PLO as a possible option for the future.

CHAPTER - III

Policy
 SOVIET ~~ATTITUDE~~ TOWARDS THE PLO: 1970-1973

The steady transformation of Soviet attitude towards the PLO, which had begun in mid-1968, underwent further modifications during this period, 1970-73. The Soviet Union still preferred to direct its policy in the Middle East through the Arab regimes and kept its support for Palestinians relatively limited. However it began to view the Palestinian Organisations as a factor in Arab politics, worthy of direct contact. From the beginning of the seventies it was obvious that a new Soviet Policy towards the PLO had become operative.

A delegation of the Palestinian Organisations, headed by Yasser Arafat, was received in Moscow in February 1970 by the Soviet Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity.¹ Although the delegation stayed in the USSR for ten days (10-20 February) the visit was kept in a low key by the Soviets. The official news agency Tass released only short notices, one about the arrival of the delegation and then at the end of the visit. Among other things, the delegation tried to persuade the Soviet leadership to give up its desire for

1 For details of the visit, see "PLO Delegation visits the Soviet Union, Izvestia, 21 February 1970. Current Digest of Soviet Press (hereafter CDSP), vol. XXII, no.8, 24 February 1970. Also Pravda, 29 February 1970.

a political settlement of the Palestine problem, which the latter had expressed in the wake of UN Security Council Resolution No.242 of 22 November 1967.² The Soviet leadership committed to the settlement of disputes through peaceful means, did not give any positive replies. Although the visit itself may be taken as a 'de-facto' recognition of the PLO by the Soviet Union, it was not granted official recognition.

Nevertheless, this trip was not completely fruitless, it marked another elevation of the PLO's status and positive shift in the Soviet attitude. Pravda introduced a new phrase which was to become the standard characterisation, when it referred to "Arab people of Palestine".³ Moreover, the generally well informed Africasia, indicated that the Soviets had promised the PLO weapons.⁴ The PLO report on the visit characterised it as "one of their most important achievements on the international level".⁵

2 For Soviet view on the settlement of the problem, see E. Primokov in Pravda, 15 October 1970. Official English translation may be found in New Middle East, November 1970, pp.46-47. Also CDSP, vol.XXI, 12 February 1969, p.10 and 5 March 1969, p.19. Arab Report and Record, 1-15 December 1969, pp.518-19.

3 Pravda, 22 February 1970, cited in Galia Golan, "The Soviet Union and the PLO", Adelphi Papers, no.131, London, 1976, p.2. The XXIV CPSU Congress also included a clause on the 'Legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine'.

4 See Simon Malley, "Arafat Au Kremlin", Africasia, 15 March 1970. Cited in Bard E.D'Neil, Armed Struggle in Palestine: A Political and Military Analysis (Colorado, 1978), p.195.

5 Al Nahar (Beirut); Cited in Arab Report and Record, 1-15 June 1970, p.344.

It may be relevant to note that the People's Republic of China did not miss the opportunity to reassure their all-out support for the Palestinians and Yasser Arafat was given a red-carpet, high level, official reception in Peking.⁶ Perhaps the visit was planned to give the impression that his Moscow trip had not meant a change in the orientation of the PLO⁷ and also to ensure arms deliveries from China.⁸

The Soviets, who opposed the general strategy of armed struggle in Palestine, tried unsuccessfully to convince the PLO that its position would be better if it strengthened its ties with the Arab leftist forces.⁹ And since the Soviet attitude towards PFLP and PDFLP (until 1973) precluded reliance upon them as channels for ideological and political influence within the PLO,¹⁰ The Soviet Union supported the idea that the communist parties in the Middle East should have their own guerrilla organization, which would be able

6 Peking Review, no.14, 3 April 1970, pp.4-5.

7 Ibid.

8 R. Medzini, "China and the Palestinians - A Developing Relationship", New Middle East, May 1971, p.36. Times (London), 19 and 23 August 1970.

9 See, G.Mirsky, "Israel: Illusions and Miscalculations", New Times, no.38, 1966, p.7. Also P. Demchenki, "The Palestinian Resistance and Reactionaries", Pravda, 29 August 1972. Tr. in CDSP, vol.24, no.35, pp.2-4.

10 For a concise account of Soviet attitude towards various Palestinian organisations, see Aryeh Yodfat, "The Soviet Union and the Palestinian Guerrillas", Mizan, January-February 1969.

to participate in the PLO. As a result, the communist parties of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan formed an organisation called the 'Al-Ansar', at a meeting held on 3 March 1970, and sought affiliation with the PLO and other co-ordinating bodies of the Palestinian resistance movement. Since 'Al-Ansar' endorsed the Russian position on Security Council Resolution No.242, the PLO rejected the group.¹¹ Consequently, 'Al-Ansar' had a minimal influence over the guerrilla movement.¹²

By June 1970 the intra-Palestinian power struggle had reached its peak, with PFLP openly challenging the Fatah leadership.¹³ When Egypt and Jordan accepted the US ceasefire proposal in August 1970,¹⁴ PFLP triggered off a sky-jacking spree. King Hussein of Jordan did not let the opportunity, provided by the guerrillas themselves, go unavailed. He decided to end the guerrilla threat to his regime,¹⁵ and initiated military attacks on guerrilla positions.¹⁶ Simultaneously, the US moved its Sixth Fleet towards the region and clearly expressed that it would not

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- 11 See Nicolas Chaoui, "Leninism and Problems of Revolutionary Movement in Arab Countries", World Marxist Review, vol.XIII, no.5, February 1970, p.65.
- 12 Naim Ashhab, "To Overcome the Crisis of the Palestinian Resistance, Ibid., vol.XV, no.5, May 1972.
- 13 For concise analysis, see Ezzat N. Salaieh, "The Jordanian Palestinian Civil War of 1970: A Quest for Justice and Peace, India Quarterly, vol.XXX, no.1, January-March 1974, pp.44-69. For details see Bard E.O'Neil, op.cit, p.134-44.
- 14 Ezzat N. Salaieh, op.cit, p.46.
- 15 The regime perceived sky-jackings as a challenge to Jordanian sovereignty, Bard, E.O'Neil, op.cit, p.141.
- 16 For a description of all these events, see Malcolm H.Kerr, The Arab Cold War, New York, 1970, pp.144-48.

let a pro-Western regime be ousted by the 'clients' of the Soviet Union.¹⁷ Syria at this juncture decided to intervene and despatched an Armoured Brigade to help the guerrillas.¹⁸

Initially, the Soviet Union supported the Syrian move,¹⁹ but latter opted for a neutral position. However, the Soviets certainly wanted the in-fighting to end and thus to save the Palestinians from mutual destruction. The official statement issued on 23 September 1970 stated:

everything should be done to end as soon as possible the fratricidal fighting in Jordan. Permanent contact is being maintained with President Nasser of the UAR on all questions linked with the development of in Jordan.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union which had endorsed the Rogers Plan, confirmed its opposition to international terrorism when it vehemently criticised the sky-jacking. The Soviet leadership underlined that such acts were reprehensible not only because they damaged the Arab national cause by undermining the Arab image, but also because they provided necessary pretexts to the US and

17 See Robert J. Pranger, American Policy in the Middle East: 1969-71 (Washington, D.C., 1971), pp.39-48. Richard Nixon's views on the crisis may be found in New York Times, 19 September 1970.

18 William B. Quandt, Decade of Decisions: American Policy Towards the Arab-Israel Conflict: 1967-1976 (California, 1977), p.115. For analysis of Soviet policy during the period, see Robert O. Freedman, "Detente and the Soviet American Relations in the Middle East during the Nixon Years" in Della W. Sheldon (ed), Dimensions of Detente (New York, 1977).

19 Kessing's Contemporary Archives, vol.17, 10-17 October p.24230.

Israel to suspend peace talks and increase tensions.²⁰ Perhaps this was also one of the reasons why the Soviet Union remained somewhat passive, if not completely inactive during the Jordanian crisis over the fate of Palestinian guerrillas.

Between 20 and 29 October 1971 Yasser Arafat led another delegation to Moscow.²¹ Needless to say that this visit was also, like the earlier one, on the invitation of Soviet committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity. Although the visit was apparently intended to counter the growing anti-Soviet campaign in Arab countries, following the unsuccessful attempt by pro-communist elements to seize power in Sudan in July 1970,²² it was not treated at the official level and the Soviet media hardly gave any coverage to it. During the visit Arafat, however, had talks with Soviet leadership, which, according to him, was "warmer" than in February 1971 and that the visit was "very successful".²³

- 20 See Izvestia, 10 September 1970. Tr. in New Middle East, October 1970, p.49. Pravda, 13 September 1970, cited in Mizan supplement A, September-October 1970, p.4, New Times, no.38, 1970, p.1.
- 21 For details of the visit, see Pravda, 30 October 1971. Tr. in CDSP, vol.23, no.44, p.18.
- 22 For a discussion on the events in Sudan, see Anthony Sylvester, "Mohammad Vs Lenin in Revolutionary Sudan", New Middle East, July 1971, pp.26-28. For the Soviet view, see Dimitry Volsky, "Changes in the Sudan", New Times, no.30, 1971, p.11. This issue of the New Times appeared during the brief period in which Nimeri was out of power. For further developments, see Tass release of 28 July 1971. Tr. in CDSP, vol.23, no.29, pp.3-4 and Comments by Observer in Pravda, 30 July 1971. Tr. in CDSP, vol.23, no.29, pp.1-5.
- 23 Quoted in New York Times, 1 January 1972.

Besides the events in Sudan and anti-Communist campaign in the Arab world, the visit could have been facilitated against the background of Kissinger's visit to Peking in July 1971 and announcement of Nixon's visit to China in early 1972. It was apparent that a new era of Sino-US detente was in the way. All these developments made it imperative on the part of the Soviet leadership to re-evaluate their policies in the Middle East.²⁴

As the new year 1972 began, the Soviet leadership faced the rising tide of anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism in the Arab World, with Egypt joining hands with Sudan and openly blaming the Soviet Union for lack of support in its confrontation with Israel.²⁵ The antagonistic vibrations from Egypt after Nasser had begun to cause concern in the Soviet Union.

Consequently, the Soviet policy was geared around an effort to counter the growing negative trends in the Middle East. It moved to come closer with States other than Egypt, as for instance, Syria, Iran, and North Yemen.

24 For analysis of the effect of Sino-US detente on Soviet Policy, see George Ginsburg, "Moscow's Reaction to Nixon's visit - Jaunt to Peking" in Gene T. Hsiao (ed), Sino-American Detente and Its Policy Implications, (New York, 1974), pp.137-59.

25 See Sadat's speech in New Middle East, February 1972, p.42.

Moreover, it renewed its interest publicly in Arab Communist movement. During the Congress of newly legalised Lebanese Communist Party in January 1972, the Soviet Union received support for its proposal of convening a Congress of all the "progressive and patriot organisation of the Arab countries", whose goal was stated as mapping out a "general line of struggle against imperialism, Zionism and reaction".²⁶ The goal of the Soviets in convening such a Congress was expressed by Nadim Abd Al-Samad, member of the Lebanese Communist Party in an interview with Pravda. He said:

The Central Committee of the Lebanese Communist Party feels that there is an urgent need to convene a Pan-Arab Conference...under conditions of increasing pressure on Arab Liberation Movement...by certain circles to arouse anti-communist and anti-Soviet sentiments.²⁷

Besides, the Soviet Union utilised yet another effective source to counter the growing Western and anti-Soviet influence in the Middle East -- the PLO. Just at the time when Sadat was expelling Russians, Yasser Arafat led yet another delegation to Moscow on 17-27 July 1972. The

26 See the report of Congress in New Times, no.5, 1972, p.15.

27 Tr. in CDSP, vol.24, no.4, p.19.

PLO leader met this time Soviet Defence Ministry Officials,²⁸ and succeeded in obtaining Soviet arms supplies. They were received by the PLO apparently sometime in September 1972.²⁹ After the visit the PLO statement of their appreciation of Soviet support for Palestinian cause and its declaration was given wide publicity in the Soviet media.³⁰ The Soviet statement on the visit said that the "Soviet people" will continue to "provide aid in the future too to the Palestinian resistance movement".³¹ The Joint Communique also reiterated the Soviet support for the "Just struggle of Palestinians for their legitimate rights". Although the communique did recognise that the PLO "expresses the interests of Palestinian Arab people",³² the Soviet leadership did not grant official recognition to the PLO as the 'sole representative of the Palestinians', for a long time to come.

Later in mid-September, when Iraqi President Bakr visited the USSR, Moscow officially recognized the Palestinian role in the Arab struggle. Soviet President,

- 28 "A PLO radio broadcast of 23 July 1972 had referred to Arafat's meeting with Defence Ministry officials, although the Soviets made no mention of such talks," Galia Golan, Yom Kippur and After, London, 1977, p.33.
- 29 M. Maoz, The Soviet and Chinese Relations with Palestinian Guerrilla Movement (Jerusalem, 1974), p.11. Also reports by Eric Pace in New York Times, 16 and 22 September 1972.
- 30 The text of the Statement may be found in Pravda, 28 July 1972. Tr. in CDSP, vol.24, no.32, p.20.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 See The Tass release of 27 July 1972. Cited in Galia Golan, op.cit, n.28, p.32.

Podgorny, in his speech, said: "The Palestinian resistance movement plays a tangible role in general front of the Arab struggle against imperialism and Israeli expansionism."³³

Despite the change in attitude, certain elements of the Soviet policy remained constant over the following years.³⁴ One of them, the most important one, was Soviet position on use of terror as a means for solution of any problem. It maintained that terrorist methods used by certain "pseudo-partisans"³⁵ would not serve the Palestinian National Cause.³⁶

Logically the Munich incident undertaken by the Black September Organization (BSO) on 5 September 1972 met with strong expressions of disapproval by the USSR.³⁷ Nevertheless, Munich assassination did set off a chain of events and gave the Soviets ample opportunity to demonstrate their support for the Arab cause.

33 Pravda, 15 September 1972. Tr. in Daily Review, vol.XVIII, no.184 (4526).

34 For details, see Galia Golan, op.cit, no.28, pp.129-250.

35 Radio Moscow, 15 November 1970. Cited in Summary of World Broadcast (hereafter SWB) I, 16 November 1970.

36 New Times, no.35, 1973, p.17.

37 See Pravda, 11 September 1972. Tr. in Daily Review, vol.XVIII, no.180 (4522).

Under the pretext of "taking actions and measures" to "deny the Arab terror organization the necessary bases, facilities and other assistance",³⁸ Israelis launched a series of air attacks on the Palestinian Refugee Camps in Syria and Lebanon. Whereas the Western Press unanimously upheld these raids as 'legitimate reprisal', the Soviet Union, on one hand, airlifted medical and other civil supplies to Lebanon to help treat the victims of the Israeli attack³⁹ and on the other, it did not hesitate from expressing its criticism of such extremist groups as PFLP and BSO and emphasised on the need for unity among the Palestinians.⁴⁰ However, it will not be out of context to note that BSO-Fatah connections with such acts of terror was quietly overlooked by the Soviets. The only possible explanation for this could be that they felt that quiet diplomacy may be effective in persuading Arafat to give up international terrorism.

By 1973, the Soviet support for the Palestinians became a part of its policy in the Middle East. Palestinian resistance movement was further elevated from its earlier

38 Deputy Prime Minister of Israel, Vigel Allon, quoted in the report by Francis Offner in the Christian Science Monitor, 23 September 1972.

39 See report by Eric Pace in New York Times, 22 September 1972.

40 See Yo Kornilov, "Meetings with the Fedayeen", New Times, no.42, 1972, pp.24-25. Also Dmitry Volsky, "The Beirut Crime", New Times, no.16, 1973, pp.12-15.

position of playing a 'tangible role in Arab-struggle' to that of being the 'leading force' or vanguard in this struggle.⁴¹ This support continued despite the rejection of Soviet proposal of a peaceful settlement of Palestine problem by no less a person than Yasser Arafat himself. In his May Day speech the same year, he said:

From the first moment we believed that what has been taken by force can only be regained by force. Our friends in the USSR must know that the peaceful solution which the US has been talking about is fictitious.⁴²

In the same month when the Palestinians clashed with the Lebanese forces (which was triggered off by the Israeli raid on the PLO headquarters in April), the Soviet Union sought to support the Palestinians without alienating the Lebanese government. The Soviet media put the blame for clashes on 'local reactionaries' and outside provocations.⁴³ While a Palestinian spokesman did say later that the Soviets had helped them, Le Monde claimed that Azhinov, Soviet Ambassador in Beirut, had in fact pressed Arafat to come to an agreement with the Lebanese government.⁴⁴

41 Radio Moscow, 28 November 1972. Cited in SWB I, 29 November 1972.

42 Cairo Radio, 1 May 1973. Reprinted in Middle East Monitor, vol.3, no.10, pp.3-4.

43 Pravda, 4, 11, 12, 13 May 1973. Cited in Galia Golan, op.cit, no.28, p.66.

44 Le Monde, 11, 12 & 19 May 1973. Cited in Galia Golan, op.cit, no.28, p.60.

On 27 June 1973, after the Nixon-Brezhnev summit in Washington⁴⁵ TASS released what may be termed as basic tenets of the Soviet policy in the Middle East. The release reiterated what had been frequently stated in the past. It stressed the need for total withdrawal of Israeli forces to the pre-1967 war boundary, a peaceful solution based on the UN Resolution no.242, recognition of "legitimate interests and rights of the Palestinians".⁴⁶ The release, among other things, had been warranted by the sharp Arab reaction to the summit (Nixon-Brezhnev) treatment of the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁴⁷

To counter this fresh tide of anti-Sovietism in the Arab world, supplemented with Egyptian leanings towards the Western Powers, the PLO chief Yasser Arafat was not only invited as an honoured guest to the World University Games at Moscow,⁴⁸ but was also permitted to open a PLO office in East Berlin.⁴⁹

One of the immediate results of the October war (1973) was that the Soviets sought to increase their prestige

45 For the text of the Joint Communique issued after the summit, see New Times, no.26, 1976, p.23.

46 TASS release, 27 June 1973. Reprinted in Middle East Monitor, vol.3, no.14, p.1.

47 For Arab reactions to the Nixon-Brezhnev summit, see report by John Gooby in Christian Science Monitor, 20 June 1973.

48 See New Times, no.35, 1973, p.2.

49 New York Times, 19 August 1973.

among the Arab-States. Development of a better relationship with the PLO was one of the important elements of such a policy. Before the close of 1973, the Soviets had moved closer to PLO's declared objectives. According to the Joint communique which was issued after the visit of Josip Tito, the Soviets declared that the lawful national rights of the Palestinian Refugees must be implemented as a part of the peace settlement.⁵⁰ Three days later Arafat himself was in Moscow, on the invitation of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, from 19-26 November 1973, for discussions about the future of Palestinians.⁵¹

The Soviet leadership suggested to the PLO delegation that the PLO should participate in the Geneva Peace Conference. Although the USSR described the PLO as "the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people",⁵² the official recognition was still not granted.

Thus, between 1970 and 1973, much water had flown down the Nile as well as Volga. With the increased degree of American Egyptian rapprochement, the Soviet Union realised the importance of the PLO in the Arab struggle against Israel. Consequently with each visit to Moscow, Arafat succeeded in elevating PLO's position in the Soviet policy vis-a-vis the Middle East.

50 The text of the Communique may be found in Pravda, 16 November 1973. Tr.in Daily Review, vol.XIX, no.226, (4907). For comments on the visit, see Irina Trofimova, "Mutual Trust and Understanding", New Times, no.47, (1973), pp.4-5.

51 Galia Golan, op.cit, no.28, p.140.

52 Ibid.

CHAPTER - IV

SOVIET POLICY TOWARDS THE PLO: 1973 (OCTOBER WAR) - 1980

The October War was not the Palestinians' War. It was, however, to be followed by the most remarkable upsurge in the Palestinians' fortunes since they were driven out of their homes in 1948.

As the American-Egyptian rapprochement increased, the Soviet Union, in order to show considerable benefits the Arabs could get from the continued collaboration with the USSR, gave a fresh leash of support to the PLO. Besides attempting to rebuild the anti-imperialist Arab unity,¹ which had reached its zenith during the October War,² the Soviet Union geared its policy in the Middle East with the PLO as the corner stone.

- 1 See Pravda, 27 November 1973. Tr. in Current Digest of Soviet Press (hereafter CDSP), vol.25, no.48. Also Pravda, 4 December 1973. Tr. in CDSP, vol.25, no.49, p.18.
- 2 The War brought about for the first time an anti-imperialist Arab Unity, which the Soviets had been advocating for long. Not only had Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Kuwait and Morocco actually employed their forces against Israel, but even the most conservative states, and one time allies of the US, like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had declared an oil embargo against the US. Even a small state like Bahrain had ordered the US to get out of the naval base, which the former had granted. See Georgi Mirsky, "The Middle East: New Factors", New Times, no.48, 1973, p.18.

Accordingly, the Soviet Union sought to demonstrate the significance of the PLO in any Arab-Israeli settlement. It began to insist that any political resolution to the conflict must include the 'fulfilment of the national legitimate rights of the Palestinians'.³ This clearly implied that some form of Palestinian sovereignty was needed to be established in Gaza Strip and West Bank, after the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories. After the visit of the PLO delegation to the USSR in October 1973, Hawatmeh, one of the delegates and leader of the PDFLP, said that the visit "represented a marked development in the Soviet policy on the Palestinian issue." He also clarified that the "legitimate national rights of Palestinians" (referred to in the communique at the end of the visit) had been asserted by them as their "absolute right to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip."⁴ The Soviet media even commented that after the Israeli withdrawal Israel would be ensured of a lasting peace founded on the recognition of the State of Israel by its Arab neighbours.⁵

3 Galia Golan, Yom Kippur and After (London, 1977), pp.139-40.

4 Ibid, p.141. Also see, George Habbash's statement in Journal of Palestine Studies, vol.III, no.3, 1974, p.202.

5 See Georgi Mirsky, "The Middle East: New Factors", New Times, no.48, 1973, p.18.

At the same time, the Soviet Union assisted the PLO in its efforts to attain political significance when the Soviet Government made the first official statement in support of the PLO's demand for the recognition of Palestinians as a 'national entity'.⁶

These unprecedented Soviet support for the Palestinians helped enhance the status of the PLO at the Algiers Summit (1973) and it recognised the PLO as the "sole representative of Palestinian people."⁷ The recognition of the PLO by the Arab Summit led to a still greater support by the Soviet Union. On 23 December 1973 Andrei Gromyko, the Foreign Minister of the USSR and Co-Chairman of the Geneva Peace Conference declared at the opening session of the Conference: "the problem of Palestine cannot be examined and decided without the participation of the representatives of the Arab people of Palestine."⁸ This was a clear-cut demand for PLO's participation in the conference and thus in settlement of the Palestinian Problem.

6 See TASS release, 15 November 1973. Tr. in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (hereafter FBIS), III, 16 November 1973.

7 V. Shelepin, "The Arab Summit", New Times, no.49, 1973, p.8.

8 Pravda, 22 December 1973. Tr. in Daily Review, vol.XIX, no.251 (4932), 24 December 1973. Mikhail Fyodorov, "The First Step", New Times, no.52, 1973, p.11. For comments on the Conference, see "Geneva: Preparation for the Conference is Over", Izvestia, 20 December 1973. Tr. in Daily Review, vol.XIX, no.250 (4931), 21 December 1973.

Gromyko met Arafat twice in March 1974. During these meetings, sources closer to Palestinians claim that, the Soviet Union promised to recognize the Palestinian state on West Bank and Gaza Strip, as soon as it might be established and that no part of the Palestine would be returned to Jordan.

Later the PLO was recognised by the conference of Muslim States at Lahore in February 1974.

Following the Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement signed on 31 May 1974,⁹ the Palestine National Council (PNC) met in Cairo to determine the future of Palestinian movement. After a great deal of debate, the PNC worked out a ten-point programme, not all of which were to the Soviet liking.¹⁰

The Programme rejected participation in the Geneva Peace Conference due to the inclusion of UN Resolution No.242, and declared that until it (the Geneva Conference) dealt with the Palestinian Arab problem as more than mere

9 For a Soviet view on the agreement, see Dmitry Volsky, "Step Towards Settlement", New Times, no.23, 1974, pp.8-9.

10 A report of the meeting and the programme may be found in Middle East Monitor, vol.4, no.13, 1974, pp.3-4. For the Soviet view of the programme, see Victor Bukharov, "Palestine National Council Session", New Times, no.25, 1974, pp.12-13.

"refugee problem" and resolved that the PLO would continue its struggle "by all means, foremost of which is armed struggle, to liberate Palestinian Lands."

The PLO had earlier rejected participation in the Peace Conference on two grounds. One, that the participation would automatically be interpreted as a 'de-facto' recognition of the State of Israel and as such, would amount to betrayal of the Palestinian national cause.¹¹ Second, the Geneva Peace Conference had been convened under the provisions of UN Resolution No.338 (1973) and one of the provisions of this resolution had entrusted the Conference the task of implementing UN Resolution No.242,¹² which in the first place had never been accepted by the PLO.¹³

The Soviet Union exhorted the guerrilla organizations to unify and rebuked them indirectly for rejecting participation in the Geneva Peace Conference. At the same time, the PLO was praised for admitting Palestine National Front (PNF) representatives in the PLO executive.¹⁴ This,

11 For details see Galia Golan, "The Soviet Union and the PLO", Adelphi Papers, no.131, London, 1976, pp.10-15.

12 See Appendix II.

13 See New Times, no.32, 1974, p.11.

14 See, Victor Bukharov, "Palestine National Council Session", op.cit, p.13.

according to the Soviet Union, served as an excellent example of the National Front tactics, the Soviet leaders had been urging on Arab world.¹⁵

During Nixon's visit to Moscow in June 1974, once again the role of Palestinians in a peace settlement was accepted by both the US and the USSR. The joint communique¹⁶ issued at the end of the visit stated: "of a just and lasting peace settlement in which should be taken into account the legitimate interests of all peoples in the Middle East, including the Palestinian people".¹⁷

When the Arab League Defence Council met in July to deal with the Israeli attacks on Lebanon, the Soviet Union hailed the Arab solidarity and once again underlined its support for the Arab cause.¹⁸ At the same time the Soviet Union continued its attempts to persuade the PLO to participate in the Geneva Peace Conference with a renewed vigour. Now the USSR declared openly that it should do so with the goal of creating a Palestinian Arab state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.¹⁹

15 See, Kerim Mroue, "Use the Opportunity of the New Situation in the Middle East", World Marxist Review, vol.17, no.3, p.92.

16 Text of the Joint Communique may be found in New Times, no.28, 1974, pp.21-32.

17 Ibid., p.23.

18 See Georgi Shmelyov, "Solidarity the Keynote", New Times, no.28, 1974, p.10.

19 See, Izvestia, 9 July 1974. Tr. in CDSP, vol.26, no.27, p.21.

Nevertheless, with further deterioration of Soviet-Egyptian relations in July, the Soviet strategy of encouraging anti-Western trends in the Middle East reached new heights when Yasser Arafat was invited to Moscow as the guest of the CPSU and the USSR Government. The delegation which arrived at Moscow on 30 July, had meeting with the officials of CPSU and Soviet foreign Ministry.²⁰ During the talks, though the Soviet Union did not recognise the PLO as 'the sole legitimate representative of the people of Palestine' in an unambiguous terms, it did support the participation of the PLO in the Geneva Peace Conference on an equal basis with other participants. It "noted with satisfaction the importance of the decisions taken at the conference of heads of Arab states in Algiers (November 1973) and the conference of Muslim States in Lahore (February 1974) on the recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Arab People of Palestine". (my emphasis).²¹ In this statement the Soviet Union thus drew yet closer to a full recognition of the PLO. So much so that it agreed to the opening of a PLO mission in Moscow.²²

20 New Times, no.32, 1974, p.10.

21 See the TASS release, at the end of the visit, of 3 August 1974. Pravda, 4 August 1974. Tr. in CDSP, vol.26, no.30, p.5.

22 Ibid. Also New Times, no.32, 1974, p.10.

However, the strongest official support hitherto, came in October when Brezhnev openly called for a 'national home' for the Palestinians.²³ Nevertheless the Soviet leadership underlined that a complete and final settlement to the Middle East Crisis could be achieved only within the framework of Geneva Peace Conference.²⁴

Despite all these supports the Soviet Union was not ready to commit itself in unambiguous terms on the question of PLO's recognition as the 'Sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians', unless there was a clear consensus among the Arab States. It was only after the Rabat Conference of October 1974²⁵ that the Soviet Union supported the UN General Assembly Resolution No.3236, which recognised the Palestinian problem as a political and national one; it also accorded tacit recognition to the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.²⁶ The Soviet Union also claimed that the Rabat decision was a proof of growing anti-imperialist Arabs unity -- the development, the Soviet Union had long desired.²⁷

23 Pravda, 12 October 1974. Tr. in News and Views From the Soviet Union (hereafter NVSU), vol. XXXIII, no. 240, 13 October 1974.

24 See "Fruitful Talks", New Times, no. 43, 1974, p. 17.

25 For Soviet View on Rabat Conference, see Dmitry Volsky, "After the Rabat Meeting", New Times, no. 45, 1974, pp. 10-11.

26 For details, see Surendra Bhutani, Hope and Despair (New Delhi, 1980), pp. 164-66 for Soviet view on the UN Resolution, see A. Rykunin, "Big Victory for Palestinian Patriots", New Times, no. 48, 1974, pp. 16-17.

27 See Dmitry Volsky, "After the Rabat Meeting", op.cit.

With the PLO prestige on the upswing in the Arab world after the Rabat Conference and with Arafat's appearance at the UN, the Soviet leadership did not lag behind in giving what was due to the PLO. When Arafat visited Moscow on 25-30 November 1979, he for the first time officially met the Prime Minister Kosygin,²⁸ while the Soviet media gave a great deal of emphasis on the visit as also on the political achievements of the PLO.²⁹ The Joint communique issued at the end of the visit, pledged Soviet Union's continued support for "the struggle of the Arab people of Palestine for their inalienable, rights to self determination and creation of their own national home upto the formation of their statehood".³⁰ Thus it endorsed both the Rabat decisions and the UN General Assembly Resolution No.3236.

Throughout 1975, the PLO remained a centre of attention at the UN. These discussions at the UN in which the Palestinian entity was recognised by the international community, served to highlight the Soviet achievement of emphasising the Palestinian issue as the heart of the Middle East Conflict.

28 New Times, no.49, 1974, p.2 & pp.10-11.

29 See, A Rykunin, "Big Victory for Palestinian Patriots", op.cit.

30 For details of the visit and excerpts of the Joint Communique, see, NVSU, vol.XXXIII, no.279, 3 December 1974, pp.5-7.

When Kissinger failed in March 1975 to achieve a US sponsored Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement, the Soviet leadership stepped forward and took the diplomatic initiative. Several Arab leaders were invited to Moscow for discussions on peace possibilities. Kosygin himself made a trip to Libya and Tunisia in May.³¹ The Soviet Union called for the resumption of the Geneva Peace Conference to work out a settlement that would secure a total withdrawal of the Israeli forces from all Arab territory occupied in the 1967 war, establish a Palestinian state and guarantee the right to existence to all states in the Middle East - including Israel.³²

However, the lack of Arab unity, exacerbated by increased conflict between Syria and Iraq, hampered a common Arab stand. Hence the Soviet initiatives were no more successful than those of the U.S.

Between 28 April and 4 May 1975, Arafat led yet another delegation to Moscow.³³ During the visit, the

USSR was reported to have pressed for a formal declaration

31 For the reports of visits of the Arab Leaders to Moscow in April and Kosygin's visit to Libya and Tunisia in May, see various issues of New Times from April to May 1975 for Pravda's report on Soviet Arab Contacts (29 April 1975), see NVSU, vol.XXXIV, no.103, 30 April 1975, pp.3-4.

32 See, V.P. Yakunin, "USSR - Consistent Champion of Peace and Security in Asia", Soviet Review, vol.XIII, no.16, p.33. Pravda, 31 March 1975. Tr. in NVSU, vol.XXXIV, no.78, 1 April 1975, pp.5-6. O.Alov, "Wanted: A Genuine Mid-East Settlement", New Times, no.14, 1975, pp.8-9.

33 NVSU, vol.XXXIV, no.104, 1 May 1975, pp.2-3.

by the PLO to support a Palestinian state with the inclusion of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as for a public declaration by the PLO of the acceptance and recognition of the State of Israel within its pre-1967 borders.³⁴ If the communique issued at the end of the visit is any indication no agreement was reached in this regard.³⁵ Nonetheless, the communique did indicate that the Soviet leadership succeeded in convincing the PLO of the need to participate in the Geneva Conference. The communique stated:

The two sides stressed the importance of the participation of Arab people, with equal rights with other interested sides in an effort toward a Middle East settlement, a Geneva Peace Conference included.³⁶

Despite all its efforts, the Soviet Union was unable to reconvene Geneva Conference mainly on two accounts. The ever-increasing gap among different Arab regimes as well as between the Arabs and Israel made it a remote possibility.

When the US sponsored Egyptian-Israeli disengagement -
agreement was finally signed in September 1975 along with

34 Afro-Asian Affairs, London, no.11, 16 June 1975.

35 Text of the Communique may be found in NVSU, vol. XXXIV, no.107, 6 May 1975, pp.2-3.

36 Ibid., p.2.

other Arab States, the USSR sharply reacted against it.³⁷ Soon the Palestinian question once again came to fore at the UN. The Soviet Union, this time went one step further in its support for the PLO and it linked the convening of the Geneva Conference with the UN Resolution No.3236, in addition to Resolution No.338.³⁸ The Soviet leadership, which had always considered the Geneva Conference as the most suitable framework for resolving the Middle East Crisis, insisted that the PLO be an equal partner in the conference and this could be achieved only if the basis for discussions was UN Resolution No.3236.

Accordingly, it was necessary for the success of Soviet initiatives that the PLO granted a 'de facto' recognition to Israel, even if it was in the most indirect manner. This was vital since the Soviet Union has always stressed its willingness to participate in any international forum for a peaceful settlement of the Middle East Crisis and while supporting the Arabs, it wanted that Israel's existence was not questioned in the overall settlement.³⁹

37 For the Soviet view on the agreement, see Yuri Potomov, "Who is Undermining Arabs Unity", New Times, no.45, 1975, pp.14-15.

38 See Galia Golan, op.cit, no.11, p.12.

39 See Yaacov Ro'i, "The Soviet Attitude to the Existence of Israel", in Yaacov Ro'i (ed), Limits to Power (London, 1979), pp.232-53.

Against this background, Arafat was once again in Moscow from 25-30 November 1975.⁴⁰ Arafat expressed his support for the Soviet initiatives to reconvene the Geneva Peace Conference.⁴¹ The Communique issued at the end of the visit⁴² confirmed, on one hand, the Soviet support for Palestinians' right to fulfil their legitimate national rights on Palestinian territory, and on the other reiterated the PLO's stand that the statement should not be interpreted as the recognition of Israel. The two sides still had divergent views, although the growing convergence of views was also marked. It appeared that the PLO was moving closer towards the Soviet view of peace settlement, while the Soviets were treating the PLO as a reckoning factor in the Middle East settlement.

Arafat clarified the PLO's position in a Press Conference. He declared that the Palestinians' agreement to participate in the Geneva Peace Conference was based on International law as defined in the UN Resolution No.3236.⁴³

40 NVSU, vol.XXXIV, no.274, 26 November 1975, p.11. Also see report on the visit in New Times, no.49, 1975, pp.10-11.

41 See NVSU, vol.XXXIV, no.277, 29 November 1975, p.6.

42 Text of the Communique may be found in NVSU, vol.XXXIV, no.278, 30 November 1975, pp.4-5.

43 NVSU, vol.XXXIV, no.277, 29 November 1975, p.6.

The Lebanon crisis in 1976 introduced a new factor, complicating the overall situation in the Middle East. The subtle tactics employed by Israel and its Western supporters in undermining the Arab countries' unity of action, including their efforts to defend the Palestinians, was a characteristic aspect of the Lebanon crisis. As a result, some Arab regimes went back on their commitments to strengthen Arabs unity, for the sake of short-term advantages and against fundamental national interests.

The Soviet Union remained consistent in its approach and supported the leftist elements in Lebanon, including the PLO. It criticised the 'right' for undertaking provocations against the progressive elements and for causing a civil war with the agreement and support of Arabs reactionary regimes and US imperialism. The Soviet media stressed in particular, the role of Palestinian Organisations in the war.⁴⁴ When the Syrians intervened and attempted a cease-fire, which led to a conflict between Syria and the Palestinians, the Soviet Union, though still stood by the Palestinians, was consistent in its approach

44 See Alexander Ignatov, "Why the Shooting in Beirut", New Times, no.30, 1975, pp.25-27.

when it called for an anti-imperialist Arab unity⁴⁵ and in fact, criticised the Syrian role in Lebanon.⁴⁶

However, the intra-Arab rivalry did not come in the way of ever-growing Soviet-PLO relationship. The PLO opened an office in Moscow on 22 June 1976. The opening of the office came at the time when King Hussein of Jordan was on a visit to the USSR (17-28 June 1976). The Soviets, though interested in strengthening ties with Jordan, were not prepared to weaken their relations with the PLO. The PLO office in Moscow handled among other things, Palestinian students in Soviet Universities and other vocational scholars, and received a number of grants for studies in the USSR.⁴⁷

The Soviet Union, which stood for the Arab Unity on anti-imperialist lines, wanted to see an end to the fighting in Lebanon. Despite its reservations and doubts, the Soviet leadership thus welcomed the decisions on

45 See O. Alov, "Why the Aggravation of the Crisis in Lebanon", New Times, no.42, 1976, pp.8-9.

46 See statement of Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee in Pravda, 26 August 1976. Tr. in NVSU, vol.XXXV, no.203, 27 August 1976, pp.4-5. Also Pravda, 27 August 1976. Tr. in CDSP, vil.28, no.33, p.6.

47 Radio Moscow, 29 December 1976. Cited in FBIS, III, 30 December 1976.

Lebanon taken by Arab Summit conference convened at Riyadh and Cairo in October 1976.⁴⁸

In the aftermath of the Lebanese crisis, the Soviet leadership renewed its interest in an Arab-Israeli peace settlement.⁴⁹ On 2 October 1976, it presented a "Proposal from the Soviet Union on a settlement in the Middle-East and on Geneva Conference" to the governments of the US, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Israel and the PLO leadership.⁵⁰ The following were the main proposals for the consideration of the Conference:

- i The withdrawal of Israeli troops from all Arab territories occupied in 1967;
- ii The exercise of inalienable rights by the Arab people of Palestine, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of their own state;
- iii The ensurance of the right to independent existence and security for all states directly participating in the conflict, -- the Arabs states neighbouring with Israel on one hand, and the state of Israel on the other -- with appropriate international guarantees offered to them; and
- iv Stoppage of the state of war between concerned Arab countries and Israel.⁵¹

48 For Soviet view of these conferences. See Alexi Prignetov, "Lebanon: First Steps towards Settlement", New Times, no.44, 1976, pp.14-15. See Brezhnev's speech in the CPSU Central Committee meeting on 25 October 1976 in Pravda, 26 October 1976. Tr. in CDSP, vo..28, no.43, p.9. Y. Tsaplin, "Teamed up", New Times, no.48, 1976, p.28.

49 See Oleg Alov, "Middle East the Diplomatic Front", New Times, no.47, 1976, pp.12-13.

50 Text of the proposal may be found in NVSU, vol.XXXV, no.23, 2 October 1976, pp.2-5.

51 Ibid., p.4.

Referring to the PLO's role, the proposal stressed its importance in most unequivocal terms:

Beyond a doubt the Palestine Liberation Organisation must take part in the work of the conference on an equal footing from the very outset.⁵²

Further, the Soviet Union suggested that the conference be held in two stages:

At the first, preparatory stage, the agenda of the conference could be finalised and the procedures of considering the concrete aspects of a settlement could be determined. At the second basic stage, the conference could concentrate on hammering out substantial understandings. The conference should culminate in the adoption of a final document (or documents) of a contractual character.⁵³

Moreover, during the 31st Session of the UN General Assembly, held from 31 September-22 December 1976, the Soviet Union once again came out in support of the resumption of the Geneva Peace Conference, and declared that the PLO should be a full participant, the Assembly passed a resolution by an overwhelming majority of votes

52 NVSU, vol.XXXV, no.234, 2 October 1976, p.4.

53 Y. Dmitriyev, "Middle East: Way to Peaceful Settlement", International Affairs (Moscow), no.3, 1977, p.50.

on resuming the Geneva Peace Conference before the end of March 1977,⁵⁴ while it favoured the PLO's participation in the conference.⁵⁵ The only countries who voted against these resolutions were the USA and Israel.⁵⁶ One of the main reasons for their opposition was Israel's refusal to have any dealings with the PLO, a stand which was supported by the USA. Hence it was no surprise that the Geneva Peace Conference could not resume its work.

The Soviet Union, however, was not deterred by the US-Israeli posture. The joint Soviet-Egyptian statement of 1977 referred to the right of the Palestinians "to establish their own independent state, to return to their homes and to receive compensation in accordance with the UN decisions".⁵⁷ It may appear that the inclusion of the latter two demands in the statement was influenced by President Carter's declaration on 26 May 1977 that the Palestinians had a right to be compensated for losses that they have suffered".⁵⁸ But the fact remains that the Soviets continued to display commitment to the PLO.

54 See General Assembly Resolution No.31/62.

55 See General Assembly Resolution No.31/61.

56 V. Vasilyev, "Soviet Contribution to Peace", International Affairs (Moscow), no.4, 1977, p.16.

57 Y. Tyunkov, "USSR-Egypt: Displaying Good will", New Times, no.25, 1977, p.11.

58 Department of State Bulletin, 20 June 1977, p.654.

It may be pertinent to point out here that the Arab world in general considered the USSR as a powerful source to sustain its struggle against Israel. However, the conservative Arab regimes propagated the idea that the USSR is able to prevent any political settlement that would be made without its participation on one hand and that it might contribute extensively towards a settlement by influencing Syria and the PLO.

To counter these propaganda, the Soviet Union signed a Joint Statement with the USA on the Middle East crisis on 1 October 1977.⁵⁹ The statement called for a comprehensive Middle East settlement "incorporating all parties concerned and all questions" including such issues as "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the territories occupied in 1967 conflict", the resolution of the Palestinian question including ensuring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, termination of the state of war and establishment of normal peaceful relations". Inter alia, it called for convening of the Geneva Conference, not later than December 1977, "with participation in its work of the representatives of all the parties involved in the conflict including those of the Palestinian People".

59 The text of the Soviet American Statement on the Middle East may be found in the Appendix III. For the analysis of the Statement by a Soviet Commentator, see Oleg Alov, "The Objective: Geneva", New Times, no.43, 1977, pp.8-9.

It may be pointed out here that for the first time the US agreed that securing "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian" was one of the key issues of the Middle-East crisis. Moreover, its emphasis on the Geneva conference unquestionably made it more difficult for Israel to ignore the Conference or even the PLO.

Meanwhile Sadat either on his own or under instructions from the US decided to turn to Israel directly for a settlement. Since the USSR's priority to the PLO's role in the settlement and Israel's refusal to negotiate with "an organisation", continued the deadlock in the Middle East. Sadat had to compromise on the issue, thereby abandoning the PLO.

Sadat's visit to Israel from 19-21 November 1977 was an attempt to restore the central role to Egypt and the Israel in the Middle East Crisis. The Egyptian-Israeli negotiations and subsequent agreements were sharply criticised by the USSR.⁶⁰

The USSR rightly stressed in particular the Palestine problem, its crucial role in the Middle East conflict and

⁶⁰ See, Yuri Potomov, "President Sadat's Canossa", New Times, no.49, 1977, pp.8-9.

the fact that without a solution of this problem, there would be no end to the conflict. Thus the Soviets accorded the PLO a crucial role. Sadat's volte-face' indeed added a sense of urgency in Soviet policy to the PLO.

It may not be out of context to point out that the Soviet Union was not the only one to oppose Sadat's betrayal of Palestinian national cause. There were several Arab regimes too and the USSR conducted consultations with the leading representatives of Iraq, Syria and Libya and with the PLO leadership to find an alternative to Sadat's moves.

Yasser Arafat visited the USSR as head of a PLO delegation and was received by Brezhnev on 9 March 1978.⁶¹ During their meeting Brezhnev underlined that the Soviet Union invariably sided with the just cause of the Arab people of Palestine, who staunchly struggle for their freedom and independence. He assured the PLO that in this just struggle, the Palestine people headed by the Palestine Liberation Organisation.....can always count on the support of the Soviet Union.⁶²

61 New Times, no.12, 1978, p.8.

62 Pravda, 10 March 1978. Tr. in Daily Review, vol.XXIV, no.56, (5921), 10 March 1978.

Despite its all out support for the PLO, the Soviet Union, however, could do little to change the situation in the Middle East. It continued to advocate a political settlement by reconvening the Geneva Conference. The Soviets viewed that such a stance was opposed by the conservative Arab regimes, who were against any agreement and hostile to the concept of peace on any terms.⁶³

After the US sponsored Camp David agreement was signed between Egypt and Israel on 17 September 1978,⁶⁴ the Soviet policy to the PLO became even more forthright. When Arafat visited the USSR from 29 October-1 November 1978,⁶⁵ the statement at the end of the visit was termed for the first time as a "Joint Communiqué". The Joint Communiqué welcomed the proposed Baghdad Conference of Arab States against such agreements as the Camp David, while the agreement itself was "firmly condemned". The joint communiqué stated:

considering the obtaining situation, they (the USSR & the PLO - my addition) are profoundly convinced that the task of rallying and activating all forces opposed to anti-Arab separate deals is of special moment. In this connection the parties welcomed the convening in Baghdad of a Summit Conference of Arab States and the PLO.⁶⁶

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- 63 See comments by O. Alov, "The Middle East needs Peace", International Affairs (Moscow), no.5, 1978, pp.83-86.
- 64 For Soviet comment on the Camp David agreement, see Dmitry Voloky, "Secrets of Camp David", New Times, no.38, 1978, pp.8-9.
- 65 New Times, no.45, 1978, p.3.
- 66 Cited in Dmitry Voloky, "Duel of Tendencies", New Times, no.46, 1978, p.10.

On the question of Palestine problem the joint communique favoured: ".....the implementation of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian Arab people, including the right to self-determination and for the creation of a state of its own, and also its right to return to its hearths in conformity with existing UN resolutions. This requires the collective efforts of all the interested parties with the equal participation in them of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine". Interestingly enough, it even came out in support of PLO's stakes in Lebanon by stressing on "the observation of the legitimate interests of the Palestine resistance movement in Lebanon".⁶⁷

When Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty was actually signed on 26 March 1979, envisaging an autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the USSR vehemently criticised it and termed it as a conspiracy against Arab population of Palestine.⁶⁸ Z. Karkabi, Secretary, Central Committee, Communist Party of Israel, in an article in International Affairs commented:

67 Text of the Joint Communique may be found in Pravda, 2 November 1978. Tr. in Daily Review, vol. XXIV, no. 216 (6086), 2 November 1978. Also NVSU, vol. XXXVII, no. 255, 2 November 1978, pp. 3-5.

68 See Dmitry Volsky, "Dangerous Policy", New Times, no. 38, 1979, p. 15. Vladimir Kopin, "Palestinians Against Tel-Aviv Brand of Autonomy", New Times, no. 13, 1979, pp. 26-27. Yuri Potomov, "Peace Treaty or Military Compacts", New Times, no. 14, 1979, pp. 4-5.

The 'self-government' or 'autonomy' on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, that were agreed on at the Camp David are nothing more than a smoke screen concealing the true intentions of the Israeli government, which is nurturing plans for annexation.⁶⁹

At the summit meeting of Brezhnev and Carter, held in Vienna from 15-18 June no agreement on the question of Middle East could be reached mainly because Brezhnev did not agree to the US proposal of supporting the separate treaty between Israel and Egypt. Besides, the Soviet side gave the PLO and the Palestine problem central role in the settlement of the Middle East conflict, while US was opposed to it. On the other hand, it demanded that "All the lands captured by Israel from the Arabs must be returned, the Palestine Arab people must be granted the opportunity to create its own, if only small, independent state".⁷⁰

A week before the Tenth Arab Summit, Arafat was once again in Moscow from 12-14 November 1979. The apparent purpose of the visit was to discuss the matters, the conference was going to deal with. In the "Joint Communiqué"

69 Zahi Karkabi, "Israel: The Fruits of a Pernicious Policy", International Affairs (Moscow), no.5, 1979, p.32.

70 See Gromyko's comments on the Vienna Summit in Pravda 26 June 1979. Tr. in Daily Review, vol.XXV, no.123 (6249), 26 June 1979, p.8. The Joint US-USSR Communiqué may be found in Pravda, 19 June 1979. Tr. in Daily Review, vol.XXV, no.118 (6244), 19 June 1979. Also see, Mikhail Fyodorov & Karen Karagezyan, "A Milestone in Detente", NewTimes, no.26, 1979, pp.4-6.

on the visit Arafat expressed "deep felt gratitude for" disinterested support and assistance" from the Soviet Union.

The Communique called for:

- 1) a full and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops from all Arab, including Palestinian territories occupied by it in 1967;
- 2) The implementation of the inalienable national rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including its right to self-determination and the establishment of its own independent state;
- 3) and also the right of Palestinians to return to their home.⁷¹

This communique is important in more than way. First, it called for "unconditional" withdrawal of Israeli troops to pre-1967 borders, without making it conditional on PLO's promises to recognise the state of Israel. Second, it included "Palestinian territories" which obviously stressed Palestinian rights -- and not those of Jordanian and Egyptian -- on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Finally, the Palestine State was to be "independent", which explicitly meant no autonomous status within Israel or Jordan.

⁷¹ Text of the Communique may be found in Pravda, 15 November 1979. Tr. in Daily Review, vol. XXV, no. 233 (6349), 15 November 1979.

Thus by the end of 1979, the Soviet Union declared, in most unambiguous terms, its support for the PLO and its policies. This, however, was looked upon with disfavour, both by the conservative Arab regimes and the USA. They tried to isolate the PLO from the Soviet Union and simultaneously influence them through Arab regimes in the wake of Soviet action in Afghanistan. All trying to distract attention of the Arab world from the Arab-Israeli conflict to Afghanistan.

Although the PLO was not in an easy situation, since it had to take into account the positions of Saudi Arabia and other conservative Muslim States, it resisted the pressure so much so that it supported the Soviet action in Afghanistan.

The USSR on its part, however, continued to focus upon the Arab-Israeli conflict and its resolution. Gromyko visited Syria from 27-29 January 1980 and the 'joint statement' on the visit called for "a just and all embracing settlement in the Near East on the basis of complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from all the Arab territories occupied by them in 1967, including the eastern part of Jerusalem, and the implementation of the inalienable national rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including

their right to self-determination and setting up of their independent state, and also of the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes with the existing UN decisions".⁷²

The degree of seriousness with which the Soviets viewed the policy in the Middle East and towards the PLO in particular was highlighted by their collective endorsement by the Warsaw Pact countries. The Communique after the meeting of Political Consultative Committee of Warsaw Treaty Countries held in mid-May 1980 made a call for

all embracing Middle East political settlement with the direct participation of all interested sides, including the Arab Palestinian people in the person of its representative, the Palestine Liberation Organisation, on the basis of respect for the lawful interest of all states and peoples of the Middle East including Israel.

Such a settlement requires the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all Arab territories occupied in 1967, restoration of the right of the Arab people of Palestine to self determination, including the creation of its own independent state. Ensurance of the sovereignty and security of all states of that area. A political settlement in the Middle East also requires that no actions impeding the attainment

72 Pravda, 30 January 1980. Tr. in Daily Review, vol. XXVI, no.21 (6402), 30 January 1980. Also see Brezhnev's speech of 27 May 1980. Quoted in New Times, no.26, 1980, p.19.

of there aims be taken (as Israeli settlements) that no state should interfere in the internal affairs of the area's countries and peoples, should not try to instruct them what socio-economic system they should establish, should not make claims to encroach on their national interests.⁷³

Thus, by the end of 1980, the USSR advocated a political settlement of the Middle East conflict, it recognised the Israel's right to exist and UN Security Council Resolution No.242 and 338. It opposed Zionism and supported the PLO's right to struggle for an independent state. But at the same time condemned the use of terror as a means for it. And that, it viewed, the PLO as a bulwark against the US Imperialism in the Middle East and as an agency for social change in the region.

During this period (1973-80) the PLO's prestige was elevated at the international forums mainly due to initiatives taken by the Soviet Union. The PLO's demand for self-determination and an independent State was endorsed by no less a body than UN General Assembly.

73 Tass release in English, 15 May 1980. "Declaration of the Warsaw Treaty States". Reprinted in New Times, no.21, 1980, pp.26-32. The relevant material appears on pp.29-30.

The Soviet policy towards the PLO also had a refraining effect on the radical Palestinian Organisations. The PLO's acceptance to negotiate a settlement at Geneva Conference may be interpreted as their tacit recognition of Israel. On the other hand, there emerged a general trend among the Palestinians to shift away from the terrorism.

All this put together accorded PLO a crucial role in the Middle East Crisis -- against the background of intra-Arab politics on one hand, and ever increasing friendship between Egypt and Israel on the other. This could not have been possible but for the policies adopted by the USSR, from time to time, in the favour of Palestinian struggle for homeland.

CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSION

Soviet policy towards the PLO has over the years become an important indicator of Soviet involvement in the Arab world. The very process of evolution and development of Soviet policy towards the PLO during 1964-80, as we have studied, clearly underlines such a significant aspect of Soviet involvement in the Middle East.

We began our study by an analytical description of the central question, viz. the historical antecedents of the Palestinian problem. Such an exercise was considered essential as the PLO itself is an off-shoot of the Palestine problem and consequently the Soviet attitude towards it.

Hence, the backdrop of Soviet view of the Palestine problem is analysed in the following chapter. Here we have noted how Soviet view of the Palestine problem is marked by a subtle distinction between Zionism as a racial/sectarian movement and the legitimate aspirations of the Jewish settlers of Palestine; such a view which we have seen against the background of a characteristic Soviet

assessment of involvement and rivalry of the Western-Imperialist Powers in the Middle East.

It thus becomes logical to analyse early Soviet attitude towards Israel and the gathering storm over the Middle East as a mixture of anti-imperialism and concern for the rights of the Jewish settlers. The Arabs had not yet, till the beginning of the fifties, stirred enough to attract an involved Soviet attention, while a critical Soviet stance on the Zionism continued to be marked. With the rise of Nasser there was clear indication of Soviet involvement with the Arabs. Israel's growing links with the West and finally the Suez-War brought the Soviet Union completely on the side of the Arabs.

Soviet policy towards the Middle East thus became oriented on the Arab regimes and on their leading 'vanguard', Nasser's Egypt.

Hence, until 1964, Soviet attitude towards the Palestinian resistance movement was dove-tailed with Soviet policy towards Egypt and similar Arab regimes. Perhaps this was inevitable as Egypt and its Arab supporters themselves treated various Palestinian organisations as

their hand-maiden. When the Palestinians started asserting themselves after the formation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in 1964, the Soviet Union also began to take note of it. The intra-Arab politics and PLO's declared pro-Chinese stance, however, acted as a restraint on the Soviets in the initial phase.

We have noted here, as to how the very process of emergence of the PLO as a viable 'force' in the Arab world, particularly after its reorganisation in 1969, influenced Soviet policy towards it.

The next Chapter (Chapter III) focusses attention on Soviet policy during 1969-73. The PLO having succeeded in forging a broad Palestinian unity, was given considerable attention by the Soviets. Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, led the first PLO delegation to the USSR in February 1970 and the Soviet Union accepted, in principle, the Palestinian struggle as a form of national liberation movement and declared its support for it. We have pointed out here that although the official recognition of the PLO was complicated due to lack of unity among Arab regimes over the nature of the PLO, the Soviet Union began to regard it as a viable means to influence the Arab regimes. Moreover, the Soviet leadership

began to view it as a possible bulwark against the growing imperialist dominance in the Arab world.

The growing US-Egyptian rapprochement on one hand and ever increasing Sino-US detente on the other helped expedite the development of Soviet-PLO relationship. The Soviet leaders began to see in the PLO, despite its loosely federated character, an useful ally in their struggle against the American influence in the region. As a result of Soviet exodus from Egypt in 1972, the PLO assumed an added importance in the Soviet policy towards the Arab-Israel conflict and the PLO even started receiving Soviet arms and other forms of aid directly.

Nonetheless, as has been clearly pointed out, the official recognition of the PLO as 'the sole legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine' was granted only after the Rabat Summit of Arab States had done so in 1974. This clearly indicates the degree of importance the Soviet Union laid on the Arab solidarity on any issue -- including Palestine problem.

The totality of the Soviet Policy towards the PLO thus must be viewed against the background of the Arab politics, in general, and the process of transformation of

the PLO itself, in particular. When the Soviets viewed Arab politics in rather simplistic terms of 'progressive' and 'reactionary' regimes, the Palestinian problem was considerably subdued and consequently the Soviet policy towards it was kept in a low key.

Likewise, from mid-sixties onwards, when the Soviets began to view Arab politics as a complex, indeed nerve-raking interplay of various Arab forces and outside powers and when the PLO itself began to transform its character, the Soviet policy towards it consequently became more active.

One of the inherent difficulties, the Soviets were confronted with, was the fact that they had to operate their policy towards the PLO, an organised movement, within the system of Arab nation-state. Moreover, the PLO itself was not strictly considered a characteristic national liberation movement, primarily because of its total dependence on terrorism and commitment to the destruction of Israel.

Hence we find that the main contours of the Soviet policy emerged in its efforts to grope with these two peculiar inherent difficulties. To a very great extent the Soviet policy did succeed. It managed to help the PLO acquire a viable position within the Arab nation-state

system, where the PLO could no longer be treated simply as a pawn in the Arab politics. Moreover, it brought about this result without any loss in Soviet relations vis-a-vis the Arab states. Here it is worth pointing out that the Soviet policy towards the PLO was never a subject of serious controversies in the Soviet-Arab relations.

Likewise, Soviet policy managed to draw the PLO out of its pre-occupation with terrorism and to a stance where the PLO could accept the existence of Israel as a state. The totality of such a policy was seen in the PLO's acceptance to participate in a negotiated settlement of the Palestine problem under the UN auspices, a position which the Soviet Union has been traditionally taking in the Middle East conflict.

Finally, it does appear that the Soviet policy towards the PLO is an interesting example of the crisis management aspect of the Soviet foreign policy.

To sum up, one may conclude that Soviet policy towards the PLO is certainly an important indicator of Soviet attitude towards the Middle East crisis during 1964-80.

APPENDIX - I

U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 (1967),
22 November 1967.

Source: U.N. Monthly Chronicle, vol.IV, no.II (December 1967),
p.19.

The Security Council,

Expressing its continuing concern with the grave
situation in the Middle East;

Emphasizing the inadmissability of the acquisition
of territory by war and the need to work for a just and
lasting peace in which every State in the area can live
in security;

Emphasizing further that all Member States in their
acceptance of the Charter of the United Nations have
undertaken a commitment to act in accordance with Article 2
of the Charter;

1 Affirms that the fulfilment of Charter principles
requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in
the Middle East which should include the application of both
the following principles :

(1) Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from
territories occupied in the recent conflict;

(ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force;

2 Affirms further the necessity

(a) For guaranteeing freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area;

(b) For achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem;

(c) For guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every State in the area, through measures including the establishment of demilitarized zones;

3 Requests the Secretary-General to designate a Special Representative to proceed to the Middle East to establish and maintain contacts with the States concerned, in order to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement in accordance with the provisions and principles in this resolution;

4 Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on the progress of the efforts of the Special Representative as soon as possible.

APPENDIX - II

U.N. Security Council Resolution 338 (1973), 22 October 1973

Source: U.N. Monthly Chronicle, vol. X, no. 10 (November 1973), p. 30.

The Security Council,

1 Calls upon all parties to the present fighting to cease all firing and terminate all military activity immediately, no later than 12 hours after the moment of the adoption of this decision, in the positions they now occupy;

2 Calls upon the parties concerned to start immediately after the cease-fire the implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) in all of its parts;
(my emphasis)

3 Decides that, immediately and concurrently with the cease-fire, negotiations start between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East.

APPENDIX - III

Joint US-USSR Statement on the Middle East, 1 October 1977

Soviet text: TASS in English and Pravda, 2 October 1977.

Having exchanged views regarding the unsafe situation which remains in the Middle East, United States Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, A.A. Gromyko, have the following statements to make on behalf of their countries which are co-chairmen of the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East:

1 Both governments are convinced that vital interests of the peoples of this area as well as the interests of strengthening peace and international security in general urgently dictate the necessity of achieving as soon as possible a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This settlement should be comprehensive, incorporating all parties concerned and all specific questions of the settlement should be resolved, including such key issues as withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict; the resolution of the Palestinian question including such key issues as

withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict; the resolution of Palestinian question including insuring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people; termination of the state of war and establishment of normal peaceful relations on the basis of mutual recognition of the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

The two governments believe that, in addition to such measures for insuring the security of the borders within Israel and the neighbouring Arab states as the establishment of demilitarized zones and the agreed stationing in them of UN troops or observers, international guarantees of such borders as well as of the observance of the terms of the settlement can also be established, should be contracting parties so desire. The United States and the Soviet Union are ready to participate in these guarantees subject to their constitutional processes.

2 The United States and the Soviet Union believe that the only right and effective way for achieving a fundamental solution to all aspects of the Middle East problem in its entirety is negotiating within the framework of the Geneva Peace Conference, specially convened for these purposes, with participation in its work of the representatives of all

the parties involved in the conflict including those of the Palestinian people, and legal and contractual formalization of the decisions reached at the conference.

In their capacity as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference, the US and the USSR affirm their intention through joint efforts and in their contacts with the parties concerned to facilitate in every way the resumption of the work of the conference not later than December 1977. The co-chairmen note that there still exist several questions of a procedural and organizational nature which remain to be agreed upon by the participants to the conference.

3 Guided by the goal of achieving a just political settlement in the Middle East and of eliminating the explosive situation in this area of the world, the US and the USSR appeal to all the parties in the conflict to understand the necessity for careful consideration of each other's legitimate rights and interests and to demonstrate mutual readiness to act accordingly.

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