

# **BRITAIN, ISRAEL and ANGLO-JEWRY**

## **1949–1957**



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BRITAIN, ISRAEL AND ANGLO-  
JEWRY 1949–1957

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# BRITAIN, ISRAEL AND ANGLO- JEWRY 1949–1957

*NATAN ARIDAN*  
*Ben-Gurion University*  
*of the Negev*



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*Dedicated to my children, Nadav, Yael and Ohad*





# Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xii
<i>Introduction</i>	xiv
1 Playing the trump card: the protracted recognition of Israel, January 1949–April 1950	1
2 Cutting and retying the umbilical cord: the sterling balances and the nurturing of bilateral ties, 1949–1954	29
3 Israel’s place in British strategic planning, 1949–1951	53
4 Israel’s place in British defence policy in the shadow of the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, 1951–1954	86
5 ‘Nibbling at the edges’: border tensions and the search for an interim Arab-Israeli settlement	115
6 Adversaries and reluctant partners: the Sinai-Suez Crisis 1956–1957, a retrospective	148
7 Defining the relationship: Anglo-Jewry and Israel	187
Conclusion	231
<i>Bibliography</i>	234
<i>Index</i>	261

## Illustrations

1.1	Mordechai Eliash boards the plane for Britain to take up his post as Minister to the Court of St James's, April 1949	12
1.2	Walter Eytan, Director-General of the MFA	13
1.3	Michael Comay, Director of the British Division, MFA	14
1.4	Eliahu Elath, Israeli Ambassador to the Court of St James's	21
2.1	First meeting of the Anglo-Israeli financial talks, Tel-Aviv, July 1949	32
2.2	Ian Mikardo, MP, with Nathan Jackson of <i>Va'ad Hapoel</i> and Moshe Rosette, Secretary of the Knesset, December 1952	47
3.1	Emanuel Shinwell, Minister of Defence	64
3.2	Israeli and British flags at Haifa, during the visit of Admiral Sir John Edelsten, June 1950	67
3.3	British Minister to Israel, Sir Knox Helm ( <i>left</i> ) with Reuven Shiloah, Director of the Mossad ( <i>right</i> ), May 1951	73
4.1	Lord Mountbatten (Commander of the British Mediterranean Fleet), Israeli Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett, and Sir Francis Evans (British Minister to Israel), July 1952	88
4.2	Ambassador Nicholls presenting his credentials to President Yitzhak Ben Zvi, November 1954	90
6.1	Moshe Sharett, British Foreign Minister, Selwyn Lloyd and Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion during Lloyd's 21-hour visit to Israel, March 1955	155
7.1	Selig Brodetsky, President of the Board of Deputies of British	192

Jews, 1939–1953

7.2	Dr. Israel Brodie, Chief Rabbi of Britain and the British Commonwealth	197
7.3	The Israeli flag being hoisted during the inauguration ceremony at the Israeli Legation, 18 Manchester Square, London, 29 January 1949 [note the torah scroll on the balcony]	201
7.4	Barnett Janner MP, Chairman of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland and President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews	208
7.5	Rehaveam Amir, Israeli Consul	208
7.6	Rosh Pina Jewish elementary day school in Edgware	213

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Natan Aridan  
Beer-Sheva  
April 2004

# Abbreviations

ADM	Admiralty
AIR	Ministry of Aviation
BT	Board of Trade
BW	Records of the British Council
AIA	Anglo-Israel Association
AJA	Anglo-Jewish Association
BGA	Ben-Gurion Archive
BGD	Ben-Gurion Diary
BIPO	British Institute of Public Opinion Polls
BMEO	British Middle East Office
BoD	Board of Deputies Archive
BoE	Bank of England Archive
CAB	Cabinet
CC	Cabinet Conclusions
CIGS	Chiefs of Imperial General Staff
CM	Cabinet Minute
CO	Colonial Office
COS	Chiefs of Staff
CP	Cabinet Paper
CZA	Central Zionist Archives
DCC	Defence Cabinet Committee
DEA	Department of External Affairs (Canada)
DEFE	Defence
DFPI	Documents on Foreign Policy of Israel
DPs	Displaced persons
EPC	Economic Policy Committee
FO	Foreign Office
<i>FRUS</i>	Foreign Relations of the United States
HO	Home Office
IAF	Israeli Air Force
IDF	Israel Defence Forces
IMDEA	Israel Military and Defence Establishment Archives
ISA	Israel State Archives
JC	<i>Jewish Chronicle</i>

JP	Joint Paper
JPA	Joint Palestine Appeal
JWPS	Joint Working Party Staff
MEC	Middle East Command
MEDO	Middle East Defense Organisation
MELF	Middle East Land Forces
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NA	National Archives (US)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEACC	Near East Arms Coordinating Committee
PCC	Palestine Conciliation Commission
POWE	Ministry of Power
PREM	Prime Minister's Office
PRO	Public Records Office
PZ	<i>Poale Zion</i>
RAF	Royal Air Force
SCUA	Suez Canal Users Association
T	Treasury
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNGAR	United Nations General Assembly Resolution
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WO	War Office
WZO	World Zionist Organization
ZF	Zionist Federation

# Introduction

This book examines the complex relations between Britain, Israel and Anglo-Jewry, which were directly affected by Britain's ambivalent policy towards the *Yishuv* and were later confronted with the ramifications of the establishment of the State of Israel. Britain, the 'former proprietor' was directly responsible for the birth of Israel, the 'successor state'. The relationship was described by British and Israeli policy makers as one between a 'foster mother' and a 'foster child'. The research covers the period from the armed clash between the Israeli and British air forces in January 1949, to Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Sinai in March 1957.

While Britain was reluctantly reconciled to the permanent existence of Israel, it sought to neutralize its 'nuisance potential' and endeavoured to retain its strategic bases, maintain regional stability, and to retain friendly relations with Arab states. Despite rare gestures, Britain was unreceptive to Israel's requests for arms and suggestions to participate in regional military arrangements. While British sanctions on Israel for non-compliance with its demands were commonplace, rewards for Israel's cooperation were non-existent.

Israel required a powerful ally to ensure its security. Notwithstanding its deep suspicions of British motives and policies, Israel grudgingly recognized that despite Britain's diminished global importance, as long as the US supported Britain and rejected its requests for a security alliance, Britain would remain the predominant power in the region. Britain's importance was augmented by London's prominence as the world's financial capital, it was the major arms supplier in the region, and exercised considerable influence on Arab states.

This book is the first detailed study on the subject and is based on the profusion of primary material culled from 24 public archives and 63 private paper collections in Israel, Britain and the United States, in addition to 35 personally-conducted interviews with contemporaneous decision makers and personalities.

Orna Almog, *Britain, Israel and the United States, 1955–1958*, is an important contribution focusing on the period leading up to Suez and beyond. However, there is scant reference to other influences on Anglo-Israeli relations, and Almog overlooks important available Israeli and British sources.<sup>1</sup> Ilan Pappé, *British Foreign Policy towards the Middle East Conflict: Britain and the Arab-Israel Conflict 1948–1951*, and Yoav Tenenbaum, unpublished Ph.D., *British Policy towards Israel the Arab-Israel Dispute, 1951–1954*, were the first to analyse Anglo-Israeli relations in the early period. In his eagerness to prove that Foreign Office officials were more disposed towards Israel than supposed, Tenenbaum overstates their influence on policy decisions and fails to differentiate between 'attitudes' and 'policy'.<sup>2</sup>

The works of David Deveraux, *The Formulation of British Defence Policy towards the Middle East, 1948–1956* and Michael Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied Contingency Plans, 1945–1954*, are most helpful in assessing British defence plans and requirements.<sup>3</sup> Neil Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy, 1948–1956*, and Avi Shlaim,

*Collusion Across the Jordan*, and *The Iron Wall*, are invaluable contributions to understanding diplomatic efforts to seek an Arab-Israeli settlement and of Britain's commitments to Jordan.<sup>4</sup>

Keith Kyle, *Suez*, is the most detailed study on the Suez crisis, but dispenses with important primary Israeli sources. Kelly and Gorst, *Whitehall and the Suez Crisis*, is essential for comprehending the role of the British Civil Service during the crisis. The edited volumes by Troen and Shemesh, *The Suez-Sinai Crisis: 1956 Retrospective & Reappraisal*, and Louis and Owen, *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Consequences*, combine scholarly articles with rare personal contemporary British, Israeli and French perspectives.<sup>5</sup> It is significant that two major academic contributions on the crisis were written by historians who had no direct access to primary documentation. Leon Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, remains the most significant contribution to this subject and Hugh Thomas, *The Suez Affair*, provides a succinct account of the crisis and cites unpublished testimonies of French policy makers.<sup>6</sup>

Gabriel Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett: Biography of a Political Moderate*, is a commanding study, shedding light on the factors that shaped Israeli foreign policy. Uri Bialer, *Between East and West: Israel's Foreign Policy Orientation 1948–1956*, and *Oil and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948–1963*, are definitive studies, which accurately emphasize the underlying 'internal dimension' on foreign-policy orientation. Mordechai Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza: Israel's Road to Suez and Back, 1955–1957* and *Challenge and Quarrel*, provide a unique personal and academic perspective on Israeli decision making.

Ilan Asia, *The Core of the Conflict: The Struggle for the Negev, 1947–1956*; Zach Levey, *Israel and the Western Powers, 1952–1960*; and Motti Golani, *Israel in Search of a War*, are helpful sources on Israel's attempts to thwart Anglo-American plans to truncate Israel's southern borders and on its preparations to launch a preventive war. Valuable assessments of Israel's strategy and policy are to be found in Zaki Shalom, *David Ben-Gurion, The State of Israel and the Arab World, 1949–1956*, and Moshe Shemesh, 'The Kadesh Operation and the Suez Campaign: The Middle Eastern Political Background, 1949–1956'.<sup>7</sup>

The subject of Anglo-Jewry's response to the emergence of the State of Israel is largely *terra incognita*, in contrast to published research before 1948 and after 1967. Conspicuous are the two most prominent and prolific scholars on Anglo-Jewry, David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841–1991*; *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, and Geoffrey Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics, and Modern British Jewry*. There is scant reference to Israel's impact on the community in either studies and Cesarani underemphasizes the *Jewish Chronicle's* importance as the forum for debate on the community's attitude to Israel.<sup>8</sup> Chaim Bermant, *The Cousinhood: The Anglo-Jewish Gentry* and *Troubled Eden: An Anatomy of British Jewry* are insightful studies on Anglo-Jewry but there is no evaluation on the cousinhood's relations with Israeli envoys.<sup>9</sup>

The structure adopted in this book is both chronological and thematic. The first chapter focuses on the diplomatic issues affecting Britain's with-holding of full recognition of Israel between January 1949 and April 1950, and the establishment of diplomatic relations. The second chapter discusses the negotiations to resolve outstanding fiscal issues, which were a prerequisite for establishing bilateral relations. The third and fourth chapters examine the formulation of foreign policy in Israel and Britain, and



Israel's response to Britain's proposed defence arrangements in the shadow of the on-going Anglo-Egyptian Negotiations.

The fifth chapter looks at the escalation of the border conflict and Israel's response to British attempts to impose a settlement. The sixth chapter examines Britain's fleeting collaboration with Israel, whose status underwent a metamorphosis from that of pariah to conspirator, then reverted back to its former status of pariah—all within the space of a week! It deals with Israel's attempts to extract guarantees before evacuating the Sinai and the Gaza Strip in March 1957. The seventh chapter examines the unique relationship between Anglo-Jewry and Israel.

## NOTES

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- 2 I.Pappè, *British Foreign Policy towards the Middle East Conflict: Britain and the Arab-Israel Conflict* (Oxford, 1985); Y.Tenembaum, 'British Policy towards Israel the Arab-Israel-Dispute, 1951–1954', Ph.D. [unpublished] (Oxford, 1991).
- 3 D.Deveraux, *The Formulation of British Defence Policy towards the Middle East, 1948–1956* (Oxford, 1990); M.Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied Contingency Plans, 1945–1954* (London, 1997).
- 4 N.Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy* Vol. 3: *The United Nations, the Great Powers and Middle East Peacemaking, 1948–1954* (London, 1997); *Futile Diplomacy* Vol. 4: *Operation Alpha and the Failure of Anglo-American Coercive Diplomacy in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1954–1956* (London, 1997); *The Limitations of Third-Party Intervention in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Lessons from Selected Episodes: 1949–1956* (London, 1999); A.Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan* (Oxford, 1988); *The Iron Wall* (London, 1999).
- 5 S.I.Troen and M.Shemesh (eds), *The Suez-Sinai Crisis, 1956* (London, 1990); R.Louis and R.Owen (eds), *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Consequences* (Oxford, 1989); K.Kyle, *Suez* (London, 1991); S.Kelly and A.Gorst (eds), *Whitehall and the Suez Crisis*, (London, 2000); Gorst and Johnman, *The Suez Crisis* (London, 1997).
- 6 M.Thomas, *The Suez Affair* (London, 1966); L.Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis* (Illinois, 1964).
- 7 G.Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett: Biography of a Political Moderate* (Oxford, 1996); Bialer, *Between East and West: Israel's Foreign Policy Orientation, 1948–1956* (Cambridge, 1990); 'Israel Foreign Policy, 1948–1956', *Israel Studies*, 7.1, 2002; *Oil and the Arab-Israel Conflict, 1948–1963* (Oxford, 1999); 'Sterling Balances and Claims Negotiations: Britain and Israel 1947–1952', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 28.2, 1992; M.Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza: Israel's Road to Suez and Back, 1955–1957* (London, 1994), *Challenge and Quarrel* (Sede-Boker, 1991) [Hebrew]; I.Asia, *The Core of the Conflict: The Struggle for the Negev, 1947–1956* (Jerusalem/Sede-Boker, 1984) [Hebrew]; Z.Levy, *Israel and the Western Powers, 1952–1960* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998); M.Golani, *Israel in Search of a War: The Sinai Campaign, 1955–1956* (Brighton, 1998); Z.Shalom, *David Ben-Gurion, The State of Israel and the Arab World, 1949–1956* (Sede-Boker, 1995) [Hebrew]; *Policy in the Shadow of Controversy: The Routine Security Policy, 1949–1956* (Tel-Aviv, 1996) [Hebrew]; M. Shemesh, 'The Kadesh Operation and the Suez Campaign: The Middle Eastern Political Background, 1949–1956', *Iyunim*, 4, 1994 [Hebrew].
- 8 D.Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841–1991* (Cambridge, 1994); *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Oxford, 1990); G.Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics* (Oxford, 1983); *Modern British Jewry* (London, 1992).
- 9 C.Bermant, *Troubled Eden: An Anatomy of British Jewry* (London, 1969); *The Cousinhood: The Anglo-Jewish Gentry* (London, 1971).



## Playing the trump card: the protracted recognition of Israel, January 1949–April 1950

BRITAIN'S POLICY OF NON-RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL: MAY  
1948–JANUARY 1949

Britain failed to dictate the outcome of the 1948 war and reluctantly accepted the permanent existence of Israel, whom it regarded throughout the period as an 'irritant' and an impediment to improved ties with the Arab States.<sup>1</sup> Britain was resolved to use its trump card, recognition of Israel, as a *quid pro quo* for US recognition of Jordan's union with the West Bank.<sup>2</sup> Despite Israel's deep suspicion of British policy, which included arming and maintaining military alliances with neighbouring Arab states, it acknowledged Britain's considerable influence in the region and the fact that Britain remained an important source in ensuring the flow of vital supplies essential to its survival.

Although the US accorded Israel *de facto* recognition on 14 May 1948, Britain withheld recognition because it did not consider Israel a legitimate power.<sup>3</sup> *Res nullius* was a tenuous argument that reflected aspirations for an Arab victory:

If the Arab armies invade the territory of Palestine but without coming into conflict with the Jews they would not necessarily be doing anything illegal, or contrary to the UN Charter. If they cross the frontiers recommended by the UN Resolution of November 29th for the Jewish state, they would for the reasons given above, not ipso facto be doing anything illegal.<sup>4</sup>

In the absence of formal diplomatic relations, Cyril Marriott, British Consul in Haifa, was instructed to represent British interests 'in the area'. He had little experience in Palestine issues and admitted that he was unsuitable for the task. His comments about Jews were tinted with anti-Semitism. His 'experience of Jews was gained in Roumania, where one knew if there was a dirty house in the village, it was the Jews'. In New York he, 'rarely met the Jews in a decent society'.<sup>5</sup> On 1 June, he warned the Mayor of Haifa: 'Should you bomb the aerodrome at Amman or hit any British craft we shall blast every Jewish aeroplane in the air and on the land all over Palestine.' When told that the Provisional Government was the appropriate authority, Marriott retorted that 'the State of Israel did not exist'.<sup>6</sup>

Israel did little to ease Marriott's anomalous position in Haifa. He understood that his insistence on being accorded diplomatic status was out of the question because Britain

refused diplomatic privileges to his Israeli counterpart in London.<sup>7</sup> A thaw in policy came in November when an informal British delegation visited Israel. Marriott attended events as a guest of the ‘Provisional State of Israel’, unthinkable a month before.<sup>8</sup>

Britain erroneously claimed that its policy of non-recognition was in line with the French. Walter Eytan, Director General of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) regularly met with French representatives who communicated with the ‘Foreign Secretary of Israel’. He granted an interview whenever one was requested.

The MFA was pessimistic about British recognition of Israel in the immediate future. Anxious to establish ties, an interim solution was found whereby Joseph Linton, a member of the Jewish Agency and a British citizen was appointed Consul-General in London.<sup>9</sup> Britain made no reciprocal plans for Tel-Aviv.<sup>10</sup> Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary, considered establishing a consulate in Tel-Aviv, which would provide useful unofficial contacts with the ‘Jewish authorities’. However, this normal means for establishing contacts, short of recognition, was considered ill advised by the Foreign Office, which feared offending the Arabs.<sup>11</sup>

A fundamental factor in Bevin’s policy towards Israel was the fear of Soviet penetration. He claimed that Palestine was vulnerable to communist influence because there was no stable electorate and that Russian-trained communists served in the *Haganah*. Even the leader of the right-wing *Etzel*, Begin, was reported to have been an active communist in Poland before reaching Palestine. Bevin stated that 40 per cent of the members of the *Histadrut* veered to the ‘East’ and that 20 per cent would follow an extreme left-wing party. This was used as a further pretext for withholding recognition.<sup>12</sup>

Bevin was obdurate in refusing to recognize Israel: ‘There are certain lines over Palestine from which I cannot deviate. I do not...intend in the near future to recognise the Jewish State and still less to support any proposal that it should become a member of the United Nations.’<sup>13</sup>

The question of recognition was first raised in Cabinet on 27 May when it was suggested that it ‘might be embarrassing to withhold recognition, if other Commonwealth Governments accorded it’. Bevin responded that member nations conducted their own policy, but he omitted that British pressure was being brought to bear on the Dominions to withhold recognition. It is pertinent to note that Bevin’s references to the State of Israel were interchanged with ‘the Jewish state’, ‘the Jewish authorities’ and, ‘the Jewish provisional government’.<sup>14</sup> Bevin later conceded that the Arabs had done little to deserve British friendship. However, ‘any sign of a more forthcoming attitude towards the Jews would convince the Arabs that they have no more hope from the Western powers, and induce in them a dangerous mood of desperation in which other counsels might prevail’.<sup>15</sup>

A further justification for Britain withholding recognition was its insistence that the whole of Israel was ‘occupied territory’ and that Israel’s borders remained unsettled.<sup>16</sup> In the case of the ‘Jewish authorities’ in Palestine, it was ‘by no means clear what are the exact boundaries of the area which they at present administer. In any event, this area is not identical with that which they claim for permanent inclusion within their state’ Britain opposed Israel’s claim to the whole Negev in accordance with the UN partition.<sup>17</sup>

Harold Lever, Labour MP, dismissed the argument that a state could be recognized only when its borders have been defined as groundless and has no basis in history at all’. Winston Churchill, Leader of the Conservative opposition, derided government policy:

'*De facto* recognition has never depended upon an exact definition of territorial frontiers. There are half-a-dozen countries in Europe, which are recognised today whose territorial frontiers are not finally settled. Surely, Poland is one.'<sup>18</sup>

Bevin maintained that Britain's refusal to recognize Israel was realistic given that no Arab leader was willing to sit with the 'Foreign Minister of the State of Israel'.

It appears fairly clear that a Jewish state of some kind will form part of the eventual Palestine settlement, but the state, which the Jews now claim to have set up still falls far short of the normal criteria demanded for recognition, and the aggressive declarations of the Jewish leaders are not consistent with their desire to be accepted as a member of the United Nations.<sup>19</sup>

He told Parliament that Jordan would be 'allowed' to annex the Arab areas of Palestine and that something should 'be done' about the 'unfortunate' occupation of the Galilee by the Jews.<sup>20</sup> Bernadotte's assassination was a further setback to Britain's designs to limit Israel's military successes.<sup>21</sup>

Britain maintained and commanded the Arab Legion fighting in Jerusalem. When asked in Parliament whether British officers were participating in the Arab Legion's invasion of Israel, Bevin replied that they were not. Technically, he was correct since at that moment, the officers were 'relieved' of their duties, only to have them reinstated the following day.

The US disparaged Britain's military involvement in Palestine and of its refusal to recognize Israel. Bernard Burrows, Director of the Eastern Department, urged that: 'We can repeat to the Americans that our attitude on recognition will depend on the success of the plan on which we are working, and we could perhaps add that we have always considered our recognition as a valuable card, which must be played to its best advantage.'<sup>22</sup>

The Government's policy of non-recognition became increasingly untenable. The Cabinet proposed that although it 'might be unable as yet to recognise the Israeli Government, it would be convenient to find some practical arrangement that could be made for establishing direct communication with that government'.<sup>23</sup> Bevin was instructed to explore a practical means of establishing direct channels with Israel without formal recognition and to report on the progress of the discussions on Palestine at the UN. The British consuls in Jerusalem and Haifa were instructed not to deal directly with the 'Jewish authorities in Tel-Aviv'.

A major impediment to Anglo-Israeli relations was the future of the 11,000 Jewish detainees still incarcerated by Britain in Cyprus who desired to emigrate to Israel. The Chiefs of Imperial General Staff (CIGS) were adamant that men and women of military age should not be released because they would eventually strengthen the Israel Defence Forces (IDF).<sup>24</sup> Bevin made their release contingent on support for Jordan's application to the UN.<sup>25</sup> In December, detainees under military age continued to languish in Cypriot internment camps, which Israel viewed as verification of Bevin's vindictiveness.<sup>26</sup>

Israel's successful 'Operation Yoav' (15–22 October 1948) drove the Egyptians from the northern Negev, which jeopardized uninterrupted British hegemony from Basra in Iraq through Jordan to Gaza in Egypt. The Foreign Office disseminated the idea that

Israel connived with the Soviets to drive a wedge between British forces and its natural allies in the region. Britain sponsored a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution calling for the restoration of the 14 October lines in the Negev and for the creation of a demilitarised zone between the Israeli and Egyptian forces, which Israel accepted.<sup>27</sup>

Britain pressed for sanctions against Israel but the US and the USSR abstained, and the UNSC was unable to implement sanctions.<sup>28</sup> Bevin was furious at the failure to agree on a joint policy on Palestine. Having supported Israel's request for admission to the UN, and recently co-opted onto the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC), the US was not willing to jeopardise her position by supporting Britain's narrow self-interests.<sup>29</sup>

By late November 1948, the IDF had extended its territorial control to the east of Beersheba, across the desert to the Dead Sea, and down to the Arava, running south along the Jordan border. Bernadotte's plan to assign the Negev to the Arabs in exchange for the Galilee became obsolete when Israel successfully launched 'Operation *Horev*' on 22 December. By 27 December, the Egyptian eastern front completely collapsed, and a day later, Israel crossed the Egyptian frontier and rolled into the Sinai Peninsula. British Intelligence was sceptical that the IDF had crossed into Egypt but was unable to ascertain the authenticity of the claims owing to Israel's refusal to allow UN observers to visit the front.<sup>30</sup>

The CIGS considered the use of force, but their options were limited. The one British infantry brigade of any use to the Egyptians was inadequate, and in these circumstances they preferred not to engage the IDF.<sup>31</sup> They were also concerned about a possible embroilment with Israel on the Jordanian border. Although Britain was committed to assist Jordan in the event of 'Israeli aggression', public opinion would not tolerate a return of British troops to invade Palestine. Consequently, Britain's policy was restricted to curtailing Israel's military advances at the UNSC.

#### THE ILLUSION OF THE BRITISH ULTIMATUM TO ISRAEL, 31 DECEMBER 1948

Britain was alleged to have issued an ultimatum to Israel at the end of December, which had serious repercussions for Anglo-Israeli-American relations.<sup>32</sup> At 17:00 on 30 December, Bevin ordered Ambassador Sir Oliver Franks in Washington to urge the US Government 'to act on the Jews as to make any military action by us on Egyptian territory unnecessary under our Treaty with Egypt'.<sup>33</sup> Franks met with the Under-Secretary of State, Robert Lovett, and referred to 'potential' British action of arming the Arab countries, which did not include direct military intervention. Franks was not asked to forward the contents to Israel's Provisional Government.

The State Department sent a terse message to Ambassador James McDonald in Tel-Aviv warning that: 'Unless Israeli forces withdraw from Egyptian territory, the British Government *will* be bound to take steps to fulfil their obligations under the Treaty of 1936 with Egypt.' Israel was to be warned that the US would reconsider its application to the UN if it did not evacuate Egyptian territory.<sup>34</sup>

McDonald rushed to deliver Ben-Gurion an ultimatum.<sup>35</sup> Suspicious of British motives, Ben-Gurion assumed that the harshness in tone could only have originated from

Britain, whose antipathy towards Israel was patent. His diary entry clearly indicates that both he and McDonald believed that the document was a British ‘ultimatum’.<sup>36</sup> Intended or not, McDonald’s ‘ultimatum’ in his résumé to Ben-Gurion had the desired effect. The attack on El-Arish was postponed and the IDF was ordered to withdraw from Egyptian soil by 2 January 1949. Without the ‘ultimatum’, withdrawing Egyptian forces would easily have been defeated.

If an ‘ultimatum’ had been issued, surely the CIGS would have been consulted. The ultimatum was not Bevin’s machination but initiated by President Truman himself.<sup>37</sup> A month earlier, the CIGS rejected military intervention because ‘it would not be easy to deploy forces in Palestine on the scale which would be necessary to ensure success’.<sup>38</sup> This was reiterated at their meeting on 30 December when they agreed that Britain could not intervene with superior air power alone.

Slim’s (head of the CIGS) recommendation of 3 January to present an ultimatum to the ‘Jews’ clearly suggests that they had not discussed an ultimatum four days earlier. The Defence Committee did however, decide to reinforce the British contingent in Aqaba and send two battalions to the Suez Zone.<sup>39</sup> Defence Minister, Alexander vetoed Slim’s suggestion to offer an ultimatum. Furthermore, Bevin would not have sanctioned involving British troops in a war without consulting Attlee. Sir Alec Kirkbride, Resident in Amman, knew nothing about an ultimatum: ‘Israel believed that Great Britain was on the point of entering the war on the side of the Arabs. Perhaps the most interesting fact about this episode was that I and other heads of mission at Beirut and Damascus were not told about it by the Foreign Office.’<sup>40</sup>

Thomas Rapp, head of the BMEO (British Middle East Office) in Cairo and Sir Ronald Campbell, Ambassador in Cairo, urged British military intervention to halt the Israeli advance. The alternative was for Britain and Egypt to accept a ‘peace imposed by Israel’. Sir William Strang, Permanent Under-Secretary rejected Rapp’s request because Israel aimed only at defeating the Egyptian army in the Negev.<sup>41</sup>

The CIGS’s contingency plan code-named ‘Clatter’, aimed at supporting the Egyptians, was not put into action when, anticipating imminent British action, the IDF withdrew from the Sinai.<sup>42</sup> The MFA assumed that Britain had invoked the 1936 Treaty even though Marriott had conveyed to the ‘Jewish authorities’ that Britain had no wish to go to war with Israel.<sup>43</sup> There was no legitimate justification for British military intervention. Initially having requested British air support over the Sinai border, Egypt refused to invoke the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty’s clause, which referred to a ‘belligerent state’. In Israel’s case, this did not apply because hitherto Britain did not recognize Israel.

Sharett found himself in the embarrassing position of guaranteeing the US that ‘No Israeli troops were on Egyptian territory’ when British intelligence confirmed that the IDF were at least 35 kilometres inside Egyptian territory.<sup>45</sup> He differentiated between British and US policy: ‘In threatening to take action under the terms of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, the British Government conjures up a contingency, which, as will be evident from a study of the relevant provisions of the Treaty, has by no means arisen.’<sup>46</sup> Acting-President Chaim Weizmann was obliged to write the same day to Truman, reassuring him of Israel’s peaceful intentions.<sup>47</sup>

The illusion of the ultimatum was the invention of US diplomacy Lovett included the threat of British intervention in the message sent to Israel, which now read: ‘unless Israeli forces withdraw the British Government will be [*not* ‘may be’] bound to take steps’.

Ben-Gurion accepted the ultimatum at face value and decided not to call Britain's bluff. The decision to discuss conditions for a ceasefire derived from neither UN nor US diplomatic pressure, but fears of British military intervention. He cited the US warning of an ultimatum as the reason for the IDF withdrawal from the Sinai.<sup>48</sup> Alluding to Bevin, he told the cabinet that, 'there is a man who is irrational in his hatred towards us...who does not only act according to logic'... He can send here hundreds of planes with pilots...we have no interest in providing Mr. Bevin with the legitimisation or the pretext for intervening with British Military Forces in war'.<sup>49</sup> These fears were well founded. Hector McNeil, Minister of State, declared that Britain would 'defend Aqaba if necessary'. Rumours circulated that sophisticated British 'Locust' tanks were sent to Jordan to back up her threat. Bevin's biographer suggests that in order to save face, it was easier for him to appear to relent to British military pressure than to US verbal threats.<sup>50</sup>

Whether Britain anticipated the US would re-interpret the telegram and present it, as an ultimatum to Israel is unclear. Britain did, however, succeed in issuing a virtual ultimatum by proxy with the desired outcome. Israel achieved its military objectives and thus withdrew.<sup>51</sup> Britain became increasingly aware of the serious consequences if it was to fulfil its treaty obligations to Egypt and Jordan in the event of hostilities with Israel. This was further demonstrated when Britain declined to come to Jordan's aid following Israel's raid on Qalkilia in October 1956.

#### ISRAEL SHOTS DOWN FIVE RAF AIRCRAFT, 7 JANUARY 1949

A tragic and ironic development marking the conclusion to Arab-Israeli hostilities was the armed confrontation between Israel and Britain on 7 January 1949 after Israel and Egypt had agreed to comply with the ceasefire and enter into negotiations.<sup>52</sup> Britain suffered the most humiliating military loss since World War II when an Israeli dilapidated air force shot down five RAF aircraft reconnaissance over the Sinai border sent to ascertain whether the IDF was still on Egyptian territory.

That day *The Times* urged Anglo-American coordination:

The differences between the British and the American attitudes towards Israel may be too great to be adjusted quickly or easily. Yet, it should at least be possible for both Powers to agree upon the importance of encouraging those Israeli statesmen who deprecate rash military adventures because they know that Israel's permanent longterm interests require the establishment of friendly relations with neighbouring Arab countries.<sup>53</sup>

These fears proved well founded.

Israel viewed British military flights over its airspace as a flagrant disregard of international law. Britain cited 'Israeli aggression' for continuing the flights and refused to cancel them until the IDF's withdrawal from the Sinai had been confirmed. Although the ceasefire came into effect at 14:00, Alexander received Cabinet approval to continue the flights, which was unaware that the UN had made no such request.<sup>54</sup> Bevin did not object to the Ministry of Defence's tactics vis-à-vis the incursion into the Sinai as part of



the Israeli strategy to negotiate with Jordan.<sup>55</sup> He agreed that political considerations should not override military operations. Although he did not oppose the flights, he feared that Britain would be accused of breaking the truce.

The day was particularly tense as the belligerents made a last concentrated effort to reinforce their positions before the ceasefire.<sup>56</sup> Israel anticipated British military action. Two hours before the air clash, British forces landed at Aqaba in response to Jordan's request for aid.<sup>57</sup>

Israeli pilots patrolling the border with Egypt intercepted British Spitfires and in a series of dogfights downed five RAF planes. Two British pilots were killed, one succeeded in making his way back to Egyptian lines, and two were taken prisoners. The incident was not without precedent. Three weeks earlier, Israel downed an RAF plane on a reconnaissance flight over the northern Negev.<sup>58</sup>

British pilots received oral instructions not to open or return fire because Israel, Britain and Egypt flew Spitfires, making identification difficult.<sup>59</sup> Although the demarcation of the international border was incomplete, there is irrefutable evidence that RAF planes entered Israeli airspace. One of the British pilots admitted that his plane was shot down over 'Palestine'. Ben-Gurion's account is ambiguous. He instructed Yigal Allon, IDF Southern Commander to return to Israel the debris of the crashed planes: 'I ordered some of the planes moved into Israeli territory boundaries, for obvious reasons...a fabulous day. Did the war end today?'<sup>60</sup> Britain manipulated reports of the removal of the wreckage as proof that Israel had downed the planes outside its airspace.<sup>61</sup> However, 'the nature of the British reaction was not related to the question of where the planes had crashed, but to the new political processes now commencing'.<sup>62</sup>

British troops stationed in the Middle East were placed on full alert, all leave was cancelled and British citizens were advised to leave Israel.<sup>63</sup> On 8 January, the CIGS decided 'to act tough with Israel' by announcing two directives, which left British pilots perplexed.<sup>64</sup> The first order was to regard every Israeli aircraft infiltrating Jordanian or Egyptian airspace as an enemy plane and to shoot it down. The second directed that 'RAF activity close to Israel's border be halted forthwith'.<sup>65</sup>

Bevin believed that the joint US-British pressure, which forced Israel to withdraw from the Sinai, would help restore Arab faith in the West. However, he underestimated the degree of US anger over the incident and Truman's resolve to press Britain to moderate its policy. He also made no secret of his view that Britain had backed the wrong horse.<sup>66</sup> The US did not regard the maintenance of land communications between Egypt and the Arab world, via the southern Negev, of primary importance.<sup>67</sup> Franks maintained that US policy aimed not at containing Israel but at winning it over to the Anglo-American camp, whereas Britain's policy aimed at 'containing the Israelis even at the risk of permanently estranging them', which could well lead them into the arms of the Soviets.<sup>68</sup>

Israel surmised that the US had advised Britain to close the incident and to abstain from hindering Israeli-Egyptian negotiations.<sup>69</sup> Israel launched a diplomatic offensive at the UN on 12 January when Eban explained that Britain's menacing policy was responsible for the clashes. He accused Britain for repudiating the 29 May 1948 UNRA calling on all governments and authorities 'to undertake that they will not introduce fighting personnel into Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan and the Yemen during the cease-fire'. Since there was no threat to the integrity of Jordan,

Britain's moves could only be interpreted as designed to threaten Israel's position in the southern Negev.

Initially, the British press blamed Israeli aggression: 'Jews shoot down 5 RAF planes', and 'Bevin asks empire aid to stop Israel Reds'.<sup>70</sup> However, as the humiliating facts became known, disapproval mounted at the government's handling of the incident. The *Manchester Guardian* commented: 'Mr Bevin's policy is making fools of us and is in danger of doing worse.' Furthermore, 'Mr Bevin is taking perilous and needless risks in the Middle East. He must understand that the people of this country recoil from the idea of an attack on Israel and have no patience with any gestures, which carry the threat of an attack or their sanction.'<sup>71</sup>

*The Times*, questioned the handling of the crisis: 'It is widely asked what the outcome can be of policies, on both the British and the Israeli sides, which make clashes of this sort possible.'<sup>72</sup> It warned the government about its dangerous policies after a British pilot had admitted that his plane had definitely crossed Israeli territory.<sup>73</sup> The *New Statesman* charged the government with pursuing a dangerous policy, and the *Economist*, which normally supported the government, commented that the 'actions were made in a fit of temper'.<sup>74</sup>

During the Commons debate on 19 January, Air Minister Henderson came under a barrage of criticism. Attlee felt obliged to declare the division as one of a vote of confidence in the Prime Minister.<sup>75</sup> The air clashes served to prove the dire consequences of the absence of diplomatic relations between the two countries. It also revealed the limits of their respective powers.

#### DE FACTO RECOGNITION, 29 JANUARY 1949

Britain's decision to recognize Israel was not the direct result of the air clashes though it accelerated the timing of the recognition by a few days.<sup>76</sup> The debacle of the humiliating loss of the RAF planes added to the mounting opposition to the Government's policy. The Conservative Party called for recognition in early December. They were supported by the quality press.<sup>77</sup> Petitions protesting against government policy were collected in over 300 Labour constituencies.<sup>78</sup>

McNeil, liaison to Israel's envoys in London, advised Bevin that Britain had to face the fact that it now played a secondary role to the US in world affairs. By pretending still to be masters of the Middle East, Britain lost sight of the primary importance of retaining US goodwill:

It is essential even when the Jews are at their most wicked and the Americans most exasperating not to lose sight of this point. As long as America is a major power, and as long as she is free, anyone taking on the Jews will indirectly be talking to America.<sup>79</sup>

Bevin conceded that the Jews had developed an organization 'morally' superior to the Arabs but that Britain had to consider the growing Soviet influence in Israel:

It is clear that with the strong international support, which Russia has given the dependence of the Jews on satellite war material and the large number of immigrants from Eastern Europe that, Russian chances of establishing influence in the Jewish State are considerable.<sup>80</sup>

He denied that he had opposed a Jewish state and insisted that, by supporting the Bernadotte plan, Britain had in fact already recognized Israel. He suggested that in the interim a consulate be established in Tel-Aviv, which Israel refused because it was unaccompanied by *de facto* recognition.<sup>81</sup>

Recognition was discussed at both Cabinet meetings on 17 January. Aneurin Bevan, Minister for Health castigated Bevin's reckless policy:

We should have done better to base our position in the Middle East on the friendship of the Jews, who, if we had pursued a different policy, would have been glad to give us all the facilities we needed to establish strong military bases in Palestine.

It is suggested that he considered resigning if Israel was not recognized. It would however, be a mistake to assume that Bevan was an avid Zionist. His criticism of Bevin's Palestine policy was only one subject on which he and Bevin were at loggerheads. The cabinet decided:

If this recognition is to be granted, it would be preferable that it should take place before there was any Parliamentary debate on Palestine. Otherwise, the impression might be created that the Government had changed their policy in response to Parliamentary pressure.<sup>82</sup>

Hugh Dalton, former Chancellor of the Exchequer, gave the impression in his memoirs that he was an outspoken critic of Bevin's policies in Cabinet but there is no evidence in the minutes.

The Foreign Office decided to play its trump card, a *quid pro quo*, US *de facto* recognition of Transjordan in return for British *de facto* recognition of Israel.<sup>83</sup> Bevin argued that: 'While at times there may have been differences of opinion in London and Washington as how best to deal with the Palestine problem, there has been no difference whatsoever in our main objective.'<sup>84</sup> He urged that US recognition of Jordan's annexation of Arab Palestine be announced with Britain's recognition of Israel. As a gesture, he announced the release of the 9,000 detainees still languishing in Cyprus. The US announced its intention on 22 January to grant *de facto* recognition to Jordan, and *de jure* recognition to Israel following the forthcoming Israeli elections. British recognition of Israel was now a formality.<sup>85</sup>

Alexander told Parliament that: 'If we had recognised the Government of Israel at any time before, it would have been misunderstood in a wide area of the Commonwealth. Have Hon. Members heard of India? India happens to be part of the Commonwealth. So does Pakistan. They are important factors.'<sup>86</sup> Australia, New Zealand and Canada favoured recognition as early as May 1948. They informed Britain that they would recognize Israel no later than 24 January.<sup>87</sup> Australia snubbed Bevin by omitting to

mention whether recognition was *de facto* or *de jure*.<sup>88</sup> New Zealand's recognition was unconditional.<sup>89</sup>

Britain and France had agreed to accord *de facto* recognition to Israel on 24 January, two days before the scheduled Commons debate but Britain was forced to stall because it coincided with anticipated violence in Baghdad marking the anniversary of the Portsmouth Treaty riots.<sup>90</sup> France duly accorded Israel *de facto* recognition on 24 January, the reports of which arrived after the Cabinet meeting where Bevin had argued that recognition of Israel without France would be condoning Israeli belligerence.<sup>91</sup>

Having postponed calls for debates on Palestine, the Government agreed to a full-scale debate on 26 January, which was the most vitriolic foreign-policy debate since the decision to grant India independence. Churchill charged that the Government had: 'Deprived Britain of credit she had earned, and of the rights and interests she had acquired, and made her at once the mockery and scapegoat of so many States who have never made any positive contribution of their own.'

Bevin justified withholding recognition of Israel because 'the Jews' had demanded far more than a home in Palestine and that a good deal of the problem had been caused by Jewish intransigence. He condemned Israel's 'displacement of a half a million Arab refugees'. In a 'sulky acquiescence', he admitted that, 'the State of Israel is now a fact and we have not tried to undo it'.<sup>92</sup>

The long debate included speeches from entrenched pro-and anti-Zionists alike. Anti-Zionist MP Norman Smith argued:

What is Zionism but the expressed belief of certain fanatical Jews that they are the Chosen People who ought to have a national state in Palestine, a country they left twenty centuries ago? This belief of the more fanatical Jews is a belief backed by big money in various parts of the world, particularly in the United States... Zionism is not only characterised by deceit in its methods; but also characterised by its violence.

The motion supporting Government policy was passed by 283 votes to 193. More than 150 Labour MPs either joined the opposition or abstained.<sup>93</sup> *The Times* commented that, 'Mr Bevin has not come out of the fire unscathed'.<sup>94</sup>

Britain finally recognized Israel on 29 January and the US duly recognized Jordan the same day.<sup>95</sup> *The Times* lauded the US and Britain for finally accepting the reality in the Middle East but 'recognition *de facto* would be recognition of the Government of Israel and not of the Israeli State'.<sup>96</sup>

It was hoped that recognition would facilitate the solving of outstanding issues between the ex-Mandatory government and the successor state, Israel.<sup>97</sup> Bevin reluctantly accepted that the US refusal to back Arab control of the Negev and its support of Israel was irreversible. Despite Britain's loss of face, he was determined not to allow the Palestine issue to obstruct British-American relations.<sup>98</sup>

## THE LEGATIONS SET UP SHOP

On 29 January, Saturday morning (the Sabbath), Bevin summoned Linton to receive an official note of *de facto* recognition at the Foreign Office. Bevin impressed upon him his desire to maintain friendly relations and that in spite of 'all the froth in the press and elsewhere, he had never had any prejudice against Israel'. All the detainees in Cyprus would be released and free to go to Israel. He expressed his willingness to use his good offices to assist Jews from Islamic countries wishing to emigrate.<sup>99</sup>

Dr Mordechai Eliash, a prominent lawyer who served in the Jewish Agency was appointed Minister at the Court of St. James's.<sup>100</sup> A Foreign Office official reported that he had an aptitude for finance, 'not peculiar for one of his race'.<sup>101</sup> Within two days of recognition, the Israeli flag flew over the Legation building in Manchester Square in the heart of London's fashionable West End.<sup>102</sup> Eliash later formally presented his credentials on 7 April.<sup>103</sup>

Eliash's principal objectives were, to ensure oil supplies through London, the centre of the world oil market, and to establish immediate channels of communication, the absence of which had almost brought the two countries to war. His other assignments included building bridges with Anglo-Jewry, and facilitating meetings with those wishing to discuss bilateral relations.<sup>104</sup>

Israel's envoys enjoyed a significant advantage over their counterparts in Tel-Aviv. They were well versed in British politics and culture and enjoyed the goodwill of the established Jewish community eager to be of service in improving bilateral ties. The MFA was incensed at Britain's request for the Legation to keep a low profile, which was virtually ostracized from social events with the flimsiest of excuses. Britain's refusal to grant immunity enjoyed by all legations in London was seen as particularly vindictive.<sup>105</sup>

Britain stalled on establishing its legation as long as possible. Between January and June 1949, Marriott represented Britain in Haifa, not in Tel-Aviv.<sup>106</sup> He regarded the Haifa oil refineries, British nationality laws and Israel's foreign-policy orientation as the most important issues affecting full recognition.<sup>107</sup> Michael Comay, director of the British Desk at the MFA, concluded, 'I am afraid the British do not emerge in a very dignified light, as they obviously want to enjoy full status without paying the price of proper recognition.'<sup>108</sup>

Sir Alexander Knox Helm, Minister in Budapest was appointed Minister to Tel-Aviv, a post he took up in June, four months after Eliash in London. He served in Ankara during the war and was acquainted with the intrigues of Zionist diplomacy. Israel maintained one mission in London. Britain maintained a legation in Tel-Aviv and a consulate in Jerusalem where Consul-General, Sir Hugh Dow liaised with the Arabs. He was told that: 'The establishment of a diplomatic or quasi-diplomatic mission at Tel-Aviv will not affect your position. You will continue to report independently to the Foreign Office and you will not be subordinate in any way to Helm.'<sup>109</sup>



Figure 1.1 Mordechai Eliash boards the plane for Britain to take up his post as Minister to the Court of St James's, April 1949

*Source:* Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office



Figure 1.2 Walter Eytan, Director  
General of the MFA

*Source:* Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office

It was no secret that Britain had preferred an Arab state in Israel's place. Initially the Foreign Office dismissed the viability of the Jewish state. Dow predicted Israel's imminent collapse, and similar opinions were voiced by William Houstoun-Boswall, Minister in Beirut.<sup>110</sup> Sir John Troutbeck, head of the British Middle East office in Cairo, dismissed Labour MP, Crossman's glowing reports of Israel's dynamism and viability. He argued that: 'A country restricted within narrow territorial limits, with a population bursting with vitality, and surrounded by people of a medieval outlook, swollen also by immigrants for whom it has no room, is bound in any case to covet its neighbours' lands. The urge for more *lebensraum* [my italics] will be increased...'.<sup>111</sup>



Figure 1.3 Michael Comay, Director of the British Division, MFA

*Source:* Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office

Prior to formal diplomatic relations Israel objected to the expected appointment of John Sherringham to the Legation citing his responsibility for detaining hundreds of Jews during the Mandate. There was ‘some risk’ of retaliation. Sherringham was not appointed for fear of his safety.<sup>112</sup> Chargé d’Affaires Mordechai Kidron, lamented his influence at the Foreign Office: ‘It would have been to our advantage not to have objected to Sherringham’s appointment... He has done, is doing, and will do us far more damage here than he could ever do in Tel-Aviv.’<sup>113</sup> Helm protested:

We cannot hope to make any success of our Mission in Israel if we allow the Israelis to get away with this sort of thing. It would merely mean that the Israelis would feel that they could kick us around when they liked and that we ourselves should be thoroughly demeaned in the process.<sup>114</sup>

A quirk of fate was the timing of Helm’s arrival on 17 May 1949, the exact date according to the 1939 White Paper on which an Arab state was to have been established in Palestine. He presented his credentials on 27 May.<sup>115</sup> The Israeli press was sceptical about future relations. The *Palestine Post* noted that British acceptance of a new relationship with Israel depended primarily on the Foreign Office.<sup>116</sup> *Ha’aretz* viewed his



appointment as a step towards correcting terrible mistakes of the past but that real friendship would transpire when Britain ceased to arm the Arabs against Israel.<sup>117</sup>

Helm's initial assessments were no less disdainful than Marriott's: 'One of the greatest handicaps of these people is their inferiority complex. The Jews took a pathetic pride in all their works... They have developed an attitude of arrogance and intolerance towards the feelings of others.' He viewed Israel as an artificial creation, while Jordan was not. Its economy was unsound and unlimited immigration was a mistake: 'There is an irony in the fact that Israel's major problem, immigration, on which the present Government might well flounder eventually, is the same problem, which more than any other, forced us to surrender the Mandate.'<sup>118</sup>

British diplomats worked in an unpleasant environment where a deep residue of suspicion towards Britain pervaded. Israel remained on a war footing and restrictions were placed on diplomats' movements. Helm was angered by his unsuitable accommodation and by the faded graffiti near his residence calling for 'British invaders out of our country'.<sup>119</sup> He lambasted Israel's inability to find him and his staff suitable accommodation:

The time has come to tell the Israelis on the highest level that unless they agree forthwith to make available suitable and acceptable residential accommodation...that the whole question of my appointment will be re-examined and consideration given to the alternative of sending out a much smaller mission on a considerably lower level.<sup>120</sup>

His complaint to Ben-Gurion about having to live in a luxury hotel in Herzliya at their first meeting was ignored. Ben-Gurion retorted that he had the task of finding accommodation for 60,000 home-less people!<sup>121</sup> Despite his criticisms, Helm wrote to Bevin:

Our reception has been friendly and responsible Israelis at any rate are, I believe anxious to have relations established on a friendly basis ...it would be an exaggeration to suggest that you are their most popular hero! But I have made full use of your remark to me when I saw you last, that the future and not the past was your concern.<sup>122</sup>

#### BRITAIN'S POLICY OF DELAYING ISRAEL'S APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION TO THE UN

Britain aimed to thwart Israel's membership application to the UN as long as Jordan's was denied. 'If the question of membership of the UNO by the Jewish State should arise now or later, HMG should decline to agree and if necessary exercise their veto, unless the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was admitted also.'<sup>123</sup>

Britain blocked Israel's application to join the UN, ironically on 29 November 1948, by ensuring that it would not receive the seven votes in the UNGA needed for admission. Thus, Britain did not have to veto Israel's application.<sup>124</sup> Cadogan refused to allude to Israel by name and resorted to circumlocutions as 'the Jewish authorities in Palestine'. He

maintained that policy towards Israel was in accordance with all countries in similar situations. This was not correct. He admitted that there was no objection to the Republic of Korea's entry to the UN.<sup>125</sup>

The USSR's objection to Transjordan's application for membership influenced the US and French decision to withdraw their support. In retaliation, Britain vetoed Israel's application until that of Transjordan's was accepted.<sup>126</sup> Churchill likened this policy to the protective reaction of a 'cuttlefish beclouding friend and foe alike in an opaque, inky liquid'.

The circumstances changed when Israel re-applied on 24 February 1949. Democratic elections were held, Israel was recognized by 45 of the 58 UN members, and she had signed an armistice agreement, thus fulfilling the necessary requirements for UN membership. However, Britain imposed unrealistic conditions for Israel's acceptance, which included a truce with its Arab neighbours, (the armistices of February and March were not considered sufficient) and the observation of all UN resolutions.<sup>127</sup>

On 11 May, despite Britain's efforts to prevent its entry, Israel became the 59th member of the UN with, 37 votes in favour, 12 against and 9 abstentions.<sup>128</sup> Israel's speedy membership was accelerated by USSR support, to ensure that Britain would not reoccupy Palestine. Britain suffered an additional diplomatic setback when its efforts to secure Jordan's application was delayed a further six years.

According to Sharett, 'Britain's abstention shows how hard certain prejudices die if they do at all, but that is something the State of Israel will have to take in its stride.'<sup>129</sup> It was a triumph for Sharett's perseverance:

Israel's admission to the UN marks the end of a process of transition from...a nation lacking political identity to a nation having a very clear and specific identity It also marks the transition from inferiority to equality from a posture of protest to active participation, and from the status of an outcast to full membership in the family of nations.<sup>130</sup>

Britain remained with one trump card to play, *de jure* recognition, contingent on reaching a financial settlement, Israel's conciliatory policy to the refugee problem, and signed accords with her Arab neighbours.<sup>131</sup> Helm regretted a missed opportunity to accord *de jure* recognition when Israel was admitted to the UN. Foreign Office Official, John Chadwick also argued that:

To accord *de jure* recognition upon Israel's admission to the UN would be a graceful compliment to that organization and rebound to our credit both in Israel and the United States. It offers what is probably the most obvious opportunity for according *de jure* recognition without serious loss of faith.

Their superiors dismissed these recommendations.<sup>132</sup>

BRITAIN'S ASSESSMENT OF ISRAEL'S FOREIGN-POLICY  
ORIENTATION

Bevin was influenced by Burgess and MacLean's assessment that communists had infiltrated into the highest echelons of Israel's establishment. The US State Department reported that 'Within five years, Israel may be [a] Communist state. Bevin infers this from the fact that new Jewish immigrants come largely from countries behind the Iron Curtain where they have been exposed to Communist philosophy.'<sup>133</sup> He ignored Ben-Gurion's exclusion of *Mapam* in his government and Sharett's statement that: 'Israel's neutrality was not Swiss neutrality...[and] would not formally and blatantly join either bloc against the other. There was no doubt about Israel's ultimate orientation, it was with the Western democracies.'<sup>134</sup>

In the view of Sir William Strang, Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Office, extreme Israelis were now 'coming round slowly'. Helm believed it was in Britain's interests to support the moderate socialists, analogous to the British Labour Party.<sup>135</sup>

Despite *de facto* recognition, Britain refused to consider Israel a 'friendly state'. Troutbeck did not 'accept the view that the Israeli problem can be cured by kindness. Firmness is just as necessary.'<sup>136</sup> Doubts about Israel's foreign-policy orientation were used to justify Britain's policy of vetoing Israel's applications to join international organizations; Israel was refused permission to participate in the London Olympics held in July 1948 and excluded from joining the Universal Postal Union. Israel was only permitted to attend the International Telecommunications Union in October with observer status, after France sought a compromise solution. In November, Israel was admitted with observer status to attend the Food and Agricultural Organisation conference in Washington.<sup>137</sup> IDF personnel were refused permission to study in Britain.<sup>138</sup>

In June, Strang visited Israel as part of his tour of the Middle East. In Iraq, Nuri Said told him that 'he had in mind to take Arab refugees, head for head, in place of all the Jews now in Iraq'. Arab leaders told Strang that Israel was a cancer in their midst aiming at economic domination. He also learned of intense Arab opposition to the incorporation of Arab Palestine into the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Strang concluded that the Arabs were weak, divided, lacking in direction and corrupt. He had 'little doubt that Israel aimed at economic domination of the Middle East [which] offered the best chance for her survival'. Intellectually a European was more at home in Israel than in Arab countries.<sup>139</sup> Strang admired Israel's achievements: 'When one remembers that Zionism was distilled from the miseries of the ghettos of Eastern Europe and brought to fruition by the Nazi savageries, it strikes a sympathetic chord to see the Israelis walk as free men in a land of their own, however unjustly acquired.'<sup>140</sup>

Strang concluded that Ben-Gurion was 'the real power in the land'. Initially he was scheduled to meet him for a brief chat followed by extensive talks with Sharett. However, Ben-Gurion insisted that Sharett and Strang only meet together with him. Strang did not encounter a 'moderate' school of Weizmann and Sharett, or an 'extremist' Ben-Gurion school, which the Foreign Office had briefed him. Ben-Gurion told him that Anglo-Israeli relations could improve with mutuality and respect.<sup>141</sup> Israel's 'civilizing mission in the Middle East' was followed by the rights of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, her

desire for peace and Britain's role in furthering contacts between Israel and its neighbours. Strang pleaded that Britain had less influence on the Arabs than Israel imagined. Jordan, Egypt and Syria, while not willing to 'accept' or 'recognize' Israel, did not recoil from the prospect of 'provisional relations'.

Strang reported that the Israelis would 'probably find that they cannot ignore or cut adrift from Great Britain'. Sherringham minuted:

Israel should have to realize that they must accept Britain as a Great Power, which has important interests in the Middle East. Whatever those interests might be called, economic, strategic or political, they are all part of one interest, the preservation of Western civilization, which the Israelis profess to belong... Our Middle East policy must be concerned primarily with the Arabs who form the bulk of the population and hold almost all the territory. The Israelis are mistaken if they think that a word from us is sufficient to put an end to 'Arabism', ideas of Arab unity or hostility to Israel... The Israelis have vastly exaggerated ideas about our influence on the Arabs.<sup>142</sup>

Bevin believed the Arabs would not attack Israel and that there was no cause for Israel to fear Britain's rearming of her Arab allies. As to Israel's impractical and unrealistic expectations, these were put down to inexperience.<sup>143</sup>

In July 1949, the Foreign Office organized a conference of British envoys in the Middle East. The question of a settlement between Israel and the Arabs was discussed.<sup>144</sup> Bevin invited Eliash to meet with him before the conference.<sup>145</sup> He told Eliash that Britain regarded Israel as a 'permanent feature in the Middle East' and admitted that although he had failed to impose a settlement it was good that events had turned out the way they had because negotiations on a settlement 'might have taken generations'. He offered mediation between Israel and the Arab states.<sup>146</sup>

Bevin achieved a major concession from Israel when Eliash sanctioned the annexation of the West Bank to Jordan. Eliash reported that Bevin 'enquired whether we raised any serious objections to Jordan taking the remaining part of Palestine, this seemed the only practicable solution. I agreed with him, and he then turned to the question of Haifa.'<sup>147</sup>

Bevin told the envoys that Israel was ready to look to Britain for advice and that while not negating the PCC, solving the Palestine problem could be achieved only by direct negotiations. Many found Bevin's pragmatism too sudden to absorb. Helm argued that 'the delay in the incorporation of Arab Palestine into Jordan was an invitation for Israel to expand'. Kirkbride gloated that 'our restraining influence' prevented Abdullah from reaching an agreement with Israel.<sup>148</sup>

In August, Bevin called for greater military and technical assistance to Arab states reasoning that renewed Arab confidence in Britain would accentuate an Arab-Israeli agreement and hasten *de jure* recognition of Israel.<sup>149</sup> However, during an austerity programme, he underestimated the financial constrictions in supporting the Arab Legion and was unable to convince his Cabinet colleagues to augment the annual subvention from £3.5m to £5.5m unless it came from the defence budget.

Eytan and Eliash believed there was a detectable change in British policy. They cited the successful visit of the highest-ranking officer to visit Britain, Colonel Yigal Allon,

and British efforts to induce Iraq and Egypt to permit free passage through the Suez Canal of oil tankers to the Haifa refinery as important contributions to improved Anglo-Israeli relations.<sup>150</sup> Reuven Shiloah, director of the *Mossad* dismissed their assessment as 'wishful thinking'.<sup>151</sup> Britain's desire to maintain friendly relations with the Arabs and Israel was unrealistic because Britain would be unable to enjoy the confidence of the Arab world.<sup>152</sup>

Helm was pessimistic about future relations in his annual report of 1949:

This review does not represent Israel in a very attractive light. Nor could it otherwise, ...it was born of a force applied with unscrupulous singleness of purpose by a people whose inferiority complex and sense of persecution had made them aggressive and blind to the interests of others, and whose easy success, facilitated by world states, merely confirmed the belief that they could do no wrong. The nature of the Jew cannot be expected to change...<sup>153</sup>

He dismissed Ben-Gurion's vision for the Negev following his journey to Elath:

Today I am trying to recover from two of the most ricketiest days of my life! [Elath], we are told that ships up to 10,000 tons would be able to come in fairly close why any should want to come in at all I can't imagine...[Negev] I cannot believe that the Israelis will be able to make anything of it...<sup>154</sup>

In his annual report for 1950, Helm noted that:

Israel's greatest disability remains the more disagreeable features of the Jewish character, with an inability to realise that the obtaining of the last farthing does not necessarily mean the best bargain, that in an imperfect world, unrelieved seriousness is not a virtue and, perhaps above all, that strength is not always best displayed through force.<sup>155</sup>

His patronizing and dismissive comments did not escape his farewell despatch:

The Israelis know little of the spirit of compromise and are so self-centred and so intent on extracting the uttermost farthing from everything as frequently to be blind to their own interests over a wider field... Naturally enough they see their interests through their own eyes and, being Jews they pursue them relentlessly.<sup>156</sup>

*QUID PRO QUO*: RECOGNITION OF THE UNION FOR *DE JURE*  
RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL

Although financial considerations influenced the decision to accord *de jure* recognition, an overriding factor in the timing of the decision was Britain's attempt to ensure international recognition of Jordan's union with the West Bank.<sup>157</sup>

In October 1949, Abdullah initiated a further round of direct contacts with Israel to seek approval for the union of the West Bank with Jordan. Kirkbride argued that: 'If he were allowed to continue to act in this manner, it would be a political blunder' and that Britain would pay the price for dissent in Jordan and in the Arab world.<sup>158</sup>

Israel and Jordan were close to reaching an understanding, whereby Israel would recognize the vital importance of a sea outlet to a corridor from Hebron, via Beersheba to Gaza, under Jordanian sovereignty. In return, Jordan promised that the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty would not apply to the corridor. Britain expected Israel to agree to the union, having already done so in secret. While US diplomats in Amman and Tel-Aviv were optimistic about the outcome of the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations, Kirkbride deliberately diminished these reports. He accused Israel of trying to force Jordan to make further concessions.<sup>159</sup>

While Britain ruminated over the implications of an agreement on its commitments to Jordan on the West Bank, a sense of foreboding pervaded the MFA, which feared the establishment of British military bases west of Jordan. Israeli negotiators told the Jordanians that it would be easier to recognise the annexation if Britain 'did not return to Palestine'.<sup>160</sup> Helm assured Sharett that Britain did not intend to establish bases on the West Bank but in the event of a war involving the USSR, it would regard 'Arab Palestine' as her domain in accordance with the Anglo-Jordanian treaty.<sup>161</sup> This commitment, aimed to 'protect Jordan from Israeli military pressure during direct negotiations', was made before the formal union. This also applied to Britain's position on Gaza, under the Anglo-Egyptian treaty. Neither Arab state was informed of Britain's decision, which was to be disclosed after the final borders were settled.<sup>162</sup>

Israel sought *de jure* recognition before the UN debated the issues of Jerusalem and the refugees. However, Kidron, (acting Minister following the death of Eliash) maintained that full recognition would have little practical advantage for Israel. Eliezer Yapou, First Secretary at the Legation believed 'that it would not be proper for us to press for *de jure* recognition, or even to ask for it. It will be forthcoming in its own good time without appearing to attach undue value to it.'<sup>163</sup>

Following Israel's decision on 23 January to move government institutions to Jerusalem, British envoys urged against *de jure* recognition.<sup>164</sup> They were told that *de jure* recognition did not imply approval of a country's policies; recognition of Communist China was but one example. Bevin informed them to view Israel as a permanent factor in the Middle East and advised their Arab hosts to do likewise.<sup>165</sup>



Figure 1.4 Eliahu Elath, Israel,  
Ambassador to the Court of St James's

*Source:* Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office

On 20 April, Bevin declared that it was always the Government's intention to establish friendly relations between the Arab states and Israel and that he had encouraged Abdullah to contribute to regional stability.<sup>166</sup> He told Ministers that Britain intended to extend the treaties with Jordan and Egypt to include Arab controlled areas of Palestine, which was the only logical solution and 'the best one calculated to ensure the welfare of its inhabitants'.<sup>167</sup> Britain would guarantee to Israel that these areas would not be used as military bases. Having accomplished its aims, Britain encouraged Jordan to proclaim the union of Arab Palestine.

The US maintained that 'unilateral action was not the best method but, if that course was adopted, we had hoped that it would be possible for the union to take place quietly, as a sort of prolongation of a *de facto* situation'.<sup>168</sup> In Washington, Burrows urged *quid pro quo* US recognition of Jordan in return for British *de jure* recognition of Israel before the USSR was able to sabotage the union.

The Cabinet faced a *fait accompli* when events ran ahead of the recommendations set out in Bevin's memorandum of 20 April.<sup>169</sup> The new Assembly in Amman proclaimed the union. The Cabinet was assured that the US was informed of British intentions and agreed to recognize the union and accord *de jure* recognition to Israel with a special proviso on the question of Jerusalem. At its second meeting on the 27th, it learned that the US had issued its own statement.<sup>170</sup>

Britain accorded *de jure* recognition on 27 April and formally recognized the union 'of the part of Palestine under Jordan occupation and control' and that 'the provisions of the Anglo-Jordan Treaty of Alliance of 1948' were 'applicable to all the territory included in

this union'.<sup>171</sup> Britain did not regard the borders laid down in the armistice agreements as final, which were subject to modification by free negotiation. Britain never relinquished the prospect that the Negev would re-link Jordan and Egypt in the near future.

British *de facto* recognition of Israel's administration in Jerusalem pended a final settlement. Sharett responded that Jerusalem was an integral part of Israel and that Jordan's unilateral annexation and the status of the occupied areas remained open to discussion.<sup>172</sup> Refusing to recognize Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem, Helm formally notified Eytan in Tel-Aviv of Britain's decision to accord *de jure* recognition, in view of the fact that Sharett was in Jerusalem.<sup>173</sup>

There was no parliamentary debate although a number of MPs criticized Britain's arms policy. Anti-Zionist, Legge-Bourke called the recognition of Israel as 'the most hideous betrayal of all those men who fought in Palestine in the past'.<sup>174</sup>

Despite setbacks, Anglo-Israeli relations had progressed considerably. *De jure* recognition was a realistic approach to a compromise solution and recognition of the union demonstrated that Britain ignored Arab League pressure.<sup>175</sup> Israel reluctantly acknowledged that a peace agreement with Jordan was unattainable without the tacit support of Britain, which despite its decline as an imperial power, was still the major regional power and enjoyed US support. Britain remained an important link between Israel and the neighbouring Arab states.

#### NOTES

1. ISA, 2412/26, 15 Jul 1948. Eytan reported: 'I am told by various people who meet the Arab representatives in London that they are fuming against the British and accusing them of a switchover to the Jewish cause. This is the main reason for the British going slow on *de facto* recognition: they do not want to add another irritant in the Arab world.'
2. K.Pattison, 'The Delayed British Recognition of Israel', *Middle East Journal*, 37, 1983, 412–17; 'The International Law of Recognition in Contemporary British Foreign Policy', Ph.D., University of Virginia, 1981.
3. H.Briggs, *The Law of Nations: Documents and Notes* (New York, 1952), 102.
4. FO 371/68664 6090/6422, 19 May 1948.
5. FO 371/68505 6249, 26 Apr 1948.
6. ISA, 2412/26, 1 June, 2 Jul; 2382/8, 20 Aug 1948. The Foreign Office addressed letters to Nahum Goldmann, President of the World Jewish Congress, as the 'Agent of the Jewish Authorities'.
7. ISA, 2412/29, 2 Jul 1948. He was told 'not to do anything which might in any way imply recognition of the existence of the State of Israel'. There were attacks on Marriott in the press. He was very unhappy and requested to be relieved from his post, FO 800/477, 13 June 1948.
8. FO 371/68699 13351/14143, 1 Nov, 13351/14669, 3 Nov 1948.
9. Zionist Federation and Jewish Agency staff filled the various positions.
10. ISA, 2412/29, 1 Sep 1949.
11. FO 371/68666 6090/7951, 16 June 1948.
12. CAB 129/31 CP (48) 223, 13 Sep, 16–18; FO 371/68632, 24 Sep 1948. Marriott predicted that the extreme left would win.
13. FO 371/68649 1078/6760, 20 May 1948.
14. CAB 128/12 CM (48) 33, 27 May 1948.
15. CAB 129/31 CP (48) 223, 13 Sep 1948.
16. FO 141/1322, 19 Aug; FO 371/68665 6090/7245, 21 May; 68670 6090/11607, 7 Sep 1948.



17. I.Asia, *The Core of the Conflict: The Struggle for the Negev, 1947–1956* (Jerusalem/Sede-Boker, 1984); N.Lorch, *Israel in the Grip of the Superpowers* (Tel-Aviv, 1990); I.Pappé, *Britain and the Arab-Israel Conflict, 1948–1951* (London, 1988), 27–9; R.Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945–1951* (Oxford, 1984), 376, 542, 557; E.Elath, *The Political Struggle for the Inclusion of Elath in the Jewish State* (London, 1966), 13–14; M.Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers* (Princeton, 1982), 140–9, 312.
18. *Hansard*, 451, 2661, 10 June 1948.
19. CAB 129/31 CP (48) 207, 24 Aug; 129/31 CP (48) 208, 25 Aug 1948.
20. CAB 128 CM (48) 57, 26 Aug 1948.
21. Interview with Pinchas Ginossar, *Lehi* activist. J.Heller, *The Stern Gang: Ideology, Politics and Terror, 1940–1949* (London, 1995); ‘Failure of a Mission; Bernadotte and Palestine, 1948’, *JCH*, 14.3, 1979, 515–34; A.Ilan, *Bernadotte in Palestine, 1948* (London, 1989); M.Gazit, ‘American and British Diplomacy and the Bernadotte Mission’, *Historical Journal*, 29.3, 1986, 677–96; C.Stanger, ‘A Haunting Legacy; the Assassination of Count Bernadotte’, *Middle East Journal*, 42.2, 1988, 260–72.
22. FO 371/68895 11946/12034, 9 Sep. Harold Beeley, desk officer responsible for Palestine at the Foreign Office, advocated that non-recognition was essential in the context of Britain’s overall relationship with the Arab states, FO 371/68670 6090/11511, 7 Sep 1948. Interview with Beeley.
23. CAB 128/30 CM (78), 6 Dec 1948.
24. ISA, 2412/26, 9 Jan 1949; K.Harris, *Attlee* (London, 1982), 395; *FRUS*, 1948, V, 22 Dec, 1683; FO 371/75367 1052/999, 14 Jan 1949.
25. FO 371/68699 13351/15782, 8 Dec 1948.
26. *FRUS*, 1948, V, 10 May; FO 371/68699 13351/15193, 19 Nov; 15782, 8 Dec; 75330 1015/1082, 22 Jan 1948.
27. Y.Freundlich, (ed.), *DFPI*, 11, *Companion Volume*, 16–17. Michael Oren, suggests that as early as 21 Sep 1948, Egypt approached Israel to conclude a separate agreement based ‘on the status quo in the South’. He cites Ben-Gurion’s Diary, 21 Sep 1948. ‘The Struggle for the Negev’, *Studies in Zionism*, 10.2, 1989, 203. Cadogan pressed for sanctions against the ‘Zionist aggressors’, *UNSCR*, 1070.
28. Bemused by Cadogan’s reincarnation as an apostle of peace, the other delegates waited three days before simply demanding a third cease-fire, on 22 Oct, *FRUS*, 1948, V, 26 Dec, 1691; A.Bullock, *Ernest Bevin* (Oxford, 1985); 649.
29. *FRUS*, 1948, V, 5 Jan 1871.
30. FO 371/75045 1016/167, 15 Jan; CAB 128/153 (49) 17 Jan 1949.
31. CM 128 (48) 71, 12 Nov; COS (ME) 308, 31 Dec 1948.
32. An ultimatum is a final, definitive term submitted by one disputant nation to the other for immediate acceptance or rejection. Since refusal to accept the terms may lead to war or hostile measures, an ultimatum usually constitutes a conditional declaration of war in written form and indicates how its non-acceptance will be regarded. The intensification of the crisis is often proportional to the time limit, thus reducing prospects for mediation or arbitration. An ultimatum could have been issued only through a third party, whose interpretation did not ensure that the final message replicated the original.
33. FO 371/68692, 11666, 30 Dec 1948.
34. *FRUS*, 1948, V, 31 Dec, 1690, 1701–5.
35. Lorch, 46–8; J.McDonald, *My Mission in Israel, 1948–1951* (New York, 1951), 107–14.
36. BGA, BGD, 31 Dec 1948: ‘J.M. [James McDonald] received a note from his Government to inform us that the English have a contract with Egypt, and they’ll have to put the contract into action—that is, provide military assistance, if we continue to remain in Egyptian territory... He [Sharett] asked whether to give orders immediately to return to our territory. I told him to confer with Yigal [Allon] on whether an immediate return will not interfere with the plans to conquer Gaza...J.M. arrived with Knox and read us the written resume to this

effect. I told J.M. that it is true that our army, after our liberation of the Negev crossed the border out of strategic needs but it has already been ordered to return, and the reports his Government received to the effect that this was premeditated are incorrect... As for the report from the British government, if it is obliged to act under these circumstances under the contract, it will be responsible for the Egyptian invasion. As for the second part of their statement, they present themselves as representatives of the UN, when in fact, they are not, and about the decisions [of the Security Council] we are in contact with UN representatives, and we do not believe that England has a separate mandate to worry about carrying out UN decisions... Privately I said to J.M. that I am surprised at the tough tone. Is it necessary for a friendly power to approach a small and weak nation in such a tone?... J.M. also expressed astonishment at the tone and he thinks that there must have been a lot of pressure on the President. Clearly, this note was dictated by England.'

37. FO 371/75045 1016/167, 15 Jan; CAB 128/15, CAB 3 (49) 17 Jan 1949; *FRUS*, 1948, V, 30 Dec, 171–2.
38. CAB 128 CM 128 (48) 71, 12 Nov 1948.
39. FO 371/75045 1016/367, 3 Jan; CAB 21/1922 DO (49), 1 Jan 3 1949; 30 Dec 1948; AIR 8/1791.
40. A.Kirkbride, *From the Wings: Amman Memoirs, 1947–1951* (London, 1976), 90.
41. FO 141/142, 31 Dec 1948; 2 Jan; 75334 1016/454, 10 Jan; 1016/156, 4 Jan; 75336 1016/1273, 17 Jan 1949; IDF, *Toldot*, 349–55.
42. BGA, BGD, 30 Dec 1948; FO 371/75334 1016/360, 14 Jan; ISA, 38/12, 4 Jan 1949.
43. ISA, 36/12, 3 Jan 1949; H.Wilson, *The Chariot of Israel* (London, 1980), 232.
44. FO 371/75380 1091/362, 2 Jan 1949.
45. G.Sheffer, *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (New York, 1986), 424–9.
46. ISA, 2414/26, 3 Jan 1949.
47. ISA, 377/16, 2318/5, 3 Jan 1949.
48. BGA, BGD, 31 Dec 1948; M.Bar Zohar, *Ben-Gurion* (Tel-Aviv, 1976), 859–60; ISA, 2412/26, 3 Jan 1949. Linton informed Sharett that Lewis Jones of the State Department had told him that: 'If we crossed frontier, it would be a serious matter, and quoted from copy of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty.'
49. ISA, Provisional Council minutes, 16, 5 Jan 1949; E.Orren, *Operation Horev* (Tel-Aviv, 1982), 7.
50. A.Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, 650.
51. *FRUS*, 1948, VI, 30 December, 1701–2.
52. B.Cull, S.Aloni and D.Nicolle, *Spitfires Over Israel* (London, 1993); Z.Tzahor, 'The 1949 Air Clash between the Israeli Air Force and the RAF', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 28, 1993, 75–101; G.Levett, *The Shabbos Goy* (Tel-Aviv, 1989); E.Weizman, *On Eagles Wings* (Tel-Aviv, 1976); Cohen and Lavi, *The Sky is not the Limit* (Jersalem, 1990); A.Bateman, 'Unholy Land', *Air Clues*, Apr 1987, 154–6.
53. *The Times*, 7 Jan 1949.
54. Attlee disliked the term 'reconnaissance flights' because as a part of 'Clatter' they were in accordance with the Anglo-Egyptian treaty. FO 371/75399 1016/154, 30 Dec 1948; 1016/297, 1 Jan; 128/31 CM 3 (49), Jan 17; CAB 21/1922 DO (49), 1, 3 Jan 1949; FO 371/75402 1223, 3 Feb; 10 Jan. See also 75247, 75339, 75388, 75400–2.
55. FO 371/75334 1016/338, 11 Jan 1949; M.Sieff, *Don't Ask the Price* (London, 1982), 189–90.
56. AFHA, *Intelligence Report 19*, 25 Nov; *Intelligence Report*, Southern Front HQ, 25 Nov 1948; AIR 27/2769, Log of Squadron 213 stationed in Egypt, 8–9 Jan 1949; Daily Report, 57, 9 Jan, see also 1–10 Jan; E.Weizman, *On Eagles Wings*, 72–7.
57. ISA, Provisional Council minutes, 16, 9 Jan 1949.
58. *Davar* and *Haaretz*, 22 Nov 1948; CAB 21/1922, DO (49), 1, 3 Jan 1949; *Hansard*, 459, 1388.

59. FO 371/75247 1221, 13 Jan 1949.
60. BGA, BGD: 7 Jan 1949. Weizman wrote that he shot down the planes because he was feeling 'blue' about missing out on the glory of that day: 'Here the war was over here it was breathing its last breath...and I was left out of the celebration [and] went to seek his prey', *Toldot*, 362.
61. CAB 128/1, CM 3 (49), 17 Jan 1949.
62. Z.Tzohar, 'The 1949 Air Clash', 95.
63. FO 371/75400, 1223, 11 Jan 1949.
64. DEFE 4/19 COS (49) 5, 8 Jan 1949.
65. AIR 27/2769, Log of Squadron 213 stationed in Egypt, 8–9 Jan 1949.
66. *FRUS*, 1949, VI, 9 Jan, 594–5, J.McDonald, *My Mission in Israel*, 107–14. On Jan 10, Truman summoned Franks to the White House and told him: 'I don't like what you people are doing...your planes have no business over the battle area in Palestine'. Lovett told Franks that: 'It was clear indeed as had been proved by recent events, that the State of Israel would be the most dynamic, efficient vigorous government in the Near East in the future', FO 371/75334 1016/614, 13 Jan; 1016/615, 17 Jan; BGA, BGD, 13 Jan; *FRUS*, 1949, VI, 9 Jan, 633, 645, 658; D.Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York, 1969), 342.
67. BGA, BGD, 9 Jan; ISA, 2318/5, 11 Jan 1949.
68. FO 371/75367 1051/350, 7 Jan; 75334 1016/614, 13 Jan 1949.
69. ISA, Provisional Council minutes, 16, 11 Jan. This was also the recommendation of Rafael at the UN, ISA, 2180/31, 10 Jan; 2412/26, 11 Jan; 2412/28, 18 Jan 1949.
70. *Manchester Evening News*, 8 Jan; *Sunday People*, 9 Jan 1949. With the exception of the *Observer*, all the Sunday papers blamed Israel.
71. *Manchester Guardian*, 10 Jan 1949.
72. *The Times*, 11 Jan 1949. See L.S.Amery's letter the same day.
73. *The Times*, 13 Jan 1949.
74. *New Statesman*, 8, 15 Jan; *Economist*, 15 Jan 1949.
75. *Hansard*, 460, 164–85, 19 Jan 1949.
76. ISA 2318/5, 22, 23 Jan. Linton cabled Sharett that recognition was not a change of heart but a direct consequence of US pressure on Britain after the downing of the RAF planes. FO 371/75337 1016/1932, 3 Feb 1949; A.Eban, *An Autobiography*, 137.
77. *The Times*, 1, 11 Jan; *Economist*, 15 Jan 1949; *New Statesman*, 10, 17, 24, July; 7, 14, 21 Aug; 11, 25 Sep; 23 Oct; 13, 27 Nov; 25 Dec 1948; 8, 15, 22, 29 Jan 1949; *Daily Herald*, 9 Aug 1948; 4, 8, 19, 27 Jan 1949; FO 371/75368.
78. FO 371/75368 1052/100, 21 Dec 1948.
79. FO 371/75337 1016/1881, 14 Jan 1949.
80. CAB 129/32 CP (49) 10, 15 Jan 1949.
81. Bevin made this offer ignoring the advice of his advisers. CAB 128/31, Part 1, CP (49), 10, 15 Jan 1949. Sharett supported the British offer. BGA, BGD, 24 Dec 1948.
82. CAB 128/15 CM (49) 3, 17 Jan 1949; M.Foot, *Aneurin Bevan*, ii (London, 1962), 82.
83. FO 371/75334 1016/615, 17 Jan; *FRUS*, 1949, VI, 18 Jan, 676.
84. *FRUS*, 1949, VI, 24 Jan, 691–2.
85. FO 371/75368 1052/1259, 22, 24 Jan 1949.
86. *Hansard*, 16 Jan 1949, 94.
87. FO 371/75368 1052/1119, 21 Jan 1949.
88. FO 371/75369 1052/1507, 28 Jan 1949.
89. ISA, Provisional Council minutes, 16, 30 Jan 1949.
90. FO 371/68695, 66870–1. While the Portsmouth Treaty (an attempt to renew the 1930 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty) was being negotiated, over 300 people were shot on the streets of Baghdad. The government resigned and on 4 Feb 1949, a new government rejected the treaty.

91. CAB 128/15 CM (49) 6, 24 Jan 1949.
92. *Hansard*, 460, 925–1064, 26 Jan; FO 371/75369 1052/1510, 25 Jan 1949.
93. *Hansard*, 460, 1059–63, 26 Jan; *Jewish Vanguard*, 29 Jan 1949.
94. *The Times*, 27 Jan 1949.
95. FO 371/75208 1056/15164, 7 Dec; ISA, 2584/12, 28 Dec 1949.
96. *The Times*, 2 Feb 1949. *The Times* index listed ‘Israel’ under ‘Palestine’ until 1954.
97. ‘His Majesty’s Government was convinced of the importance of entering into direct relations with Israel in order to facilitate day to day transactions covering the area of Palestine occupied by the Jews.’ *FRUS*, 1949, VI, 29 Jan, 711; R.Louis and H.Bull, *The Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations since 1945* (Oxford, 1986); E.Elath, *Through The Mist of Time: Reminiscences* (Jerusalem, 1989), 27–53.
98. A.Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, 653; FO 371/753334 1016/1392, Jan 1949.
99. ISA, Provisional Council minutes, 16, 30, Jan; 2583/4, 29 Jan 1949.
100. In 1952, ministers (legations) were upgraded to ambassadors (embassies).
101. FO 371/75209 1071/2313, 18 Feb 1949.
102. ISA, 36/2, 31 Jan 1949.
103. ISA, 2583/4, 7, 19 Apr 1949.
104. ISA, 2583/4, 27 Apr 1949. Interviews with Michael Comay, Lord Weidenfeld and Eliezer Yapou.
105. ISA, 2583/4, 9 Mar 1949.
106. ISA 2594/7, 14 Mar 1949.
107. ISA, 36/12, 23 Feb 1949.
108. ISA, 2589/12, 12 May 1949.
109. FO 371/75269 1891/6043, 10 May 1949.
110. FO 371/75054 2478, 8 Feb; 2479, 16 Feb 1949.
111. FO 371/75054 3518, 24 Jan 1949; *New Statesman*, 15, 22, 29 Jan; 2 Jul 1949; 18 Feb; 10, 24 June, 5 Jul 1950; FO 371/75358 1684; K.Kishtany, *The New Statesman and the Middle East* (Beirut, 1972).
112. ISA, 2583/4, 24 Mar 1949.
113. ISA, 2583/5, 13 Jan 1950.
114. FO 371/75202 1051/437, 25 Mar 1949.
115. ISA, 36/12, 27 May 1949.
116. *Palestine Post*, 18 May 1949.
117. FO 371/75269 1891/6345, 19 May; *Ha’aretz*, 18 May 1949.
118. FO 371/75195 1016/7953, 24 June 1949.
119. FO 371/75207 1052/65611, 75194 1016/7194, 23, 31 May 1949.
120. FO 371/75202 1051/437, 25 Mar 1949.
121. BGA, BGD, 30 May; FO 371/75269 1051/7143, 30 May; ISA, 36/12, 30 May 1949.
122. FO 371/75202 1051/7920, 15 June 1949. Bevin made similar remarks to Rosette.
123. FO 371/68665 6090/6548, 15 May; *FRUS*, 1948, V, 10 Dec, 1659.
124. *FRUS*, 1948, V, 22 Dec, 1683; FO 371/75367 1052/999, 14 Jan 1949.
125. FO 371/75209 1071/2571, 25 Feb; 1071/2620, 26 Feb 1949.
126. FO 371/75209 1071/2313 and 1673; 3, 10 Feb 1949.
127. FO 371/1071/2313, 10 Feb; 75209 1071/2789–90, 2 Mar; 2910, 1, 2 Mar; 75210 1071/3116, 4 Mar; 3519, 13 Mar 1949.
128. G.Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett: Biography of a Political Moderate* (Oxford, 1976), 448–68; ISA, DFPI, ii, 46; 7 Mar; A.Eban, *An Autobiography*, 132–7; UNGA 273 (iii), 11 May 1949.
129. *Palestine Post*, 6 Mar 1949.
130. G.Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett*, 466.
131. ISA, 2586/14, 25 Jan; 2586/4, 9 Mar 1950.
132. FO 371/75308 1421/6283, 10 May; ISA, 2583/4, 9, 10 May 1949.
133. FO 371/68512 16134, 20 Dec 1948; *FRUS*, 1949, V, 1680–5.

134. Mapam, (United Labour Party) socialist, anti-imperialist pro-Moscow party committed to Jewish-Arab co-existence. It garnered 15% in the Jan elections. Sharett, *Dvrei HaKnesset*, i, 15 June, 717–38. ISA, 2595/8, 20 July; 22 Sep 37/1; 2403/12; 75207 1054/11807; 75206 1054/8696, 16 July; 75054 1026/2478, 8 Feb 1949. Beeley and Shuckburgh told me that they had been wrong that Israel would become communist. However, Arab extremism was undoubtedly the cause of Israeli intransigence, which continued to threaten western interests in the region.
135. ISA, 36/14, 12 Aug; *FRUS*, 1949, VI, 6 July; FO 371/75193 1016/7953, 24 June.
136. FO 371/75064 1026/4263, 22 Mar; 75054 1026/6145, 20 May 1949.
137. ISA, 2412/26, 12 May 1949.
138. FO 371/75245 1195/10385, 18 Aug; CAB 128/16 CM (49) 54, 29 Aug; ISA, 2412/26, 26 Aug 1949.
139. 'The Ministry of Agriculture is Russian, the Ministry of Trade is full of Germans but the Foreign Office is more or less Anglo-Saxon. It is easier with people like these', ISA 36/14, 12 Aug 1949.
140. FO 371/75067 1052/8752, 4 July 1949.
141. ISA, 2412/26, 7 June 1949.
142. FO 371/75206 1054/8696, 19 July 1949.
143. ISA, 36/14, 19 July 1949.
144. FO 371/75206 1054/8696, 21 July 1949.
145. ISA, 36/14, 19 July 1949; E.Elath, *Through the Mist of Time*, 27–53.
146. Abdullah sent letters to the 'Foreign Minister' of Israel via Britain, ISA, 2412/26, 11 Mar, 29 July 1949.
147. ISA 36/14, 19 July 1949.
148. FO 371/75072 1058/9042, 21 July; ISA, 36/16, 17 Aug 1949.
149. CAB 129/37 CP (49) 183, 25 Aug 1949.
150. ISA, 38/12, 4 Oct, 64/2, 14 Oct 1949.
151. ISA, 2412/26, 26 Sep 1949.
152. CAB 129/37 CP (49) 209, 19 Oct 1949.
153. FO 371/82506 1015/9, 29 Jan 1950.
154. FO 371/911370 1081/18, 28 Feb 1951.
155. FO 371/91705 1101/1, 24 Jan 1951.
156. FO 371/82511 1017/35, 24 Nov 1951.
157. Interviews with Lord Mayhew and Sir Harold Beeley. Truman sent a congratulatory telegram to Weizmann on his 75th birthday. Helm's recommendation to follow suit, which 'could perhaps provide the opportunity for *de jure* recognition' was rejected. This was in part because no Arab head of state had received a birthday telegram, FO 371/75207 1054/13388, 7, 16 Nov 1949.
158. *FRUS*, 1949, VI, 18 Oct.
159. FO 371/75277 10111/14906, 5, 15 Dec; *FRUS*, 1949, VI, 20 Dec; A.Sinai and A. Pollack, *The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the West Bank* (New York, 1977), 325.
160. ISA, 36/14, 19 Dec 1949.
161. FO 371/82715 1051/2, 18 Mar 1950.
162. 'Our primary interest is that a settlement should be reached between Israel and Jordan...any notification of the above to either Jordan or Egyptian governments would have the effect of stiffening their attitude in the negotiations with Israel', FO 371/82715 1015/14, 27 Jan 1950.
163. ISA, 2586/14, 21 Mar 1950.
164. ISA, 2586/14, 9 Jan 1950.
165. FO 371/82577 1053/4, 2 Feb 1950.
166. CAB 129/39 CP (50) 55, 30 Mar 1950. Reference to Israel did not appear.
167. CAB 129 CP (50) 78, 20 Apr 1950.

168. *FRUS*, 1950, VI, 870.
169. CAB 128 CM 25 (50), 25 Apr 1950.
170. CAB 128 CM 26 (50), 27 Apr; *FRUS*, 1950, VI, 875.
171. *Hansard*, 27 Apr 1950, 474, 1137–42; Britain was the only country that formally recognized the union. Pakistan did so verbally but not in writing.
172. ISA, 2586/14, 2 May 1950; U.Bialer, ‘The Road to the Capital; the Establishment of Jerusalem as the Official Seat of the Israeli Government in 1949’, *Studies in Zionism*, 5.2, 1984, 273–96; M.Brecher, *Decisions in Israel’s Foreign Policy* (Oxford, 1974), 9–53.
173. ISA, 36/12, 27 Apr 1950.
174. *Hansard*, 27 Apr 1950, 474, 1141.
175. ISA, 2584/2, 27 Apr 1950. Following the meeting, Eytan officially notified him of the appointment of Eliahu Elath as Israel’s Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Court of St James’s.

## 2

# Cutting and retying the umbilical cord: the sterling balances and the nurturing of bilateral ties, 1949–1954

### ANGLO-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS ON THE STERLING BALANCES

The granting of full diplomatic recognition of Israel was made contingent on the conclusion of a satisfactory financial settlement with Israel on outstanding financial matters arising after the termination of the Mandate.<sup>1</sup>

Uri Bialer correctly notes that ‘urgent needs greatly determined Israel’s basic approaches to contacts with the outside world during its early history’ and that Israel’s foreign policy was formulated against a background of constant economic stress.<sup>2</sup> Anglo-Israeli relations were affected by pressing economic exigencies characteristic of both countries. Britain’s victory in World War II came at a devastating cost. Policy makers endured a disparaging metamorphosis and the post-war Labour government was overwhelmed with the task of implementing a programme of austerity and retrenchment. In August 1945, following the abrupt termination of ‘Lend-Lease’, Britain was forced to negotiate a humiliating US loan of \$3.75m in order to prevent the total collapse of its economy.<sup>3</sup>

During World War II, Palestine accumulated a large sterling balance, which Britain regarded as profits of war.<sup>4</sup> Britain feared that these balances would rapidly be depleted, borne out by the fact that Palestine’s sterling balances declined from approximately £120m in July 1946 to under £100m in November 1947.<sup>5</sup> In a measure designed to limit depreciating levels of sterling, the Colonial Office recommended excluding Palestine from the sterling zone, which was implemented on 22 February 1948.<sup>6</sup>

The Jewish Agency argued that the sterling balances were the direct result of an influx of Jewish capital.<sup>7</sup> It castigated Britain’s decision to set aside £7m for immediate needs, until the termination of the Mandate, as particularly vindictive since these measures were not applied to Transjordan.

Sterling reserves were imperative. Without them, the Jewish State could not procure commodities crucial to its survival. Israel recognized that the alleviation of its plight lay in expediting a successful conclusion on sterling balances. Initially, Bevin refused to consider financial negotiations with the ‘Jewish authorities’, asserting that the political advantages outweighed long-term economic factors.<sup>8</sup> The Cabinet ‘realised that postponement of financial discussions with the Jewish authorities would make it more difficult to secure payment of their debts to His Majesty’s Government, but there were over-riding political advantages in postponement’.<sup>9</sup> With regard to citrus imports, Bevin was determined ‘to avoid any suggestion that His Majesty’s Government were making payments to the Jews in respect of products which they had acquired as a result of recent

military operations, since this would ruin any prospect of securing Arab acquiescence to proposals for a political settlement’.

In November, Bevin made a significant gesture by agreeing to release Israel’s blocked sterling in commercial banks.<sup>10</sup> The Treasury calculated that the former Mandate’s liabilities far exceeded its assets, and urged that Israel purchase them and undertake to cover the liabilities.<sup>11</sup>

The deficit of the former Palestine Government is so considerable that if, as we hope, the Israeli Government agrees to meet a substantial proportion of it, their sterling balances would not suffice to enable them to reimburse His Majesty’s Government immediately.<sup>12</sup>

It was reluctant to initiate direct negotiations and suggested that ‘the Bank of England should let the Anglo-Palestine Bank know that they have reason to think [HMG’s] Government would respond to a move’ from Israel.<sup>13</sup>

In an attempt to resolve the differences, Britain released £1.5m on 22 February 1949.<sup>14</sup> Israel requested an additional £16.5m in monthly payments of £1.5m but Britain agreed only to £8.5m. In a further limited gesture, Britain agreed to release sterling at a rate of £700,000 a month between May and October in addition to £1.75m to cover sterling payments for oil supplies up to 31 October.<sup>15</sup>

On 27 March, Israel formally approved the conditions and guidelines for entering negotiations with Britain on outstanding financial matters.<sup>16</sup> Without fanfare, preliminary negotiations began when Treasury officials advised Linton on matters Britain was prepared to discuss.<sup>17</sup> The Treasury estimated that Israel was liable to pay between £25–30m, but concluded it was unrealistic to expect that this sum could be recuperated.<sup>18</sup> It feared that Israel was incapable of assuming these liabilities and there was nothing to prevent her from commencing all British-owned land, thus conveniently dispensing with its liabilities. The longer it took to reach an agreement, the less Israeli sterling would remain in London. In these diminishing circumstances, the most Britain expected to retrieve was between £10–15m, less than half its estimated assets in Israeli-controlled Palestine.

The Colonial and Foreign Offices demanded that the negotiations comply with contemporaneous discussions on additional liabilities, including assets and territorial disputes of the former mandatory government.<sup>19</sup> The Treasury claimed that it would lead to protracted negotiations, which were detrimental to Britain’s interests.<sup>20</sup>

Israel’s advantageous bargaining position was weakened by severe shortages aggravated by the absorption of over 231,000 immigrants in its first year.<sup>21</sup> The release of the Jewish Agency’s frozen sterling balances was considered crucial for Israel’s survival. David Horowitz, Director-General of the Finance Ministry, wrote:

I decided that top priority be given to the payment of debts and promissory notes. If we did not maintain our good reputation, we would be unable to obtain loans in times of emergency. Next in importance was fuel, without which we could not maintain either the army civilian productivity or our electricity supply... The only hope of extricating



ourselves from our foreign currency crisis lay in the release of our sterling balances in Britain<sup>22</sup>

The Foreign Office concluded that 'the Israelis-and this is no discredit to them-are likely to be extremely hard and shrewd bargainers... We should keep as many cards as possible in our hand for the difficult negotiations ahead of us. Among these cards is the question of the sterling balances.'<sup>23</sup>

Britain was interested to recover what remained of its diminishing assets in Israeli-controlled Palestine.<sup>24</sup> Despite mutual antipathy, direct formal negotiations began in May and later resumed in July to the end of November. The *Palestine Post* commented that 'Israel will be ready enough to forget the past if Britain is desirous of starting off afresh'. It criticized Britain's decision to release blocked Palestine funds for Transjordan, nominally on behalf of the Arabs of the 'triangle', while money was held back for Jewish interests at a meagre rate.<sup>25</sup>

At the outset, Colin Crowe, First Counsellor at the Legation, believed that:

The negotiations were of far greater importance for Israel than they are to the United Kingdom. The terms of any agreement are going to be scrutinised clause by clause in the Knesset and in the press, an agreement that is considered unfavourable might even cause the downfall of the Government.<sup>26</sup>

Horowitz did not anticipate an easy mission, but upon arriving in Britain, he was pleasantly surprised to be granted a cordial private meeting with Sir Wilfred Eddy, a senior Treasury official who told him 'you shot your way out to freedom, and now we can become friends'. Eddy warned him that the difficulties were accentuated by the seriousness of Britain's economic crisis. Eager to ease the way, he arranged for Horowitz to meet with Henry Wilson-Smith, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Treasury. He was less amenable than Eddy and reiterated Treasury policy to use the impounded sterling balances as payment in the event of counter claims for Israel's 'sequestration' of British government property in Palestine.<sup>27</sup>

The initial negotiating positions proved unbridgeable.<sup>28</sup> Despite the impasse, it was in Britain's interests to protect the Israeli pound because it was linked to the British pound. For this reason, Horowitz was informed in advance of an imminent devaluation of sterling and on 20 September, a specially convened Cabinet authorized an immediate devaluation and the readjusting of Israel's currency to \$2.80 to £1. Kaplan explained that the decision was taken solely at Israel's initiative.<sup>29</sup>

Fearing that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Stafford Cripps, would be too acquiescent to Israel's requests, the Colonial Office reiterated demands to recover substantive fixed assets in former Palestine. In a ploy to pre-empt counter claims against Britain for the illegal detention of Jewish refugees in Cyprus, the Foreign Office urged 'that the items in respect of Jewish illegal immigrant camps should be included in the accounts presented to the Israeli government'. Claims for the maintenance and dismantlement of camps,



Figure 2.1 First meeting of the Anglo-Israeli financial talks, Tel-Aviv, July 1949

*Source:* Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office estimated at about £330,000 were leaked by Horowitz to the *New Statesman*, which chastised the Government's insensitivity in suing for costs incurred for incarcerating Jewish detainees in Cyprus.<sup>30</sup> In a *volte-face*, fearing adverse criticism, Israel was then informed that the inclusion of these claims was for 'information only', which was buried in an annex:

The liabilities borne by His Majesty's Government since May 15th include an item of £1,290,000 in respect of Jewish immigration camps in Cyprus. Although His Majesty's Government consider this item to be unquestionably, a legitimate charge on Palestine accounts they do not desire to state this claim further...<sup>31</sup>

The Treasury's predicament was to ensure that Britain recuperated maximum returns for its assets, while avoiding adverse pressure on Israel to conclude a settlement, which would result in Israel refusing to pay at all. If Britain accepted anything close to Israel's offer, the outcome of separate negotiations with neighbouring Arab states would be seriously prejudiced.<sup>32</sup> Crowe conceded:

There is also the uncomfortable point, which they [Israel] have not mentioned but which is clearly in their minds, that we are most unlikely to get, or even try to get, any money out of the other [Transjordan] successor state. On the contrary, we are likely to have to subsidise it.

McGeagh, one of the Treasury negotiators also doubted Britain's objective. He did not understand 'why we should expect Israel to make payments of a kind, which we know the equivalent Arab state can never make'.<sup>33</sup>

Helm led Britain's negotiators at the resumed talks in Israel accompanied by Treasury officials, Hogan and McGeagh. Helm insisted that no protocols were to be kept of the discussions. Israel's delegation, led by Horowitz, included Kaplan, Minister of Finance and Sharett, Foreign Minister. Sharett wanted to concentrate on the political and economic aspects of the problem but Britain succeeded in focusing the discussions on legalities.<sup>34</sup> Comay noted that:

Helm is ignorant of the whole background, and of the intricacies attending special issues... He probably has an idea that we have helped ourselves to the assets, and we are now trying to evade taking over a share of the liabilities, by taking refuge in technicalities... That the Jews should suspiciously want to scrutinise the way HMG handled Palestine funds, or acquired funds, or acquired property in Palestine, seems natural to Hogan and McGeagh, and does not upset them. Helm finds it outrageous.<sup>35</sup>

The negotiations proved fruitless. Britain failed to produce accurate figures and Israel refused to accept 'successor authority' status. Israel's opening gambit focused on Britain turning over, without payment, several key military installations to the Arabs in the last months of the mandate. Crowe argued that:

In their claims they said they included, without having worked out the sums, compensation for lives lost in taking possession of Tel Litwinsky camp sold to the Jews but handed over to the Arabs and Malkia camp in the Upper Galilee, sold for pounds Palestinian 1,250 but also handed over to the Arabs and captured by the Israelis after three attempts at the cost of 40 lives. The claims which they had received from the Jews in Israel in respect of rent due, reinstatement and compensation amounted to £Israel 540,000.

Israel maintained it had simply acquired property, which Britain gave to the Arabs and was unjustified in reselling it to Israel.<sup>36</sup> Helm refuted the claim and cited the precedent of 'successor authority', thus Israel inherited all outstanding obligations. Israel argued that 'successor authority' was entirely obscure in international law.<sup>37</sup>

The Bank of England complained that Israel's transfers of sterling to third countries totalled L.1.9m, L.7m more than had originally been agreed upon at the negotiations in London. Crowe noted that by delaying discussion on important matters it would get 'no better terms on this issue and there is a danger of doing worse'.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, 'the Israelis do not have the money to pay us even moderate sums at the present time, nor are they in a position to mortgage their future to pay us'.<sup>39</sup> McGeagh concurred: 'Instead of continuing a losing battle and having to be beaten point by point, let us come forward with a framework as a noble gesture of friendship towards the new State and then negotiate as to how much we can obtain from Israel within this framework.'

The Foreign Office blamed the impasse on Israel. The difficulty was ‘not so much differences of opinion as to the correctness of the demands made as the Israeli refusal to admit our right to make any demands at all’.<sup>40</sup> Israel requested that the talks reconvene in London where Horowitz believed direct negotiations with Cripps would prove more productive.<sup>41</sup> He sensed Cripps’ sincere desire to make amends for Britain’s antagonism to Israel. As a socialist, he discounted the obligation to reduce standards of living in order to pay a political debt. Helm happily consented to the request, thus relieving himself from the burden of the impasse in Tel-Aviv.<sup>42</sup> Before the reconvened negotiations scheduled for January 1950, Britain and Israel conducted supplementary negotiations in what Horowitz described as ‘a game of chess by correspondence where one is not face to face with one’s opposite number and Helm merely acts as a post office for transmitting our offers’.<sup>43</sup>

The Foreign Office and the Treasury differed on tactics. The Foreign Office urged to ‘continue as long as possible to stall on the question of fixing a date for the resumption of talks on sterling releases’ while the Treasury objected to ‘receiving an Israeli delegation in London and keeping them on a string’.<sup>44</sup> *The Times* suspected that ‘the urgent need for capital investment is beginning to shape Israeli foreign policy’.<sup>45</sup>

In 1949, Britain’s share in Israeli trade declined by more than half, owing to the dearth of free sterling. The freezing of sterling had a detrimental effect on British exports and employment, as Israel looked to other markets.<sup>46</sup> Cripps was influenced by the Federation of British Industries argument that Israel was Britain’s most important commercial centre in the Middle East. He insisted at the Economic Policy Committee (EPC) on 18 November that Israel be invited to resume talks.<sup>47</sup> The Foreign Office was ‘doubtful whether we should consider the possibility of Israel as a centre of trade in the Middle East as at all desirable at any stage’.<sup>48</sup>

In early February 1950 negotiations resumed in London where a final agreement on the sterling balances was concluded on 30 March.<sup>49</sup> Britain’s initial demand that Israel pay between £25–30m was soon reduced to £18,714,000 (discounting pensions). Israel offered £4,885,000 and succeeded in reducing Britain’s sum to £11,507,000 while raising her offer to £6,180,000. Cripps was doubtful whether Britain would receive more than £10m; the Foreign Office reluctantly agreed and advised the Treasury to conclude ‘a realistic settlement on purely financial grounds’. Eager to conclude an agreement, Cripps intimated to Horowitz that Britain was willing to consider an Israeli offer of £7m, £4.5 less than its previous offer. The Foreign Office was furious at Cripps and the Treasury for displaying ‘a generosity, which is in clear contrast with their attitude over the provision of funds for the Arab refugees or the Arab Legion’.<sup>50</sup>

The Treasury was relieved to learn on 26 March that an ‘agreement signed by Horowitz would be binding on the Israel Government without further ratification’ and that they were not contingent on *Knesset* approval.<sup>51</sup> The final accords were duly signed by Horowitz and Sir James Crombie on 30 March. The initial agreements involved £12.75m, which included £1m for November and December 1949.<sup>52</sup> The negotiating teams met once more at the end of December to discuss further releases of sterling.<sup>53</sup> Britain made a further concession by extending private charitable remittances to Israel to the sum of £2.25m and between January 1951 and December 1952; a further £13.7m was released.<sup>54</sup> In total, Britain released £33.65m and received an accumulating Israeli

concession estimated at £8.8m, half the amount demanded at the outset of the negotiations.<sup>55</sup>

It was essential for Israel to wean itself from Britain after a painful and protracted birth and to ensure its future. The sterling balances agreement, to borrow a metaphor, was the necessary cutting of the umbilical cord, which made possible the essential flow of oxygen (sterling) to the fledgling Jewish State. Britain recuperated significant assets through a dignified settlement.<sup>56</sup>

In an attempt to save face, the Foreign Office explained that:

In considering whether such concessions were desirable, it was necessary to take into account the political factors involved, e.g., the goodwill to be gained in Israel and the United States by a settlement on the one hand, and possible resentment in the Arab States on the other... It was only by taking into account Israel's economic difficulties that His Majesty's Government were able to agree to a settlement on those terms.<sup>57</sup>

Pro-Arabist, Elizabeth Monroe was alarmed at 'the rapidity with which Israel has run through its available sterling and has built up indebtedness... is a significant reminder of the extremely artificial basis on which the economy of Israel is still operating'.<sup>58</sup> Horowitz believed that the agreement eased Israel's serious economic plight, acquired vast property, and opened further avenues and prospects for the future.<sup>59</sup> The financial agreements 'had a most salutary effect on economic and political relations between the two countries, and have done much to promote goodwill and understanding'.<sup>60</sup> *Davar*, the *Histadrut* newspaper, shared Horowitz's view; 'it removes the last stumbling block in the way of regular financial and commercial relations between the two countries'.<sup>61</sup> The British press lauded Britain's readiness to compromise as munificent.<sup>62</sup>

The agreement went beyond Israel's expectations. It transferred to Israel, large numbers of British buildings and tracts of land. In return, Israel made a token payment (a negligible proportion of Britain's original demands), a sum paid in instalments over a period of fifteen years at only one per cent interest a year.<sup>63</sup>

A successful conclusion of an agreement on sterling releases was also a prerequisite for the establishing of full diplomatic relations.<sup>64</sup> Within a month, Israel was notified that she could pursue requests for arms and military equipment; Britain accorded her *de jure* recognition; initiated the first formal naval visit of the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, and permitted Israeli military personnel to study at military academies in Britain. These developments would not have been possible without a successful agreement on outstanding financial issues.

### THE HAIFA REFINERIES

The 1947 UN partition plan called for an economic union between the proposed Jewish and Arab states, which were to derive their oil from the existing supplies at the Haifa refinery.<sup>65</sup> This proved problematic because Haifa was allotted to the Jewish state. Jewish forces took control of the city in April 1948 and, following British withdrawal from Haifa, Israel secured the refineries, the third largest in the Middle East. Refined oil

products accounted for between six to nine per cent of the total oil product imports from Europe and brought considerable revenues to the Treasury.<sup>66</sup>

Two-thirds of Israel's oil requirements were marketed by Shell and, along with the Haifa refinery, constituted an important British investment. Britain feared that Israel would sabotage them.<sup>67</sup> In May, Iraq severed the oil pipeline from Mosul to Haifa. Israel's fuel reserves ran perilously low. Without oil, the IDF could not function. Imminent collapse was prevented by a British assimilated Jew 'on loan' to the Bank of England from the India Office, who helped Israel meet shortfalls in payments by complex accounting that maintained the flow of oil.<sup>68</sup>

Britain's eagerness to reach an agreement on the sterling balances contrasted with its reluctance to seek a swift solution to the future of the refineries, which were shut down on 14 April following a strike by Arab employees. In January 1949, all British employees of Consolidated Oil Refineries had left for Cyprus, a clear indication that the refineries would remain closed for the near future. Despite undesirable benefits to Israel's economy, the Treasury favoured resuming Arab oil production to the refinery, expected to replenish \$50m in lost revenues.<sup>69</sup>

To Israel's chagrin, the quantity of oil discussed catered for no more than a month's supply. Although Israel blamed the oil shortage on Britain, Israel 'was perfectly willing to discuss any reasonable and liberal arrangement in the nature of free port facilities or a free port area'. This contradicted Israel's earlier stance that it would not relinquish any military accomplishments, and rejected calls for Haifa to become a free port to which the Jordanians would have access.<sup>70</sup> In September 1948, UN mediator Bernadotte recommended that:

The port of Haifa, including the oil refineries and terminal and without prejudice to their inclusion in the sovereign territory of the Jewish State or the administration of the city of Haifa, should be declared a free port, with assurances of free access for interested Arab countries and an undertaking on their part to place no obstacle in the way of oil deliveries by pipeline to the Haifa refineries, whose distribution would continue on the basis of the historical pattern.<sup>71</sup>

The *New Statesman* supported the reopening of the refinery because the biggest single item of dollar expenditure was still oil. Unless the refinery was reopened, the suspicion would not be removed that anti-Jewish prejudice in the Middle Eastern department of the Foreign Office was preventing the restoration of one of the most important dollar-earning plants.<sup>72</sup>

In November 1949, the EPC expressed deep concern over the heavy losses resulting from Egypt and Iraq's blockage of sterling oil from reaching the Haifa refinery. Financial pressure was applied on Iraq but in light of Iraq's threat to leave the sterling zone, the Cabinet was constrained to instructing Bevin to 'explore all practical possibilities of securing the passage of sterling oil to the refinery at Haifa'.<sup>73</sup> Contrary to the Cabinet's instructions, Bevin refused to make representations to Iraq and Egypt because Israel's minuscule influence did not justify 'recommending expenditure in Israel for the sake of our oil interests so long as there is no settlement of the Palestine question with the Arabs'.

Attempts to cajole Iraq failed because it was, 'a case where economic arguments carried no weight against political considerations'.<sup>74</sup> A Treasury official told Horowitz that oil companies, which had arranged crude oil shipments to Haifa, were continually thwarted by the Foreign Office. Britain's refusal to consider Egypt's readiness to secretly re-route the oil tankers to Haifa after passing through the Suez Canal, lent credence to this accusation.

Britain and the US differed on the reopening of the Haifa refinery. Unlike Britain and France, the US economy was not directly dependent on the refinery and was concerned that its strategic position in the region would be impaired in the likelihood that the pressure would backfire.<sup>75</sup> US ambassadors in Arab capitals sympathized with Baghdad's stance. Leigh-Jones, Chairman of Shell, suggested that the main reason for keeping the Haifa refineries closed lay in the objection of US oil companies to using Persian oil.<sup>76</sup>

Iraq suggested oil tankers supply oil to Haifa from Tripoli in the Lebanon. Sharett advocated despatching the IAF to bomb the Tripoli refineries in order to prevent oil shipments reaching Arab countries from Haifa.<sup>77</sup> Britain's refusal, as controlling shareholder owner of the Anglo-Iranian Petroleum Company, to activate the refineries forced Israel to import refined oil at an exorbitant price. Sharett accused Britain of aiming at 'annihilating us but now that their plan has failed they are planning to make our life impossible'.<sup>78</sup>

Horowitz travelled to London in June 1950 to urge the board of directors to resume oil supplies to Israel from Haifa. He was warmly received by Cripps, who as Chancellor, was empowered with Britain's voting shares in Anglo-Iranian. Britain's hands, however, were tied after loaning Iraq £3m on the security of its oil royalties.<sup>79</sup> Nuri Said warned that reopening the refinery would adversely effect current Anglo-Iraqi financial negotiations.<sup>80</sup> Horowitz informed Cripps that Israel would not tolerate the refineries remaining idle and intimated it was considering nationalization.<sup>81</sup> Cripps, in poor health, did not call Israel's bluff and he guaranteed to reopen the refineries. True to his word, they reopened in January 1951. Three days later, on 19 October, poor health forced him to resign from government.

Horowitz ensured for Israel the continual flow of oil supplies, whose dependency on sterling lessened following the reparations agreement with West Germany in 1952. Improved Anglo-Israeli economic relations were exhibited by the conclusion of a satisfactory settlement on the sterling balances, securing Israel's oil supplies and the partial reopening of the Haifa refineries.

#### ISRAEL'S REQUEST FOR LOANS AND ANGLO-ISRAELI COMMERCIAL RELATIONS

In 1897, Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary, declared that 'the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office are chiefly engaged in finding new markets and in defending old ones'. Anglo-Israeli commercial relations were a case in point. Before May 1948, Britain was the *Yishuv's* prime financial market, the custodian of its currency, its chief insurance market and the supplier of raw industrial diamonds, capital goods, and equipment. Britain was also the top purchaser of oranges, citrus by-products, and potash from the Dead Sea.

Between 1949 and 1958, Britain remained Israel's chief export market and London remained the financial centre of the world where Israel sought to raise vital capital.

The Palestine Potash Company was the Mandate's most profitable enterprise.<sup>82</sup> Leopold Kessler, a former mining engineer, was the largest private shareholder in the company. He was also proprietor of other enterprises including the *Jewish Chronicle* under his son's editorship. After Britain's evacuation of the Dead Sea Works, looting ensued until 20 May when the *Haganah* captured the installation, which it regarded as a liability.<sup>83</sup> Lord Glenconner, Chairman of the Palestine Potash Company, urged the government to invest in the company but was unaware that before the evacuation Britain had ordered that all removable machinery should be dismantled and transferred to Transjordan. The Treasury calculated that Britain could supplement its potash supplies from other markets.<sup>84</sup>

Although Britain's exports to Israel were negligible, the significance of Israel's ability to provide valuable services played an important element in British defence planning contingencies. The disproportionate number of economic and commercial attaches serving in the British Legations in the early 1950s reflected the economic importance Britain attached to relations with Israel.<sup>85</sup> The Anglo-Israel Chamber of Commerce inaugurated by the Sieff and Marks families in October 1950, provided an important means of bypassing the Board of Trade's apathy to Israel's requests.<sup>86</sup>

During the financial negotiations in 1949, Horowitz announced Israel's desire to increase trade with Britain to the fullest extent possible, mentioning a figure of £50m, which rose within the next few years to £100m. Israel's shortage of sterling had an adverse affect on trade with Britain. Horowitz argued that 'the prompt release of sterling balances will promote normal trade between Israel and Britain, and put that trade on the same basis as Israel's trade with other countries'. Kaplan intimated that if a financial agreement did not significantly increase Israel's sterling reserves it would be forced to use its dollars to tie in permanently with US industry.<sup>87</sup> The Treasury regarded this as

TABLE 1:  
MERCHANDISE TRADE BETWEEN ISRAEL  
AND BRITAIN: 1949–1957<sup>89</sup>

Year	% Israel exports <b>to</b> the UK	Ranking	% Israel imports <b>from</b> the UK	Ranking
1949	53.8%	1	9.5 %	2
1950	31.3 %	1	9.1 %	2
1951	32.8 %	1	10.9 %	2
1952	29.2 %	1	8.7 %	2
1953	26.1 %	1	12.2 %	2
1954	23.0 %	1	10.9 %	3
1955	20.9 %	1	11.6 %	3
1956	22.3 %	1	11.2 %	3
1957	20.6 %	1	13.5 %	3



‘dollar bait’.<sup>88</sup>

Having failed to prevent Treasury concessions, the Foreign Office coldshouldered Israeli overtures by delaying visas to Israeli technical personnel and limiting the flow of British capital, which led Israel to place orders elsewhere.<sup>90</sup> The exception was citrus exports that accounted for more than 85 per cent of the total exports to Britain in 1950.<sup>91</sup>

Ben-Gurion’s suggestion to General Sir Brian Robertson (see Chapter 3) that Israel, with British assistance, could become a producing centre for various requirements of the Middle East Land Forces. This was on the proviso that Israel received economic assistance. His suggestion of a possible connection with the Commonwealth was also motivated by the possibility of Israel receiving preferential loans.<sup>92</sup> The Foreign Office thought it would ‘be rash to deny ourselves in advance the possibility of taking advantage of them’.<sup>93</sup>

In the autumn of 1951, Horowitz asked for Treasury assistance for a substantial long-term loan of £20m on an inter-government basis. His strategy to overplay Israel’s economic plight in order to secure the loan for development projects seriously backfired. His reasoning was unsound. In order to obtain the facilities, Britain was obliged to accommodate Israel’s request since there would be little point in maintaining military arrangements with a country in danger of economic collapse. If Britain approved the loan, something substantive would have to be offered to the Arab states, which had prior claims.<sup>94</sup>

Brinson argued that: ‘There is no reason why Israel should not be asked to make some concessions. The advantages to her of aid for our industry far outweigh the advantages which might accrue to the United Kingdom.’<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, concessions would have to be made to the Arab states. In effect, by investing and establishing an interest, Britain was expected to underwrite Israel’s economy. Helm was ‘satisfied that Israel will not collapse. We cannot therefore, even if we would, bring about Israel’s collapse by ourselves withholding support’. He concluded:

Israel is a fact and she is our foster child. In addition, strangely enough, she has a great respect for her foster-mother and in many ways models herself on her. She wants to be associated with us and I believe that, if we treat her sympathetically (this does not exclude firmness when necessary) we can influence her greatly for good and, more importantly, in the direction of our own interests.<sup>96</sup>

Economic aid to Israel had repercussions on Anglo-American relations. If Israel were to make a financial contribution towards an eventual Palestine settlement by compensation for releasing the frozen balances of refugees, the US would put pressure on Britain to contribute its relative share necessary to facilitate a Palestine settlement. Despite strong arguments, the Treasury rejected Israel’s request but wished to ‘avoid disappointing the Israelis too publicly and too bitterly’.<sup>97</sup> The Overseas Negotiations Committee concluded that Israel desperately needed to purchase oil, raw materials and manufactured goods but in the light of its inability to pay for imports in sterling, it was expected that Israel would reduce its imports from Britain. The committee proposed that Horowitz ‘be discouraged from coming to London’ to prevent further humiliation to Israel.<sup>98</sup>

Israel's Economic Attaché, Jacob Brin lambasted Israel's *modus operandi*:

It is generally felt that the United Kingdom has treated Israel well in the matter of sterling releases and the unblocking of Israeli-held British securities... Finally it must be admitted that the inability of Israel to pay its commitments in sterling on time has not helped in the various departments.<sup>99</sup>

He was particularly critical of Anglo-Jewry for failing to exploit Britain's liberalization in raising funds for Israel, which could be reconverted to sterling on the London capital markets. Comay was equally sceptical because part of the problem lay in the coordination within the MFA as 'our affairs become more and more politico-economic'.<sup>100</sup>

The request for a £5m loan for the purchase of sterling oil was rejected.<sup>101</sup> *Haboker*, organ of private enterprise, blamed the reluctance of Britain's City financiers to grant credits to a country whose financial solidity was open to doubt, and had 'not hesitated to violate normal relations with the City [by]...preventing the transfer of premiums to British insurance companies'.<sup>102</sup>

It would have been convenient for Elath to attribute failure to secure the loan on British machinations but honesty and candour could not ignore Horowitz's blunder and lapse in protocol in requesting President Weizmann to appeal directly to PM Churchill for the loan. Out of reverence for Weizmann, he made a personal statement to the Commons, (unnecessary under parliamentary procedure), that owing to the grave economic situation, Britain was compelled to reject Israel's request for sterling credits.<sup>103</sup>

Israel's wisdom was questioned in requesting a favourable loan when Britain was in a serious economic crisis. The request was ill-timed given Israel's success at the Luxemburg talks on reparations.<sup>104</sup> The tragedy was that 'the US administration has no authority and the British government no money'. Elath was scathing of *ad hoc* decisions and feared 'there is little doubt that we ourselves, at both ends, carry no small measure of responsibility for it'. He believed that the oil negotiations here attracted a great deal of attention, largely because 'we tried to provoke press comment in the hope of influencing the Government's decision in our favour'. He argued that 'the first and decisive mistake was when Marcus Sieff, on his own initiative (though he says he was encouraged by Horowitz) made an irresponsible suggestion to a friend on the *Observer* that it would be a good idea to carry a front-page story about Israel's impending financial "collapse". This implied that the main cause was Britain's refusal to lend Israel the £5,000,000 for the oil purchases.'<sup>105</sup>

Israel's request produced the opposite desired effect because if her economy was about to collapse because of a mere £5m a loan it 'could be little more than an injection given to a dying man'. Elath berated Horowitz's tactics, which were symptomatic of a breakdown in coordination within the MFA.<sup>106</sup>

Brin echoed Elath's criticism of Israel's ambiguous trade policy towards Britain. Israel had to decide whether to direct efforts towards an Anglo-Israeli commercial treaty, or, as he suggested, in view of recent developments, avoid anything definite. Only practical steps should be taken to preserve and advance its interests. He reasoned that reduced British imports were a logical development of 'H.M. Government's step-motherly treatment of our imports during the past year'.<sup>107</sup>

Haim Margalit, Brin's successor, wrote a scathing memorandum on the state of affairs inherited from his predecessor, "whose 'testament' has to be forgotten".<sup>108</sup> There were too many uncoordinated approaches to government departments, which hampered financial relations. These included; the Economic Attaché, the Anglo-Israel Chamber of Commerce, representatives of citrus companies, which met regularly with the Board of Trade, the Foreign Office, the Treasury, and other government departments. He urged setting up a coordinating committee, which in due course was established. Margalit reported that his work would be more fruitful if the task of securing cooperation and friendship with Britain would be regarded as first priority.<sup>109</sup> Despite his optimism, he could offer no substantial suggestions on how to improve trade relations.<sup>110</sup> His superiors requested that his lengthy critical memoranda be curtailed because there was nothing much 'that had to be said and done about our economic relations with Great Britain'.<sup>111</sup>

In July 1954, Israel was admitted to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which enabled it to raise loans from the international monetary organizations previously closed to it. British loans would be considered within the framework of international loans, thus reducing the onus on the Treasury.<sup>112</sup>

Israel endeavoured to use foreign currency from German reparations as collateral in raising funds in Britain and intimated that some of the 'moral reparations' would be spent or deposited in London where it would transfer £10m of German funds as normal transferable sterling with a probable further deposit of £20m. Although an enticing offer, Britain refused to accommodate Israel's requests because it refused to release £2.5m from the Custodian of Enemy Property, deposits made in Arab countries to British banks in Palestine, who were now refugees. Israel's refusal to compensate them through Jordanian banks was cited in Britain's rejection of Israel's request to sell £5m of bonds in Britain.<sup>113</sup> The Foreign Office argued that Anglo-Jewry was unwilling to invest in Israel. This was a fallacious argument given the investments and commitments of Jewish philanthropists including, Wolfson and the Rothschilds.<sup>114</sup>

#### ANGLO-ISRAEL PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS 1949–1951

Britain and Israel raised their missions to embassies in August 1952 and on 21 October; Elath presented his new credentials to the Queen.<sup>115</sup> He reported that she:

Began by congratulating me on my promotion to Ambassadorial rank. Sir William, [Strang], still within earshot, found it appropriate to remark, that for me, it was not actually a promotion, since I had held the rank of Ambassador since my first appointment in Washington in 1948. The Queen showed some surprise, and said: 'that means that your appointment to London two years ago was a demotion, really?'<sup>116</sup>

His priority was to 'find suitable occasions and pretexts' to invite 'prominent people to visit Israel as our guests' and would 'prove an excellent investment for our present and future relations'.<sup>117</sup>

Britain's democratic institutions and laws influenced the attitudes of future Israeli leaders who witnessed them at first hand when they resided in London. One of Ben-

Gurion's deepest regrets was his failure to implement a parliamentary democracy on the British lines.<sup>118</sup> Israel's adherence to a parliamentary democracy was remarkable considering that an overwhelming number of Israelis had little or no experience of the democratic process.

Moshe Rosette was one of the few *bona fide* socialist-Zionist activists in both Poale Zion (PZ) and the Labour Party. He declined an offer to stand as a Labour parliamentary candidate in a safe seat and accepted to serve as the first Secretary of the Knesset, a post he held from 1949 to 1967. His comprehensive and meticulous knowledge of parliamentary procedure was a boon in the transition from the Provisional Constituent Assembly to the *Knesset*.<sup>119</sup> He became the first Israeli to serve as Vice-Chairman of the prestigious World Inter-Parliamentary Union.

In May 1950, parliament under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, invited Israel to send a *Knesset* delegation of eight members to visit London. Sharett welcomed the gesture after Israel's ostracism, which would highlight Israel's democracy and bring pride to Anglo-Jewry.<sup>120</sup> Israel was careful to avoid linking this visit with a planned *Histadrut* delegation.<sup>121</sup>

Pinchas Lavon led the delegation in July, which met with leading government ministers, politicians, senior civil servants, industrialists and members of the World Inter-Parliamentary Union.<sup>122</sup> The successful visit was soon followed by a delegation of leading Israeli journalists, as guests of HMG, which added to a qualified mood of optimism that Anglo-Israeli relations had embarked on a new phase.<sup>123</sup>

Elath recommended that *Knesset* Speaker, Sprinzak invite a parliamentary delegation to Israel in March 1951. An invitation was duly sent in January and Britain accepted three weeks later.<sup>124</sup> Rosette's meticulous planning ensured the delegation's success. His personal acquaintance with his British counterparts helped to diffuse potential controversial issues such as Britain's request to visit the Wailing Wall in Jordanian-occupied Jerusalem.<sup>125</sup>

The MFA was disappointed with the composition of the delegation: 'Apart from Glenvil Hall, and of course, Lord Samuel, the members are virtually unknown in these parts except to those few who ex officio, at least pretend to glance occasionally at the Hansard. Nor is the average age of the delegation very flattering'.<sup>126</sup> Comay replied, 'It is true that they are for most part people of no particular consequence in political life, but as someone remarked to me, it is a good thing to get the NCOs on your side as well as the generals.'<sup>127</sup>

The reception for the departing delegation to Israel on 21 March was marked by the conspicuous presence of the ailing Bevin, his first appearance at an Israeli function. Ignoring his doctor's advice to stay in bed, he told Elath of his desire to contribute to peace between Israel and the Arabs. He died six weeks later. The long-awaited Parliamentary Delegation arrived in Israel on 26 March and the request to visit the Old City was granted. Notwithstanding public utterances about the Arab refugees and the absence of any mention of the prospects for peace, the visit was considered a success.<sup>128</sup>

Elath, a former Reuter's correspondent, appreciated that the '*The Times* is much more than a paper, in fact the expression of Government-inspired views, and the voice of prominent and authoritative circles in this country'.<sup>129</sup> He cultivated friendly relations with its editor, Sir William Haley 'a progressive Conservative'. His contacts bore fruit. Turkish Prime Minister, Dr Menderes, Elath's former colleague at Reuters, cited *The*

*Times*' extensive reporting of Churchill's pro-Israel speeches, for Turkey's willingness to consider cooperation with Israel and Britain. The Embassy believed that the 'quality press' was more objective and accurate in its reporting than in 1948. The tabloids however, were a lost cause because they reported little foreign news.<sup>130</sup>

## NURTURING THE POLITICAL PARTIES

Contrary to Labour's commitment to improving universal humankind, the Labour governments showed little interest in promoting social and economic progress in the Middle East, or in the Empire's possessions. Labour's philosophic assumptions in foreign affairs were virtually indistinguishable from those of their Conservative counterparts, an outlook, unchanged since the period of British economic supremacy in which they were born.<sup>131</sup>

No other party had taken such an equivocal stance on Jewish nationalism, as did the Labour Party.<sup>132</sup> Ben-Gurion observed that: 'Within the Labour Party there are relatively speaking, more people who sympathise with Zionism than in other parties—There is friendship between the two labour parties, but we should not exaggerate the significance of this friendship.'<sup>133</sup>

Labour's overwhelming victory in the 1945 post-war General Election raised the question of whether the ties forged between the two labour movements in the *Yishuv* and Britain, which influenced pro-Zionist conference resolutions would be manifested in Labour's policy towards Israel. The labour movements proved an indispensable link that was utilized by Britain and Israel in facilitating improved relations and the British labour movement Press was sympathetic to Zionist aspirations to create a Jewish State.<sup>134</sup>

Ben-Gurion dismissed the misguided optimism of a Labour victory; 'a conference's resolution is not an official guarantee that if this party comes to power it will immediately implement it'. Attlee failed to comprehend the need for establishing a Jewish state and gave tacit approval of Bevin's policies. Labour's majority was such that even the most ardent pro-Zionists had little effect on the government's majority.<sup>135</sup>

The Foreign Office was chastised by Bevin's adversaries, among them James Middleton, former secretary of the Labour Party, and Vice-Chairman Anthony Greenwood who congratulated Israel in its 'attempt to build a democratic state amidst a surrounding welter of despotic corruption and inefficiency'.<sup>136</sup> They and trade union leaders, naively, saw themselves as godparents to an idyllic socialist Israel in the Middle East.

In December 1949, Schneir Levenberg, Chairman of PZ and 'acting head' of the Jewish Agency in London, initiated the first visit of a labour movement delegation to Israel.<sup>137</sup> He established friendly relations with Dennis Healey, Secretary of the International Department of the Labour Party, and Harold Tewson, Secretary of the Co-operative Party.<sup>138</sup> Initially, Israel viewed his idea of an official delegation as unrealistic where there was a fear of hostile demonstrations. The labour delegation consisting of the Labour Party, the TUC and the Co-operative movement, went ahead on 28 December. Labour Party Secretary Sam Watson, who headed the delegation, told reporters that they were going to 'Israel as six ambassadors of good will'.<sup>139</sup> Concerned that the delegation

could seriously damage Foreign Office policy, the Legation was ordered to send reports by the hour.

Israel received the delegation with the highest protocol. They met with President Weizmann; Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Ben-Gurion; Foreign Minister, Sharett; leading government ministers; Chief of Staff, Yadin; Director-General of the MFA, Eytan; Locker, Chairman of the Jewish Agency and leading members of the *Histadrut*. They visited immigrant schools, *kibbutzim* and industrial concerns. To Helm's consternation, they did not visit Bethlehem or East Jerusalem in Jordan.<sup>140</sup> He reported that they 'covered the whole territory from Dan to Beersheva', a euphemism for the 'Land of Israel', which omitted 50 per cent of the country, indicative of Britain's refusal to acknowledge Israel's permanent sovereignty over the Negev.

At the Legation's bequest, they raised the possibility of IDF personnel studying in the UK, and questioned arms sales to the Arabs. Helm confessed he was unprepared for a non-Jewish lobby, linked with a ruling party who were returning, 'as propagandists for Israel, though I hope not blindly so... The Israelis may well look forward to an increase of political goodwill towards themselves in British labour circles, because of the visit'. He believed that public opinion in Britain was likely to be influenced and admitted that Israel had succeeded in ensuring that: 'Being good showmen and propagandists, (to quote Mr Watson's farewell broadcast), the members of the delegation left this country "as friends, much better informed, much clearer in their conception of Israel's hopes and desires"'.<sup>141</sup> Sherringham feared that the visit 'may increase pressure when the Israelis want to get something out of us, e.g. arms'.<sup>142</sup>

Israeli press comment was remarkably low key compared to coverage in the British press. Helm surmised that this was at Ben-Gurion's and the *Histadrut's* instigation who were anxious, 'not to open themselves to too much criticism from the extreme left and indeed from Moscow'.<sup>143</sup> The revisionist and Communist organs castigated Ben-Gurion's greetings because it would displease the US, France and the USSR.

The Foreign Office advised Attlee to decline an invitation to the reception in honour of the returning delegates.<sup>144</sup> Representing the government, Morrison told delegates that: 'In Israel the spirit of human service exists more sincerely and more in practice than in any other part of the civilised world and we are glad that it has a Labour Government'.<sup>145</sup> The delegates responded to requests for radio interviews and articles, which were widely reported. Watson doubted: 'whether any country possesses in proportion to its population, so many young men and women who are investing their strength, idealism and spirit in the creation of a new way of life'.<sup>146</sup> Alice Bacon, MP, stated: 'Israeli socialism was an example to the world' and Coldrick of the Co-operative Party: the 'Israelis were a talented and versatile people'. Codd of the Co-op Union, 'never dreamt that such things were possible'.<sup>147</sup>

The Foreign Office looked unfavourably at Labour's request to reciprocate with an invitation to a *Histadrut* delegation, alluding to its involvement with pro-Moscow *Mapam* in the *Histadrut*.<sup>148</sup> It was asked to reconsider because the proposed delegation would comprise entirely of the *Histadrut* and not its opposite number, *Mapai*. Despite these objectives, Labour's invitation was sent. Morgan Phillips, Labour Party Secretary was warned of possible confusion between the Labour delegation and that of the *Histadrut's* request to send 15 workers to study production methods and industrial conditions in Britain, still awaiting a decision.<sup>149</sup>

On 3 December, the *Histadrut* delegation's El Al plane landed in London for a fortnight's visit as guests of the Labour Party and Cooperative movements.<sup>150</sup> The press, were unaware that another passenger, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, who flew in on the same flight was disembarking without fanfare. He met briefly with Legation staff who having greeted the delegation, were taken aback upon learning at short notice that he was on a 'private' visit to Britain. Ben-Gurion was whisked away to Oxford where he began his private pilgrimage to Blackwell's bookshop.<sup>151</sup>

The two arrivals marked an interesting coincidence. During his fourteen years as head of the *Histadrut*, Ben-Gurion was instrumental in sowing the seeds of cooperation between the two labour movements, which were now bearing fruit. An embarrassed Legation was at pains to deny accusations that it had deliberately suppressed information about his visit.

In contrast to the British delegation, which visited Israel earlier in the year, Israel's delegation was comprised principally of trade unionists.<sup>152</sup> Comay complained that the MFA was not consulted or informed about the visit, and apprehensive of the political importance attached to the visit when 'there is nobody of political standing or public importance on the delegation'. Elath was asked to tell the hosts that the delegation was concerned only with labour issues.<sup>153</sup> Delegates met with Foreign Minister Morrison, accompanied by leading ministers included Gaitskell, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Bevan, Minister of Health.<sup>154</sup> These exchanges served as an important conduit at a time when Anglo-Israeli relations were inhibited by mutual mistrust.<sup>155</sup>

More than 40 Labour MPs accepted invitations to visit Israel during this period. Ian Mikardo, a left wing Jewish Zionist, was critical of Israel's industry and the maintenance of military government in the Galilee. Helm reported that: 'He impressed me favourably and it was refreshing to have a visiting Jew by no means blind to the notes in the Israeli eye'.<sup>156</sup> Conversely, after witnessing the arrival of immigrants on the SS 'Transylvania' he was chastised for signing the Haifa Port guest book, 'it was an unforgettable experience. I wish Bevin could have seen it'.

Labour MPs were primed to ask parliamentary questions pertaining to arms sales and policy towards Israel.<sup>157</sup> Sam Watson intended to establish a Labour pro-Israel lobby, which would watch over Israel's interests whenever they were raised in Parliament. Elath supported his proposal but Gaitskell believed Israel's interests were best served by establishing an inter-party bipartisan group.<sup>158</sup> Kidron's attempts to form an 'Anglo-Israel Parliamentary Association' were thwarted by the Labour's objection to inter-party associations and 'the desirability of keeping Barnett Janner, especially and Sydney Silverman out of it in order to ensure that it does not become a Zionist society for Jewish MPs'.<sup>159</sup> He reluctantly concluded that: 'There does not seem to be any way of getting over Labour's objection to inter-party bodies. So, the same thing will have to be done with Tories.'

Labour was returned at the February 1950 Election with its overall majority cut from 145 to 5. Although pro-Israel lobbyists did not threaten the government's majority, they were more assertive in questioning policy towards Israel. Elath cultivated Gaitskell, (whose wife was Jewish) and tipped to succeed Attlee as leader.<sup>160</sup> He visited Israel on numerous occasions, as did future leaders, Wilson, Healey, Callaghan and Foot.<sup>161</sup>

Labour's traditional ties with Israel changed abruptly in October 1951 when it was swept from office and replaced by the Conservative Party, which ruled for the next 13

years. Many Conservative MPs were unfamiliar to the Legation which naturally concentrated on the Jewish Labour MPs, who constituted 26 of the 28 Jewish MPs returned to parliament.<sup>162</sup> Many leading Conservatives regarded Britain's decision to withdraw from Palestine as an abrogation of its commitment to guarantee a just settlement and feared that a Jewish State would be a disruptive force in the Middle East.<sup>163</sup> Boothby, a close confidant of Churchill, was in a minority when he urged the party to adopt a pro-Israel policy because Israel was the only country in the region capable of defending Britain's interests.<sup>164</sup>

While not ignoring the historic ties between the labour movements, Elath was always keen to nurture the Conservative Party, identified with the elite and the establishment. His attempts to woo the Conservative Party were hampered by the stigma of prevalent anti-Semitic bias and the fact that a high proportion of MPs held directorships in companies that complied with the Arab boycott against Israel. It was harder to invite Tory MPs to Israel whose livelihood would be compromised by an open association with Israel. Important inroads however, were made with Tory peers, who comprised the overwhelming majority in the House of Lords.<sup>165</sup>

Despite the insignificant number of Liberal MPs, Elath believed that upwardly mobile Jews, while reluctant to vote Conservative were likely to vote Liberal and for this reason, the Liberal Party was courted out of all proportion to its standing in parliament. Its leader Clement Davies devoted many years of service to the Zionist cause and his excellent relations with both Attlee and Churchill provided an important channel for Israel during crises. Although his influence was less marked in British politics, his extensive contacts in his capacity as President of the World Liberal Union also proved useful to Israel.

Important inroads were made including the maiden flight to Britain in December of El Al, Israel's national airline.<sup>166</sup> A year later, Elath and Bevin signed the Anglo-British Air Services Agreement on 6 December, which enabled designated airlines to fly across the territory of the other country without landing. Israel sought restriction on military overflights and Britain assured Israel, it would be consulted if any 'exceptional circumstances arose'.<sup>167</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle* reported that this was 'the first time that a Foreign Secretary of this country has appended his signature to documents in Hebrew'.<sup>168</sup>

With the releases of sterling, and the relaxing of charitable reminiscences, bi-lateral flourished. In April 1951, the *Technion* Society of Great Britain was founded; in September, *Hapoel* Tel-Aviv football team played a number of friendly matches in Britain; in December, Israel was represented in the Miss World competition in London; and in 1952, Israel decided to print its banknotes in Britain.

The British Council was also anxious to counter the growing influence of the Alliance Française.<sup>169</sup> Following the establishment of the State, it performed a salutary role in removing lingering anti-British residue. Thirty years of British rule had inculcated in Israelis Anglophile sentiments, which differed from the prevalent Anglophobia vented at the Defence Ministry and Foreign Office. Ironically, the British Council, which enhanced bilateral cultural relations, was financed by the Foreign Office accused by Israel of plotting with its enemies its downfall.<sup>170</sup>





Figure 2.2 Ian Mikardo, MP, with Nathan Jackson of *Va'ad Hapoel* and Moshe Rosette, Secretary of the *Knesset*, December 1952

Source: Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office

#### NOTES

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17. ISA, 2583/4, 4 May 1949.
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28. *The Times*, 3, 10 May 1950.
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45. *The Times*, 4, 9, 30 Nov 1949.
46. FO 371/82554 1151/38, 31 Jan; *The Times*, 16, 23, 26 Jan 1950; BT 230/226, 1950–1957.
47. ISA, 2601/1, 22 Dec 1949.
48. FO 371/82554 1151/46, 2 Mar 1950; 91722, 98498.
49. *The Times*, 9, 13 Feb 1950.
50. FO 371/82554 1151/46, 2 Mar 1950; T 220/171.
51. ISA, 2318/6, 26 Mar; 2601/2, 1 Apr; FO 371/82555, 26 Mar 1950.
52. *The Times*, 31 Mar, 1 Apr 1951.
53. FO 371 91722, 1151, 16 June 1951.
54. FO 371/91723 1151/38, 30 Mar 1951.
55. FO 371/82740 1151, 27 June 1950.
56. *The Times*, 1 May 1950.
57. FO 371/82556 1151/61, 5 Apr 1950.
58. *Economist*, 27 Jan 1951.
59. FO 371/82557 1151/73, *Jerusalem in English* broadcast, 16 Apr 1950.
60. FO 371/91722 1151/2, 4 Jan 1951.
61. *Davar*, 21 Jan 1951.

62. *The Times* 5, 15 Dec 1950; *Financial Times*, 22 Jan 1951.
63. ISA, 2601/3, 6 Dec 1952; 23 Feb 1953.
64. *The Times*, 22, 23 Jan 1951.
65. UNGA 181 (II), 29 Nov 1947.
66. In 1951, British oil exports from Haifa, accounted to 8% of its world trade in oil. POWE, 33/1716–7; B.Swadran, *Middle East Oil: Blessing and Threat* (Tel-Aviv, 1975), 195–99.
67. U.Bialer, *Oil and the Arab-Israel Conflict, 1948–1962* (Oxford, 1999), 24, ISA, C119/23, 2973/702/1.
68. Interview with Elath. For obvious reasons the identity of Israel's 'anonymous saviour' will remain as such.
69. FO 371/81907 1023/3, 17 Nov 1950.
70. ISA, 36/14, 94/10, 26 Jan 1950, ISA, 1784/5, 1784/15; 2329/24.
71. Excerpts from UN doc. A/648 (i) 1, 29 (ii) 2, 23 (iii) 3, 11, 18 Sep; *Department of State Bulletin*, 3 Oct 1948, 436–40.
72. *New Statesman*, 2 Jul 1949.
73. CAB 128/16 (49) 66, 14 Nov 1949.
74. *The Times*, 21, 23 Feb, 2 Mar; FO 371/81907 1023/3, 17 Nov 1950; 91747 1531, 1951; 120828 1171, 1956.
75. ISA, 2582/3, 1 Mar 1950
76. FO 371/82554 1151/46, 2 Mar; T 220/171, 234, 236, 238; ISA, 2583/5, 28 Jan 1950.
77. BGA, BGD, 18 May; 6, 15 June 1948; 27 Sep 1950.
78. ISA, 183/1; 2601/2, 28 Oct 1950.
79. D.Horowitz, *In the Heart of Events*, 237; *New Statesman*, 8 Apr 1950.
80. Cripps' confidant, Estorick, denied that Nuri Said's threat kept the refineries closed.
81. ISA, 2582/3, 23 June 1950. Horowitz leaked it to Crossman. *New Statesman*: 'Even after this the Foreign Office fought a gallant rearguard action against the combined forces of the Treasury, the oil company and the Israelis', 2 Jul 1948.
82. FO 371/68685, 75249; 75250, 75389, 82582, 91736, 104812, 104938, 110933, FO 816/169, IR 40/9803; CZA, J99, The Palestine Potash Ltd, Sodom 1934–1949; S.I. Troen, 'The Price of Partition, 1948; the Dissolution of the Palestine Potash Company', *Journal of Israeli History*, 15.1, 1994, 53–81; M.Novomeysky, *From Lake Baikal to the Dead Sea* (Jerusalem, 1958); M.Novomeiskii, *The Dead Sea Concession* (Jerusalem, 1951); R.Or-Ner, 'The Vision of Moshe Novomeiskii'; D. Levi-Faur, 'Building the Israeli State Sector; the Case Study of the Palestine Potash Ltd, *Economic Quarterly*, 41, 1994, 263–93; D.Gavish, *Salt of the Earth: From the Palestine Potash Ltd. to the Dead Sea Works Ltd* (Jerusalem, 1995); *The Times*, 31 Oct, 27 Nov 1950, 28 Nov, 6, 12 Dec 1951, 12, 23 June, 7, 25 July 1952.
83. S.I.Troen, 'The Price of Partition, 1948', 53–58.
- 84 FO 371/68685; 75249–50; 75389, 82582, 91736; 104938.
85. *The Times*, 16 Apr 1950.
86. *Jewish and Zionist Yearbooks*; FO 371/104803 1154/1, 19 Jan 1953.
87. *The Times*, 18 Mar 1949; FO 371/75229, 22 Nov 1949; Brinson commented: 'The figure of... which Horowitz apparently imagines Israel is going to spend on British goods, seems to me fantastic'.
88. FO 371/91722 1151/2, 4 Jan 1951.
89. The figures are stated in percentages for sake of comparison. BT 1948–1958; Trade statistics; Halevy and Klinov, *The Economic Development of Israel*, 290; M.Michaely, *Foreign Trade and Capital Imports in Israel* (Tel-Aviv, 1963), 84; *Central Bureau of Statistics Abstract, 1950–1957*; *Israel Government Year Book, 1950–1958*; *The New Statesman Year-Book, 1949–1958*.
90. ISA, 38/6, 1 Mar 1949: 'Meanwhile, other countries are taking advantage of her [Britain's] absence to develop trade which would normally have been hers.'

91. *Israel Government Year Book*, 1950–1951; FO 371/82543 1121/2, 24 Jan; 82535 1101/1, 3 Mar 1950.
92. FO 371/91731 1194/1, 5, 21 Feb 1951.
93. FO 371/98805 1152/7, 3 Jan 1952.
94. FO 371/91719 1103/7, 26 Feb 1951.
95. FO 371/91726 1155/1, 29 Mar 1951.
96. FO 371/91726 1155/19, 22 Oct 1951.
97. FO 371/98805 1152/7, 2 Jan 1952.
98. FO 371/98805 1152/15, 18 Jan 1952.
99. ISA, 40/5, Feb 1952. Interview with Eliahu Elath. He had a low regard for Margalit but he highly valued Brin.
100. ISA, 2594/6, 17 Feb 1952.
101. FO 371/98806 1152/39, 28 Apr 1952.
102. *Haboker*, 13 May; FO 371/98806 1152/54, 19 May 1952.
103. *Hansard*, 20 May 1952; *Jewish Yearbook*, 1951–1952, 340.
104. ISA, 40/5, 15 Jul 1953.
105. ISA, 2582/6, 20, 27 June 1952.
106. ISA, 2582/7, 7, 21 Jan, 18 Feb 1954.
107. ISA, 46/13, 6 May; 40/5; 2600/1, 15 May 1953. Britain also perceived its role as a ‘step-mother’.
108. ISA, 46/15, 9 Nov. See previous meeting with Williams, financial adviser at the Embassy, 14 Aug 1953.
109. ISA, 46/13, 29 June, 29 Jul 1954.
110. ISA, 40/4, 15 July 1954.
111. ISA, 40/5, 5 July 1954.
112. ISA, 40/5, 1, 20, 24 Sep; 2600/1, 10 Nov 1954; *Jewish Yearbook*, 1953–1954, 313.
113. FO 371/111116; ISA, 2595/8, 13 June 1954.
114. ISA, 40/5, 1, 20, Sep; 26001/1, 24 Sep; 10 Nov 1954; T 231/660, Overseas investment in Israel, 1949–1955 (closed 2006); T 231/1154, Gt. Universal Stores and I. Wilson: investment in...Israel, 1956–1957; CAB 134/1104.
115. The decision was taken in June. ISA, 2584/12, 27 June. *JC*, 24 Oct. Elath described the transformation in relations since the first presentation of his credentials when he drove in his own car unaccompanied by any representative of the Crown. On this occasion, he and his colleagues were escorted in three state coaches accompanied by coachmen, footmen and outriders, 2382/8, 15 Nov 1952.
116. ISA, 2382/8, 15 Nov 1952.
117. ISA, 2382/6, 23 Jul 1952.
118. S.Aronson, ‘David Ben-Gurion and the British Constitutional Model’, *Israel Studies*, 3.2, 1998, 193–214; G.Goldberg, ‘Religious Zionism and the Framing of a Constitution for Israel’, *Israel Studies*, 3.1, 1998, 211–29.
119. M.Rosette, ‘Sources of Parliamentary Procedure’, *Constitutional and Parliamentary Information* 57, 1964, 15–28. Interview with N.Lorch.
120. ISA, Cabinet minutes, 46, 17 May 1950.
121. ISA, 2595/8, 16 May 1950.
122. ISA, 2586/2, 7, 27 July; *The Times*, 11, 14, 19, 21 July; *JC*, 14 July 1950.
123. *JC*, 1 Sep 1950.
124. ISA, 2586/20, 16 Nov 1950; 17 Jan; 5 Feb 1951.
125. ISA, 2586/20, 8 Dec 1950, 14, 21 Feb; 7 Mar 1951.
126. ISA, 2586/20, 1, 7 Mar 1951: ‘Glenvil Hall, the leader is the only one who can lay claim to any sort of distinction...’ [the Rev. Gordon Lang]: ‘has the appearance of an evangelist, and is reputed to conduct himself like one...’ [J.H.Joy]: ‘a roly-poly, bald, brown and shiny little man...’ [Captain Chetwynd]: ‘His manner is self-confidant; his voice is loud, but there is a

- very definite English steadfastness about him which atones for much'; [Wakefield], 'a rubicund, portly and jovial person, is the "eccentric" in the English sense, i.e. with an unexpected streak of originality about him... Mr Wakefield will wear shorts wherever he can'.
127. ISA, 2582/4, 9 Mar 1951.
128. ISA, 2582/4, 21 Mar; ISA, 2586/20, 4 Apr; *The Times*, 6, 22, 26 Mar–5 Apr; *Haaretz*, *Jerusalem Post*, *Davar*, *Maariv*, *Yediot Ahronot*, *Herut*, 26 Mar–5 Apr 1951; E.Elath, *Through the Mist of Time: Reminiscences* (Jerusalem, 1989).
129. ISA, 2589/7, 10 June 1953.
130. ISA, 2583/5, 26 Oct 1954.
131. ISA, 2382/8, 5 Oct 1951.
132. Y.Gorny, *The British Labour Movement and Zionism, 1917–1948* (London, 1983), 144.
133. *Ibid.*, 177.
134. *Tribune*, *New Statesman*, *Daily Herald*, *Forward*, *New Leader*, *Town Crier*.
135. Backbench descent did not alter government policy. Interviews with Lords Wilson, Healey, Shinwell, Mayhew and Sir Harold Beeley.
136. *Jewish Vanguard*, 13 May; 30 Sep 1949.
137. *Jewish Vanguard*, 6 Jan 1950.
138. Interview with Shneur Levenberg. Sharett was concerned about violence from extremists and urged him to postpone the visit.
139. *Jewish Vanguard*, 6 Jan 1950.
140. FO 371/82526 1052/1, 2 Jan 1950.
141. FO 371/82526 1052/3, 11 Jan; 1052/2, 13 Jan 1950.
142. FO 371/82526 1052/3, 21 Jan 1950.
143. FO 371/82526 1052/3, 11 Jan 1950.
144. FO 371/82526 1052/4, 23 Jan 1950. It drafted a letter for him: 'This visit will I am sure, have done much to foster and maintain friendly relations between Britain and the State of Israel.'
145. *JC*, 27 Jan; *Jewish Vanguard*, 3 Feb 1950.
146. *Daily Herald*, 31 Jan; Batty, ASLEF, *Jewish Vanguard*, 3 Feb 1950.
147. *Jewish Vanguard*, 3 Feb 1950; Thornycroft, Secretary of the RCA, the *Histadrut* was 'virtually a State within a State', *Jewish Vanguard*, 3 Feb; ISA, 2400/13, 11 Jan 1950.
148. Interviews with Lords Healey and Shinwell, Moshe Rosette, Shneur Levenberg.
149. FO 371/82526 1052/5, 2 May 1950.
150. ISA, 2586/7, 3 Nov 1950.
151. BGA, BGD, 19 Dec 1950.
152. The delegation consisted of Reuven Burstein, member of the Executive, Aliza Shidlovsky, Assistant Secretary of the Women's Workers Council; Peretz Naftali, MK, Feivush Bendori, Mapam executive members; and Jacob Efter, of *Hamashbir Hamercazi*.
153. ISA, 2586/7, 1 Dec 1950.
154. ISA, 2586/7, 8 Dec; *J.C.*, 8, 15 Dec 1950.
155. ISA, 2586/7, 20 Dec 1950; 2384/6, 5 Dec 1952.
156. FO 371/91716 1053/6, 13 Jan 1951.
157. ISA, 2594/15, 24 Oct; 18 Dec 1950.
158. ISA, 2582/7a, 23 Dec 1953.
159. ISA, 2582/3, 28 June 1950.
160. ISA, 2382/6, 23 Jul 1951.
161. ISA, 2400/13, 5 Jan; 2590/12, 11 Jan; 2592/22, 24 Aug; 2590/14, 14 Oct; 10, 14, 19, 24 Nov 1954.
162. Jewish MPs returned in General Elections was as follows: 1950, 23, (all Labour); 1951, 17, (all Labour); 1955, 18, 17 (Labour) 1 (Ind. Conservative), doubled a year later. ISA, 2582/4, 22 Nov; 12 Dec 1950; 7, 8, 21, 30 Mar; 17 Apr 1951.

163. H.Macmillan, *Tides of Fortune, 1945–1955* (London, 1969).
164. *The Times*, 3 Jan 1949.
165. Interview with Lord Joseph.
166. *JC*, 30 Dec 1949.
167. ISA, 48/14, 6 Dec 1950.
168. *JC*, 10 Dec 1950.
169. The British Council was established in 1934, under the auspices of the Foreign Office to foster educational and cultural links with other countries and supplemented foreign policy objectives. Staff were recruited from the secret services or connected to them in some way or other. F.Donaldson, *The British Council: The First Fifty Years*.
170. BW 103/1, Annual report for 1950–1951; 103/2.

## Israel's place in British strategic planning, 1949–1951

British foreign policy grew increasingly subordinate to defence *ad hoc* contingencies in the light of the ascendancy of *pax Americana*, the rise in anti-westernism, instability and the constant tension on the Israel-Arab borders.<sup>1</sup> In the light of a growing threat of a war between the Superpowers, Britain was forced to reassess Israel's potential role in Middle East defence arrangements.<sup>2</sup>

Oblivious to post-war realities, Britain's foreign policy continued with a 'business as usual' approach, presuming that it remained a predominant imperial world power and the centre of international diplomacy. Her long-standing and international involvement was 'accepted unquestionably by Britain's policy-makers, who, as a matter of course envisaged her place in the world in terms of her international responsibilities'.<sup>3</sup>

A former Foreign Secretary observed that, 'foreign and defence policy essentially has to be about the obtaining and management of influence'.<sup>4</sup> Britain lacked the means to do so. Acheson complained that the US was 'having difficulty persuading the UK that they must help us share the responsibility of defending the free world'.<sup>5</sup> Britain's Middle East policy was not engaged with obtaining influence, but rather, totally occupied with preserving what influence remained.

That influence was a contradiction in terms. Britain shed her empire in India, overextended her overseas commitments, was instrumental in setting up a Jewish state, which severed the landmasses connecting Egypt and Jordan, and was in gridlock with Egypt over the extension of the lease of its military bases.<sup>6</sup> Although Britain remained the dominant power in the region her 'influence hung by a thread. It had not been strengthened by the war. The United Kingdom had secured a stable Middle East during the war by virtually terminating, by its White Paper of 1939, the sacred principle of the Palestine Mandate.'<sup>7</sup>

### BEVIN'S LEGACY

In August 1949, Bevin told his Cabinet colleagues that in peace and in war, the Middle East was an area of cardinal importance to the United Kingdom:

Second only to the United Kingdom itself... Strategically the Middle East is a focal point of communications, a source of oil, a shield to Africa and the Indian Ocean, an irreplaceable offensive base. Economically, it is, owing to oil and cotton, essential to the United Kingdom recovery.<sup>8</sup>

Having failed to secure the southern Negev for Jordan, Britain aimed to consolidate Jordan as a strategic centre and Abdullah's rule on both sides of the Jordan.<sup>9</sup> The US was more inclined to accept the 1949 borders as the permanent demarcation.<sup>10</sup>

Bevin's name often evokes repugnance among Zionists for causing intolerable suffering to those who were denied entry to Palestine and consequently perished, and to the detainees in internment camps.<sup>11</sup> What is less understood is the respect and rapport he enjoyed by all levels of the Foreign Office, which was the envy of his contemporaries.<sup>12</sup> This in part was due to his ability to get Foreign Office recommendations accepted by the Cabinet and committees. Contrary to his detractors, he meticulously read all correspondence and memoranda, as attested by his copious notes and the questions he dispatched to his staff.

Bevin enjoyed the bureaucratic apparatus, which ensured continuity and momentum irrespective of the party or leader in office. Arguably, the most powerful and influential policy makers were the Permanent Under-Secretaries and their dedicated Chief Clerks.<sup>13</sup> A prominent characteristic in the Foreign Office documentation was the ratio of reports sent and received on the Middle East. The Cabinet invariably received at least 21 reports from envoys serving in Arab and Muslim capitals, which were responsive to their aspirations. Those received from Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv, were not necessarily well disposed to Israel.<sup>14</sup>

Palestine however, was Bevin's outstanding failure. During a parliamentary debate in a fit of anger, he said that he would stake his 'political future on solving the Palestine problem'.<sup>15</sup> These comments haunted him for the remainder of his office. He was prepared to pursue his policy at the cost of his health, popularity, criticism from colleagues, and unrelenting vilification from Zionist sympathizers.<sup>16</sup>

Before the war, Bevin was regarded as sympathetic to Zionist aspirations. His detractors attributed his anti-Zionism on the machinations of his 'evil officials', including Beeley who deliberately misguided him. Beeley explained that Bevin:

Probably did not know what was in the Labour programme in relation to Palestine. He never paid much attention to it. Therefore, it is not so much a question of Bevin changing his mind. It's a question of Bevin looking at the Labour Party programme and looking at the advice given to him by his professional advisers in the Foreign Office and coming to the conclusion that after two or three months' study that the policy was either wrong or was not practical.<sup>17</sup>

Bevin was determined to steer British policy in a progressive direction by winning the support of the Arabs because 'the benefits of the partnership between Great Britain and the countries of the Middle East have never reached the ordinary people...our foreign policy has rested on too narrow a footing, mainly on the personality of kings, princes and pashas'.<sup>18</sup> He could not have pursued his policy without the tacit approval of Attlee and the Ministry of Defence.<sup>19</sup> Although Attlee sanctioned Bevin's policy to return the displaced persons (DPs) and holocaust survivors to their pre-war homes, it was Bevin not Attlee, who bore the brunt of condemnation.

Bevin insisted that Britain had to counter-balance US pro-Israel policy:



The fact that the Americans have so consistently favoured one party to the dispute, namely the Jews, has made it necessary for us to bear the whole burden of trying to keep the balance, which is in our joint interest, or to lean or appear to lean further on the other side than would otherwise have been the case.<sup>20</sup>

Although he was determined to show the Arab world that there was at least one western power, which recognized that full justice had not been done to their cause, he 'misjudged both the balance of local forces and the depth and tenacity of Jewish determination.'<sup>21</sup> Shlaim writes that 'the idea of a Jewish State is reported to have given him nightmares of thousands of Harold Laski's pursuing him down a road'.<sup>22</sup>

Bevin was convinced that the Soviets had sent agents to Palestine in the guise of immigrants. These 'sufficient indoctrinated Jews would turn Palestine into a Communist state... They were not alone, the New York Jews have been doing their work for them'.<sup>23</sup> Harold Wilson, President of the Board of Trade, noted that 'in many respects, Bevin's foreign policy was sound and often inspired. He was the first to see the dangers in Europe with the Soviet Union asserting control over neighbours to the West, who she liberated from Nazi Germany'.<sup>24</sup>

Bevin failed to grasp that his office required tact, not a prerequisite for a seasoned trade unionist. His inability to control his tongue had a profound negative effect on his Palestine policy, and conveniently deflected criticism away from Attlee. The more he was criticized the more entrenched he became. Chiding the US for favouring the admission of 100,000 Jews into Palestine, he told reporters that, 'the reason why the Americans want them to go to Palestine is that they don't want them in New York'. It fuelled further accusations of anti-Semitism.

Despite his denigration of Bevin, Ben-Gurion did not regard him an anti-Semite: 'Bevin was not the first Foreign Minister who wanted to nullify the Balfour Declaration and the terms of the Mandate. But he was the first to try with such zeal to put that wish into effect'.<sup>25</sup> Bevin's successor, Morrison wrote that 'he was never an anti-Semite in the sense of racial hatred. However, he did become anti-Jewish as regards the people living in Palestine'.<sup>26</sup> Shinwell concluded that 'Bevin is naturally an anti-Semite' and castigated him for being terrified of the Arabs' displeasure, and appeasing them when they were angry; 'the Americans are pretty unpopular in the Middle East, and it doesn't seem to have done them any harm'.<sup>27</sup> Gorny succinctly noted that 'if we take anti-Semitism to imply the denial of rights as equal citizens, he was not anti-Semitic. But if we are speaking of prejudices against Jewish culture, conduct, economic acumen and social "pushiness", he was not innocent'.<sup>28</sup>

Elizabeth Monroe, Bevin's apologist, held that:

Mr Bevin's name for Pro-Arab leanings was therefore earned for a policy that was neither pro-Arab in Arab eyes... Yet, at least until 1948, his policy if examined in the context of all Britain's problems of the day is not pro-Arab but a pro-British policy. It is firmly rooted in Britain's financial and strategic lot, and in the physical well being of British and European workers who seldom if ever, give Palestine a thought.<sup>29</sup>

Bevin's socialist credentials were never in doubt but his outlook on the post-war world was at variance with the left-wing ideologues of the party.<sup>30</sup> He was paternalistic and dogmatic in his belief that solutions could be found solely from his trade union experience where he was engaged in averting Catholic-Protestant strife. He erroneously viewed Jewish-Muslim tension through the same prism. Bevin's policy was naive. It was based on the false assumption that Britain's prestige would be restored to her former strength, albeit in a different format:

Arabs, Iranians and even Jews would get used to the idea that Britain, by reason of her long experience, was the natural agency to govern them, to define their various needs, including defence, and to guide them on their way to property and security. It was not to be supposed that people of this kind could run their own affairs and look after themselves without British guidance.<sup>31</sup>

Elath was surprised by Bevin's conciliatory attitude during his first official meeting in October 1950.<sup>32</sup> He described him as 'extremely shrewd, cunning and a powerful personality...evading clear statements on controversial matters which might commit him to action'.<sup>33</sup> At his last meeting with Bevin in January 1951, he confided in him invaluable information pertaining to Anglo-American relations.<sup>34</sup>

Bevin died on 14 April. Obituaries focused on the legacy of his Palestine policy. *The Times*: 'his own solution was overborne by the facts, and he would neither seek nor support any other'. *The Manchester Guardian*: 'in one of the rashest moments of his career, Bevin had staked his political reputation on solving this problem. He failed, and it was perhaps his greatest failure... He went badly astray on the Middle East and was pig-headed wrong on Palestine'. *The Daily Worker* accused him of 'goading the Arabs into war against the Jews, to prop up the decaying feudal aristocracy in Iraq, Persia and Turkey'. *The Yorkshire Post*, however, commended 'his expositions of his country's attitude upon Egypt, Indonesia, the mandated territories, China and Palestine'. *The Scotsman* stressed that, 'once the Jewish State was established Bevin displayed towards it an attitude of helpfulness devoid of all rancour'. *The Jerusalem Post* was noticeably absent in an appreciation of his life and work: 'the establishment of the State of Israel found Bevin harbouring no resentments'. *Davar* noted that 'for the Jewish people he will remain one of the staunchest and most stubborn enemies of Israel's independence'.<sup>35</sup>

#### FORMULATING ISRAEL'S POLICY TOWARDS BRITAIN

Although the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) was formally established in 1948, it was a continuation of the Jewish Agency's Political Department extended by the Public Service College known as 'the school for diplomats' set up in December 1947.<sup>36</sup> Sharett was able to draw on the wealth of experience of a talented inner-circle group of confidantes including South African-born Michael Comay, head of the British Commonwealth Division.<sup>37</sup>

The Political Department had hitherto conducted its business in English because it addressed itself primarily to Britain and the US. In May 1948, Ben-Gurion ordered that

all communication between government departments be conducted in Hebrew, which presented a problem because of the acute shortage of Hebrew-speaking secretaries and typewriters, most having been commandeered to the Defence Ministry. Eytan found it difficult to circulate Elath's reports in English to Hebrew speakers because he had no translating staff. He wrote to him, (in English) requesting his reports in Hebrew. Elath replied, 'if it is easier for you to read my letters in English, it would certainly be easier for me to dictate them in Hebrew... There is also the purely technical problem: dictation in Hebrew at this moments presents almost insuperable difficulties here'. He explained that the only Hebrew secretary worked for other attaches, in addition to answering the telephone and opening the mail.<sup>38</sup>

Sharett's attitude towards Britain was less dogmatic than Ben-Gurion's, which in the view of the prominent Jewish philosopher, Isaiah Berlin, meandered between Anglophilia and Anglophobia.<sup>39</sup> In February 1947, Ben-Gurion told Bevin that:

We consider an interest of our own to help preserve England's place in the world in general, and especially in that part of the world where our future is being built. We shall therefore for our own sakes regard your interests, economic and political as our own.<sup>40</sup>

His negotiations with Foreign Office officials and the 'architect of the Arab League', Eden, convinced him that Britain's interests lay with the Arabs regardless of Zionist policy and actions.<sup>41</sup> Ben-Gurion remained instinctively shackled to the Mandate past, distrustful of British motives and overtures.<sup>42</sup> He correctly assessed that Britain had not abandoned hope of recovering the Negev, and was scathing of its misguided imperialist policy of attempting to rule through despots.<sup>43</sup> He was aware of the 'special relationship' extended to Palestine and understood that 'a clearly anti-British policy is hence essentially anti-American as well'.<sup>44</sup>

Contrary to British opinion, Ben-Gurion did not possess 'autocratic powers', lacking an overall Knesset majority he was plagued by coalition crises and the whims of party activists.<sup>45</sup> He envied Attlee who could ignore ideological disputes in his party because of his parliamentary majority. Whereas Attlee and Bevin enjoyed harmonious relations, this was not the case between Ben-Gurion and Sharett. Ben-Gurion assumed that in addition to his position as Prime Minister he was also privileged to conduct foreign policy. He admitted that Sharett knew more about the details of foreign policy than he did, but 'when it came to an important problem he did not know how to distinguish words from deeds... he was the greatest Foreign Minister of our day in peacetime, but not in war'.<sup>46</sup>

Although Israel was firmly committed to establishing a society modelled on western democratic freedoms, this did not detract from the desire to pursue a policy of non-alignment.<sup>47</sup> Elath and Comay discussed Israel's orientation. Elath argued that it would be 'incorrect to state that, so far as concerns us, the world is simply divided into East and West, one side being wholly friendly and the other side hostile... We have friends both in the East and the West'. He maintained that Israel was a Middle Eastern country and not a European outpost. Comay begged to differ:

If it is true that we are not like their Semitic cousins, it is also true that we don't particularly want to be. We feel superior because of our

Westernism, for all the romantic speeches, we like making about our return to Asia. ‘When we get an influx of Oriental Jews arrived in the country all our efforts are directed to making them less oriental and more Western as quickly as possible.’<sup>48</sup>

Israel’s foreign-policy orientation was not created in a vacuum. It was rooted in the practice of Zionist diplomacy.<sup>49</sup> Since its inception, the Zionist movement followed two ostensibly contrary policies; seeking the help of a major power to secure the establishment of a Jewish home, whilst vehemently reluctant to side with one power against another. This precept was expounded by *Mapai* in April 1947:

Orientation means our readiness to maintain relations with anyone willing to have relations with us, with all those holding the key decisions...no room exists for partisan positions. There is only the wretched position of a dependent nation [which] must follow any power willing to accept it.<sup>50</sup>

In his inaugural speech before the UNGA on 11 May 1949, Sharett expounded Israel’s foreign policy. Glancing at Cadogan who had employed delaying tactics to impede Israel’s membership, he savoured the fact that 45 out of the 54 members had recognized Israel. He acknowledged that Israel had entered the international arena under the ominous threat of confrontation between ideological blocs but stressed that the US and the USSR were ‘among those Powers, which had joined hands in welcoming Israel into the world’.<sup>51</sup>

Ben-Gurion’s policy was utilitarian non-alignment, not ideological neutrality:

It would be erroneous to describe our policy as one of neutrality. We are not neutral. Neutrality implies a negative, passive attitude, an attitude of non-intervention and political indifference.... We do not identify ourselves with America or with Russia. We maintain our intellectual sovereignty and cherish our ideology.<sup>52</sup>

When the UN sent forces against the Communists in Korea, Sharett cautioned against the dangerous bipolarity in world politics. The real question was not whom or what Israel would choose, but when.<sup>53</sup> The delay was pragmatic. Israel was careful to avoid unnecessary action, which could further jeopardise the plight of Jews behind the ‘iron curtain’.<sup>54</sup>

Following the Korean War, Sharett re-defined ‘non-identification’ as ‘Israel’s way of serving world peace, of making its specific contribution towards preventing a widening of that breach and perhaps, with restricted means, of helping in narrowing and healing that breach’.<sup>55</sup> Britain’s pragmatic voting record on Korea at the UN, and the tactical decision to recognize Communist China, served as a paradigm for Israel.<sup>56</sup> Sharett maintained that Israel’s UN voting record on Korea was indistinguishable from Britain.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the exclusion of *Mapam* from the government, the Foreign Office continued to play up the Soviet threat in Israel. Bevin instructed the Treasury to turn down Israel’s requests for arms and in-training courses for civil servants and workers ‘because there is no assurance that some of them would not be communists’.<sup>58</sup> Requests from countries

with extensive Communist activity were not rejected. Helm deduced from Ben-Gurion's personal regard for Communist, Moshe Sneh that he 'did not despair of getting back their support one day' and selectively quoted Crossman's opinion that 'Mapam was the cream of the nation'.<sup>59</sup>

In August 1950, Ben-Gurion prepared his *Mapai* colleagues for a looming scandal relating to his article shortly to appear in the *Government Year Book*, which was critical of the 'USSR as had never been printed before'.<sup>60</sup> A week later, Sharett told the Central Committee that: 'We are increasingly exposing our true position in world affairs, which is anti-Soviet as a consequence of the fact that our fate is exceedingly connected with the West than the East'.<sup>61</sup>

Ben-Gurion's affirmation of Israel's pro-western policy paved the way for the unprecedented gathering of Diaspora Jews at the Jerusalem conference in September 1950, which aimed at rejuvenating Israel's economy.<sup>62</sup> US delegates revealed privately that the exclusion of *Mapam* from government had persuaded the Administration to exempt contributions to Israel as tax deductible.<sup>63</sup>

#### IN SEARCH OF ARMS, 1949–1951

Elath recommended principle guidelines for policy towards Britain:

The most valuable way to deal with the British would seem to be to avoid exaggerations and unduly high expectations of any kind, and to meet them with the same empirical and pragmatism approach they use themselves: a dispassionate and constructive appreciation of the facts to be dealt with, coupled, on our side, with foresight, a sense of fair play, and a readiness to offer a reasonable quid pro quo when there is something to be achieved for the common benefit of all concerned.<sup>64</sup>

With the exception of a military alliance, Ben-Gurion's assessment of Britain's intentions towards Israel lay in its response to Israeli requests for arms and military supplies and his appraisal of Elath was determined by his ability to procure arms.

Israel's procurement of weapons from the Communist bloc was a contributing factor in Israel's success in the War of Independence. Israel also required sophisticated weaponry manufactured by Britain who controlled exports.<sup>65</sup> British arms sales to 'desirable' countries were prioritized by the influential Joint War Production Staff Arms Working Party as follows:<sup>66</sup> Class 1: (Commonwealth countries); Class II: countries 'with which we have a military alliance and whose armed forces are likely to make a significant contribution to the Allied war effort'; (Egypt and Transjordan): Egypt's army was not expected to make a significant contribution. Class III: 'countries of strategic importance with which we have no military arrangements, but whose armed forces are likely to make a significant contribution to the Allied war effort', (Iraq, Persia, Turkey, Spain, Sweden and Israel).

Britain remained steadfast in denying Israel any advantage over the Arabs. In January 1949, in a retaliatory measure against Israel's downing of the RAF planes, the CIGS succeeded in preventing aviation spirit and other essential fuels from reaching Israel.

They also decided to renew arms sales to Egypt and Transjordan because the ‘Jews had repeatedly broken the truce’.<sup>67</sup> Shortages of serviceable spare parts had a crippling impact on the IAF.

In January 1950, the Legation was instructed to petition for jet aircraft. Although Israel had obtained materials on the open market, essential spare parts were obtainable only with British permission. The Ministry of Defence had no objections to selling Israel civilian aircraft, provided it could satisfactorily guarantee they would not be used for military purposes. Israel agreed, but on 3 February, without warning, Britain cancelled the order.<sup>68</sup>

In a game of ‘battleships’, through its incessant enquiries and process of elimination, Israel was able to discern information on the availability of spare aircraft and military parts. Furthermore, it was able to deduce details of specific arms, quantities, manufacturers, and delivery dates of arms to the Arabs.

Britain maintained that there would be no prohibition on arms sales providing ‘Israel could prove they were for non-aggressive purposes’. Israel’s guarantee that arms would be used for ‘defensive purposes’ was considered unsatisfactory.<sup>69</sup> When Eliash provided proof that the Arabs employed British arms against Israel, he was told that they were only ‘light arms’.<sup>70</sup>

Given its refusal to implement all UN resolutions and its ‘dubious’ relations with the Soviet bloc, the Foreign Office argued that it was illogical to supply arms to Israel at war with its allies. It urged rejecting export permits to Israel pending a final settlement. Even if Israel was able to answer the stipulated criteria, it should be informed that Britain was unable to meet its requests owing to ‘depleted government stocks and commitments to countries with existing contracts’.<sup>71</sup> Britain was unwilling to risk offending Egypt before the delicate defence talks scheduled for January 1950 and therefore postponed a decision on the training of IDF personnel until the end of the talks.<sup>72</sup>

In March 1949, General Omar Bradley, Chairman of the US Chiefs of Staff, concluded that: ‘Israel...has demonstrated by force of arms its right to be considered the military power next to that of Turkey in the Near and Middle East’.<sup>73</sup> Britain was asked for its own evaluation and a ‘questionnaire on Middle East defence’ was submitted to the CIGS. They were asked whether ‘any such step may be possible for a considerable time. Meanwhile, is there any indirect method by which the ground could be prepared for some such possibility, e.g. by contact between British and Israeli services?’ and whether limited and specialized material could be supplied to the IDF after a final settlement on Palestine.<sup>74</sup> The CIGS opposed arms sales because they could be deployed against Britain by Communists and extreme Zionists.

The Legation concluded that Israel was of little importance in the considerations of the CIGS and merely an irritant in the Middle East. Comay derided Britain’s claim of objectivity because a settlement with the Arabs was made a prior condition for the supply of arms, which inevitably made a settlement more distant. ‘It is perfectly obvious that the Arabs are not likely to hasten towards negotiations with us if they know that a successful outcome would mean our rearming’.<sup>75</sup>

The Legation enjoyed the voluntary services of a high-ranking sympathetic employee in the Ministry of Defence, who furnished details of available surplus military equipment, technical information on Spitfires with Merlin engines and British firms’ permission to

supply information about types of aircraft, which Israel might wish to procure for military or civilian use.<sup>76</sup>

Burrows argued that Britain was 'likely to lose far more in Israeli goodwill than we are likely to gain in Arab approval for refusing to supply non-Service equipment and industrial explosives' and that by supplying arms to Israel, Britain could restrain Israel's policy and actions.<sup>77</sup>

General Lyne, a commander in World War II, mistakenly informed Ben-Gurion that 'the War Office adopts a realistic view towards Israel, and, were it not for Foreign Office interference, would be ready to accede to most of our [Israel's] requests...only Bevin remained adamant in his opposition'.<sup>78</sup> Sherringham dismissed 'the conviction of the Israelis...that they could manage our Middle East Policy better than ourselves will need a lot to dislodge'.<sup>79</sup>

Comay cautioned against pursuing British arms. As long as Israel did not purchase British arms, it would be free to protest sales to the Arabs:

We should not lightly muzzle ourselves on this score, and present the British Government with a cheap alibi. This political consideration must be weighed in the scale against the genuine needs of the Armed Forces, and, if what they can get from Britain is of a nature and on a scale, which makes a substantial difference, we would consider playing the political price. I cannot however, recommend that we should put ourselves at a political disadvantage in our general policy for the sake of a handful of spare parts.<sup>80</sup>

Sharett visited the US in December 1949 with details of Israel's security needs, which he hoped would later be discussed with the US military and naval attaches in Tel-Aviv.<sup>81</sup> He failed. Fortunately, for Israel, the propensity of World War II surplus arsenals was available from arms merchants and impartial countries.<sup>82</sup> Israel accused Britain of 'fostering an arms race in the Near East and encouraging the Arabs to resume hostilities'. The US did not envisage an Arab attack on Israel and maintained that her security needs were adequately met, furthermore, Britain was merely 'honouring existing contracts'.<sup>83</sup>

Notwithstanding the armistice agreements, the US and Britain adhered strictly to the agreed arms embargo because to supply arms to Israel under 'non-existing treaties' would lead to further arms escalation and threaten prospects for peace.<sup>84</sup> Israel was unaware that a joint Anglo-American military committee coordinated arms purchases and that the US had concluded that Egypt's request for heavy arms was not excessive for 'defensive purposes'. By agreeing to strengthen British forces in Egypt, the US tilted the arms balance against Israel.<sup>85</sup> Despite *de jure* recognition in April 1950, Israel remained pessimistic about the chances of persuading Britain to ship even the most elementary and obsolete military equipment.<sup>86</sup>

Since 1945, the sale of arms to the Middle East had been the exclusive purview of Britain and France who agreed to respect one another's 'habitual source' status in the region. Britain would be the sole supplier to states it held bilateral treaties with; Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and the Gulf States, while France would supply countries formerly under its mandate, Syria and Lebanon. The lifting of the UN arms embargo in August 1949, led to

the sale of arms first by the West and later by the Soviets, which contributed to the ensuing instability on the Arab-Israeli borders.

By 1950, the US emerged as a potential competitor for Middle East arms markets. US penetration of the European monopoly was spurred by the rapidly expanded arms industry after World War II and the Korean conflict. This was facilitated by its control over the sale of ‘off-shore procurement’. The 1949 NATO agreement limited the sale of arms earmarked for use by NATO, which were financed, licensed or manufactured abroad by the US. With the decline of the Anglo-French economies, and the rise in production costs, Britain and France increasingly used offshore procurement in manufacturing modern weapons, in particular, jets. The main market for these weapons was the Middle East; however, the US reserved the right to approve their export outside NATO and exercised a tight control over their export. Preference was given to countries at risk from Communist infiltration.

Britain hoped to reach an arrangement whereby it would supply arms to the Arabs while the US supplied Israel, thus maintaining a balance they could control. Bevin considered Egypt the pivotal issue: ‘I do not see how I can settle the question of arms until I have an agreement regarding Egypt’.<sup>87</sup> He insisted that Britain’s supply of substantial arms to Egypt in order to prevent it turning to the Soviets was motivated by its desperation to renew the lease on the Canal Zone bases.<sup>88</sup>

The Middle East arms race was of paramount concern to the US and Britain. A nightmare scenario of an arms race in which two stalwarts of NATO might be aligned on opposite sides was a constant source of anxiety for the US, which pressed for a joint declaration aimed to alleviate public excitement on the matter. Britain however, regarded it as a ‘guarantee of frontiers’ with the focus on the Israeli-Jordanian armistice line.<sup>89</sup>

Bevin maintained that it would be a mistake not to include the French, since their supply of arms to Syria would provide a loophole to supply other Arab states, ‘if we do it, I prefer tripartite’.<sup>90</sup> Britain informed Israel that it had gained ‘assurances’ from Egypt and Jordan that they would not undertake aggression ‘against a Middle Eastern state’. This was not difficult since they did not recognize Israel as a state. The Foreign Office considered submitting a similar request to Israel, but concluded it was unrealistic because Britain did not supply or intend to supply, arms to Israel.<sup>91</sup>

The Tripartite Declaration, which was signed on 25 May, was not a legally-binding document. It expected to restrain the arms race, to accord recognition, if not actual guarantees to the Middle East borders or armistice lines, and promised the three Powers’ commitment to arms control by supplying them only for self-defence and internal security purposes. The absence of the USSR and Canada, both major arms producers, later contributed to the precipitation of an unprecedented arms race five years later.<sup>92</sup>

The Declaration demonstrated US resolve to do something about the Middle East arms race and allowed Britain to strengthen Jordan’s borders.<sup>93</sup> Israel’s rejoinder was swift. Ben-Gurion lambasted the Declaration as discriminatory and iniquitous because it sanctioned British arms supplies to Arab countries at war with Israel while withholding arms to Israel. He noted that ‘Israel’s worst enemy could have signed this Declaration. It legitimises unlimited arms supplies to the Arab states without [mentioning an] obligation to Israel’.<sup>94</sup> Israel’s cause for concern was justified in light of Britain’s offer to sell substantial armaments to Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Iraq with whom it had defence treaties, but also to Syria and Lebanon with whom it did not.<sup>95</sup> The Washington Embassy



however, considered the Declaration an impressive achievement because it indicated formal western protection over Israel.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, it established formal parity between Israel and the Arabs regarding the right to acquire arms, though it 'was not clear what this meant in practice in the light of specific British treaty obligations to Arabs'.<sup>97</sup>

The Tripartite Agreement furnished Britain with an ingenuous, clear-cut rationale for turning down Israel's requests for arms because, 'as far as the Foreign Office was concerned, there was no longer an arms embargo against Israel'.<sup>98</sup> In July 1950, the British Defence Committee anticipated difficulties ahead:

Experience has shown that assistance in obtaining reasonable quantities of arms is still one of the most important factors in relations between Middle East countries and the West. If they are refused arms by the West, they will seek them from wherever they can, e.g., from Czechoslovakia, and politically they may turn away from the West.<sup>99</sup>

In view of the Declaration and categorical assurances to the US that it had no aggressive designs, Israel was permitted to submit an application for arms. The Foreign Office suggested that 'it would seem essential that we should be furnished by the Israel government with sufficient information to enable us to judge what arms she already possesses. This is likely to be important in the matter of jet aircraft'.<sup>100</sup> It was predicted that Israel would not oblige.<sup>101</sup>

The offer to provide training facilities to IDF personnel in Britain was 'subject to availability of places and security requirements', and its declaration of parity in 'future arms supplies' did not take into account 'existing arms sales commitments' before 25 May 1950.<sup>102</sup> The possibility of military supplies was dashed when it became apparent that there would be little available 'after the requirements of NATO had been met'.<sup>103</sup> Although there was no embargo, the War Office had 'no specific instructions as to what was available'.<sup>104</sup>

Israel was invited to submit further arms requests but was informed that jet aircraft and tanks were excluded from the categories of arms available to Middle East states'.<sup>105</sup> When Military Attaché, Katriel Salmon submitted a request for non-combatant material, he was given a long list of available material and informed that current production would take longer.<sup>106</sup> The Foreign Office was delighted that it had succeeded in preventing the supply of jets and tanks to Israel.<sup>107</sup> Chief of Staff, Makleff argued that it was useless to ask Israel about its arms requirements 'and then to do nothing about it'. This could not be done without informing Israel 'at least to some extent', of Britain's plans for regional defence arrangements.<sup>108</sup>

On the strength of rumours that Britain would supply arms to Israel and Helm's misguided optimism that Vickers-Armstrong's sale of fighter aircraft to Israel was 'in the bag', armaments firms and engine manufactures approached Israel for potential contracts. They desisted when the Foreign Office refused to confirm or deny the rumours. Helm's 'encouraging breakthrough' was weighted with qualifications, which diminished its significance.

Shinwell unsuccessfully pressed for a complete arms embargo on Egypt, supported by the CIGS. He provided Israel with valuable information, on Britain's relations with NATO and gave the Legation unsolicited assistance, which helped avert adverse

publicity.<sup>109</sup> In October, Elath solicited him for arms on credit. Kidron complained that: ‘We are going to be put into the ridiculous position I have been anticipating for a long time: The British will say “yes” and we will neither know what we want nor have the money to pay for it when we do’. In effect, Ben-Gurion wanted to receive arms from Britain without paying for them.<sup>110</sup> Shinwell admitted that the Service departments were dragging their feet but admonished Israel for the delayed response because arms requests were not made ‘through the correct channels’.<sup>111</sup> His claim was substantiated when Ben-Gurion presented to George Wigg, his deputy, a detailed list of Israel’s arms requests. That morning, the Legation had submitted the Services with a different list, which was already in their hands. To Elath’s chagrin, he was asked to clarify which list he was referring to, his, or Ben-Gurion’s list.<sup>112</sup>



Figure 3.1 Emanuel Shinwell, Minister of Defence

*Source:* Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office

Elath was not beyond reproach himself. Comay complained of ‘Elath’s independent action’ on receiving from Comay a copy of a British Aide-Mémoire regarding the supply by Israel of certain British Army requirements. ‘Elath initiated a series of discussions with Marks & Spencer and the Ministry of Supply, although conferences were in the meantime proceeding between the various Government and Army departments in Israel’.<sup>113</sup>

Although the Salmon held diplomatic status and operated from the Legation, it was unclear as to whether he was directly responsible to, Elath and Sharett, or to Ben-Gurion. He boasted that 'there was no other military attaché who, is so well situated as I, for no one else enjoys the Minister of Defence's confidence as I do'.<sup>114</sup> He reported to Ben-Gurion that Britain preferred to deal 'directly with Israel's military representatives not through its diplomats'.<sup>115</sup> He often reported to Ben-Gurion without Elath's prior reading. The MFA urged the need to 'find a common language to be spoken by our representatives in both political and military circles'.<sup>116</sup> Wary of his military allegiances, Comay belittled Salmon: 'the kind of special directives, which you suggest, are simply not practical politics. I suggest you should try to keep yourself as well informed as possible on political developments, and seek guidance from the Minister as to how or when to use any information'.<sup>117</sup>

Relations between Israeli and British military attaches were tense due to Israel's failure to procure arms, the fact that Israel was still at war and military restrictions were in place, and the likelihood that attaches transferred to Arab countries would supply them with information.<sup>118</sup>

Elath had no illusions as to the difficulties in obtaining British arms but his repeated requests had the effect of reducing arms supplies to the Arabs because Britain was obliged to disclose all its arms sales under the Tripartite Agreement.<sup>119</sup> Britain had failed Ben-Gurion's litmus test, and so too Elath, whom he considered inept.<sup>120</sup> Elath remained steadfast that Israel's only prospect of acquiring arms was by participating in regional defence.<sup>121</sup>

#### BRITISH DEFENCE ARRANGEMENTS IN THE WAKE OF ISRAEL'S DETACHMENT OF 'THE KING'S HIGHWAY' 1950–1951

In 1949, the prevailing Foreign Office view was that Britain was 'still the major power in the Middle East, which in its present state is a vacuum, which will certainly be filled if we move out'. Furthermore, 'whatever our interests may be called, economic, political or strategic they are all part of one interest, the survival of Western civilization, to which Israel professes to belong'.<sup>122</sup>

The Middle East was Britain's principal global region, second only to Western Europe. Britain was the dominant and influential power: it sustained a huge military base on the Suez Canal and a naval base at Aden; air squadrons in Iraq; and rear bases in Cyprus and Malta. The commander of the Arab Legion in Jordan was paid and provided by Britain; it had Protectorates over the Persian Gulf sheikdoms whose foreign relations were conducted by a Political Resident in Bahrain. Britain had massive oil investments in Iran and a growing interest in Gulf oil. However, within a short space of time, these positions were threatened in one form or another. Iranian oil was nationalized; the Canal Zone base was under growing Egyptian harassment; the treaty with Iraq, under which British air squadrons were operating in that country was shortly to expire; Saudi Arabia threatened Britain's influence over the Gulf Protectorates and Transjordan was under threat from increasing Communist influence.

Following the November 1947 UN Resolution on Palestine, British military planners endeavoured to prevent the Negev's inclusion in a future Jewish State.<sup>123</sup> Britain

emphatically supported Bernadotte's proposals, which recommended Israel's compliance in yielding the Negev to the Arabs. Upon his assassination, there seemed little hope of a diplomatic solution to the Negev.<sup>124</sup> Israel's rapid success in maintaining and expanding its control in the Negev caused consternation among the CIGS who witnessed the severing of the land-masses of its strategic bases between Egypt and Jordan, historically referred to as the 'king's highway', which linked Cairo to Damascus via Jordan.<sup>125</sup> In December 1948, Bevin argued that Britain and the US should ensure an Arab victory in the Negev because: 'To have a communist Israel lying athwart vital strategic roads in ME such as Auja-Beersheba, Gaza-Beersheba and El-Kuntilla-Aqaba, would be a serious blow to UK strategy in the area'.<sup>126</sup>

The seriousness of the 'loss' of the Negev became more evident during the winter of 1948–49 when Britain was required to send troop reinforcements to Jordan under the Anglo-Transjordanian Treaty.<sup>127</sup> Britain did not have 'the manpower, the money, the material and everything else that would be needed to carry such an adventure to a successful conclusion'.<sup>128</sup> With the expected imminent IDF capture of Umm Reshresh on the Red Sea, Britain, anxious to avoid armed confrontation, issued explicit instructions on the conditions of engagement.<sup>129</sup>

Britain sought a regional security network comprising of Jordan, Turkey, Egypt and Israel, which would be integrated into shoring up its defences in the region. The ideal arrangement was a regional pact consisting of the United Kingdom, the Arab League states, Israel, Turkey, Persia and possibly Greece, 'in which Egypt, as a willing partner would provide the base facilities required'.<sup>130</sup> Contingency plans were drawn up in the event of the outbreak of a third world war: *Doublequick*, July 1949; *Speedway*, July 1950; and *Binnacle*, July 1951.<sup>131</sup>

There were two schools of thought regarding British options: the 'alternative' Jordan option, and the 'remain in Egypt at any cost' school. Dow, a proponent of the Jordan option, proposed concentrating on 'Israel and Jordan even if this means for a time some deterioration in our relations with other Arab states'. A solution to the Israeli-Jordan dispute would help Britain to defend the area. He claimed that the US had encouraged Israel to wring too many concessions from Jordan, the only country 'likely to be of military use'.<sup>132</sup> Military planners refuted Crossman's suggestion that Britain 'place all her eggs in the Israeli and Jordanian basket'. Dow sourly commented that 'there were many baskets but too few eggs to put them in'.<sup>133</sup>

The Middle East played an integral part in these plans. Britain's foremost objective was to ensure unhindered use of the key Baghdad-Haifa road, the land link from Aqaba to the Sinai and the sea routes in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, which ran through or close to Israel. It was anticipated that over half of the entire British bomber force was to operate along the Canal Zone.<sup>134</sup>

Israel's geo-strategic location was more important to the allies than its military potential.<sup>135</sup> The CIGS admitted that 'the importance of Israel's co-operation in preventing this earlier Russian threat in the Levant cannot be over-emphasised'.<sup>136</sup> Although Israeli airbases could contribute to western defence, they were no substitute for existing bases in Arab countries.<sup>137</sup> However, the Admiralty regarded Haifa as of paramount importance in war and urged signing a long-term agreement with Israel because Western interests depended on Israeli cooperation.<sup>138</sup> Israel was informed that she was a 'positive factor in protecting western regional interests'.<sup>139</sup>

Anglo-Israeli cooperation was undermined by Israeli-Arab hostilities, the whims of Anglo-Egyptian relations and Egypt's obduracy in cooperating with defence plans. They were 'a little too confident in their belief that we cannot do without them... a visit to Tel-Aviv might help to show them that for better or worse there are other people in the Middle East today whose affairs concern us, that they may have rivals for our support'.<sup>140</sup> Britain dangled Israel as the 'bogeyman' when the Arabs refused her bidding, 'a very effective way of frightening the Egyptians is to threaten them with Israel'.<sup>141</sup> The 'goodwill and co-operation of the Egyptians in peace and war' was required, but Israel's 'willing co-operation' would suffice.<sup>142</sup> Britain aimed to solve this strategic nightmare by trying to cajole Israel into agreeing to transit rights along a road from Rafiah to Hebron.<sup>143</sup>

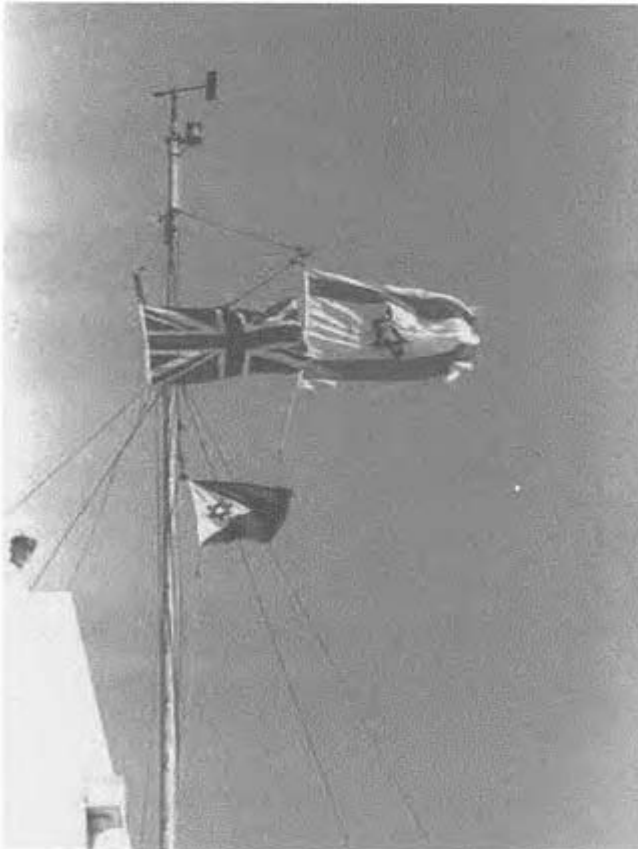


Figure 3.2 Israeli and British flags at Haifa during the visit of Admiral Sir John Edelsten, June 1950

*Source:* Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office

## ADMIRAL EDELSTON'S TIMELY 'SURPRISE', JUNE 1950

June 1950 was an important landmark in Anglo-Israeli relations with the visit of Admiral John Edelston, recently appointed commander of the Mediterranean fleet. It marked the first visit of a foreign warship to Israel, and the first 21-gun salute fired in honour of a foreign dignitary. This official courtesy call in Tel-Aviv was similar to those paid in Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Syria and Iraq. Notwithstanding reservations concerning anticipated anti-British demonstrations, the Israeli Cabinet was anxious not to rebuff Britain's initiative.<sup>144</sup>

The visit encountered difficulties even before HMS *Surprise* weighed anchor. Days before the visit, six Jewish bodies were discovered in an old British army camp. They had apparently been shot while trying to destroy a depot near the camp. Fearing retribution by extremists, the crew were forbidden to disembark. Edelston arrived late for his meeting with Ben-Gurion after discovering that Israel Standard Time was one hour ahead of that listed in the *Nautical Almanac*. The *Jerusalem Post's* headlines revelled in the lapse of British punctiliousness, 'Timely Surprise!'

Edelston reported that the Israeli Navy's absence from the welcome ceremony was a poignant snub; 'none of my calls on the Israelis was in fact returned in person; I consider the Chief of General Staff at least should have done so'. He would have excused the lapse of etiquette 'had they pleaded ignorance'.<sup>145</sup> His meeting with Ben-Gurion was equally disconcerting. Following Israel's decision earlier in the month to move government institutions to Jerusalem, Edelston refused to meet him at the PM's Office in Jerusalem. Ben-Gurion relented but insisted on meeting him at his Tel-Aviv home and not at the Defence Ministry. He recorded:

He arrived an hour late, they did not tell him that the official standard time is according to Israel time and not Greenwich Mean Time and thus arrived in Haifa three hours late and to the meeting with me, an hour late... He tried to persuade me that British policy had changed and I told him in public opinion yes, in the Government yes, but not in the Foreign Office. He begged to differ and requested a further meeting.<sup>146</sup>

His hosts were unaware that Edelston had succeeded in turning a public relations disaster into a success. Despite lapses in protocol, he admired Israelis who 'would fight to the last man and woman in the face of aggression'. He was satisfied that animosity towards Britain had faded and that Israel had a deep appreciation for Britain's contribution under the Mandate.<sup>147</sup> He noted that 'it did not seem even slightly ridiculous to them that the Naval Commander-in-Chief is an ex-Army major with no sea experience whatsoever'. Aside from *Mapam's* condemnation and protests, the visit was free of violence.

## BRITAIN'S APPROACH TO ISRAEL ON DEFENCE ARRANGEMENTS

The CIGS re-evaluated Israel's strategic position and Britain's requirements in securing rights of access through its territory in the event of a war. They concluded that if Israel

did not comply, the US and Britain would be obliged to occupy the country by force.<sup>148</sup> Short-term solutions such as the 'Ramallah line' were unsound and the defence of the 'Inner Ring' should be the immediate objective because 'the successful defence of the Middle East either now or in the future depends largely on a co-operative Israel and a determined Turkey'.<sup>149</sup> Ben-Gurion grasped that Israel's readiness to cooperate with the Allies was not a deciding factor and that the US and Britain were unprepared to jeopardize their established ties with the Arab states.<sup>150</sup>

Arthur Henderson, Secretary of State for Air visited Israel on 29 September 1950, to discern Israel's response to the possibility of establishing British bases in Israel. Ben-Gurion's cordial reception contrasted with that given to Edelston because of his sentimental regard for his father, who had supported the Jewish National Home.<sup>151</sup> Chief of Staff, Yigal Yadin told Henderson that Israeli public opinion was unequivocally opposed to establishing British bases in Israel during peacetime but offered Israel's 'full cooperation' in the event of a Soviet invasion.<sup>152</sup> Helm erroneously concluded that Israel was willing 'to march in step with us'.<sup>153</sup>

The CIGS concluded that Israel was able to offer skilled and unskilled labour, military stores, food production, airbases and the port of Haifa. This was subject to it permitting full access, transit routes to neighbouring countries in peace and war. The stationing of British troops in Gaza, was considered highly unlikely. The cost of relocating Britain's bases in Egypt to Israel was out of the question.<sup>154</sup>

#### GENERAL ROBERTSON'S VISIT TO ISRAEL, FEBRUARY 1951

Shinwell believed the time was ripe to send newly appointed General Robertson, C-in-C, MELF (Commander in Chief of British Armed Forces in the Middle East) to visit Israel. Helm requested that the visit be postponed because it was not desirable that Israel 'should begin to think we are running after them or in particular that we should frighten them off by appearing to force defence matters'.<sup>155</sup> Egypt informed Britain that while it would not cooperate in any venture associated with Israel, she would not oppose an Anglo-Israel agreement or understanding. However, perturbed by the lack of progress with Egypt, Shinwell called for an examination of 'the possibility of concluding a defence agreement with Israel under which Britain should secure some compensation for the loss of the Egyptian base'.<sup>156</sup>

The US advised Britain to pursue a conciliatory policy towards Israel for the sake of strengthening western interests in the region. Captain Liddell Hart, foremost military expert and commentator, valued Israel's strategic potential and urged for its integration into some military arrangement in Middle East defence but Furlonge warned that 'if we were prepared to pay the price Israel demanded in return for facilities, we might be putting ourselves in the jaws of Israeli pincers'.<sup>157</sup>

In the event of a world war the US did not intend to defend the region, 'If anything should happen there will anyway only be the English in the Middle East'.<sup>158</sup> Robertson's mission to Israel was initiated by the US, which was responsive to Israel's request for US military aid and help to expand Haifa's port after intimating that Israel would agree to the US establishing strategic stockpiles of essential materials, oil, foods, grain, seeds and

basic raw materials in Israel. This marked the first time Israel had explicitly offered cooperation on such a scale.

Teddy Kollek, Minister in Washington followed up the initiative and informed the State Department on 28 December that Israel was prepared to allow the Allies to use Israeli facilities, and that between 30,000–40,000 men and a trained reserve of 200,000 were prepared to participate in the defence of the Middle East.

The US recommended that an on the spot evaluation be conducted on Israel's potential and suggested that Israel agree to a visit by Robertson early in 1951. Israel was asked to be more explicit about 'her willingness to talk with the English' on regional security and told that the US response to its requests was conditional on substantial progress with Britain.<sup>159</sup> Helm noted that 'Three months ago in London, I was far from encouraging about the Gaza Strip. If I had been asked about Haifa, my reply at that time would have been that it was out of the question...today, I would not say that either is impossible'.<sup>160</sup> Franks reported that it was 'clear that an important step forward has been taken' and that the Americans 'think we should act quickly if we are to draw permanent advantage from Israel's present mood'.<sup>161</sup>

At the War Office's suggestion, Crossman was solicited to disclose to Elath Britain's interest in establishing bases in the Negev, Haifa and strengthening the Aqaba base to accommodate some of the troops from the Canal Zone.<sup>162</sup> Crossman sought Ben-Gurion's response but he 'refused to comment on proposals that did not reach Israel through official channels'.<sup>163</sup> If Britain wished to discuss defence arrangements, it should do so overtly through its official representatives. This prompted the decision to approach Israel directly to approve of the mission.<sup>164</sup>

Acting on the US suggestion, Strang invited Elath on 15 January 1951, to a 'private talk' at the Travellers' Club where he informed him that Robertson's directives would call for contacting Israel's chiefs of staff but that he would not discuss political matters. He would explore the idea of a pact or 'some kind of alliance with [Israel] either on a regional basis [if possible] or also bilateral'.<sup>165</sup> Strang suggested two specific ideas, Israeli agreement to a British base in Gaza with a corridor to Jordan, and bases in Israel. The substance and interpretation of the meeting were open to question. Elath held that the meeting was prompted by the impasse in the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations.<sup>166</sup>

Despite censorship, rumours and speculation were rife. The press referred to the impending visit on 21 January and two days later during the *Knesset* foreign affairs debate, Sharett was attacked for welcoming imperialist generals.<sup>167</sup> Elath flew to Israel to present Ben-Gurion with his assessment, and on 27 January, Ben-Gurion convened a late night meeting attended by Sharett, Eytan, Comay, Shiloah and Elath to discuss the matter. Far from praising Elath's initiative, he launched a scathing attack upon him. He dismissed Britain's 'insulting proposal' and by flying to Israel, Elath had unwarrantedly raised British expectations. Ben-Gurion suspected that Britain having left the front door, was attempting to sneak in through the back door:

This is not a proposal, which can be debated, despite the recent pose; they wished to get back into Israel, why should we give them a foothold? Their policy in the Near East remains unchanged, despite the change in public opinion and among members of the government. Not Cripps or Morrison or Bevin direct foreign policy—but Bevin, and it is a hostile policy:



support for the [Arab] League whose only activity is war against Israel, supplying arms to Egypt which the Egyptians at any rate intend for war not against Russia but against Israel. She [Britain] now offers us what is in effect an agreement between her and Egypt at the cost of Israel's independence and well-being.

The presence of British bases would curb Israel's options to retaliate against the Arabs, if and when, the situation arose. However, because the US had advised Britain to make the gesture, Ben-Gurion was willing to discuss the proposal, which involved US protection of the Near East and, which denoted protection of Israel.

On his return, Elath notified Strang that Israel's position should not be taken for granted and that 'suspicions persisted in many circles in Israel with regard to the British'. He assured him: 'under no circumstances is it conceivable that Israel could find herself engaged against the West in an armed conflict' but would only enter arrangements with the West in the event of an inter-bloc war.<sup>168</sup> Fearing violent reaction in Israel, Robertson was advised against raising the issue of bases.<sup>169</sup>

On 9 February, Elath informed Strang that any consideration of associating with the western alliance would depend on reciprocal and mutual cooperation. He requested Britain's response to three Israeli concerns; Israel's relations with the Arabs and the proposed role Britain might play in forging a possible peaceful settlement; the possible assistance Britain would give Israel to strengthen her economic and military potential; and their views and plans for Israel's perceived role in the defence of the Middle East.<sup>170</sup>

The CIGS instructed Robertson to impress upon Israel the great importance attached to the Middle East, which was under Soviet threat; that Israel was considered a vital strategic centre and that in time of war, it was hoped that it would allow Britain use of railways, roads, ports and airfields. He was also to seek Israel's agreement to Britain flying over its airspace during peacetime and to present Israel with a list of arms, which Britain was unwilling to supply, including jet aircraft, radar and modern tanks. If Israel wished to purchase arms, it would have to pay for them in advance and not expect charity as it had in the past.<sup>171</sup> Under no circumstances was he to divulge information on defence arrangements. He was told that, 'if we were accused of doing more for the Arab countries, we should be blunt and tell the Israelis that we had defence agreements of long standing with those countries and could not do less than we were doing'.<sup>172</sup>

Robertson's long-awaited three-day visit began on 19 February.<sup>173</sup> His arrival invoked protests by both left and right. However, no more than 100–125 demonstrators attended.<sup>174</sup> Sharett argued that 'Israel has become a factor in this part of the world: we are a political and military factor. Moreover, we are facing a global crisis that may open various possibilities and we must explore all options'.<sup>175</sup>

Sharett impressed upon Robertson the intricate nature of Israeli politics and strong differences of opinion regarding military alliances. At their first meeting, Robertson told Ben-Gurion that there was no divergence of opinion between Britain and the US on Middle East policy.<sup>176</sup> Since Britain was the only Power with an effective army in the Middle East, he was required to evaluate which countries would offer resistance to Russian aggression and to secure all the forces concerned.<sup>177</sup> Ben-Gurion questioned Britain's willingness and ability to defend the Middle East with her meagre resources. Robertson proposed a possible arrangement with regard to free airspace over Israeli

territory and an assurance of a right of passage of British forces through Israel in wartime.<sup>178</sup> He told Ben-Gurion that Russia would probably attack in a southerly direction towards Iraq and British forces would move north from their bases in Egypt through Israel, Jordan and Iraq. Anticipating his reply, Ben-Gurion reminded him ‘forcibly’ that Israel was not subservient to Britain. Robertson suggested that British officers visit Israel either ‘in or out of uniform’ to check the communications systems in Israel. While his protocol reveals that Ben-Gurion consented, Ben-Gurion’s did not record a reply.<sup>179</sup>

Yadin told Robertson that Britain’s defence arrangements were inadequate. In order for Israel to consider its position, it needed to know what was being asked of it. Robertson replied that Israel’s role ‘had yet to be determined’.<sup>180</sup> He deduced that Israel had hinted and intimated that transit and communications would be available and that she had offered ‘active partnership’ in time of war.<sup>181</sup>

At their second meeting on 21 February, Ben-Gurion told Robertson that:

The English were one of the best peoples in the world and that they would fight for an ideal. Israel would also fight for an ideal. The difference was that the loss of ground here or there made little difference to the Western world. They would undoubtedly win the war in the end, but Israel could not afford to lose any ground. If the allies lost ground in this part of the world, it would inevitably mean that Israel would be wiped out.<sup>182</sup>

Ben-Gurion, (who indicated he was not speaking for his government) startled him with an unexpected and astonishing suggestion that Israel could be associated with the Commonwealth.<sup>183</sup> Bar Zohar, his biographer, quotes him telling Robertson, ‘Why don’t we join the British Commonwealth? You have more in common with us than with Ceylon. We could create a new network of relations between us, like the one between you and New Zealand’.<sup>184</sup> However, these comments are not recorded in Israeli and British files. Comay later recalled:

I was present at all the Robertson talks, and have no doubt in my mind as to what was said. There was not the faintest suggestion of applying for membership of the Commonwealth, either now or in the future. In the course of discussing future collaboration in the event of a third world war, Ben-Gurion wanted to emphasise that political and military commitments were in the last resort less important than the basic relationship. It was in this context that he suggested that the attitude towards us be what it would have been if we were in the Commonwealth.<sup>185</sup>

Michael Cohen explains that his suggestion was rooted in the fact that he:

Had a habit of floating ‘grand’, even ‘grandiose’ ideas. Thus having elicited very little from the general at their first meeting, he had asked in their second meeting for a public guarantee of Britain’s commitment to Israel’s survival in the event of war. This was the reasoning in asking that Israel, in an emergency, be treated like New Zealand.<sup>186</sup>

This ignores Ben-Gurion's shrewdness in floating ideas in order to assess early responses and reactions. Bialer's assertion that he wanted merely to 'outline the sort of preconditions which had to exist before such a relationship, could become possible', is a more plausible explanation.<sup>187</sup>

Ben-Gurion's choice of New Zealand was cited because its relationship with Britain was not primarily military but had wider economical and cultural ramifications. His inquisitiveness went beyond a layman's interest in British imperial history and was influenced by Josiah Wedgwood's advocacy of Palestine's inclusion as a dominion in the British Empire. Weizmann also discussed the idea in his book, *Trial and Error*.<sup>188</sup>



Figure 3.3 British Minister to Israel, Sir Knox Helm (*left*) with Reuven Shiloah, Director of the Mossad (*right*), May 1951 Sir Knox Helm with Reuven Shiloah, May 1951

*Source:* Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office

Helm believed that Ben-Gurion 'would be extremely disappointed if Britain did not respond in a corresponding spirit and hoped that she could do this... I think at heart Ben-Gurion would like to ask for full membership, though the rest of the country probably does not share his views'.<sup>189</sup> The Foreign Office believed that the 'proposition that there should be Commonwealth treatment for Israel in peace was in order to secure a Commonwealth reaction in war was meant in all seriousness' but that he did not suggest that Israel become a member of the Commonwealth. 'On the basis of Mr Ben-Gurion's proposal we could not admit Israel to the system of the Commonwealth Consultation but

we could develop much clearer consultation with Israel on an ad hoc basis if it were desirable'.<sup>190</sup>

Helm wrote to Sharett that Robertson's visit was 'a milestone along the road which we have been following together for the last two years'.<sup>191</sup> He reported that it was the first British official visit paid to an Israeli authority in Jerusalem and that Israel hoped it foreshadowed the acceptance of the City as its capital. He also noted that it was the first time that Ben-Gurion accepted entertainment in his house.<sup>192</sup>

The Foreign Office played down the significance of the visit as merely a fact-finding mission. Robertson regarded his mission as a success and reported that Israel was stable, and could be relied upon if, and when, the need arose and 'apart from Turkey and, to some extent, Israel, all the component states in the Middle East were weak'.<sup>193</sup>

Sharett maintained that: 'although he [General Robertson] has not achieved his goals...nevertheless, the results of the visit should not be viewed negatively, [since] there is no doubt that it was an important visit that will serve as a link in a chain'.<sup>194</sup> While Ben-Gurion appreciated Britain's conciliatory gesture, and that it was the first occasion a Great Power had made significant suggestions pertaining to regional security, Israel was not prepared to tie itself to the wider objectives of British Middle East strategic defence plans.<sup>195</sup>

#### RE-EVALUATING ISRAEL'S ROLE IN BRITISH DEFENCE PLANNING, MARCH-OCTOBER 1951

Morrison wrote to Ben-Gurion welcoming his suggestions to Robertson and proposed military cooperation between the two countries:

We believe it is possible to establish a relationship between our two peoples which, taking into account the realities of the existing situation and our respective world interests, shall constitute a bond between us which shall be capable of progressive development... We, for our part, are fully prepared to do all we can to this end.<sup>196</sup>

Shinwell thought he could contribute to Anglo-Israel relations by paying a visit to Israel following a meeting of Commonwealth Defence Ministers in June. He was adamant that 'we must avoid placing too much reliance on the Arabs and must allow no opportunity of developing satisfactory relationships with others who may prove helpful partners in our defence plans in the Middle East to go by default'.<sup>197</sup> The Foreign Office objected because it would 'give the impression that we are running after the Israelis'.<sup>198</sup> Furthermore, Israel was in the middle of an election campaign and Ben-Gurion had yet to reply to Morrison's letter. Shinwell's renewed request to visit Israel ten days after the election was vetoed by the Foreign Office, because it was 'difficult to agree in the present conditions'.<sup>199</sup>

Following Robertson's visit, the CIGS reluctantly concluded that 'from a military point of view, the only practicable location for an interim base [following its evacuation of its Suez base] to support the forces in peace and in the opening stages of a war would be Israel'. It was 'clear that the Israeli forces would develop their maximum fighting

efficiency in support of the inner ring strategy if their deployment also made a direct contribution to the defence of their own territory'. However, in view of political considerations, it was 'unwise to plan for Israel to play a more active role than that of providing a nucleus air defence organization and of maintaining the lines of communication within her own territory'. They suggested sending a military mission to Israel to help meet any 'politically acceptable' Israeli requests for equipment and training facilities in Britain.<sup>200</sup>

The Foreign Office warned of the 'grave danger' of deploying the IDF on Arab territory and urged that no decision should be reached until Ben-Gurion had replied to Morrison's letter.<sup>201</sup> Ben-Gurion felt no urgency to reply due to the dearth of substantive proposals in the letter.<sup>202</sup> He told Helm that he 'was willing to talk business but that it was impracticable until after the elections and the formation of a new government'.<sup>203</sup> There were possible areas for cooperation, Britain's role in promoting peace, and economic and military cooperation. If Britain was unable to offer any suggestions, there could be no cooperation.<sup>204</sup>

Securing the Middle East Command (MEC) in Egypt ruled out cooperation with Israel. Egypt was invited to become a founder member while Israel and other Arab states were to be offered 'associate membership'. The Defence Co-ordinating Committee in Cairo advocated that even associate membership for Israel was unacceptable. Only after the Arabs refused to join the MEC would they reassess Israel's role. In September, the CIGS rejected Israel's request to construct a pipeline from Elath to Haifa.<sup>205</sup>

Egypt was invited to join SACME (Supreme Allied Command of the Middle East). Ben-Gurion regarded Morrison, 'a fox not to be trusted' and that 'this is one of the most ominous events that have taken place in recent years, perhaps even graver than the Abdullah's assassination...this does not bode well for Israel'.<sup>206</sup> How was it possible that Egypt, which did not belong to the free world, would fight the Soviets to uphold democracy in the Middle East? The military training and equipment Egypt was to receive would 'certainly be used against Israel when circumstances permitted'.<sup>207</sup> Egypt refused to join the MEC, leaving open the possibility of Israel's future participation. Sharett announced on 26 October that Israel would consider any plan put forward on its merits.<sup>208</sup>

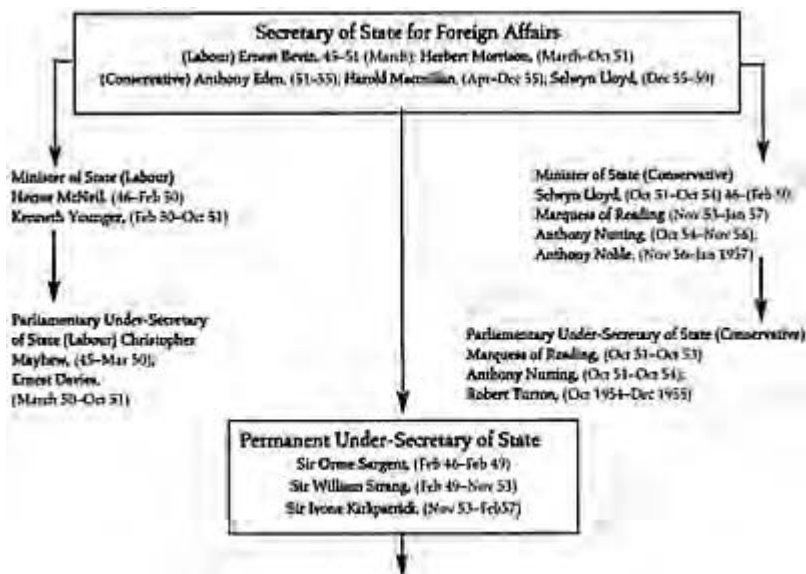
Abdullah's assassination on 20 July 1951 was a devastating blow for Britain who in October, was humiliatingly forced to abandon its position in Abadan. In the wake of Britain's misfortunes, Egypt unilaterally abrogated the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. Britain had little option but to improve on previous offers. Anticipating a diplomatic offensive, the US urged Israel against sabotaging an agreement.<sup>209</sup>

Two weeks before the British General Election in October 1951, Morrison sent Ben-Gurion an *aide-mémoire* pertaining to questions on plans to defend the Middle East. He was informed that Britain, the USA, France and Turkey would establish an organization to defend the Middle East in the event of Soviet aggression. They would be joined by Australia, New Zealand and Egypt whose base was of 'paramount importance'. All would be done to 'facilitate' Israel's inclusion in a defence arrangement.

The return of an ailing Churchill to office as Prime Minister and the heir apparent, Eden as Foreign Secretary in October postponed further developments. Despite Israel's pessimism, there were some encouraging developments. Britain consulted and shared common concerns with Israel and highly regarded Israel's military potential, which

would be called upon to serve British interests in the Canal Zone in October 1956. Israel lost nothing; there was nothing for it to lose.

APPENDIX: THE FOREIGN OFFICE DEPARTMENTAL STRUCTURE 1949–1957



Director of Research & Librarian: Research Department and Library

Deputy Under-Secretary of State (Administration) Personnel Department; Establishment and Organization Department; Conference and Supply department; Finance Department; German Section Establishment and Organization Department; German Section Personnel and General Departments; Corps of Inspector

Director of Communications, Communications Department

Assistant Under-Secretary of State; Archives, Claims, Consular, Passport Control; Protocol Departments, Passport Office, Department; Treaty and Nationality Department, American Department

Deputy Under-Secretary of State Western Organizations Department (non-defence)

Director of Research & Librarian: Research Department and Library

Legal Advisors

News Department

Assistant Under-Secretary of State; Cultural Relations Department; Informational Policy Department; Information Research Department; German Information Department

Assistant Under-Secretary of State; Security Department

Permanent Under-Secretary's Department

Assistant Under-Secretary of State, Southern Department

Deputy Under-Secretary, Western Department

Assistant Under-Secretary of State; Economic Relations Department; Mutual Aid Department; General Department; UN (Economic and Social) Department (Economic); UN Political

Assistant Under-Secretary of State; African Department Eastern Department; Levant Department

Assistant Under-Secretary of State; South-East Asia Department Far Eastern Department

Assistant Under-Secretary of State, Northern Department; UN (Political Department); UN (Economic and Social) Department (Economic); UN Political

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6. G.Craig and F.Lowenheim, *The Diplomats, 1919–1979* (Princeton, NJ, 1994); J.Zametica, *British Officials and British Foreign Policy, 1945–1950* (Leicester, 1990); C.Bartlett, *British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1989); F.Northedge, *Descent From Power; British Foreign Policy, 1945–1973* (London, 1974); *Freedom and Necessity in British Foreign Policy* (London, 1972); H.Nicholson, *Diplomacy* (Oxford, 1965); W.Strang, *Britain in World Affairs* (London, 1961); *Home and Abroad* (London, 1954); J.Frankel, *British Foreign Policy*; S.Croft, *The End of Superpower: British Foreign Office Conceptions of a Changing World, 1945–1951* (Dartmouth, 1994); J.Dickie, *Inside the Foreign Office* (London, 1992).
7. F.Northedge, 'Britain and the Middle East', in R.Ovendale, *The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Government*, (Leicester, 1984), 151.
8. CAB 129/36 CP (49) 183.
9. *FRUS*, 1950, VI, 1530, 1544, 1549, 1554, 1571.
10. FO 371/75287 1081/11158. 'We informed King Abdullah in July 1948 that in our view the most logical decision on the future of the Arab parts of Palestine would be their incorporation in the Kingdom of Transjordan', 1081/6695, 12 May 1949. On 6 Oct, the CIGS concluded that 'there would be a very great advantage, from an operational point of view, in locating a proportion of our peacetime Middle East land and tactical forces in the...area of Greater Transjordan', DEFE 6/7 JP (48) 108; *FRUS*, 1950, V, 139, 844–7. The US was reluctant to make a public statement before the conclusion of a Transjordanian-Israeli peace treaty: 'annexation might appropriately take place in the context of a final peace settlement', 870.
11. Norman Bentwich recalled that 'it was no idle jibe of the Rector of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, when in 1949, in awarding to Ben-Gurion a prize for the person having rendered the greatest service to Israel during the previous two years, he indicated that that

- the other serious candidate was Bevin', H. and N. Bentwich, *Mandate Memories* (London, 1965), 176.
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  21. F. Williams, *Ernest Bevin*, 258–9, 261.
  22. A. Shlaim, 'Ernest Bevin', 61.
  23. FO 800/509, 15 Oct 1947, *FRUS*, 1948, V, 2, 1683–4.
  24. H. Wilson, *The Chariot of Israel* (London, 1980), 127.
  25. M. Perlman, *David Ben-Gurion Looks Back* (London, 1966), 96.
  26. H. Morrison, *An Autobiography*, 272.
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  28. Y. Gorny, *The British Labour Movement and Zionism, 1917–1948* (London, 1983), 219.
  29. E. Monroe, 'Mr Bevin's Arab Policy', 23; Warner, 'Bevin and British Foreign Policy', *The Diplomats*, 105.
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  31. F. Northedge, 'Britain and the Middle East', 178.
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62. ISA, 2382/22, 31 May; BGA, The Jerusalem Conference, Sep 1950.
63. Interviews with Shneur Levenberg, Lords Sieff and Weidenfeld.
64. ISA, 2382/8, 5 Oct 1951. He concluded that ‘their [Foreign Office Ministers] statements that H.M. Government is anxious to preserve and develop friendly relations *both* with Israel *and* with the Arab countries are *perfectly reliable*. Any wishful assumption on our part to the contrary, and *especially anything that seems to imply ignoring the Arab factor, must be dismissed as simply not true*’.
65. U.Bialer, *Between East and West*, 173–205.
66. JWPS. (W.) (Arms) P (49) 46, 23 Aug 1949.
67. CAB 131/8 DO (49) 2, 10 Jan; 5, 18 Feb 1949.
68. ISA, 2318/6, 3 Feb; 2594/8, 3 Apr; 82567 1193/5, JWPS/P (50) 14, 3 Feb 1950; 82568 1193/23. The Foreign Office gave Israel the impression that an announcement would be forthcoming. No headway would be made without an air force representative in Britain. Interviews with Lowens and Yapou.
69. This was intimated to Col. Yigal Allon, who visited the War Office in Sep. FO 371/75246 11671; ISA, 38/12, 4 Oct 1949.
70. There was no accepted definition of ‘light arms’ in the service manuals. He was told that the sales were registered with the UN yet there is no record in the UN files. ISA, 36/14, 14 June 1949. The War Office saw no reason why HMG could not meet Israel’s requests for technical information on the Spitfires and rifles.
71. The War Office maintained that information given to Israel should be guided ‘purely by security considerations on the assumption that any information supplied to Israel will very likely leak to Russia’. DEFE 4/24, COS (49) 126; FO 371/75243 1193/12747, 26 Oct 1949.
72. ISA, 2583/5, 12 Jan; 2318/3, 30 Jan; FO 371/82567 1193/12, 23 Jan 1950.
73. NA, RG 319 Box 160, Mar 1949; *FRUS*, 1950, V, 189, 25 Jul.
74. DEFE 6/8 JP (49) 29, 30 Mar 1949.
75. ISA, 36/14, 27 Mar 1950.
76. Including, single shot rifles, Raiders and Gypsy airplane engines designated for civilian purposes. Heavy arms were excluded in order to test HMG’s response to future requests. FO 371/75243 1193/10041, 10 Aug 1949. Interview with Lowens.
77. FO 371/75243 1193/10041, 10 Aug; 1193, 14 Oct. Non-combat supplies could ‘possibly be met’, this might, diminish ‘the evil consequences of Israel’s obtaining of military equipment from Russia, Czechoslovakia or other iron curtain countries’, 82567 1193/14, COS (49) 439, 14 Dec 1949.
78. ISA, 2582/3, 26 Jan; BGA, BGD, 18 Apr 1950.
79. FO 371/82568 1193/28, 1 Apr 1950.
80. ISA, 2587/9, 29 Nov 1949.
81. *FRUS*, 1950, V, 9 Mar, 792–3; 27 Mar, 818–9. Israel was willing to make available to the US, information on the strength of its military establishment but could not formally do so since it would involve a political debate in the *Knesset*. This was a further sign that she was moving into the western camp. ISA, 36/14, 23 Mar; 2412/29, 31 Mar; *FRUS*, 1950, V, 23 Dec, 1078–82. Kollek told the State Department that the IDF wished to exchange Czech arms for those of the US. Czech weapons conformed to those used by the West-German army and the US could make use of the arms to train them. The US did not respond. *FRUS*, 1950, V, 28 Dec, 1084–5. The US told Israel that Britain was primarily responsible for the

- Near East and that it should consult with Britain because there could be no agreement on arms without both the US and British consent.
82. Israel's arms purchasers in Britain were a motley collection with little notion of the arms they were searching. Many were conned. One ecstatic procurer proudly informed Ben-Gurion that he had succeeded in 'purchasing a dry dock for the give-away price of \$500' merely to be informed of the true nature of his prowess. Interview with Fred Lowens who worked with *Machal*. After 1948, he handled the duties of the military attaché before Salmon took up his post. From 1949 to 1953, he was a non-military secretary under the auspices of the military attaches and liaised between IDF personnel studying in the UK and the Embassy. He was involved in clandestine operations for the Purchasing Mission at the Legation. Lowens maintains that much of the material Israel required, with the exception of heavy weaponry, was purchased on the European open market. His request not to disclose details pertaining to his involvement has been respected.
  83. M.Gazit, 'Ben-Gurion's Efforts to Cement Military Ties with the US', *Gesher*, 115, 1987, 57–63; *FRUS*, 1950, V, 131–5, 163–6, 672–3, 685, 742–5, 801.
  84. The US voiced reservations about British arms to the Arabs, but was doubtful that the remedy was for the US to supply Israel with arms. *FRUS*, 1949, VI, 24 Mar, 862–4; 1 Sep, 1341–2; 1950, V, 712–15; ISA, 2202/6; 2308/5, 16; 2318/3; 2382/22; 2386/1; 2414/21; 26; S.Slonim, 'The 1948 American Embargo on Arms to Palestine', *Political Science Quarterly*, 94.3, 1979, 497–514; 'President Truman, the State Department and the Palestine Question', *Wiener Library Bulletin*, 34, 1981, 13–29. Helm found it paradoxical that the 'Israelis are insistently asking us for the very thing which the Commanders-in-Chief want them to look to us for', FO 371/82568 1193/21, 15 Feb 1950.
  85. *FRUS*, 1950, V, 28 Mar, 20 Apr, 129–35; 16 May, 891–2; 17 May, 163–6, 25 May.
  86. ISA, 2582/3, 3 May 1950.
  87. *FRUS*, 1950, V, 11 May.
  88. *FRUS*, 1950, V, 28 Mar, 131–4.
  89. *FRUS*, 1950, V, 139, 158.
  90. FO 371/81909 1020/60, 17 May; 1023/89; 6 May; 1023/93, 17 May; *FRUS*, 1950, V, 146, 160–3. Campbell suspected that waning French influence in the region would have a weakening effect.
  91. FO 371/81909 1020/60, 17 May 1950.
  92. *The Times*: 'It deserves to rank among the substantial achievements of the London conference', 26 May. FO 371/81908–10; ISA, 2467/7, 24 May; 5 June, 1950, 886.
  93. S.Slonim, 'The Origins of the 1950 Tripartite Declaration on the Middle East', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 23.2, 1987, 145; FO 371/81907 1023/10, 27 Mar; 1023/6, 1 May; 82192 1023/11, 22 Sep 1950.
  94. ISA, Cabinet minute, 48, 31 May. At the Foreign and Security Affairs Committee the day before, Ben-Gurion urged that the Declaration's effect on the question of Jerusalem should not be raised in the *Knesset* debate, ISA, 7562/3; *Dvrei Haknesset*, 31 May; BGA, BGD; 28, 30, 31 May, 1 June 1950; DEFE 7/203, 7/226.
  95. CAB 131/9 DO (50) 61, 25 Jul 1950, Annex C and D.
  96. ISA, 2461/9, 29 May 1950; 2403/18.
  97. ISA, 2237/1, 26 May 1950.
  98. ISA, 10 Jul; FO 371/81920 10211/19, 7 Jul 1950.
  99. CAB 131/9 DO (50) 61, 25 Jul 1950.
  100. DEFE 5/21, COS (50) 202, 7, 13 June; CAB 131/9 DO (50) 61, 25 Jul 1950, 'We might request the Israel Government, as the United States Government have already done, to treat this question without excessive publicity'.
  101. ISA, 2582/3, 21 June; *FRUS*, 1950, V, 24 June, 940.
  102. ISA, 2582/3, 1, 10 Aug; 37/12, 10 Aug 1950.
  103. ISA, 2403/12, 24 Aug 1950.

104. ISA, 2589/9, 26 Jul 1950.
105. ISA, 2593/1, 29 Nov 1950.
106. ISA, 2582/4, 12 Dec 1950.
107. FO 371/81960, 1192/124, 31 Jul; 1192/125, 126; 1 Aug; 1192/134, 1 Aug; *FRUS*, V, 7 Aug, 176–7; 81960; 11 Aug; 1192/139, 2 Sep 1950.
108. DEFE 4/46 COS (51) 133, 20 Aug; 5/33 COS (51) 492, 28 Aug; CAB 129/47 CP (51) 266, 22 Sep; 4/47 COS (51) 147, 19 Sep; 7/203, 1 Sep; 5/33 COS (51) 515, 7 Sep; 91223 1191/137, 14 Sep 1951.
109. ISA, 2582/3, 24 Oct 1950; 36/14, 8 Aug 1951. He personally notified Elath ‘that a member of his Legation was in a compromising and damaging situation, which could be rectified before the premises of a house of ill-repute were to be raided by the flying squad within the hour’. Interview with Elath.
110. ISA, 2587/9, 26 Jul; 2318/7, 9 Oct 1950.
111. ISA, 38/12, 19 Sep; 11 Oct 1950. Shinwell explained the long delay because of a reassessment of defence needs
112. Interview with Elath; ISA, 36/15, 27 Sep 1951.
113. ISA, 2382/8, 31 Oct 1951.
114. ISA, 38/12, 5 Jul–18 Aug 1950.
115. ISA, 2445/1. Ben-Gurion was to approve of all arms requests.
116. ISA, 38/12, 23 Aug 1950.
117. ISA, 2594/8, 12 Dec 1950.
118. ISA, 38/12, 23 Aug; 2594/8, 19 Oct, 11, 12 Dec; 2594/9; 40/11c, Dec 1950. General Shortt, Director of Military Intelligence told Salmon, ‘we have absolutely no guarantees whatever that classified information passed on to you is properly safeguarded; in fact with the many elements in Israel which must still continue to be hostile to this country we are running very considerable risks in releasing such information to you in the way we do’.
119. ISA, 2582/5 11 Oct; 2582/4, 1 Mar 1951.
120. ISA, 2582/3, 1 Sep 1950. Interviews with Ben-Gal, Avner, Bar-On and Lowens.
121. ISA, 36/15, 27 Sep 1951.
122. FO 371/75206 1054/8557, 15 Sep 1949.
123. M.Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East* (London, 1997), 103–22.
124. I.Asia, *The Core of the Conflict: The Struggle for the Negev, 1947–1956* (Jerusalem/Sede-Boker, 1984), 65–6.
125. DEFE 5/9 COS (48) 208, 15 Dec 1948.
126. *FRUS*, 1948, V, 2,20 Dec, 1683–4.
127. CAB 131/8 DO (49) 1, 3 Jan 1949.
128. FO 800/488, 16 Jan 1949.
129. CAB 131/7 DO (49) 19, 8 Mar; DO. (49) 7, 9 Mar 1949; CAB 131/9 DO (50) 12, 2 Mar 1950.
130. PREM 8/359, DO (50) 40,19 May 1950; FO 371/110782, 3 Jul 1954.
131. M.Cohen, *Fighting World War Three*, 162–94.
132. FO 371/91184 1024/6, 3, 6, 16, 23 Mar, 2 Apr; ISA, 36/14, 17 Jul 1951.
133. *New Statesman*, 10, 17 Feb, 3, 10 Mar; FO 371/91184 1024/6, 6 Mar 1951.
134. Air 20/8101, 6 Apr; 8/1603; JPS (48) 57, Aug; DEFE 6/6, JP (48) 106, 7 Oct; 5/8 COS (48) 123, 16 Oct; 6/7, JP (48) 108, 26 Oct; 5/9, COS (48) 210, 16 Dec 1948; 4/20 JP (49) 11,11 Feb; 6/8, JP (49) 11, 11 Feb; 5/13 COS (49) 107, 25 Mar; JP (49) 59, *Supra*, DCC (49) 51, 15 June; 5/15, 1 COS (49) 232, 12 Jul 1949; 5/34 COS (51) 755, 4/36, (50) 94, 22 Sep 1950; PREM 8/745; 5/9 COS, 18 Dec 1951.
135. M.Cohen, *Fighting World War Three*, 196.
136. DEFE 6/13 JP (50) 48, 19 May 1950 J.Zametica, *British Officials and British Foreign Policy, 1945–1950* (Leicester, 1990), 264.
137. FO 371/81928 1055, 20 Apr 1950.

138. FO 371/82515 1022, 10 Oct 1950.
139. FO 371/82514, 10 Apr 1950; ISA, 2584/1.
140. FO 371/82528, 1054, 6 Feb 1950.
141. WO 216/722, 29 Nov; FO 371/81988. The MoD showed interest in concluding a separate treaty with Israel, which would enable Britain to make more concessions to the Egyptians, 80457, 1197/163, Dec; 82515 1022/35, Dec 1950.
142. DEFE 5/20, COS (50) 141, 28 Apr 1950.
143. JP (48) 19, 12 Feb; FO 371/68378 4319, 7 Apr; COS (48) 144, 1 Jul 1948; DEFE 6/8 JP (49) 29, 30 Mar; 4/23, JP (49) 59, 11 Jul; FO 371/75332, 2 Apr; DEFE 4/23 JP (49) 59, 11 Jul; 4/26, JP (49) 126, (final) 3 Nov 1949.
144. ISA, Cabinet minute, 46, 17 May 1950.
145. *Jerusalem Post*, 29 June; FO 371/82576 1212/3, 28 June, Helm wrote, 'in addition to the inexcusable behaviour of the Prime Minister, was his absence "on manoeuvres" during the visit of the units of the so-called Israeli fleet'; 1212/6, 17 Jul; DEFE 5/25 COS (50) 459, 7 Nov 1950.
146. BGA, BGD, 26 June; FO 371/82576, 1212/6, 17 Jul 1950.
147. *Jerusalem Post*, 25 Jul; FO 371/82576, 1212/6, 5 Aug 1950.
148. AIR 20/8113 JP (50) 106, 1 Aug 1950.
149. *Ibid.*, 23 Aug; *FRUS*, 1950, V, 224, 24 Aug.
150. BGA, BGD, 31 Oct 1950. In Sep, the British short-term plan for Middle East Defence 'Celery' was amended so that the fighting would be kept east of Israel.
151. BGA, BGD, 29 Sep 1950.
152. FO 371/82179 1015/102, 4 Oct 1950.
153. FO 371/82578 1223/33, 29 Sep; 82179 1015/106, 7 Oct 1950.
154. DEFE 6/14 JP (50) final, 4 Oct; appendix D to JP (50) 141, 16 Oct; CAB 128/18, 23 Oct; *FRUS*, 1950, V, 19, 24 Oct, 217–30; 131/10 DO (51) 3, 21 Feb 1951.
155. ISA, 2582/3, 13 Oct. After the Edelston and Henderson, and Robertson's anticipated visit, it was not surprising that the nondescript composition of the parliamentary delegation was a disappointment. FO 371/81970 1202/2, 6 Oct 1950.
156. FO 371/82515 1022/35, 12 Dec; ISA, 36/12, 15 Dec; 2582/4, 26 Dec 1950; DEFE 5/27 COS (51) 28, 18 Jan 1951.
157. *Jewish Standard*, 29 Apr, 13 May 1949; *FRUS*, 1950, V, 19 Oct, 217–31; 28 Dec; FO 371/82515 1022/33, 7 Dec.
158. ISA, 2587/7, 22 Dec 1950.
159. *FRUS*, 1950, V, 1080–5, 28 Dec; ISA, 36/14, Dec.
160. FO 371/91393 1201/2, 1 Jan 1951.
161. FO 371/91206 1073/2, 5 Jan; 1073/3, 6 Jan 1951.
162. ISA, 2403/12, 9 Jan 1951.
163. BGA, BGD, 26 Dec 1950, 4 Jan 1951.
164. BGA, BGD, 17 Jan 1951.
165. ISA, 36/14; 37/10, 15 Jan 1951.
166. ISA, 36/14, 1 Mar 1951.
167. Riftin (*Mapam*), Katz (*Herut*) and Yellin-Mor (Fighters' Party). The independent *Ha'aretz* criticized the censor's suppression of reports of the *Knesset* debate. The right-wing *Herut*, 'we shall not agree to permit British soldiers to tread on our land'; the Communist *Kol Ha'am*, feared that Israelis would be 'cannon fodder' for the West. FO 371/91731 1194/1, 27 Jan; 1194/2, 31 Jan 1951.
168. BGA, BGD, 27, 31 Jan. He told Yadin that: 'we must not leap in too early and undertake commitments toward a future which is unclear...an undertaking on war and who will make undertakings towards us? We can do only one thing—not say how we will act in an uncertain future, but instead what shall we do from day to day...to do this we have to gain trust—not by deception or ruses but by what we are'. *Dvrei Haknesset*, 31 Jan 1951.

169. FO 371/91240 1201/37, 4, 5 Feb 1951.
170. ISA, 2582/4, 22 Jan; 36/14; FO 371/91240 1201/38, 6 Feb 1951.
171. DEFE 6/16 JP (51) 21, 9 Feb; 4/40 COS (51) 30, 12 Feb; CAB 131/11 DO (51) 8, 13 Feb; 131/10 DO (51) 2, 16 Feb 1951.
172. DEFE 4/40 COS (51) 30, 12 Feb 1951
173. FO 371/91240 21 Feb; 1201/54, 55, 23 Feb; 58, 22 Feb; 91716 1053/9, 23 Feb; 917331 1194/5, 23 Feb; 1194/3, 24 Feb; 1053/11, 26 Feb; 10, 2 Mar; 917331 1194/4; DEFE 4/40 COS (51) 41, 5 Mar; 5/29 COS (51) 153, 21 Mar; 4/40 COS (51) 52, 22 Mar; 2457/7, 19–22 Feb; 2586/20, 21 Feb; 2582/4, 22 Feb; 36/14, 2445/11; BGA, BGD, and protocols of meetings, 19–22 Feb 1951; *The Times*, 19–22 Feb 1951; U.Bialer, *Between East and West*, 238–9; M.Cohen, *Fighting World War Three*, 210–19; D.Deveraux, *The Formulation of British Defence Policy towards the Middle East, 1948–1956* (Oxford, 1990) 150–3; E.Podeh, ‘The Desire to Belong Syndrome’, *Israel Studies*, 4.2, 1999, 121–49.
174. FO 371/91731; 91373 1193/3, 24 Feb; 1194/5, 36/14, 20–27 Feb 1951. Banner slogans included; ‘Robertson return to your country’, ‘we shall never forget and forgive the British crimes in this country’, ‘We have not brought up our children to go to war’. FO 371/91373; *Al-Ittihad*, 17 Feb. *Al Hamishmar* opposed entangling Israel with the West, which was detrimental to her independence. *Kol Haam*, accused Robertson of trying to make Israel into a supply base and exploiting her in warlike designs. *Ha’aretz* noted that the visit finally confirmed that Britain had not merely recognized Israel but had abandoned all doubts as to her survival.
175. *Dvrei Haknesset*, 21 Feb 1951.
176. M.Bar-Zohar, *Ben Gurion* (Tel-Aviv, 1976) ii, 904.
177. ISA, 2457/5, 19 Feb 1951.
178. ISA, 36/14, 28 Feb 1951.
179. FO 371/91240 1201/58, 21 Feb; DEFE 5/29 COS (51) 153, 21 Mar; ISA, Cabinet minute, 32, 22 Feb; 7562/8, Foreign and Security Affairs Committee, 27 Feb 1951. This had ramifications for the British military mission in Oct 1952.
180. ISA, 2457/7, 20, 21 Feb 1951.
181. FO 371/91716 1053/11, 3 Mar 1951.
182. ISA, 36/14, Feb 1951.
183. FO 371/91716 1053/11, 26 Feb; 10; 2 Mar; DEFE 4/41, COS (51) 52, 22 Mar 1951.
184. M.Bar-Zohar, ii, *Ben-Gurion* 904.
185. ISA, 36/16, 24 June; 36/14, 23 Feb; FO 371/91240 1201/55, 1951.
186. M.Cohen, *Fighting World War Three*, 217–18.
187. U.Bialer, *Between East and West*, 238–9.
188. J.Wedgwood, *The Seventh Dominion* (London, 1927); FO 371/91240 1201/55, 23 Feb 1951. ‘Nor of course is the idea of Commonwealth connexion, a new one, it has its place in Weizmann’s *Trial and Error*’, 142307 1054/1, 4 May 1959.
189. FO 371/91716 1053/9, 23 Feb 1951.
190. FO 371/91716 1053/11, 26, 27 Feb; 1053/10, 2 Mar; ISA, 36/14, 30 May 1951; 121855 2211/2, March 1956.
191. ISA, 36/14, 22 Feb 1951.
192. FO 371/91373 1194/3, 24 Feb 1951.
193. ISA, 2592/5, 28 Feb; CAB 129/45 CP (51) 94, 19 Mar 1951; M.Cohen, *Fighting World War Three*, 253–61, 270–2.
194. G.Sheffer, *Sharett*, 578; ISA, 36/14, 28 Feb 1951.
195. DEFE 5/31 COS (51) 309, 28 May; 4/43 COS (51) 84, 21 May; CAB 128/19 CM 36 (51) 22 May; DEFE 4/43, COS (51) 91, 4 June; 131/10 DO (51) 15, 7 June; 4/44 COS (51) 100, 20 June; 103, 25 June; 109, 2 Jul; 4/45 JP (51) 129, 24 Jul; 130, 24 Jul; 131, 23 Jul; 129/46 CP (51) 214, 27 Jul; 5/32 COS (51) 449, 2 Aug; 4/46 COS (51) 127, 8 Aug 1951.
196. FO 371/91240 1201/64, 9 Mar 1951.

197. FO 371/91731 1194/6, 18 May. Comay noted that, 'it would be assumed here that his own PM had already agreed to such as visit, as it would not be fitting for the government officially to invite a leading member of a foreign Cabinet and then find he was unable to come, or not be allowed to do so', ISA, 37/1, 19 Jul; 2582/5, 26 Aug 1951.
198. FO 371/91731 1194/6, 3, 11 May 1951. Stated in official documents and corroborated in my interviews with Lord Shinwell.
199. FO 371/91735 1194/8, 9 Aug 1951.
200. CAB 131/11 DO (51) 26, 7 Mar; 131/10 DO (51) 6, 19 Mar; DEFE 4/41JP (51) 49, 29 Mar; 129/45, CP (51) 95, 30 Mar; 128/19 CM 22, 30 Mar; 23, 2 Apr; DO (51) 44, 5 Apr; 131/10, DO (51) 8, 9 Apr; DEFE 5/31, COS (51) 283, 7 May; 129/45, CP (51) 140, 28 May; 128/19, CM (51) 39, 31 May; 4/44, 10, 22 June; DO (51) 18, 2 Jul; 5/32, 397, 3 Jul; 4/45, JP (51) 56, COS, 9 Jul; 129/46, CP (51) 214, 27 July; 128/20 CM (51) 57, 1 Aug 1951.
201. DEFE 4/45, COS (51) 114, COS, 11 July 1951.
202. Elath told Strang that as soon as Ben-Gurion formed a government he would issue a reply. FO 371/91731 1194/7, 1 Aug; BGA, BGD, 7 Jul 1951.
203. There are two accounts of the meeting written by Comay, the first a synopsis, ISA, 37/1, the other a full minute, 36/12, 9 Jul 1951.
204. BGA, BGD, 9 Jul 1951.
205. *Hansard*, 30 Jul, 491, 959–1072; ISA, 2412/26, 15 Aug; FO 371/91749 1533/14, JP (51) 144 (Final), 6 Sep; 1533/14 JP (51) 144 (Final), 14 Sep; 91223 1192/140, 5 Oct; 91224, 1192/169, 8 Oct; 91224, 1192/169, 26 Oct. Shinwell mistakenly believed that the negotiations with Egypt would fail. The MFA concluded that 'ultimately, Egypt will simply be forced by the Americans into acceptance, though that may be far off', 2582/5, 21 Oct 1951.
206. BGA, BGD, 25 Jul 1951.
207. BGA, BGD, 15 Oct 1951.
208. FO 371/98785 1011/1, 27 Feb 1952.
209. ISA, 2582/5, DFPI vi, 694–6, 13 Oct 1951.

## Israel's place in British defence policy in the shadow of the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, 1951–1954

### THE ATTITUDES OF CHURCHILL AND THE FOREIGN OFFICE TOWARDS ISRAEL

Improved Anglo-Israeli ties were neither influenced by Israel's potential or by its willingness to cooperate but were contingent on the milieu of the protracted and volatile Anglo-Egyptian negotiations on the renewal of Britain's Suez Canal base.

Although it had lost an empire, Britain searched for a role commensurate with its responsibilities and resources, and adamantly adhered to furthering its role as part of the 'Big Three'. Britain's esteem and credibility were severely tested when, in the absence of a viable alternative, it was obliged to conduct humiliating negotiations with a newly-installed popular anti-western regime in Egypt. Britain was forced to think the unthinkable, the removal of its Canal base, its most strategic global asset, which protected a route for more than 80 per cent of her oil supplies.

Uncertainty regarding the likelihood of an outbreak of hostilities between the Soviet Bloc and the West required Britain to reappraise its defence requirements, which included consideration of Israel's possible role. Israel was cautious not to commit itself to safeguard western interests, which neither guaranteed her security nor accorded equal status enjoyed by neighbouring states, which were adverse to promoting western interests.

Aged 77, Churchill became Prime Minister and retained the defence portfolio until 1 March 1952. Although his mental capacities remained sharp, his declining physical health rendered him incapacitated from the middle of 1953. The Government's workable but slim parliamentary majority of 17 made him and Eden susceptible to Conservative backbench attitudes, which commanded considerable influence in moulding public opinion. It is difficult to discern the attitudes of cabinet members.<sup>1</sup>

Eden's acrimonious relationship with Churchill was a source of indecision in implementing policy. Increased responsibilities and the sheer influx of daily papers placed a great strain on Eden who remarked that, 'the job had killed Bevin and destroyed Morrison and now he understood why'.<sup>2</sup> He maintained that 'the essence of a sound foreign policy was to ensure that a country's strength is equal to its obligations'. He identified three underlying factors, which governed British policy: 'World responsibilities inherited from several hundred years as a Great Power, the fact that Britain was not a self-sufficient economic unit, and lack of a world security system which meant that the United Kingdom...is faced with an external threat'.<sup>3</sup>



His fundamental difficulty was to sustain Britain's world role with reduced US aid and diminishing resources.<sup>4</sup> The only practical course was to shed defence commitments and construct international defence organizations by persuading the US to take the lead. Eden regarded the US as an untutored rival. He expected it to look to Britain for guidance, and by seeing the error of its ways, would acknowledge that both the US and British vital interests were equally at stake.

Conservative backbenchers considered the US as the immediate threat to Britain's interests, which undermined it and was blamed for every overseas loss. They resented the replacement of *pax-Britanica* by *pax-Americana*.<sup>5</sup>

We must steer a course between allowing ourselves to be supplanted by other powers whose support we require in our own interest as well as in the interest of the countries of the Middle East and refusing to allow those powers to help countries, in which we have hitherto held a privileged position when we cannot adequately help them ourselves.<sup>6</sup>

Israel welcomed Churchill's return to office. He was admired for his genuine support for the Jewish national aspirations and their contribution to 'civilization'.<sup>7</sup> Following his indignation at the assassination of his close friend Lord Moyne by Jewish extremists in 1944 he wrote to Weizmann that: 'The Palestine position, now as concerns Great Britain, is simply such a helldisaster that I cannot take it up again or renew my efforts of twenty years. It is a situation which I cannot help in, and must, as far as I can, put out of my mind'.<sup>8</sup> In 1951 he declared that 'now that we no longer hold India, the Canal means very little to us...we are holding the Canal not for ourselves but for civilization'.<sup>9</sup> In June 1954, Churchill declared, 'I am a Zionist, let me make that clear. I was one of the original ones after the Balfour Declaration and I have worked faithfully for it'. Churchill referred to Israelis as 'the sons of the prophets dwelling in Zion'. He never spoke of Jews in the same disrespectful terms that he sometimes applied to Negroes, Arabs and Indians.<sup>10</sup>

Sharett grasped that with the exception of Churchill's occasional intervention, Eden, his heir apparent was the driving force behind foreign-policy decisions.<sup>11</sup> Israel regarded Eden's espousal of the Arab League as confirmation of his pro-Arab stance.<sup>12</sup> It was natural that Eden's studies of oriental classics at Oxford (he was the only Foreign Secretary to speak fluent Arabic and Farsi) influenced his views on the Middle East. Like Churchill, there was no inference of anti-Jewish bias or slurs whereas he made derogatory comments about the Arabs.<sup>13</sup> Eden failed to grasp the impact of significant changes taking place in the region.

He was a victim of the old interwar charade of mistaking figures under British influence for representative Middle East leaders...the key to his thinking was that for the Middle East Britain had the prime responsibility. Arab leaders must recognise this primary fact and, where they failed to do so, they were sharply reminded of their failure to understand the true situation of their real interests.<sup>14</sup>



Figure 4.1 Lord Mountbatten (L) (Commander of the British Mediterranean Fleet), Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett (C), and Sir Francis Evans (R) (British Minister to Israel), July 1952

*Source:* Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office

Evelyn Shuckburgh, Eden's Principal Private Secretary who later headed the Foreign Office's Middle East Department, (his father was head of the Colonial Office's Palestine Desk in the 1920s), considered Israel as 'the greatest irritant of all' and lamented that 'Palestine was the burial ground of our hopes and desires for maintaining the British position in the Middle East'. He noted that Israel was 'founded on a false premise and in unnatural, impertinent conditions'.<sup>15</sup>

Helm's successor, Sir Francis Evans, was inexperienced in Middle Eastern affairs. His familiarity of inter-faith conflict (in Ulster) added little insight to his understanding of the Jewish-Arab conflict. Despite his scathing criticisms of Israel, he admired the elite's collectivist attitude, tenacity and composure in the face of adversity, which was unprecedented in the Middle East.<sup>16</sup> Israel's redeeming quality lay in its potential as a 'semi-European' state: 'Israel's leaders are, I think, determined that the Israelis shall not become a master race existing on the fruits of other men's labours as do, for example, the white men in South Africa'.<sup>17</sup>

John Nicholls, Evans' successor, told Avner that 'there were really no basic outstanding issues between Britain and Israel'. Avner conveyed to him that this was not the case. Nicholls asked whether there were any such outstanding problems, to which Avner replied, western policy in the Middle East. Nicholls replied: 'Yes, I know there is this big Anglo-Israel thing, but if you put that aside... I said that, if one puts 'that big

thing' aside then indeed he was perfectly right though I knew he realised that what he had just put aside was a very heavy package indeed.<sup>18</sup>

Foreign Office discourse often used German expressions and applied Nazi war machine analogies in describing Israel's policies. Helm referred to its '*Lebensraum*', and Evans believed that she would surrender to a '*Führerprinzip*' given the rampant militarism.<sup>19</sup> Notwithstanding Foreign Office bigotry against non-Britons *per se*, they also presumed that Jews were a unified people. This explains the synonymous use of 'Jews' and 'Israelis'.<sup>20</sup> Jews were depicted as: intelligent, ruthless, cunning, determined bargainers, dynamic, emotional, unstable, too independent, and impatient. Troutbeck accused the 'Jews of controlling US policy'<sup>21</sup> and Rapp believed that the Jews' 'publicity machine dominated the world media'.<sup>22</sup> Evans warned that:

So long as there are five million Jews in America, possessing vast power in the fields of finance, industry, commerce and publicity, and as long as their voting strength is crucial in the key state of New York, it would seem to me that any administration in the United States must hesitate long before permitting the submergence of the State of Israel.<sup>23</sup>

The Foreign Office prejudice was unashamedly blatant in the case of Menachem Begin, leader of the *Herut* opposition party and former *Etzel* commander responsible for the deaths of British army and civilian personnel in Palestine. Britain welcomed leaders who had waged terrorist operations against her however Begin was reviled and *persona non grata* despite his adherence to democracy.<sup>24</sup>

#### ISRAEL'S PERCEIVED ROLE IN THE PROPOSED MIDDLE EAST COMMAND (MEC)

While Israel stiffened the restrictions on British military attachés, those on the US attaches were relaxed.<sup>25</sup> Helm reported that Israel did not like the Military Attaché because, 'they have found it much less easy to pull the wool over his eyes than they have done with other attaches' and that the late 'American Ambassador threw out his two senior attaches because they were not sufficiently pro-Israeli'.<sup>26</sup>

Israel demanded a *quid pro quo* for its military attachés in London, which descended to boycotting cocktails at the British Legation because its attaches were not invited to receptions in London. The corollary had the desired affect. Military Attaché Salmon found himself *persona grata* at institutions and events with access to leading officers from whom he had hitherto been kept at arm's length.

Shinwell's remoteness from Zionist affairs during the struggle for independence was balanced by his keenness to assist Israel in his capacity as Minister of Defence.<sup>27</sup> He told Elath of serious differences between NATO and the MEC regarding Turkey's role and that Israel was in a strong bargaining position and 'should not be in too great a hurry to state her position publicly'. Furthermore, 'no military expert in this country believed there could be an effective MEC without Israel's cooperation'.<sup>28</sup>



Figure 4.2 Ambassador Nicholls presenting his credentials to President Yitzhak Ben Zvi, November 1954

*Source:* Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office

Sharett denied rumours of on-going negotiations on Israel's participation in the proposed MEC but stated that Israel was willing 'to contribute its share to the defence of regional and world peace'. Israel desired to work towards a parallelism of interest between Britain and Israel and direct *sui generis* defence arrangements with the US and Britain rather than in the form of association with the proposed MEC. Sharett informed Helm that Israel preferred a practical arrangement over any formal link and saw no need for any spectacular step.<sup>29</sup> Sharett's comments encouraged 'the hope that militarily, Israel will come in with us in some shape or form'.<sup>30</sup>

On 3 December 1951, Elath delivered Ben-Gurion's delayed response to Eden in which he reaffirmed Israel's willingness to cooperate with Britain in the defence of the Middle East along the lines suggested to Robertson. Israel was willing to safeguard common interests and promote the aims of the free world in the Middle East and elsewhere.

To enable us to play our part effectively, it will be necessary to strengthen our industrial potential, to develop means of transport and communications (ports, airfields, roads and railways), to improve the

training and equipment of our armed forces on land, sea and air and to provide stocks of food and fuel. In our view, direct conversations on concrete plans might well be initiated now between our Governments.<sup>31</sup>

Anticipating a negative rejoinder, Ben-Gurion appealed directly to Churchill proposing they examine the possibility of strategic cooperation. Julian Amery MP, 'one of the last believers in the Empire', thought it rash to presume that Churchill would be more amenable than Eden.<sup>32</sup>

The CIGS agreed that Israel should be provided military equipment pending a defence agreement, and that Israel should be placed higher in priority for equipment than were India and Pakistan, both members of the Commonwealth. They proposed an exploratory mission visit to Israel to deal exclusively with military matters, although 'for security reasons the mission should visit Israel in plain clothes'.<sup>33</sup>

Ben-Gurion agreed to receive a small 'plain clothes' military mission for an exploratory discussion and requested a clearer indication of the scope for the proposed discussions.<sup>34</sup> The favourable tone of the letter notwithstanding, he accused Eden of avoiding establishing mutual relations, as he had suggested to Robertson.<sup>35</sup> Overlooking the fact that he had not originally objected to a plain-clothes delegation, Ben-Gurion asked 'how was it possible for the delegation to be a military one if it was to conduct negotiations of a political nature?'<sup>36</sup> Israel accused Britain of failing to implement Robertson's proposal to purchase goods. Israel underestimated the change in circumstances in Britain. A high proportion of goods, Israel offered, consisted of textiles, but the recession in the textile industry, rising unemployment, and the worsening balance-of-payments led to a cut in all overseas purchases and prevented it from purchasing merchandise, readily produced at home.<sup>37</sup>

By joining the MEC Israel could have a stake in Middle East defence, which would enable it to influence the organization from within and provide a possible guarantee against a second round. The MFA was concerned that it would turn Israel into a British military satellite; weaken prospects for US aid; military secrets would be given in some form or other to the Arabs; and Israel's freedom of action would be restricted. It favoured an association with the MEC that 'ensures that we will be consulted on its plans without our being formally connected with it'.<sup>38</sup>

The CIGS considered two less ambitious alternatives; the possibility for the MEC to place orders in Israel within the limits of local purchase powers and financial allotment, which could be extended by Britain. In the light of Treasury and War Office opposition, a face-saving gesture was found; Britain would place limited commercially insignificant orders to demonstrate its commitment, which would have a morale-boosting effect and there would be 'no harm in transferring some of Britain's local purchases to Israel away from Egypt. It will serve to bring home to more Egyptians the consequences of their lack of cooperation'.<sup>39</sup>

The CIGS briefed the military mission that the most to be expected from Israel was to develop the IDF, which in time of war could defend its borders against the Soviets. It was not 'HMG's intention merely to fight a delaying action on Israeli soil, and the mission will make this clear'. It was instructed not to express 'any views to the Israelis on their possible contributions' but to inform them that Britain could render expert advice on setting up a modern air defence organization and provide instruction in the latest

techniques of air defence. These measures were considered sufficient to entice Israel into making concessions. A major obstacle to any agreement was the price Israel was expected to exact from Britain.<sup>40</sup>

Britain reaffirmed that the military mission would conduct negotiations with Israel based on Morrison's proposals and Ben-Gurion's message of November 1951. The mission was ready to visit Israel 'at any date convenient to the Israeli Government' after 1 June 1952. Ben-Gurion dismissed the proposals as a 'dialogue of the deaf': 'we are not a merely another Near Eastern country that has to 'help' Britain in defending the region. We are the ones who are defending. If she is to treat us in the same vein as other Middle East countries, we will not involve ourselves'.<sup>41</sup>

Eytan told Chadwick that the visit was 'a step of the greatest political significance and a departure from our policy of non-identification in the cold war'. However, if Britain was unwilling to compromise, Ben-Gurion 'might well regard himself as not having a clear mandate from his Government to proceed, and might ask it to consider the position afresh'. Realizing its error, Britain quickly modified the terms of reference according to the content of the Ben-Gurion-Morrison letters. Israel was informed that Britain 'fully respects full equality and understood Israel's special position with regard to the MEC and in relation with the iron curtain countries'.<sup>42</sup> In an opening gambit before talks in October, Britain offered Israel a 'sweetener' by granting permission to negotiate the purchase of up to 14 Meteors.<sup>43</sup>

Having failed to establish the MEC, the western powers discussed an alternative plan during the spring of 1952, MEDO (Middle East Defense Organization).<sup>44</sup> Israel postponed the talks because Acting Chief-of-Staff, Makleff, who would lead the talks, would be 'engaged in military manoeuvres'. Elath complained that he was not consulted about the continued postponements and reproached Israel's decision makers: 'If Envoys are to be merely public relations officers and postmen for the delivery of documents, then it seems to me that they are very expensive luxuries'.<sup>45</sup>

Elath was concerned that Israel would be unable 'to deliver the goods'. In a 'strict and personal' letter to Sharett, he feared that the Israelis would be regarded 'as a people who enter hastily into negotiations only to execute a *volte face* at the critical moment'. He was pessimistic about a successful outcome to the talks:

To reject in advance even the possibility of our participation in a regional defence organisation, and this not on the merits of the question, put purely on the notion that Israel is a 'nation that dwells alone', looks to be like a most dangerous kind of escapism, such as can only involve us ever deeper in wrong concepts of policy which may later have disastrous effects, not only on our public opinion.

Comay replied that there was no 'pretending that there is any great enthusiasm here about the Mission'.<sup>46</sup>

Ben-Gurion drafted specific guidelines for Makleff:

- 1) Israeli-British relationship should be based on equality; 2) inquire as to Western plans for the defence of the Middle East; 3) indicate the potential of the Israeli army, 250,000, without disclosing any details on the IDF; 4)

inquire what would be the IDF's freedom of movement in case of a war in the Middle East, the size of other available forces and their expected roles; 5) inquire the extent to which airplanes, tanks, artillery, guns, ammunition and other equipment were to be supplied to the IDF and under what conditions; 6) inquire whether Israel can expect assistance to expand its existing air fields and build new ones, and building a port at Atlit and a railway to Eilat; 7) inquire what were the conditions for fuel pre-stocking in Israel and its use in peace-time.<sup>47</sup>

Sharett argued that on these directives, the delegation would conclude there was no possibility of reaching an understanding and suggested that Israel explain the extent the IDF was prepared to contribute 'in a state of emergency' and to make a proviso that Israel's 'willingness to fight outside its borders in defence of the entire region depends on the Western powers' willingness to defend the Middle East'.

Much to Ben-Gurion's anger the military mission finally arrived, in plain clothes for a two-day visit on 7 October.<sup>48</sup> Three secret meetings were held.<sup>49</sup> In answer to the possibility of utilizing airfields and a supply base in wartime, Israel replied that with the exception of the stationing of British troops during peacetime, it was willing to participate in Middle East defence, draw up joint plans under which the IDF would operate in war and to grant Britain facilities for the pre-positioning of stores. This was conditional on Britain's commitment to develop port facilities, communications and provide immediate funding.

The mission was pressed to disclose plans for defending the region: 'What we are trying to discern is; what are the actual military plans, which have nothing to do with the Allies? In fact, the Allies have yet to appear; the command has not yet been formed'. They admitted that 'we are absolutely debarred...from giving any details' a position, off the record, which was humiliating and untenable.<sup>50</sup> The talks made no headway although a uniformity of interests was achieved because neither Israel nor Britain sought to pursue cooperation further. The mission reported that 'despite an inauspicious beginning, meetings adjourned in a most cordial atmosphere'.<sup>51</sup> It cited the lack of funds for projects suggested by Israel, and the need to avoid action, which would prejudice defence cooperation with the Arab states as the two major obstacles. It made no recommendation regarding Israel's requests.

The CIGS reaffirmed that allocation of arms to Israel should be in accordance with Britain's estimate of Israel's probable attitude in the event of war and her capacity to put any arms supplied to use in a 'common cause'. In Israel's case, her situation would be critical without outside help but once she was made aware of the potential gravity of the situation she was expected to make concessions: 'we therefore had a very good lever in any discussions with them'.

Israel was to be sufficiently informed of Britain's plans to enable her to plan for the fulfilment of whatever role Britain assigned, 'what we tell them should be innocuous; something along the lines of the information already given to the Turks would probably meet the case'. If Israel wished to propose further military talks, Evans was to explain that the Egyptian negotiations were unlikely to be concluded for some time and that: 'Defence co-operation with Israel must continue subordinate to our relations with the Arab countries'.<sup>52</sup>

In March 1953, Elath requested to resume military talks. He was stonewalled: ‘A number of administrative questions were involved that needed close study’ and that although the mission had been ‘favourably impressed’ by the possibilities of direct cooperation with Israel, ‘no further progress could be made until it was possible to discuss detailed plans’.<sup>53</sup> Comay ‘saw no reason why the direct military strengthening of Israel should not proceed without delay regardless of the outcome of the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations or the setting up of a defence command’.<sup>54</sup>

Israel lost nothing in conducting talks with Britain. She made no commitments (the MEC did not exist), further recognition was given to her military potential, her options remained open, and she gleaned vital information pertaining to British and Western defence planning.

#### ‘PATCHING UP A LEAKY SHIP’: ISRAEL AND THE MEC FOLLOWING THE MILITARY MISSION

Upon Stalin’s death in March 1953, the Foreign Office concluded that ‘Israel is losing some of the powerful bargaining advantages: the new Soviet anti-Zionist line makes it no longer necessary for the ‘west’ to woo Israel actively’. Even without the East-West conflict, the Foreign Office could, ‘discount the possibility of Israel siding with Russia’.<sup>55</sup>

Elath wrote to Sharett that:

For all practical purposes, we are *already* in the picture of Western defence, whatever we choose to say about it. The economic and military aid we are accepting from America, with its attendant obligations, is surely a form of co-operation in Western defence plans. It is no charitable gift, but is clearly aimed at strengthening the military and economic potential of *countries regarded as Allies of the West* against possible Soviet aggression, and not as mere ‘benevolent neutrals’ towards the cause of democracy.<sup>56</sup>

Sharett argued that ‘no MEDO can be effective without Israel’s participation and no cooperation [of] Israel [with] Arabs in defence [is] possible without peace hence no MEDO without peace’.<sup>57</sup> While the MEC’s requirements were long term; Israel’s were immediate, given that sufficient forces would not be sent to defend it.

In April, Evans requested Ben-Gurion’s response to discuss Britain’s request to move armoured divisions from the Suez Canal to the West Bank, which involved employing Arab refugees. Ben-Gurion complained: ‘Why should we be a party to this idea, when we are not associated with British policies in the region, especially when they are not in our interests?’<sup>58</sup> Evans told him that he was ‘seeking your approval, not your agreement’. Churchill was informed that while Ben-Gurion did not object he made a reservation that the presence of British troops on the west bank of the Jordan would ‘arouse suspicion’, because Israel questioned the legality of Jordan’s claim to sovereignty in that area.<sup>59</sup>

Eden was certain that Israel would not enter a defence agreement unless Britain made considerable concessions. This was impossible. An interim solution lay in the establishment of some *modus vivendi* between Israel and the Arabs but even this seemed



unfortunately remote. Allen, a Foreign Office official conceded that 'the harder we work for a solution, the further it recedes. Our present policy consists of little more than trying to patch up a leaky ship'.<sup>60</sup>

The CIGS maintained that 'we must not seriously prejudice our position with the Arab States for the sake of a relatively small accretion of strength from an Israel Air Force'.<sup>61</sup> They suggested talks with the US to discuss cooperation with Israel.<sup>62</sup> Churchill sent them a terse note:

I do not mind it being known here or in Cairo that I am on the side of Israel and against her ill treatment by the Egyptians. The idea of selling Israel down the drain in order to persuade the Egyptians to kick us out of the Canal Zone more gently is not one which attracts me.<sup>63</sup>

He believed that 'the fear of stronger Israeli forces would constitute a useful deterrent against Egyptian aggressive aspirations and the possibility of such forces being built up would be a useful factor on our present negotiations with the Egyptian Government'. He thought Israel was 'the most powerful fighting force in the Middle East and may come in very handy in dealing with Egypt if Neguib attacks us'.<sup>64</sup> General Horrocks, C in C of MELF, who visited Israel, was convinced that 'Israel is the only country in the Middle East that is of any value'. Subsequent British military personnel, including Liddell Hart, emphatically endorsed Israel's military potential but they failed to effect policy decisions.<sup>65</sup>

To the Foreign Office's consternation, Churchill notified Ben-Gurion that Britain 'will always give friendly and active study to anything the Israeli Government may have to say about the many interests common to the two Governments and to exchange views wherever their interests are directly affected'.<sup>66</sup> Elath noted that:

Whatever may have been the underlying motives of Churchill's references to Israel, whether 'hatred of Haman' or 'love of Mordecai', his statement stands out as the most outspoken ever made by a British Prime Minister on the subject of Israel, and its incorporation in what is generally regarded as one of Churchill's greatest speeches gives it added significance.<sup>67</sup>

It is surprising that Ben-Gurion did not write to Churchill after recording in his diary excerpts of his speech, admiring the greatness of the man who 'for the first time spoke in favour of Israel in such an emphatic tone in the British Parliament'.<sup>68</sup>

Churchill suffered a major heart attack in June 1953 and this had a detrimental effect on Anglo-Israeli relations. The Marquess of Salisbury, deputizing for Eden who was also incapacitated through illness, asked the Cabinet rhetorically, 'whether it would not be wiser to hold up the suggested approach to the United States Government until progress had been made with the defence negotiations with Egypt'. The Cabinet concurred.<sup>69</sup> Churchill's overtures to Israel were annulled.

The Cabinet instructed the Foreign Office and the CIGS to prepare a memorandum on options with regard to Israel, Egypt and Turkey and regional defence. The CIGS reported that Britain must 'abandon any idea of basing our Middle East defence policy wholly or mainly on co-operation with Israel'.<sup>70</sup> Proposals to set up the MEC HQ in Cyprus were

also dismissed because there was no suitable substitute for Egypt as the British base in the Middle East: ‘We might however obtain from Israel facilities for oil storage and the repair of heavy equipment’. Britain also opposed storing supplies in Haifa during wartime because Israel could seize the supplies at Haifa on the grounds that they were being deployed against it. They concluded that ‘no progress can be made towards defence co-operation with Israel in the foreseeable future’.<sup>71</sup>

The Foreign Office feared that by excluding Israel from the MEC it would increase Israel’s insecurity which would lead to increased border tensions, and that Israel would inevitably turn for military equipment to other sources. It encouraged Sharett’s moderation: ‘What Israel needs, if M. Sharett is to have something to show for his moderation, is rather some additional assurance in the political field, and this might be sought by associating Israel directly, or indirectly with NATO or the Balkan Pact’.<sup>72</sup> The formal decision to abandon military discussions with Israel was taken in January 1954.<sup>73</sup> Eden argued that Israel refused to accept the stationing of British troops in peacetime and that owing to ‘the lack of funds for their development projects and to the need to avoid antagonising the Arabs, we have not followed up these discussions pending the outcome of the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations’. He confided in his officials, ‘I have really gone as far as I am prepared to go in support of P.M.’s appeasement of Israel’. The *fait accompli* came with the announcement of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement on 27 July.<sup>74</sup>

Eden was pressed in Parliament to approach Israel with a view to establishing a base either by Britain or by NATO because Britain would inevitably relinquish its Canal Zone bases.<sup>75</sup> Eden replied that ‘the establishment of our main base in Israel was too overt an act to risk’ and that as the Canal existed, Britain should try to reach an agreement with Egypt before bearing the excessive cost of transferring. He responded to his critics that even if Israel agreed to the stationing of active formations, ‘we should have to send at least a brigade of troops if they were not in effect to be hostages in Israeli hands’.<sup>76</sup>

Western involvement in the signing of the Turco-Pakistani agreement in April 1954, and the Turco-Iraqi Pact in February 1955 was a clear indication to Israel that, despite its efficacy, the ‘Arab option’ prevailed. Israel adopted a policy of containing western-led pacts while seeking arms and security guarantees from the West. Although the desire for full cooperation with western defence plans still constituted a pillar of Israel’s foreign policy, its ‘passion’ would have to be ‘restrained’ for reasons of ‘efficiency and pride’.<sup>77</sup>

Israel was aware of the advantages in negotiating terms of a contract as an understudy to appear in a ‘revised’ British production of the MEC, which would never be staged. The temperamental leading star’s (Egypt), off-stage melodrama was a passing episode in the final act of a performance with an inevitable finale.

## BRITAIN’S RESPONSE TO ISRAEL’S QUEST FOR A US ALLIANCE

Israel actively sought a direct defence arrangement with the US ‘while there was still time’.<sup>78</sup> Ben-Gurion continued to press for a strategic understanding with the US because unlike Britain it had no imperialist past in the region. He told the *Knesset* Foreign Relations Committee that:

England can no longer be a *decisive* factor in the Middle East neither in time of peace nor of war. In this region, our forces are better than theirs and cooperation between us is possible only based on equality and reciprocity as between England and the Dominions. Eden's England is not ready and not prepared for this. English policy in the Middle East is antagonistic towards us and this should be made known to the English and the Americans.<sup>79</sup>

While on a private visit to the US in May 1951, Ben-Gurion sounded out Secretary of Defence Marshall about possible US-Israeli cooperation, but nothing constructive resulted.<sup>80</sup> He told Ambassador Davis that there was no reason to delay regional defence plans until peace was achieved. The West should rely primarily on Turkey and Israel who were able to mobilize considerable forces and to provide important strategic facilities. His approach to Dulles was one of 'cautious conflict management'.<sup>81</sup> During his visit to Israel, he intimated to Dulles that Britain was to blame for 'lost opportunities' and that steps should be taken to strengthen Israel's military and industrial potential. Dulles avoided making any commitments other than that a regional organization would eventually arise in which Israel would play an important part.<sup>82</sup> Israel's case made little impression on Dulles. In his 1 June broadcast, he reiterated that the US did not favour Israel to the Arabs' disadvantage.

Eban remonstrated with Bedell Smith, former head of the CIA that while Turkey and Yugoslavia, were rewarded for their policies towards the USSR, Israel was not. He failed to understand why there were plans to invite countries, which 'had shown no great interest in defending civilisation against the dark powers of barbarism, while leaving out of account Israel that had shown its willingness to take part in the defence of democracy and civilisation'.<sup>83</sup> He told Dulles that the US was 'unjust and inexpedient' in reviving plans for MEDO, which excluded Israel. It could put eight divisions into the field and 'if the airfields were enlarged and industry increased in advance of emergency, Israel could then be of great use in the event of an international crisis ... while others might hesitate, we were prepared to fight along with the West'. Dulles replied that the Suez problem must first be settled.<sup>84</sup> Sharett paid a ten-day visit to the US in April 1953. He regretted that the US rebuffed all Israeli military offers and told that regional defence depended on the achievement of peace and the completion of negotiations with Egypt.<sup>85</sup>

The Foreign Office maintained that Israel was a source of Anglo-American disagreements but that the US was primarily responsible for the creation of Israel and had given some \$135m of direct aid and as much again in credit through the export-import bank.<sup>86</sup> Moore, First Secretary in Tel-Aviv reported that:

US actions towards Israel, have as I suggest, been the result not so much of a purposeful policy, but of an emotional attitude... The United States Government appear admirably equipped to press their policies on Israel. It has been in their general aim of making Israel pro-American that the failure of United States' policy has been the most noticeable.

Falla faulted US officials with 'extravagance', 'lavishness', 'excessive flattery to ingratiate themselves with the governments and peoples of the Middle East' and 'cruelty

and offensiveness to Arab tastes and belittling Britain's achievements'.<sup>87</sup> Helm accused McDonald, 'an avowed supporter of Zionism', for 'fulsome praise for everything Israeli, combined with a consistent anti-British attitude'. His staff 'against his orders is beginning to openly fraternize with ours. This is the only place where I did not find a close relationship between the United Kingdom and United States representatives'.<sup>88</sup>

The Foreign Office welcomed Eisenhower's stance on the Middle East. It was hoped that 'Mr Dulles may develop a *genuine* [my italics] United States policy'.<sup>89</sup> It also shared Dulles' conviction that Israel impeded US ties with the Arab world and that its policies tended towards territorial expansion.<sup>90</sup> When Dulles visited the region in May 1953, Britain expected the US to finally appreciate its record in the past, which 'justifies our claim of superior wisdom and success'.<sup>91</sup> Evans informed Elath that:

As regards to an alliance with the West, he admitted that although the inspiration and policies originated from the US they bound Britain too; there was in fact an identity of British and American views on Middle East policy, and this set a limit beyond which Anglo-Israel relations could not, in present circumstances, be strengthened further.<sup>92</sup>

Having turned down Israel's requests for loans, the Foreign Office welcomed Dulles' decision in July to reject Israel's request for a \$75m loan and that future Israeli requests would be scrutinized more critically than in the past. The Embassy observed that American-Israeli relations were so bad that if Israel could choose, it would prefer an agreement with Britain than a direct commitment to the US. After withstanding the worst of Zionist denigration, Britain was gratified that American-Israeli relations were 'entering a period of acerbity'.<sup>93</sup> Trudo, a high-ranking US intelligence official, questioned Israel's resolve to fight for western interests and concluded that Israel could offer little practical help because regional limitations rendered Israel's military usefulness obsolete.<sup>94</sup>

Ben-Gurion had not relinquished the prospect of creating a mutual defence treaty between Israel, Britain and the US to 'safeguard our boundaries for at least twenty-five years, and, in case we shall be attacked, the United States will have to fight'.<sup>95</sup> The MFA did not share his optimism. They deduced that Anglo-US plans to set up a MEC or MEDO were shelved and suggested Israel should establish closer ties with Turkey Greece and Yugoslavia who had recently concluded the Balkan Pact.<sup>96</sup> Avner called for a reassessment of Israel's policy towards the US:

The United States of America have decided to go in for a policy of arrogating to themselves, sometimes under the guise of the United Nations, certain administrative functions in and around Israel, which are bound to result in a whittling down of our sovereignty. If we do not put up a fight now, the USA will become something like a Mandatory Government, though of course, only in certain spheres. But those spheres will be vital ones, and essential to our scheme of things, namely water, development, border problems, security, relations with our Arab neighbours, and perhaps the Israel economy itself.<sup>97</sup>

## ESTABLISHING A JOINT ANGLO-US POLICY ON ARMS TO ISRAEL

Britain sold arms in different quantities to all Middle East countries while the US criteria were based solely through the prism of western regional defence.<sup>98</sup> Arms policy was coordinated between the US, Britain and France through the Near East Arms Coordinating Committee (NEACC) whose function was purely advisory and had no authority to prevent other countries from furnishing arms to the region.<sup>99</sup>

Israel obtained precise details of its deliberations. A senior MoD official, an Anglicized Jew, who was privy to all papers on arms sales, revealed to Avner the existence of a formula used to consider arms sales to Israel. The ratio was 3:1 in favour of any Arab state in relation to any measurable military weapon and provided the yardstick of a *de facto* balance of strength between Israel and the Arabs. He noted that arms requests were more or less rejected on a ratio of 3:1 or 4:1, intimating that one in three or four requests was likely to be accepted. He suggested Israel should acquire arms on the open market and use high-level under-cover connections in Germany.<sup>100</sup>

Although the US refrained from becoming a major arms supplier to the region, Makins in Washington was convinced that:

The Americans are out to take our place in the Middle East... They are inclined to feel that we have cast them in a supporting role, which is to consist of switching on or off the powerful current of their diplomatic and financial influence and a word from us.

He noted that Britain had overridden strong objections by the US to the supply of jet aircraft to Israel, while objecting to a US proposal to sell bombers to the Saudis.<sup>101</sup>

The US maintained that Iraq and Saudi Arabia were not direct parties to the Palestine conflict, and that British and French obligations to their Arab protégés took precedence over subsequent treaties. Thus to all intents and purposes, the limitations on the flow of arms applied only to Israel. While large amounts of surplus could be purchased from private agents, modern weaponry was virtually unobtainable. The result was a growing disparity between the Israeli and the Arab arsenals, particularly with regard to jet power. Combined, the Arab states possessed 100 jets (Egypt, alone, had 41) compared to Israel's 15.

Elath maintained that protests would not change policy and suggested that Israel should request that all recipients from the Tripartite signatories be required to sign a non-aggression pact.<sup>102</sup> Sharett argued that if Britain intended to arm the Arabs, without making it conditional on peace negotiations, they would gather that Britain was indifferent to peace or war.<sup>103</sup>

Britain linked sales to pressure Israel into making concessions, 'one of the political weapons at our disposal in dealing with the Arab states'. This was questioned by the Embassy in Tel-Aviv because: 'Military aid to Israel is likely to be more efficiently and effectively used than in the neighbouring countries... We shall need help in this part of the world that only the Israelis could provide...if we build up the strength of the Arab

countries...we shall be offering them direct incitement to fall upon Israel'. Tripp argued that arms sales to the Arabs were a waste of time.<sup>104</sup> Despite assertions to consider requests according 'to the country's probable attitude in the events of war and its capacity to put any arms supplied to common cause,' economic and political considerations prevailed.<sup>105</sup>

'Parity' and 'arms balance' were guiding factors in formulating policy among the Tripartite Powers. The disparity in British sales to the Arabs was justified because of Israel's high morale qualitative edge and its aptitude to utilize the weapons.<sup>106</sup> Israel naturally considered the aggregate Arab arsenals in assessment of the arms balance but Britain assumed that in the event of war the Arab command would be divided, and therefore would require more arms.<sup>107</sup> The MoD was alarmed at the size of Israel's arms orders from France, Belgium and Italy, which would upset the balance of power in the Middle East and give the Israelis a marked superiority over the Arab states.<sup>108</sup>

Israel's predicament was whether to support a complete ban on arms sales to the region, which was to its advantage, or 'to compromise and accept the principle of equality'.<sup>109</sup> Sharett and Ben-Gurion preferred the second option. Sharett argued that if: 'it becomes clear that the Arabs are about to receive weapons on the basis of parity between each individual country and Israel, Israel will then at least demand its meagre portion'.<sup>110</sup>

Although the US signed a Cash Reimbursable Military Assistance Agreement with Israel in July 1952, and later announced that Israel was eligible to obtain US government assistance to purchase US arms, Israel's efforts to acquire arms were adversely affected by US attempts to entice the new Egyptian regime. In October, the US concluded an arms purchase with Egypt, which were to be used for 'internal purposes only'.<sup>111</sup> This was supplemented in July 1953 with a commitment to provide military and economic assistance to Egypt. Sharett charged the US with pursuing 'an erroneous and dangerous policy' towards Israel'.<sup>112</sup>

Prior to his Middle East tour in 1953, Dulles maintained that 'Israel's military establishment is believed to be greater than that of the combination of Arab States'. Byroade warned that 'we should not build up the Israeli forces. We may have gone too far already'.<sup>113</sup> The State Department announced that 'Israel has greatly exceeded those of the Arab states, as have the arms shipments [to Israel] from commercial sources'.<sup>114</sup> Eisenhower noted his deep concern for the genuine distress which the Israelis felt as they watched the US and British assistance to the growth of the Arabs' military capabilities.<sup>115</sup> Britain favoured curtailing military supplies but not as drastically as the US proposed. She was concerned that: 'The almost complete denial of arms to Israel proposed by the United States would have a grave effect on relations between Israel and the Western Powers and would be liable to strain her confidence in them'.<sup>116</sup>

## SALES OF JET AIRCRAFT AND CENTURION TANKS

By the early 1950s, jet aircraft were integrated in significant numbers into the arsenals of Middle East countries. These planes, mostly of British design, Meteors and Vampires, were inferior to the US F-86 Sabre and the French Mystère II.

The Israeli Legation obtained information from inside the defence establishment on the availability of jet fighters. The Gloster Aircraft and Rolls Royce companies were able to supply Israel with at least two squadrons of jet fighters, which could be delivered within eighteen months and all that was needed was official approval. The Foreign Office was incensed that Elath had cited classified information, which contradicted Britain's claim that jet sales were based on scarcity and availability.<sup>117</sup>

Although it considered the Meteor an inferior aircraft, Israel regarded it as a temporary solution to its plight. A breakthrough came in September 1952 when it was informed that it was possible to place an order for fourteen Meteor aircraft, two of which were trainers, with the Gloster Aircraft Company.<sup>118</sup> The Air Ministry admitted that: 'Quite clearly the numerical balance of strength is in favour of the Arab states...the fact that Israel is now to get jets must go a long way to readdress the balance'.<sup>119</sup>

Churchill persuaded his colleagues that an offer of additional jet aircraft could be made to Israel if it was in a position to pay for them: 'We could try to find means of supplying more aircraft to Israel on generous terms and we could undertake to train more Israeli pilots in the United Kingdom'.<sup>120</sup> He wrote to Eden that he was 'dead against giving jets to Egypt now and probably indefinitely'. He contrasted Israel's 'wonderful record in the last few years' with that of Egypt, 'about the feeblest nation alive'.<sup>121</sup>

Britain sold five Meteors to Egypt and fourteen to Syria, in addition to fourteen Vampires to Iraq and Lebanon for purely 'commercial interests'. Fourteen would be sold to Israel. Churchill protested: 'To me the greatest issue in this part of the world is not deserting Israel... She is only getting a quarter of the jets which it is proposed to go to the Arab States apart from the five promised to Egypt'.<sup>122</sup>

Eden regarded Churchill's stance as misguided and impracticable because Israel faced no military danger from the presence of jets in Arab air forces. Supplies to Egypt were meant to prepare the ground for negotiations with Naguib, which were vital for Britain and its allies.<sup>123</sup>

Israel's raid on Qibya in October 1953 provided a convenient pretext to justify withholding arms supplies. The week before, the Foreign Office had called for significant quantities of arms to the Arabs before considering Israel's requests.<sup>124</sup> On 2 December, despite US opposition, Britain announced the sale of six Meteors and twenty Mosquitoes to Israel accompanied by the sale of twelve additional Meteors to Syria.<sup>125</sup> Shimon Peres, Director General of the Defence Ministry, viewed the decision to sell Israel jet aircraft as, 'a light in the great darkness'.<sup>126</sup> Israel hoped to obtain twenty-nine Swedish Saab jet fighters. The Foreign Office concluded that 'the Israelis are...hesitating between the technical advantages of sticking to British aircraft and the political attraction of an alternative "neutral" source of supply'.<sup>127</sup> Eden supported the Arabs' advantage over Israel in jets. Angered that Israel was to acquire twelve Mystères and a possible further twelve, he sanctioned the sale of forty-five jet fighters to Egypt.<sup>128</sup>

The Cabinet's decision to sell Israel ten of the thirty Centurions requested in June 1953 was thwarted because of US objections that Israel possessed twice the artillery pieces of any one individual Arab state.<sup>129</sup> Britain feared it would lose its important arms market in Israel if rumours came to light that it was considering purchasing French light tanks.<sup>130</sup> Defence Minister, Macmillan, favoured supplying Israel with Centurions because the French sold 155 millimetre guns. He did not see 'why having written down the Centurion order from 60 to 10 we should now refuse it altogether in deference to the

United States' view'. The cancellation of Syria's order in September prompted Britain to curtail sales to Israel.<sup>131</sup>

Eden agreed that Israel should be granted twelve Centurions 'as a gesture of Britain's good faith' but only after Egypt was supplied with sixteen Israel was allowed to purchase. Sales to Israel were so vigilant, that Britain scrutinized the sales of scrap from used Shermans and parachutes.<sup>132</sup>

### FRENCH AND CANADIAN ARMS SALES TO ISRAEL

It was no oversight when Elath reported that 'Israel's relations with the West mean at present her relations with the United States and the United Kingdom'. He described France as a 'broken reed' whose claim to be part of the West was 'tenuous'.<sup>133</sup> France's decision to accept Marshall Aid meant that its security and prosperity were dependent on remaining under the US umbrella. French initiatives in the Middle East were undermined where 'the absence of a long-term policy left the course of developments more than ever at the mercy of events'.<sup>134</sup>

In August 1952, and in July 1954, the US offered substantial arms packages to Nasser as an incentive to cooperate on regional defence and accorded military aid to Iraq. France deeply resented these overtures because Nasser supplied arms to anti-French terrorist groups in North Africa. The French countered by supplying arms to Israel in order to readdress the arms imbalance in favour of the Arabs.<sup>135</sup>

Anglo-French mistrust in the Middle East was ubiquitous. Britain suspected that the French were 'always on the lookout for slights and insights', while France attributed British pan-Arab initiatives to unite Middle East countries as a front for its claim to hegemony in the region.<sup>136</sup> France was accused of trying to secure sufficient influence in Israel to justify its claim to have a substantial, if not equal, claim with Britain and the US in developing policy as a whole by virtue of its arms sales to the region. French 'transgression' lay in its egotism, which 'sometimes puts the achievement of purely French objectives before the interests of the free world as a whole' and tended to treat Muslims in general as hostile fanatics.<sup>137</sup> Britain viewed the strength of French influence in Israel, in its 'nuisance value'. Britain's resentment against France was partly rooted in the fear that it would be unable to compete with the US and France in their capacity to supply the quantity and the quality of weapons demanded by the Arab states and Israel.<sup>138</sup>

Although France recognized Britain's primary responsibility for Middle East defence it demanded to participate in a 'token force' to the region, but Britain and the US were reluctant because France did not fall in line with NATO policy.<sup>139</sup> The reason for including France as a signatory to the Tripartite Pact was to curb arms sales to Syria, considered a potential loophole. However, the French refusal to disclose the extent of its sales to Syria added to existing tension in the region:

France does not dispose of the military strength to honour her obligations under the 1950 Tripartite Declaration which in fact is the sole basis for her claim to political standing as a great power in the area, and this means that she can pursue an irresponsible policy towards Israel to further her own



interests, hoping to recover in Israel some of the influence which she has lost in Syria and the Lebanon.<sup>140</sup>

France maintained that she was unable to prevent the transit of arms to Egypt but that arms requests 'for Egypt were refused if they are for subversive purposes'.<sup>141</sup> Britain acknowledged that as long as Israel continued to be shunned as a pariah state, it was likely to become susceptible to French influence and advice. This was because 'the Israelis are not a politically stable people' and there was 'a real risk of their embarking on adventurous policies, which would be dangerous for our plans in the whole region'.<sup>142</sup>

Having failed to purchase US Sabre and Swedish Saab jets, Israel hoped to obtain aircraft and military hardware from Canada, which emerged as an important source of arms to the Middle East and provided a front for the US to sell arms through an alternate route.<sup>143</sup> In July 1949, Israel requested 42 training planes, which could also serve as light bombers.<sup>144</sup> In October 1953, following the raid on Qibya, Canada concurred with the Powers' decision to deny Israel 'routine' weaponry, tanks, planes and guns and complied with the NEACC's ban on all military aid to Israel. In April 1954, Canada agreed to supply twenty-four Sabres, which proved the equal of the Soviet MiG-15 front-line interceptor of NATO forces in Europe to Israel. In return, Israel pledged to scrap all other combat aircraft and assured Canada that the jets were for defensive purposes.<sup>145</sup>

### THE ANGLO-EGYPTIAN NEGOTIATIONS

Anglo-Israel relations were inextricably linked to the protracted Anglo-Egyptian negotiations over renewal of the Suez Canal bases, which lasted more than three years. They began under Farouk, were reconvened under the Revolutionary Council, and an agreement was ratified by Nasser in October 1954.<sup>146</sup> Israel requested to be consulted at all stages of the negotiations.<sup>147</sup>

In March 1951 the Foreign Office maintained that:

Our main strategic object today in the Middle East is to strengthen our position in Egypt and to endeavour to retain our base here, in one form or another, after 1956. Therefore, the prime necessity is an agreement with Egypt, and such an agreement must pre-decide any agreement with Israel.<sup>148</sup>

Despite the signing of the armistice agreements, the Law Officers of the Foreign Office maintained that: 'The situation in Palestine since May 1948 was to all intents and purposes a war, and as such, that it conferred belligerent rights on Egypt' and that Egypt was 'probably entitled under the terms of the Suez Canal Convention to exercise belligerent rights within the Canal itself'.<sup>149</sup>

Israel repeatedly protested to the UNSC that Egypt's blockade in the Straits of Tiran, giving ingress to the Gulf of Aqaba and Eilat, was a breach of the 1888 Constantinople Convention and the 1949 armistice agreement. In September 1951, a UNSCR called upon Egypt 'to terminate the restrictions of the passage of international commercial shipping and goods through the Suez Canal wherever bound'.<sup>150</sup> The Soviets nullified further

sympathetic resolutions by using her veto.<sup>151</sup> Although Britain declared Egypt's position unjustifiable, it limited its reaction to formal protests and expected Israel to accept in good-faith assurances, which were contradicted by other departments.

Elath believed that Britain and Egypt would eventually reach an agreement, which Israel was powerless to prevent.<sup>152</sup> He and Eban were instructed to submit a note to Britain and the US reminding them of their obligations regarding the free passage of navigation. The MFA Israel leaked the contents of the note.<sup>153</sup> Britain complained that Israel's disclosure merely added to its difficulties and that Israeli guarantees of confidentiality were suspect.<sup>154</sup> Churchill sent a terse reply: 'Her Majesty's Government will always give friendly and active study to anything the Israel Government may have to say about the many interests common to the two Governments and to exchange views wherever their interests are directly affected'.<sup>155</sup>

Elath was incensed, 'it proved to be one of those boomerangs which return to hit the thrower' and cited the *New York Times*' editorial, which questioned the wisdom of the disclosure, 'which only served to stress the weakness of our position'. Close informants told Elath that although Israel was justified in its concern, a public campaign against HMG would only serve Arab interests.<sup>156</sup> Evans was summoned to a meeting with Ben-Gurion who told him that: 'If it depended on us, we would not have you move from there. If you had adopted a different policy a few years ago, you might not have had to move out of Suez today.'<sup>157</sup>

In September, Elath wrote that the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement was a *fait accompli* and warned against sabotaging the agreement, which would be detrimental to Israel's interests. Despite his misgivings, he believed that Britain still held the key to the solutions that Israel sought because Britain had a direct interest in the Middle East.<sup>158</sup> One suggestion was to send an Israeli vessel through the Canal bearing cargo permitted by the Armistice Agreement, thereby forcing the Egyptians to show their hand. Two months later, a cargo of meat bound for Israel on the Italian ship *Franca Maria* was confiscated during its stopover at Port Said on 14 December *en route* to Haifa.<sup>159</sup> Israel achieved nothing.

Eden was torn between Churchill's 'so-called alternative' to an agreement with Egypt, that is, breaking off negotiations, announcing that Britain would re-deploy its troops in its own time, and his personal desire not to 'throw over the Arabs altogether' and rely on Israel and Turkey, which was Churchill's preference. Churchill's unyielding stand on Britain's need to retain the Suez Canal base was undermined by Salisbury, who favoured a negotiated settlement.<sup>160</sup>

Rapp acknowledged that the 'presence of British troops in the Canal Zone has provided a distinct deterrent to Israel/Arab hostilities' and the likelihood of a resumption of hostilities against Israel by the Arabs would 'certainly be greater when we have ceased to occupy the Canal Zone'. Eden argued that:

We cannot afford to keep 80,000 men indefinitely in the Canal Zone. Already our overseas current expenditure, mainly military, has risen from £160m in 1950 to £222m (provisional estimate) in 1952... It is not possible for our present forces in the Canal Zone to support our peacetime interests elsewhere in the Middle East.<sup>161</sup>

Mindful of Britain's humiliation, following the signing of the ANZUS pact in September 1951, which effectively excluded Britain from a region it regarded as one of rightful influence, a growing number of Conservative MPs were determined to prevent further erosion of Britain's influence in the Middle East. They made the Suez Canal the focal point and the Middle East became 'the new empire'.<sup>162</sup> In their view, the only policy was, 'to remain in the Canal Zone in sufficient strength so that it can be reinforced at short notice to meet whatever storms may break upon us'.<sup>163</sup> Eden argued that it was 'clearly beyond the resources of the United Kingdom to continue to assume responsibility alone for the security of the Middle East. Our aim should be to make the whole of this area and in particular the Canal Zone, an international responsibility'.<sup>164</sup>

Julian Amery and Captain Charles Waterhouse formed the 'Suez Group' in January 1953 whose principal concern was that Britain's withdrawal from the Canal would be so disastrous that it would not be able to recover. It would also threaten the entity of the British Commonwealth.<sup>165</sup> Amery believed that their assessment was correct because Britain was later required to recapture the Canal in October 1956 only to be further humiliated by the joint action of the US and the USSR.<sup>166</sup> The underlying flaw in their argument was that they ignored the fundamental precedent set by Attlee and Bevin during the Abadan Crisis in September 1951 not to use force, because without US support, Britain did not have the strength to act alone. Eden's decision to ignore this tenet in October 1956 resulted in unprecedented repercussions for Britain.

The MFA was unsure how to harness unsolicited offers from radical Conservatives who sought Israel's help in torpedoing the negotiations in Cairo.<sup>167</sup> Avner reported that 'every day they have been egging us on to action by ringing up with optimistic stories about splits in the Government, Selwyn Lloyd being against the Agreement etc'.<sup>168</sup> On the eve before the Suez debate, Patrick Maitland, an anti-Zionist of long standing and 'the contact-man with Israel and world Jewry', approached Avner to galvanize world Jewry into immediate action, as it had in 1948. He suggested demonstrations in the US, and flooding 10 Downing Street with letters opposing government policy. Avner observed a typical anti-Semitic trait, which assumed that world Jewry was so powerful that all this could be accomplished within twenty-four hours. On the eve of the preliminary signing of the Agreement Avner noted that: 'they can always help, but it is we who have to carry on the struggle'.

Elath resisted the tempting offers of help: 'Eden and his colleagues have thought all along that we were behind the Tory opposition group...the [Suez Group] use the Israel aspect as one weapon against the Government'.<sup>169</sup> Although a rearguard action by the 'Suez Group' of Conservative MPs failed to prevent Britain's evacuation of its Suez Canal base, it brought together an unlikely alliance of interests consisting of pro and anti-Zionist MPs, Embassy personnel, and journalists which would cooperate during the Suez Crisis. In the wake of Israel's inevitable failure to secure British guarantees, Gazit suggested that Israel cease forthwith in a quest, which was unattainable.<sup>170</sup> He believed it was possible to raise the issue of free navigation; to discern which areas on the Canal were meant to protect British and western interests; and to learn what equipment was being left to the Egyptians. All other questions were superfluous.<sup>171</sup>

Israel became irrefutably involved in the most serious diplomatic blunder in its short history, described as the 'security mishap', the Lavon Affair. On the night of 24 July, two days before the parliamentary debate, a *Mossad* operative was arrested while attempting

to plant an incendiary device in Alexandria. The immediate purpose of the operation was to blame Egyptian clandestine organizations of damaging western facilities and interests, and thus damage Nasser's credibility before he signed the agreement on the Suez Canal. News of the arrests in Egypt was censored in Israel. Sharett had the unenviable task to order Israeli diplomats to refute allegations of Israeli involvement.<sup>172</sup>

The outcome of the 28 July parliamentary debate was never in doubt.<sup>173</sup> Avner was gratified that Labour MPs, without any prompting, raised the issue of free navigation, which was partly due 'to the constant patient labour which the Ambassador has put in with all the people, both personally and collectively, in the course of the last few years'.<sup>174</sup> He sourly concluded: 'With all due respect, we could have been more realistic... Anglo-Israeli relations are definitely subordinate to this end, in fact, conditioned thereby'. He proposed increased requests for arms; procuring illegal arms on the model of 1946–48; utilizing under-cover connections in Germany, strengthening cultural relations with the French, and sending an Israeli ship through the Canal before the final signature.<sup>175</sup>

Prime Minister Sharett protested that the UNSC had not taken active steps to ensure the implementation of free navigation and thus condoned Egypt's violation of international law.<sup>176</sup> Britain deplored interference with *neutral* shipping and claimed that the agreement with Egypt would reduce tension. Because Israel was not one of the countries which, if attacked, would permit Britain to restore its forces to the bases on the Suez Canal, there was little Britain could do.<sup>177</sup>

On 28 September, Sharett sanctioned the voyage of the *Bat Galim* as a last attempt to find a diplomatic solution. The crew was arrested and Israel appealed to the UNSC. Britain and the US vetoed a resolution condemning Egypt because the precedent would damage their interests in the region. Britain prevented the crew of the *Empire Clyde*, which had entered the Canal at the same time as the *Bat Galim* from giving statements to Israel, which sought testimony to substantiate its case. Months earlier, Eden had proposed sending an oil tanker through the Canal, a suggestion he later bitterly regretted. The incident had no effect on the official signing of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement on 19 October.<sup>178</sup>

In the parliamentary debate on 2 November, Nutting, who signed the agreement, revealed that 'we now have for the first time a legal right to maintain a base in Egypt'.<sup>179</sup> The 1936 Treaty authorized the stationing of only 10,000 land forces and 400 air pilots in the 'vicinity of the Canal' in peacetime. Having violated international law with respect to Egypt, Britain was hardly in a position to demand Egyptian compliance regarding Israel.<sup>180</sup>

Served notice to vacate the premises, the long established 'British Theatre Company', was obliged to negotiate an extended lease for the performance of the production. Until new premises could be found, the leading actor, (Egypt) threatened to upstage the producer (Britain) by threatening not to appear. The producer considered other actors but despite Egypt's off-stage tantrums, it was the only one capable of playing the leading role, the script already having been written. In the meantime, Israel, (the understudy), was expected to honour a non-payable contract with the company to rehearse the lines, so that in the unwelcome and unlikely event, it would be asked to perform, the production could continue. With the leading actor condescending to perform, the understudy's services were not required but were called upon two years later.

## NOTES

1. Cabinet minutes were designed not so much as a record of proceedings but as instructions for action to departments. The Secretary was instructed 'to avoid recording the opinions expressed by particular ministers'. Macmillan complained that, 'historians reading this fifty or a hundred years hence will get a false picture. They will be filled with admiration and surprise that the Cabinet were so intellectually disciplined that they argued each issue methodically and logically through to a set of neat and precise conclusions. It isn't like that at all', G.Mallaby, *From My Level* (London, 1965), 16–17. 'Now that the Cabinet's gone to dinner the Secretary stays and gets thinner and thinner racking his brains to record and report what he thinks that they think they ought to have thought', A.Adamthwaite, 'The Foreign Office and Policy Making', in J.Young (ed), *The Foreign Policy of Churchill's Peacetime Administration, 1951–1955* (Leicester, 1988) 3.
2. The annual average in 1913 was 68,000. In 1954, it reached more than 700,000, not including telephone conversations. R.Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden* (London, 1956), 353
3. CAB 129/53, 18 June 1952.
4. CAB 129/55, 3 Oct 1952. Churchill's Private Secretary, J.Collville, *The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries, 1939–1955*, 650–1.
5. FO 371/102806 1192, 18 Mar; *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*, 17 May 1953.
6. FO 371/98255 1056/43 CRME (52) 16, 16 June; 98257/1056/80; ISA, 40/17, 14, 21, 24 Jul 1952.
7. 'Some people like Jews and some do not but no thoughtful man can deny the fact that they are beyond question the most remarkable race which has ever appeared in the world...this wandering tribe grasped and proclaimed an idea of which all the genius of Greece and all the power of Rome were incapable, a universal God, a God of nations', N.Rose, 'Churchill and Zionism', in R.Blake and R.Louis, *Churchill* (Oxford, 1993), 147.
8. *Weizmann Letters*, xxiii, 15, 196.
9. C.Moran, *Winston Churchill: Struggle for Survival, 1940–1965* (London, 1966), 362. Brendan Bracken, Churchill's closest confidant and proprietor of the *Financial Times*, told Elath on 27 July that: 'We were perfectly entitled to cash in...[and] we should never lose an opportunity of favourable comment in Churchill's wisdom and foresight in his support of Zionism from the beginning', ISA, 2582/5, 1 Aug 1951.
10. R.Boothby, *My Yesterday, Your Tomorrow* (London, 1962), 211; *Hansard*, 10 Dec 1948; 26 Jan 1949; M.Gilbert, 'Never Despair', *Winston Churchill 1945–1965* (London, 1988), 453–8.
11. G.Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett* (Oxford, 1996), 623; ISA, 40/14, 21 Mar 1952.
12. David Carlton, refers to Eden's 'long-standing anti-Zionist attitudes', *Anthony Eden* (London, 1981), 403; Russell Braddon argued that 'Eden had always been pro-Arab', *Suez, Splitting of a Nation* (London, 1973), 40. Hugh Thomas noted that, 'Eden personally had been identified with the Arab cause in the past', *The Suez Affair* (London, 1966), 112. ISA, 36/4, 11 Jul 1951. Elath was invited to Eden's house in July 1951 where he signalled his desire to visit Israel.
13. Y.Tenembaum, 'British Policy towards Israel, the Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1951–1954', (Ph.D.) Oxford, 1991, 19; B.Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939–1945* (Oxford, 1979), 34.
14. M.Fitzsimons, *Empire by Treaty, Britain and the Middle East in the Twentieth Century* (Indiana, 1964), 107.
15. E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries, 1951–1954* (London, 1986), 210–11, 264.
16. FO 371/98476 1073, 15 Apr 1952; 104753 1071, 26 Feb 1953.
17. FO 371/91200 29 Oct 1951; 98785 1011/1, 19 Feb; 98251 1054/2, 8 Mar; 98477, 98257 1056/80, 9 June, 15 Jul 1952; 104753 1071, 12 Feb; 104733 1011/1, 13 Feb Feb; 98786, Aug 1953.
18. ISA, 2385/21, 25 Aug; 2584/7, 9 Sep 1954.

19. FO 371/104757 1071, 8 Dec 1953.
20. ISA, 322/10, 14 May; FO 371/111066 1071/117, 8 Dec 1953. Arabs were deemed naïve, savages, ignorant, and stupid.
21. FO 371/98479 1073, 9 Oct 1952; 104753 1071, 12 Mar 1953.
22. FO 371/96972 1194/11, 13 Mar; 98785 1101/1, 19 Feb 1952; 104778 1092/32, 2 Feb; 104754 1071/31, 23 Mar 1953.
23. FO 371/98477 1071, 15 Jul 1952.
24. The Passport Department instructed that: ‘Every step be taken to ensure that in *no* circumstances this man arrive in the UK’, FO 371/111065 1015/14, 29 Oct 1954.
25. ISA, 40/11, 25 Jan 1952; 23 June 1953.
26. FO 371/91733 1201/10, 8 Nov 1951.
27. Interview with Lord Shinwell. He finally made his first visit to Israel as the guest of the government of Israel in October 1953. ISA, 2590/12.
28. ISA, 2482/5, 16 Nov. He told Elath on 29 Nov: ‘One thing he thought Israel should adhere to with all possible determination: to go on strengthening her Army, so when the Day of Decision comes, or is forced upon her-she will have something very definite and valuable to bargain with’, 2582/5 10 Dec 1953. Shinwell Papers, LSE; Emanuel & Doxat, *Shinwell Talking*; *The Times* commented that ‘with the exception of Turkey, she [Israel] is the only country in the Middle East state that possesses armed forces that are, by western standards, effective; and her people are organised for self-defence’, 9 Nov 1951.
29. BGA, BGD, 2, 3, 5 Nov; *Dvrei Haknesset*, 4 Nov; ISA, 2595/10, 23 Nov; 2582/5, 6 Nov; 37/1, 13 Nov, 14, 19, 22 Dec; FO 371/91716 1053/25, 4 Dec 1951; 2584/1, 1 Jan; 40/14, 2 Jan; 2460/5, 12 Feb; 2319/1, 13 Feb; 41/4, 14 Feb; 164/9, 27 Feb; 2319/1, 12 Mar; 2208/5, 14, 31 Mar; 2410/2, 17 Mar; 357/1, 1 Apr, 9 June; 2582/6, 3 Mar, 3 Sep 1952; DFPI, 821–3, 857–8.
30. FO 371/91228 1192/88, 9 Nov 1951.
31. BGA, Chron. Docs; FO 371/91716 1053/26, 28 Nov 1951.
32. ISA 2825/5, 5 Dec; 2582/1, 14 Dec 1951.
33. DEFE 7/848, COS 2499, 27 Dec; PREM 11/489, 22 Dec 1951; 4/51, COS (52) 3, 7 Jan 1952.
34. IMDFA, 230/72/845, 20 Jan 1952.
35. ISA, 2377/1, 31 Jan 1952; BGA, Chron. Docs., 30 Jan 1952; 2582/6, 2457/5.
36. BGA, BGD, 30 Jan; ISA, 2319/1, 13 Feb; 2319/1, 12 Mar; FO 371/98807 1193/14, 11 Mar 1952.
37. FO 371/98807 1193/12, 3 Apr 1952.
38. ISA, 2449/1, 29 Apr; 361/8, 28 Apr 1952.
39. FO 371/98807 1193/12, 24 Mar 1952.
40. ISA, 40/11 6 Mar; 5/38, COS (52) 170, 18 Mar; DEFE 4/52, JP (52) 3 (Revised Final), 20 Mar, Appendix B; DEFE 4/53 COS (52) 59, 2 May 1952. Military requirements were now defined as: the use of the Haifa port as an emergency repair base, and perhaps as a major supply depot; accommodation at Haifa for some 200 Navy personnel, and three major air defence units, up to 3000 men; storage accommodation elsewhere for tented camps, and eight major units of the RAF, again, up to 3,000 men; and finally the use of four airfields for light bombers, and general access to Israel’s communications system, M.Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East* (London, 1997).
41. BGA, BGD, 23 May; Chron. Docs, 5, 30 June; ISA, 2475/5, 20 May; 2319/1, 10 June 1952. He argued there was no need to augment the group of three.
42. ISA, 2603/7, 10 June; 2319/1, 17 June 1952.
43. ISA, 2394/15, 28 Sep 1952.
44. ISA, 2208/18, 11 Aug 1952; DEFE 4/51, JP (51) 219, 9 Jan; COS (52) 11, 22 Jan; CAB 129/29 (52) 32, 11 Feb; 128/24 CC 18 (52) 18 Feb; 4/54 JP (52) 14, 13 May, COS (52) 89, 23 June; 1015/48, Sep; CAB 128/26 CC (53) 20, 17 Mar 1952; 129/58 C (53), revise, 17

- Feb; 128/26 CC (53) 12, 17 Feb 1953; *FRUS*, 1952–54, IX, 178–83, 198–9, 213–18, 226–34, 249–52, 271–4. The new defence plan excluded Israel altogether. A US memo on MEDO explicitly stated that: ‘although Israel clearly has a valuable contribution to make to... Middle East defence by the provision of forces and facilities, her inclusion... as a full member... would destroy any chance of obtaining the cooperation of the Arab States’. *FRUS*, 1952–54, IX, 253. Israel did not respond. The ‘present fluid situation needs careful watching before we pass final judgment since new developments [in] Egypt may change the entire situation overnight and render obsolete a project originally designed to meet quite different circumstances’; *FRUS*, 1952–54, VII, 438.
45. ISA, 40/11, 30 June; 2582/6, 8 July 1952.
  46. ISA, 40/11, 14 Aug; 2582/6, 14 Sep 1952.
  47. ISA, 2457/5; BGA, General Corres., 1 Oct 1952.
  48. Robertson noted that he had not objected to civilian attire, FO 371/91240 1201/58, 21 Feb; DEFE 5/29 COS (51) 153, 21 Mar 1951. Israel’s account was released while the British protocol remains closed.
  49. CAB 129/65, C (54) 6, 7 Jan 1954; IMDFA, 533/73/174, 3 Oct 1952; U.Bialer, *Between East and West* (Cambridge, 1990), 258.
  50. ISA, 2319/2, 10 Oct 1952.
  51. NA, 784A. 5/10–1352, 13 Oct 1952; M.Cohen, *Fighting World War Three*, 231; Bar Zohar, *Ben-Gurion* (Tel-Aviv, 1976), ii, 347.
  52. DEFE 4/58, COS (52) 176, 30 Dec 1952.
  53. ISA, 2449/1, 16 Mar; FO 371/104753, 1071/30, 23 Mar; 1071/28, 20, 31 Mar; 20 Apr; 22 Dec 1953.
  54. ISA, 2582/6, 2 Mar 1953.
  55. FO 371/104753 1071/25, 13 Mar; 1071/28, 31 Mar; ISA, 2582/7, 2 Apr 1953.
  56. ISA, 2449/1, 14 Nov 1952.
  57. BGA, BGD; ISA, Cabinet minute, 8 Mar 1953.
  58. BGA, BGD 22 Apr 1953.
  59. FO 800/808, 2 May 1953.
  60. FO 371/111065 1051/1, 22 Dec 1953.
  61. DEFE 11/87, DCC (53) 46, 23 Mar 1953.
  62. PREM 11/489, COS (53) 213, 26 Mar 1953.
  63. PREM 11/465, Apr; 11/489, COS (53) 213, 11 May 1953.
  64. CAB 131/13, D (53) 8, 6 May; FO 371/102806, 1192/225, 20 Apr; 104754 1071/46, Tel. 977, 13 May; *Hansard*, 11 May 1953.
  65. FO 371/111065 1051/1, 18 Dec 1953; ISA, 2384/1, 29 Jan, 2582/4, 6 June; 2582/6, 17 Sep; 2582/8, 12 Nov; 2582/8, 4 Oct 1954, ‘Montgomery’s original attitude towards us and his present appreciation of the qualities of the IDF has something of the character of a repenter’. See B.Horrocks’ article on Israel’s military potential, ‘Middle East Defence, the British View’, *Middle Eastern Affairs*, 6, February 1955, 39.
  66. FO 371/102806 1192/225, 24 Apr 1953.
  67. ISA, 2412/26, 19 May; 2582/7, 2, 12 June 1953.
  68. BGA, BGD, 15 May 1953.
  69. The Foreign Office lost no time and urged against cooperation with Israel. FO 800/808, 23 Mar; PREM 11/489 C (53) 228, 7 Aug; CAB 128/26 CC (53) 48, 10 Aug; ISA, 2582/7, 23 Dec 1953; C.Moran, *Winston Churchill*, 406–14; M. Gilbert, ‘Never Despair’, *Winston Churchill, 1945–1965* (London, 1988), 846–7.
  70. CAB 129/65, C (54), 6, 7 Jan. The CIGS did not rule out the possibility of seeking ‘to obtain from Israel facilities for oil storage and the repair of heavy equipment’, C. (54) 9, 9 Jan; 128/27, 12 Jan 1954.
  71. CAB 129/65 C (54) 9, 9 Jan; C. (54) 26, 23 Jan; FO 371/111118, 1195/1, 19 Feb; DEFE 5/53, COS (54) 222, 6 Jul 1954.

72. FO 371/11118 1195/1, 19 Feb, 22 Mar; 111075 1072/240, 19 Oct 1954.
73. Shuckburgh noted on 31 Dec that Eden 'is uncertain whether he does not want to throw over the Arabs altogether and to rely on Israel and Turkey. This is the P.M.'s strong choice', E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 125.
74. FO 371/111118 1195/1; CAB 129/65 C (54) 6, 7 Jan; 110819 1193/8, 12 Jan; 111118 1195/3, 21 Jul 1954.
75. *Hugh Gaitskell Diaries; The Times*, 13 Mar, 22 Jul 1954.
76. FO 371/111118 1195/2, 22 Mar; 1195/4, 24 Sep; 111119 1196/1, 10, 17 May 1954.
77. ISA, 2403/12, 11 Mar; 417/4, 2 Mar 1954. Ben-Gurion told Dayan that, 'he offered the British a treaty and they rejected it', M.Dayan, *The Story of My Life* (London, 1976), 122–3.
78. BGA, BGD, 10, 17 Nov; FO 371/91230 1192/350, 20 Nov 1951. The US request that speculation on Israel's role be kept to a minimum disappointed him.
79. BGA, BGD, 28 Mar 1953.
80. BGA, BGD, 9 Jul 1951, 20 Aug 1954; M.Gazit, 'Ben-Gurion's Efforts to Cement Military Ties with the US', *Gesher*, 115, 1987; FRUS, 1950, V, 189, 792, 1077, 1085–6; 1951, V, 4, 21, 13, 27, 122, 126, 247, 571, 669–70, 686, 734, 821, 936; U. Bialer, *Between East and West*, 245–5; A.Gal, *Envisioning Israel; the Changing Ideals and Images of North American Jews* (Jerusalem-Detroit, 1996).
81. BGA, BGD, 19 Feb 1953; G.Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett*, 662; C.Moran, *Winston Churchill*, 441; E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 329.
82. ISA, 2474/4, 27 Apr, 1, 4, 5, 11, 13, 14, 22–24 May, 9 June; 40/19, 1 May; 2414/19, 2455/1, 3063/13, 18 May; 2418/28, 1 June; BGA, BGD, 23, 30 Apr, 14 May; *FRUS, 1952–54*, IX, 31, 37–40; *The Times, Jerusalem Post, Ha'aretz, Dvar*, 14–17 May 1953.
83. *FRUS, 1952–54*, IX, 1140–1; ISA, 2382/221, 26 Feb 1953.
84. ISA, 36/3, 11 Feb; 2408/9, 8 Mar 1953; U.Bialer, *Between East and West*, 260–1; G.Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett*, 659–65; I.Alteras, *Eisenhower and Israel US-Israeli Relations, 1953–1960* (New York, 1993); R.Immerman, *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ., 1990); S.Ambrose, *Eisenhower* (New York, 1983); NA, State Department, JF Dulles Microfilm, MC#074, Middle East, 45, 48495–91770.
85. ISA, 2381/2b, 14 Apr; 2479/11, 17 Apr; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary* 2–12 Apr 1953; G.Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett*, 662–5.
86. US Jewry was estimated to have contributed \$340m between 1948 and 1952.
87. FO 371/104258 10345/39, 7 Jul; 10345/49, 21 Aug 1953.
88. FO 371/75067 8752, 4 Jul 1949; 82636 1905/3, 14 Nov 1950.
89. FO 371/104258 10345/39, 7 Jul 1953, 'the principle criticism of US policy towards Israel is not that it has failed but there has been little of it'.
90. S.Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Chicago 1985), 54–8.
91. FO 371/104258 10345/48.
92. ISA, 2412/29, 22 Aug. Evans told Elath that: 'He had never felt so useless in his life as during his tour of duty in Israel. His predecessor had helped to heal the wounds of 1939–49 and had left Anglo-Israel relations in good shape. There had been nothing much that he [Evans] himself could do to improve things further', 2584/12, 27 Aug 1954. Elath refuted his explanation that the US was responsible for the impasse and ridiculed the hypocrisy of British diplomats' attempts to exonerate Britain from the failure to include Israel in the MEC. 2584/12, 27 Aug; Z.Levey, *Israel and the Western Powers, 1952–1960* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), 7–18.
93. FO 371/104258 10345/48, 4 Aug 1953.
94. M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 19 May 1954, 498.
95. BGA, BGD 11 Aug 1953.
96. ISA, 2403/2, [no date]; 2408/10.
97. ISA, 2582/8, 14 Jul 1954; 24 Dec 1953.



98. Elath and Gazit ruled out British arms to Israel while the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations were in progress. DEFE 7/205-7, 7/226, 7/227-9; ISA, 2582/7, 14 Jul 1953; FO 371/111065 1051/11, 15 Sep 1954.
99. FO 371/98281 1194/26; 98280, 98282, 98284, 98296, 1951.
100. His identity will remain confidential. ISA, 2582/5, 31 Oct 1951; DEFE 7/850, 9 June 1952; ISA, 2409/3, 6 Aug; FO 371/110816 1192/478, 15 Nov 1954. Lowens was aware of the NEACC's functions.
101. CAB 129/66 C (54) 53, 25 Jan, recirculated, 15 Feb 1954; U.Bialer, *Between East and West*, 231.
102. ISA, 2595/5; 2587/9, 25 Aug 1952.
103. ISA, 2403/18, 10 Oct; 2587/9, 26 Sep; 2319/3, 31 Oct. The only way to receive arms was to declare that it was willing to join a regional defence framework. FO 371/91730 1193/30, 14 Dec 1951; 98807 1051/14, 24 Jan, 11 Mar 1952.
104. FO 371/98257 1056/80, 9 June 1952; 98279 1193/53, 13 June; DEFE 11/87, 23 Feb 1953; 58, 60, 88: 'Israelis not unreasonably, consider that the Arab assurances are belied by their repeated public statements of hostility towards Israel', 23 Sep; ISA, 40/14, 7 Dec 1954.
105. FO 371/98295 1194/78, 11 Oct; 104770 1078/3, 3 Dec; ISA, 42/13, 23 Oct 1952; DEFE 7/848, 13 Jan 1953.
106. FO 371/110811 1192/195, 27 Apr; 1192/251, 4 June; DEFE 7/206 13 Apr; CAB 130/104, 24 Nov 1954.
107. FO 371/98280-97; 104187-94; 104199; 104215-30; 110807-25.
108. FO 371/104226 1192/279, Oct 1953; DEFE 7/205, 16 Jan 1954.
109. G.Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett*, 644.
110. ISA, 2488/3, 22 Oct 1952.
111. *New York Times*, 11 Aug 1952; *FRUS*, 1952-54, IX, 30 Dec 1952, 1924-6.
112. FO 371/104218, 16 Feb; ISA, 2582/8, 30 Mar 1953.
113. *FRUS*, 1952-54, IX, 5 May, 1189; 18 June 1953, 245.
114. *Jewish Telegraph Agency*, 8 Feb 1954.
115. Eisenhower Library/JF.Dulles Files, S.Mudd Library, 9 Aug 1954, box one, White House Memoranda Series (1).
116. FO 371/110816 1192/482, 18 Nov 1954; 104223 1192/224, 19 Aug 1953.
117. FO 371/91730 1193/30, 14 Dec 1951.
118. ISA, 2587/9, 25 Aug; 26 Sep; 2582/6, 26 Sep 1952.
119. It had welcomed a total ban on all sales of Meteors but such a ban would contradict the Tripartite Agreement that guaranteed arms sales to the region. Israel requested a further 15 Meteors on 23 Dec. FO 371/98297 1194/72, 28 Sep; ISA, 40/6, 23 July; 42/13, 22 Oct; 14, 25 Nov 1952; 8, 9 Jan; 104218, 16 Feb 1953. After the Egyptian revolution, Britain endorsed an order by the new regime for 65 aircraft backdated to 1950. PREM 11/398, 6 Oct; 129/55, CAB C (52) 349, 21 Oct 1952; 128/26, CC (53) 5, 27 Jan 1953.
120. CAB 128/25, CC (52) 89, 23 Oct 1952.
121. PREM 11/398, 28 Oct 1952.
122. FO 371/98285 1194/96, 21 Nov; 104215 1192/4, 31 Dec; ISA, 2319/3, 10 Nov 1952; *FRUS*, 1952-54, IX, 5 Jan; PREM 11/398, 28 Oct; FO 800/807, 18 Nov 1953.
123. FO 371/104215 1192/16, 14 Jan; 1192/13, 16, 19 Jan; 1192/10, 23 Jan; PREM 11/398, 23 Jan; *Hansard*, 17 Feb, 523, 1071-142; ISA, 2319/3, 42/13, 23 Jan; 1953.
124. FO 371/104226 1192/301, 7 Oct 1953.
125. FO 371/104229 1192/36, 2 Dec; 104230 1192/408, 22, 26 Dec 1953.
126. ISA, 40/2, 3 Jul 1953.
127. FO 371/110807 1192/21, 16 Feb; *FRUS*, 1952-54, IX, 3 Feb 1954, 2209.
128. In Nov 1953, there were 218 fighter planes in the Arab air forces of which, 97 were jets. The IAF totalled 137 of which, 15 were jets. Y.Steigman, *History of the Israel Air Force, 1950-1956* (Tel-Aviv, 1986), 38; FO 371/104215 1192/29, 19 Jan; 110817 1192/528, 18

- Nov; CAB 129, CC 79 (54), 21 Nov; DEFE 7/207, 21 Nov, ‘The determination of the French Government to supply Mystère aircraft to Israel is likely to upset the whole balance of air strength in the Middle East and to start a dangerous arms race’; CAB 128, CC 78 (54), 24 Nov; CC 85 (54), 15 Dec 1954.
129. FO 371/104220 1192/166, 12 June; 104221 1192/185, 23 June 1954. The IDF possessed 313 artillery pieces compared to 567 for all the Arab states.
130. DEFE 5/45, COS (53) 163, 31 Mar; FO 371/104187 1013/22, 22, 4 June; 104220 1192/166, 104224 1192/247, 13 June; 104226 1192/301, 7 Oct 1953.
131. DEFE 7/205, 6 Oct; FO 371/104188 1013/44, 42, 21 Oct 1953.
132. This created problems for Israel at the beginning of *Kadesh*. Israel purchased 24 outmoded Meteors and 60 Shermans compared to 41 advanced Centurions to Egypt. ISA, 2582/7, 30 Dec 1953; CAB 131/14, D (54) 34, 12 Oct; FO 371/110816 1192/475, 11, 15, 23, 25 Nov 1954; FO 371/115561 1192/218, 17 May 1955.
133. ISA, 192/41, 10 Feb; 192/41, 18 Feb 1955; G.De Carmoy, *The Foreign Policies of France, 1944–1968* (Chicago, 1968); H.Tint, *French Policy since the Second World War* (London, 1972); A.Williams, *Britain and France in the Middle East and North Africa, 1914–1967* (London, 1968); J.Coffey and G.Bonvicini, *The Atlantic Alliance and the Middle East* (Basingstoke, 1989); D.Bensimon, *Les Juifs De France et Leurs relations avec Israël, 1945–1988* (Paris, 1989); J.Kent, *Egypt and the Defence of the Middle East* (London, 1998).
134. J.P.Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944–1958* (Cambridge, 1987), 145–6.
135. FO 371/110822 1193, 25 June; 110823/90, 3 Sep; 115553 1192/4, 31 Dec 1954.
136. FO 371 98251 1054/1, ‘Request for summary of British policy in the Middle East up to 1941 to refute the tendentious comments by the French’, 3 Jan 1952.
137. FO 371/98255 1056/43, 16 June 1952.
138. FO 371/110814 1192/379, 4 Sep; 110815 1192/409, 30 Sep 1954; CAB 128/27 (54) 12 Dec; ISA, 2582/22, 9 May 1952. Israel expected arms through channels not affected by the Tripartite Agreement that is, West Germany and Canada. M.Gazit, ‘Sharett, Ben-Gurion and the Large-Scale Arms Deal with France in 1956’, *Gesher*, 1.108, 1983; A.Thomas, *Comment Israël fut suavé Les Secrets de L’Expedition de Suez* (Paris, 1978); Z.Levy, *Israel and the Western Powers, 1952–1960, 1952–1960* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1988), 58–76; S.Peres, *David’s Sling* (London, 1970), 47–55.
139. FO 371/91219 1192/20, 27 Jan 1951; ISA, 40/14, 22 Mar; 277/7; 2420/10, 17 June 1952.
140. FO 371/115818 10317/1, 28 Feb 1955.
141. FO 371/98241 1023/7, 1952.
142. FO 371/115818 10317/1, 22 Feb 1955.
143. Though initially not party to the Declaration or represented on the NEACC, Canada coordinated its arms policy with Washington and London, and solicited their approval on minor weapons orders. Cooperation was close with regard to Israel. M.Oren, ‘Canada, the Great Powers, and the Middle Eastern Arms Race, 1950–1956’, *IHR*, XII, 2, 1990, 221–40; D.Bercursion, *Canada and the Birth of Israel* (Toronto, 1985).
144. BGA, BGD, 18 Jul 1952; Peres, *David Sling*, 88.
145. FO 371/104191 1022, 5 June; CAB 129/62, 7 Aug 1953; DEFE 7/205, 14 Jan; ISA, 40/16, 14 Mar 1954; M.Oren, ‘Canada, the Great Powers, and the Middle Eastern Arms Race’, 228.
146. *Hansard*, 472, 28–29 Mar 1954, 295, 310, 514.
147. FO 371/102804 1192/184; PREM 11/465; ISA, 358/28, 2319/3, 14 Apr 1953. Britain’s evacuation ‘would be of the gravest concern to Israel’ and ‘defence of the Canal area affects Israel directly’. It requested to be consulted ‘on all aspects of the problem which have a bearing on the interests of Israel’.
148. FO 371/91219 1192/24, 6 Mar 1951.
149. FO 371/90191 1261/34, 19 Mar 1951.
150. UNSCR 2322, 1 Sep 1951. Egypt refused to allow freedom of Israeli navigation despite numerous appeals to the UN. ISA, 2383/5, 22 Aug; 2403/18, 10 Oct 1952; S.Onslow,

- Backbench Debate Within the Conservative Party and its Influence on British Foreign Policy, 1948–1957* (New York, 1997); R.Blake and R.Louis, *Churchill, 473–90*; P.Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt 1945–1956* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1991), 155–79; M.Cohen, *Fighting World War Three*, 124–63; R.Louis, 'The Tragedy of the Anglo-Egyptian Settlement of 1954', in R.Louis and R.Owen (eds), *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Consequences* (Oxford 1989), 43–71.
151. FO 371/90193, 1261/74, 2 May; 1261/81, 3, 6, 7, 10, 18 May; 90194, 1261/124, 29 June; 1261/125, 7 July; 1261/130, 12 July; 1261/173, 17 July; 1261/87, 9, 28 May; 1261/94, 6, 18, 19, 23 June; 1261/113; 13 June; 1261/106, 14, 15 June; *FRUS*, V, 2 July, 740–1; 760–71; 220, 21 Aug; 90200 1261/293, 26 Sep; 309, 19 Oct; 1261/309, 20 Oct; 309, 24 Oct 1951; UNSCR 3168/1, 29 Jan; S/3188/1, 19 Mar; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 30 Mar 1954, 421; G.Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett*, 727–8.
152. ISA, 2449/1, 23 Jan 1953.
153. ISA, 2582/7, 12 May 1953. Comay refused to divulge the source of the leak.
154. ISA, 2319/3, 22 Apr 1953.
155. ISA, 41/4, 22 Apr 1953.
156. ISA, 2582/7, 30 Apr; 41/4, 7 May; 2582/7, 19 May, 26 June; 40/12, 17 Sep; 2450/1, 18 Sep; 2319/5, 28 Sep, 31 Oct; 40/12, 12 Oct; 40/14, 28 Oct; 2593/17, 6 Nov 1953.
157. IDFA, 2177, 22 Apr 1953.
158. ISA, 2587/9, 25 Aug 1952; 2419/1, 7 Oct; 36/4, 26 Oct 1953; 2595/5, Apr 1955. After his retirement Elath wrote his Ph.D. on the Suez Canal under the supervision of Professor Sir Charles Webster at the LSE.
159. ISA, 2319/5, 23 Sep, 24 Dec 1953.
160. PREM 11/635, 22 Apr 1953; E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 86, 125; A. Horne, *Macmillan, 1894–1956* (London, 1988), 502.
161. FO 371/104778 1091/32, 2 Feb; CAB 129/59, 16 Feb 1953.
162. FO 371/102826 1193, 9 Sep 1953.
163. *The Times*, 20 Feb 1953.
164. CAB 129/53, 18 June 1952.
165. With the exception of Julian Amery, the group was anti-Zionist. S.Onslow, *Backbench Debate*, 108–22.
166. Liddell Hart Papers, Suezohp: 1, Transcript, Julian Amery, 12 Jun 1989.
167. ISA, 2582/7, 12 Nov; 2319/5, 24 Dec 1953.
168. ISA, 2582/7, 3 Feb. 41/5, 30 Jul 1954. Interviews with Elath and Amery.
169. ISA, 2589/2, 25 May 1953. On 13 July 1954, an *aide-memoire* was submitted to Eden referring to Salah Salem's broadcast that Egypt's goal was to destroy Israel. This could not be achieved as long as the British Army separated the Suez Canal (Israel) from its bases, 41/5, 13, 16, 21 Jul; Hays, *Sunday Chronicle*, 23 May.
170. Thomas argued that as a consequence of the agreement, 'Israel could now never expect the opening of the Suez Canal to her', H.Thomas, *The Suez Affair* (London, 1966), 20.
171. ISA, 2593/17, 22 Feb; 41/5, 17 Jul 1953; 2582/7, 9 Mar; UNSCR, 3168, 28 Jan. On 29 Jan, Eden wrote to Churchill: 'I think it unlikely that the UNO will do anything effective', FO 371/108593 1261/3, 18 Jan 1954.
172. ISA, 41/5, 26 July; 2585/5, 4 Nov 1954. Interview with Gershon Avner. G. Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett*, 751; S.Teveh, *Ben-Gurion's Spy: The Story of the Political Scandal that Shaped Modern Israel* (New York, 1996); A.Shlaim, *The Iron Wall* (London, 1999), 110–17; U.Bar-Joseph, *Intelligence Intervention in the Politics of Democratic States* (Philadelphia, 1995); D.Raviv and Y.Melman, *Every Spy a Prince* (Boston, 1991); G.Doron, *IJIC*, 4, 3, 1990, 371–82.
173. *Hansard*, 28 July, 499. The House approved the agreement by 257 to 26. All 26 were Conservatives, but less than the anticipated 40 expected to vote against. *The Times*, 29–31 July, 6 Aug 1954.

174. ISA, 41/5, 30 July 1954. A rearguard action was fought and sympathetic pro-Israel MPs were galvanized into action against the government's policy, including Crossman. Avner related that Crossman was peeved at being dragged from his bath to take an inconsequential phone call from the Embassy the day before. It was only after Avner told him the next day that he had an important message from Elath after consulting with Sharett, that he was willing to be of service.
175. ISA, 41/6, 1 Aug. James de Rothschild 'believes that there is no sense in crying over spilt milk. The Anglo-Egyptian Agreement was an historic necessity that was bound to come sooner or later', 2882/8, 4, 9 Aug 'We must defeat the formula of 3:1 as well as the formula of 'no increase of strength'. For this purpose he did not 'see any danger in them thinking that we actually are'. 2599/5, 19 Aug 'France is the only Power that is likely, from the point of view of some of its own interests, to be and remain faithful to us'.
176. *Dvrei Haknesset*, 30 Aug 1954, 16.
177. FO 371/111074 1072/167, 20 Aug, 22 Sep; ISA, 2582/8, 17 Sep 1954.
178. *FRUS*, 1952–54, IX, 2 Oct, 1662; Parliamentary Papers, Cmnd. 9686; ISA, 2599/5, 2 Nov; 2585/5, 4 Nov; 39/27, 22 Dec 1954; FO 371/115810 1011/1, 18 Jan 1955. Ben-Gurion dismissed Eden's assurances to Israel, which 'did not correspond with reality', David Ben-Gurion, *Israel A Personal History* (New York, 1971), 440.
179. ISA, 2582/4, 17 Apr 1951.
180. *Hansard*, 2 Nov 1954.

## ‘Nibbling at the edges’: border tensions and the search for an interim Arab-Israeli settlement

### BRITAIN’S POLICY TOWARDS THE ISRAELI-JORDANIAN NEGOTIATIONS

Britain showed little interest in initiating a comprehensive Middle East settlement.<sup>1</sup> Its primary policy concern was to strengthen its relations with Jordan and to secure international recognition of its borders. Britain’s approach to a final settlement began with the need to practise ‘a gradual process of education’ of Israel and the Arabs, who were expected to acknowledge their difficulties and to benefit from the good offices of Britain and the US. In search of an interim agreement, Britain was restricted to “nibbling at the edges” pending a decision on the course of further action.<sup>2</sup>

US participation in the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC) led to a deepening awareness of the enormity of the Palestine problem and involvement in facilitating talks towards a general settlement between Israel and the Arabs.<sup>3</sup> The US favoured a joint Anglo-American effort to broker a comprehensive peace settlement, however; Britain envisaged only a state of permanent non-belligerency.<sup>4</sup>

On 16 November 1948, the UNSC called for an armistice ‘to facilitate the transition from the present Truce to permanent peace...in all sectors of Palestine’. Following Operation *Horev*, Egypt signed an armistice with Israel on 24 February 1949, which formally ended hostilities between the two countries. Ben-Gurion described it as ‘the greatest event in a year of great stupendous events’.<sup>5</sup>

While Britain did not interfere during the Israeli-Egyptian negotiations, she did so during the Israeli-Jordanian armistice negotiations.<sup>6</sup> Jordan, with active British support, sought to incorporate the West Bank and the southern Negev into its domain. Eliahu Sasson, Director of the MFA’s Middle East division, advocated accepting Jordan’s annexation of the West Bank as a tactical gesture to assist Abdullah to realize his plans.<sup>7</sup>

The Israeli-Jordanian armistice talks opened at Rhodes on 4 March.<sup>8</sup> *The Times* optimistically commented that: ‘probably the negotiations, which are about to begin between Israel and Transjordan offer even greater opportunities of lasting peace than the armistice with Egypt’.<sup>9</sup> Although Britain offered its best services to help Abdullah to negotiate territorial questions at Rhodes, it vigorously opposed the idea of a formal peace and attempted to thwart Abdullah’s negotiations with Israel on a separate peace agreement. Britain feared that a simultaneous Israeli invasion of Egypt and Jordan, both allied to it by treaty, would weaken its position in the region and so was eager to avoid armed conflict with the IDF. When troops were sent to Jordan, Abdullah was advised to

exercise patience and told that while the troop movements were aimed to assist the Arab Legion, they were not intended to help Jordan take the offensive.<sup>10</sup>

Jordan was the only Arab state to negotiate directly with Israel.<sup>11</sup> Ben-Gurion dismissed as ‘self-delusion’ Sasson’s claim that Abdullah aimed to free himself from British hegemony because his ability to embark upon negotiations was contingent on British consent. He accurately assessed the constraints on Abdullah and was in no hurry to commence formal negotiations with Jordan. In his view, only military action could secure Israel the Red Sea outlet and foil British designs. Accordingly, Israel’s tactic was to go slow on the talks with Abdullah while Operation *Uvda*, extended Israel’s control of the Negev down to the Red Sea.<sup>12</sup>

The talks were immediately plunged into crisis by Israel’s successful launching of *Uvda*. Britain was incensed but the US urged restraint.<sup>13</sup> The US was averse to condemning Israel’s advance on the Red Sea, and was satisfied by Israel’s assurances that it had no intention of entering Jordanian territory proper.<sup>14</sup> The IDF reached the Red Sea without crossing the Jordanian border. Kirkbride recalled that:

Israel’s first reaction to the arrival of British troops to Aqaba was to send an officer over to propose that a friendly football match should be organised between the two contingents. When the advance was politely rebuffed, the Israelis retaliated by kidnapping a British border patrol and holding the sergeant for a week for interrogation.<sup>15</sup>

Leaving the matter of the southern Negev unresolved, Israel and Jordan signed a ceasefire agreement on 11 March.<sup>16</sup>

During the negotiations, Britain watched with dismay while Israel strengthened its position with Abdullah’s compliance in acquiring the ‘triangles’ territory in Samaria. Kirkbride regarded Abdullah’s concessions as ‘another Munich’ and tried to sabotage the agreement. He warned of the gravity of the situation, and urged that the US exert pressure on Israel to give up its aim to acquire the little triangle.<sup>17</sup> Bevin was unimpressed by Kirkbride’s warnings. He saw little reason to haggle over a piece of ‘territory no larger than fifteen square miles’.<sup>18</sup> Although Kirkbride urged Abdullah not to sign an agreement with Israel, he was unable to offer alternatives to the problems he faced. Abdullah charged that Britain left him no alternative but to sign.<sup>19</sup>

The Armistice signed on 3 April was preceded by a secret round of Israeli-Jordanian diplomacy. They were as anxious to hasten the agreement, as was Kirkbride to stall.<sup>20</sup> The CIGS warned that the agreement increased Jordan’s vulnerability to Israel and that if Israel failed to obtain territory by negotiations it would probably resort to force.<sup>21</sup>

The signing of the general armistice agreement represented a significant turning-point in Arab-Israeli relations. To all intents and purposes, ‘Palestine and Transjordan gave way to Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan... the name Palestine, disappeared, at least from the map’.<sup>22</sup> The agreement represented a major victory for Israel, which achieved a strategic line of defence in the centre of the country, its most vulnerable, and secured its southern outlet at the Red Sea. Israel accepted the armistice agreements in their entirety marking an end to hostilities. Such was Israel’s willingness to negotiate with Jordan that it was even prepared to do so under the auspices of the PCC.<sup>23</sup> However, when the PCC convened between 27 April and 15 September 1949 at Lausanne, Israel

was vulnerable. Whereas it had negotiated the Egyptian and Jordanian armistice, on a one-to-one basis, at Lausanne, it was confronted with the combined Arab delegations.<sup>24</sup>

Although Britain participated in regular meetings with the US, French and Turkish delegations, its tactics were to encourage the US to shoulder its long evaded responsibilities.<sup>25</sup> The US, assisted by Britain prodding from the side, aimed to put pressure on Israel to make concessions; a case in point, Truman's scathing letter to Ben-Gurion with respect to Israel's attitude to the refugee problem.<sup>26</sup> Britain developed an eight-point plan calling for a 'Greater Transjordan' concept, part of its attempt to obtain UN approval for the annexation of the West Bank to Jordan.<sup>27</sup> Britain was also involved in finding a solution for Iraqi Jews and a possible transfer of Jewish-Arab refugees.<sup>28</sup>

Abdullah considered absorbing 100,000 refugees but Kirkbride protested it would lead to the 'Palestinianization' of the Hashemite Kingdom and thwarted further developments. Ben-Gurion toyed with annexing the Gaza Strip but after learning the size of the population, he relinquished the idea. Israel's willingness to discuss possibilities in the administering of the Strip inflated US hopes that Jordan would acquire a passage from Gaza to the border south of Hebron. Strang concluded that Israel would never allow the Arab refugees to return.<sup>29</sup> The Foreign Office found solace in the UN refugee relief agency for the refugees, UNRWA, which would effectively relieve Britain from the sole burden of working with the refugees.<sup>30</sup>

The US blamed Israel for the impasse at Lausanne:

If there is to be any assessment of blame for stalemate at Lausanne, Israel must accept primary responsibility... There never has been a time in the life of the commission when a generous and far-sighted attitude on the part of the Jews would not have unlocked peace. Perhaps they are too close to the siege of Jerusalem to see it now.<sup>31</sup>

Israel was perturbed by the uniformity of the Anglo-American understanding at Lausanne. The failure of conciliation reinforced Israel's attitude that direct talks were preferable to any form of mediation.<sup>32</sup>

The Foreign Office was confident that it had insulated Jordan from Israeli pressure however, in January 1950, Israel succeeded in persuading Abdullah to oppose the UN proposal to internationalize Jerusalem because it would be detrimental to both their interests.<sup>33</sup> Kirkbride urged joint Anglo-American intervention to impose a solution, which was the only means of protecting Jordan. Israel would thus be forced to moderate its position on the redefinition and demarcation line in Jerusalem and the establishment of a Jordanian corridor to the sea. *The Times* also called upon Britain and the US to impose their own settlement on the parties.<sup>34</sup>

Helm argued that an Israeli-Jordanian settlement offered the best prospect for pursuing Anglo-US interests but warned that 'If we should recognise King Abdullah's sovereignty over Arab Palestine without the frontiers of Arab Palestine being defined, can we logically continue to with-hold *de jure* recognition of Israel on the grounds that her frontiers have not been defined?' He later claimed that a real opportunity for peace was missed because, had Bevin not been ill in 1950, he would have taken up the negotiations and followed them through.<sup>35</sup>

Israel remained suspicious of British intentions following Bevin's announcement that he opposed separate peace settlements. Sharett found it difficult to accept Helm's explanation that this was not an official declaration but 'the personal spontaneous reaction of an old "trade-unionist"'. If Bevin was merely expressing his personal view, how was Israel to discern 'official' policy?<sup>36</sup> Shlaim dismisses Ben-Gurion's claim that Britain sabotaged the negotiations, it merely would not agree to a peace at any price.

Furlonge complained that:

The Israelis, by playing on the weakness of the United Nations have got away with so much more than they are entitled to...any settlement between them and Jordan at least could be equitable if it involved them in appreciable concessions, particularly in Jerusalem and the Negeb.<sup>37</sup>

Britain maintained that a peace agreement was unattainable because of vehement opposition of the Arab states. Furthermore, if it was signed, Jordan would be ostracized and Britain's position would be untenable.<sup>38</sup> Furlonge explained to Kidron that:

It is generally believed that Abdullah can't blow his nose without asking our permission. It is quite true that on some things he can't. We have not I assure you, discouraged them. On the other hand, we have not pressed Abdullah to make peace with you.<sup>39</sup>

The secret talks with Abdullah were adversely influenced by Britain's support of the extension of the Anglo-Transjordanian Treaty to Western Palestine.<sup>40</sup> Sharett believed that, 'Abdullah felt over-confident because of the British recognition and that he now intended to raise his price in the negotiations with Israel'.<sup>41</sup> Kirkbride opposed Abdullah's secret talks because he was 'basically selfish...not really, far-sighted' and 'obsessed with the idea of recovering his fatherland, the Hejaz, towards which a settlement with Israel is the first stop'.<sup>42</sup>

Britain desisted from encouraging the Arabs to make peace with Israel 'because we believed that we should not succeed and that our efforts would merely alienate the Arabs'.<sup>43</sup> Notwithstanding Israel's deep distrust of Britain, it had no qualms in asking Britain to help Abdullah overcome opponents to a peace treaty. The secret talks came to an abrupt end in July 1951 when Abdullah was assassinated.<sup>44</sup>

Britain, and the US sought to contain the Arab-Israeli conflict from escalating. Their efforts consisted of conflict management, or peacekeeping; only occasionally did they aim at conflict resolution, or peacemaking.<sup>45</sup> Britain employed various approaches but at no stage was a comprehensive peace settlement contemplated. It was convinced that the US was 'even more disinclined than we are to exert pressure on the two sides to negotiate'.

Britain pursued an interim policy of 'a gradual process of education' aimed at convincing the Arabs that they could not expect Britain to dismantle Israel, and for its part, Israel was required to make considerable concessions to facilitate a settlement. Envoys were adverse to this process because 'rational argument tends to be ineffective'. The Tel-Aviv Embassy's perverse rationale was that a strong Israel would persuade the



Arabs to accept Britain's influence in curbing Israel's aggressive designs. Troutbeck lamented, 'all we can do at present is to keep quiet'.<sup>46</sup>

Britain resented the US initiative to convene the PCC Paris conference in September 1951, which aimed at a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement and she disapproved of US-French cooperation.<sup>47</sup> It was regretted that:

The Americans should have charged ahead in this way. The initiative now taken on their impulse appears to us entirely misconceived; moreover the way in which it was done puts us in the embarrassing position of having to choose between supporting a proposal with which we are not in agreement and of risking giving the impression of a divergence of policy from the Americans, French and the Turks. We felt on balance bound to accept the latter risk as the lesser evil.<sup>48</sup>

The failure of the conference vindicated Britain's forewarnings.<sup>49</sup> Rapp predicted that short of actual hostilities, nothing could break the deadlock; but that a settlement 'imposed equally on both sides' was attainable only with the close political and financial cooperation of the US. His superiors were pessimistic that either side would agree.<sup>50</sup>

The Foreign Office toyed with an unusual proposal: 'Israel was to offer to buy out, on a generous scale of compensation, Arabs still resident in Israel, and the Arab States to encourage and help them settle outside Israel, which would thus become homogenous'. This was in line with Bernadotte's Report in September 1948.<sup>51</sup> Troutbeck dismissed this suggestion:

When I was young, I do not recall having been taught that the Spaniards committed an act of progressive statesmanship when they encouraged their Jewish population to depart centuries ago... If I remember rightly our historians are particularly apologetic when describing how Edward I cleared out the Jews to make a homogenous England.<sup>52</sup>

The repatriation option did not negate the resettlement of refugees within Israel's borders, but rather in territories, Israel was expected to relinquish in a final settlement.<sup>53</sup> This became an essential component of plan 'Alpha'.

Rapp's suggestion of creating an independent Arab state on the West Bank was dismissed because of the Legion's fundamental importance and Britain's credibility in the Middle East. Ahmed Shukeiry, Assistant Secretary-General of the Arab League, dismissed the suggestion as 'unrealistic and stupid' the idea of separating the West Bank, 'which was an integral part of Jordan'. Evans believed it was futile to expect the Israelis 'to give up substantial slices of the land which they now hold without recourse to arms... as a result of the military decision which the Arabs provoked... the Arabs have in practice forfeited their claims to this area'.<sup>54</sup> Stevenson claimed that the Arabs were reconciled to Israel's existence and that the dispute was over whether the basis should be the 1947 resolution or the status quo'. There were growing fears that if Israel remained isolated it would 'threaten to make herself an international nuisance in an area which she knows is vital for the Western Powers by setting alight the four frontiers'.<sup>55</sup>

The Foreign Office suggested that the US, Britain and France should convene a conference of Arab States and Israel, where heavy diplomatic pressure would have to be applied to both sides, both to make them come to the conference table and to produce any results when they got there. The problem was that it would involve unsolicited UN and Soviet participation.<sup>56</sup> Evans reluctantly concluded that Arab-Israeli relations could only be established by the arbitration of force and that ‘sooner or later there will be a resumption of hostilities [that] may well come before very long, say within the next five years, and possibly much sooner’.<sup>57</sup> Although Britain’s policy was consistent, it did not follow a ‘notable pro-Israeli line’, as Tenenbaum suggests.<sup>58</sup>

#### ISRAELI AND BRITISH COMPROMISES REGARDING JERUSALEM, 1949–1953

Britain’s policy towards the status of Jerusalem was in line with the UN Partition Resolution of November 1947, which *inter alia*, provided for the territorial internationalization of Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum*.<sup>59</sup> Withholding recognition of either Jordanian or Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem remained British policy.<sup>60</sup> Bialer notes that, ‘the decision in December 1949, to make Jerusalem the seat of Israel’s government was followed by ceaseless efforts to gain international recognition of the city’s new status’.<sup>61</sup>

The MFA’s decision to remain in Tel-Aviv until further notice came as a relief to Britain. On 4 May 1952, the decision to transfer to Jerusalem came as a surprise to the British Legation, which had repeatedly dismissed such a scenario. Although Evans preferred to remain in Tel-Aviv, the Legation could not, ‘hope to be as informed as influential or as effective as we should be’. He urged a delay in a decision, which would be ‘premature’ and ‘inopportune’ and proposed applying pressure on Israel at the UN. The Foreign Office admitted that the situation would become intolerable with HMG’s representative virtually cut off from personal contact with government ministers. Assuming the move to Jerusalem was unavoidable, after discreet enquiries, Evans chose St John’s Hospital as the Legation’s premises, if it had to relocate. He considered it prudent to move ‘sooner rather than later since the longer we delay the move, which is in our view inevitable, the greater the embarrassment in the end’.<sup>62</sup>

Lord Mountbatten’s impending visit and the election of a new US President in December 1952 were expected to present problems regarding protocol.<sup>63</sup> In March 1953, after the US and France decided to await a UN decision on Jerusalem, Britain notified Israel that irrespective of a future transfer of the MFA to Jerusalem, the Embassy would remain in Tel-Aviv.<sup>64</sup>

On 8 July 1953, the MFA sent a secret coded-message to the Embassy regarding the imminent transfer. The publisher, George Weidenfeld, was appointed ‘in charge of all publicity on Jerusalem’ at the Embassy in London. On Friday, 10 July, Evans received notice that the MFA would move to Jerusalem and on 12 July would conduct its business from its new offices there.<sup>65</sup> He regarded the notification as ‘discourteous, heavy-handed and abrupt’. In Britain *The Times* opposed the transfer because it would be recognition of Israel’s *fait accompli*: ‘While the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs remains in Tel Aviv,

it is possible for the diplomatic corps to ignore tactfully Israel’s assertion that Jerusalem is her true and only capital’.<sup>66</sup>

Britain’s boycott of Jerusalem was ineffective. The Foreign Office backed down from its rigid stance and relaxed restrictions on diplomatic activity in Jerusalem. British officials would be permitted ‘on occasion’ to do business with the Israeli Ministers, personal unofficial visits to Jerusalem would be allowed, and *ad hoc* visits to conduct business with government officials would be permitted, while ceremonies would have to be avoided’.<sup>67</sup> Before the announcement, Sharett had arranged a compromise whereby MFA officials would visit Tel-Aviv once or twice a week while British envoys in turn would visit the MFA in Jerusalem. The secret arrangement was on the proviso that all press coverage of their meetings in Jerusalem would be suppressed.<sup>68</sup>

Evans had thought it discourteous not to attend presidential functions, as the US had instructed its envoys. This contradicted his earlier castigation of France’s announcement of its intention to attend presidential ceremonies, as a breach and an affront to the Tripartite understanding on Jerusalem. Averse to adding unnecessary tension to the protracted Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, the boycott of presidential receptions remained.<sup>69</sup> In 1954, as doyen of the Diplomatic Corps, Evans was confronted with a dilemma when he was invited to a presidential Independence Day reception in Jerusalem. Realizing the embarrassment and futility of continuing the boycott, Eden instructed him to attend. In defiance of official policy, US representatives met regularly with Sharett in Jerusalem, though not at the MFA.<sup>70</sup> Britain allowed the boycott to fall into disuse and Israel agreed not to publicly discuss the issue. Israel won an important diplomatic victory.<sup>71</sup>

#### ISRAEL’S REPRISAL RAID ON QIBYA, OCTOBER 1953

The significant escalation of border conflict compelled Britain to reassess its policy towards furthering a permanent settlement.

Glubb maintained that the infiltrators into Israel were merely petty thieves and poor refugees. Morris cites Kirkbride that the ‘Jordanian authorities did their best to check clandestine crossing of the frontier, not because they liked Israelis, but because they could not afford to risk a bilateral resumption of the war now that they had been virtually abandoned by their Arab allies’. Morris understates Israeli fatalities while accentuating her reprisals.<sup>72</sup> The fact that Israel acknowledged that some infiltrators only wanted to tend their fields does not detract from the murders of hundreds of Israelis, arson and damage to property committed from Jordan.<sup>73</sup>

Given that the Arab Legion, which patrolled and maintained security on the border, was funded and trained by British commanding officers, it was reasonable for Israel to assume that Britain was to be held responsible for the intolerable state of affairs. Israel cited Britain’s flagrant refusal to arrest listed perpetrators, terrorist organizations, corrupt Legionnaires and Jordanian officials, who accepted bribes from terrorists. Elath wrote to *The Times* protesting at Jordan’s acquiescence in attacks on Israeli villages and although the Legion was not explicitly mentioned, it was regarded as a direct attack on British policy. Britain admitted that more could be done ‘to prevent infiltration into Israel’ and explained that the problem was one of communication and that Jordan was unaware that

the infiltrations were under its jurisdiction. Jordan's lapse was therefore negligence and not complicity.<sup>74</sup>

The IDF underwent a severe crisis of self-confidence in 1952. Its ability to function effectively was severely undermined by economic crises, armaments shortages and the rise in militant Arab nationalism. Having encouraged new immigrants to settle on border settlements, the government was unable to ensure their safety. The failed counter-raids on Falama, Idna and Rantis added to the low morale in the IDF. Military and diplomatic approaches seemed futile.<sup>75</sup>

Britain incorrectly assumed that Sharett opposed reprisals because of his comments against retaliatory raids in June 1952. He believed that 'without the retaliatory policy there would be anarchy' and Israelis would flee from the borders. He 'explained' the activist line on retaliations as opposed to 'defending' it.<sup>76</sup> Ben-Gurion was adamant that 'there is no relying for our security on UN observers and foreign states [the US and Britain]'.<sup>77</sup>

The nadir in Anglo-Israeli relations was reached on the night of 14 October 1953, when Israeli paratroopers of 'Unit 101' descended on the Jordanian border village of Qibya, in Jordanian-held Samaria, from where it was believed murderers had attacked Israelis. The commandos, unaware of the presence of people in the basements, blew up 45 houses leaving 56 dead civilians buried under the rubble.<sup>78</sup>

Retaliatory raids were carried out on the authority of the Cabinet on 11 June. Initially, Sharett was aware of the decision to launch a raid and did not oppose it. However, he changed his mind after he learned that the Mixed Armistice Commission (MAC) and the UN had condemned the murders in Yehud, and that Jordan had agreed to the IDF to track down the perpetrators on its territory. In his capacity as acting PM, Sharett ordered Acting Defence Minister, Lavon, to cancel the planned military response but Lavon insisted that Ben-Gurion, who was on vacation, had himself authorized the raid.<sup>79</sup>

Britain harshly condemned the raid, but stopped short of recalling its ambassador. Israel was blamed for having irretrievably undermined its position in Jordan: 'Had Israel intended to destroy Britain's position in Jordan, it could not have found a more effective way. The Qibya operation delivered a mortal blow to England and demolished any trust in her [in Jordan]'.<sup>80</sup>

Britain's embarrassment at the failure of the Legion to protect the villagers raised doubts as to its ability to honour obligations to Jordan. In a face-saving measure, a number of junior officers who patrolled Qibya that night were dismissed but it did little to stem violent demonstrations in Amman calling for retaliation. Iraq threatened to send troops to defend Jordan.<sup>81</sup>

Evans expressed Britain's horror, 'such action by regular Israeli forces makes nonsense of Israeli protestations of readiness to make peace'. Elath was summoned to the Foreign Office to receive Lloyd's condemnation and outrage. He demanded an investigation with a view to punishing those responsible, and Israel should announce its readiness to compensate for the loss of life and property.<sup>82</sup> Evans scorned Ben-Gurion's broadcast disclaiming any connection between the attack and the IDF, which belied irrefutable evidence of Israel's involvement: They may be repeating the massacre of Deir Yassin in 1948, and have hoped to achieve comparable results in scaring Arabs away from the area and thereby reducing the danger of infiltration or making actual, if limited territorial gains'.<sup>83</sup>

Evans considered the possibility that Israel had not intended to cause such loss of life and that the operation got out of hand, nevertheless, he advised the British UN delegation that ‘no condemnation of Israel for the Qibya incident was too strong’. Britain neither linked the failure of negotiations in the motion of censure at the UN nor called on the parties to meet together. There was no mention of the border infiltrations from Jordan before the attack on Qibya.<sup>84</sup>

The Foreign Office admitted that: ‘The immediate cause of it was the long series of violence committed by the Jordanian infiltrations and that the fundamental cause is the Arabs’ refusal to admit Israel’s right to exist and to come to political terms with her’. Eden’s response was mild, ‘something out of the ordinary even in the sad catalogue of events that have occurred on either side of the border’.<sup>86</sup>

Glubb assessed Israel’s motivation for the raid:

We are ignorant why the Jews perform this cycle. Perhaps the explanation is that the Jews have a psychological impulse to use force. Persons or nations who have suffered persecution or have long been slaves, long to inflict the same hardships on others. The Jews, so long scorned and oppressed, love to prove to themselves that they are not inferior to other races and that they themselves can kill, and smash and crush to powder...but it is quite normal psychology.<sup>87</sup>

Evans thought it a ‘mystery that such intelligent people as the Israel leaders can be so blind to the consequences of their violent actions, and so deaf to the advice of their friends’.<sup>88</sup>

Churchill delayed the Cabinet’s decision to send an armoured division to Jordan (at its request) for 48 hours so that he could explain to Israel the precise nature of the proposed movement of troops in the sensitive region. Israel ‘had given him no such shock since the assassination of Lord Moyne. This would not have happened if Weizmann was alive’.<sup>89</sup>

In a manoeuvre to counter British pressure, Israel proposed resorting to ‘Article 12’ of the General Armistice Agreement, whereby either of the parties could call upon the UN Secretary-General to ‘convoke a conference of representatives of the two parties for the purpose of reviewing, revising or suspending any of the provisions’. Participation was obligatory upon the parties. Israel succeeded in detracting attention on to Jordan, which was obliged to respond. If it refused to attend, Britain would be required to vote for convening a conference, which would have a further damaging effect on Anglo-Jordanian relations.<sup>90</sup>

*The Times* reported on 17 November that a substantial anti-British wave was sweeping Israel but Evans did not fear ‘that our firm stand in the Security Council will have any lasting effect on our relations with Israel’. The UNSCR 101 tabled by Britain, the US and France, was adopted on 24 November. *The Times* regretted that the ‘Security Council failed to combine its censure of the Qibya incident with strong support for Israel’s initiative in calling for a conference with Jordan’.<sup>91</sup> Britain continued to regard Israeli reprisals as counter-productive and unjustified under international law. Israel’s transgression was not that it crossed the border to pursue infiltrators, but its brutal indiscriminate revenge killings that characterized the reprisals.<sup>92</sup>

The Embassy was pressed to explain the events of 14–15 October. Repugnant as it was, the staff dutifully disseminated the merits of Israel's case. Elath bemoaned the serious setback in Anglo-Israeli relations: 'We should not underestimate the effects of Qibya, when they say "horror" they reflected general British opinion'. The dearth of information reduced his own credibility with the press and the Foreign Office: 'I cannot help here expressing my own "horror" at the absence of facts and explanations which we were obliged to labour in the first week'. He asked why he was not sent the MAC's report and conveyed his humiliation at being allowed 'a glimpse' by Lloyd. Avner's account in trying to placate Anglo-Jewry was even more heart-rending.<sup>93</sup> In the absence of MFA directives, Elath was unable to explain to Lloyd Israel's version of events. Sharett's palpable lack of conviction in his statements on Qibya was conspicuous, all he could do was to refer Evans to Ben-Gurion's broadcast for an explanation of the chain of events.<sup>94</sup>

Elath presented his final report on Qibya.

Qibya will have its effect on the supply of arms to Israel... We have gravely endangered the good name and prestige of Israel, on which the existence of our state so largely depends, alienated our friends, strengthened our enemies, and voluntarily thrust ourselves into isolation... I hope and pray that we may draw the necessary lessons from the results of Qibya.

The significance of the report lay in Sharett's decision to circulate it to members of Cabinet, as though it had come directly from Elath. Ben-Gurion considered calling for Elath's dismissal but Anglo-Jewish leaders remonstrated that Elath's contribution was indispensable and any attempt to remove him would have adverse consequences on bi-lateral relations at their most sensitive juncture.<sup>95</sup>

Israel's image was tarnished and the MFA's morale was undermined. Qibya lingered like a festering open wound, a healing process disrupted after every attack and reprisal raid.<sup>96</sup> Parliament's recess was the Embassy's only solace since it effectively reduced censure of Israel's actions and attention in the media.

Sharett became PM on 27 January 1954. His policy to retaliatory raids was tested on 17 March when a civilian bus was attacked by Arab terrorists at Ma'ale Ha'Akrabim, north of Elath. Eleven passengers were killed. Glubb immediately declared that the terrorists came from Gaza or within Israel because there was no evidence that the terrorists operated from Jordan. He ignored Israel's irrefutable evidence that they had operated from Jordan. Israel walked out of the MAC in protest at the absence of British condemnation. Furlonge accused Israel of presenting the massacre as 'a Qibya in reverse':

A curious feature of this campaign is the apparent reluctance of the Israelis to turn the heat on Egypt... The obvious explanation is that the Israelis still cling to the hope that the Egyptians are the most likely of all Arabs to lead a peace movement. If so, the artificial character of their campaign is the more evident.<sup>97</sup>

The *Jerusalem Post* reported on 7 December 1956 that ID cards of some of the victims were found in the possession of 'inhabitants of Rafiah'. Morris erroneously concludes that 'Glubb had been right and Israel wrong'.<sup>98</sup> The discovery of the ID cards in Gaza was scant proof that the perpetrators came from Egyptian territory.

Arab provocation went unabated. Terrorists attacked two Israeli watchmen in the Jerusalem corridor on the night of 26 March. Evans was mistaken that Sharett did not know in advance of Israel's reprisal on Nahalin on the night of 28 March; in fact, he approved it.<sup>99</sup>

At Eden's recommendation, Churchill asked the 'Israelis to behave themselves' and Churchill sent Sharett a terse message reminding him of Britain's commitment to defend Jordan and his concern that renewed Israeli-Arab hostilities 'would be a calamity'. It was accompanied by a verbal warning, 'if Britain ever had to go to war with Jordan against Israel, the result would only be disastrous for Israel'. Sharett was expected to 'impose a sense of clever statesmanship and patience on the Israeli side'. The message was aimed at deterring hard-liners but it had the contrary effect; one Cabinet member even viewed it as a threat to Israel's existence.<sup>100</sup> Sharett replied that 'the fate of countless men, women and children, both Jew and Arab, may hang on the success of your endeavour'.<sup>101</sup>

When it became clear that the MELF HQ would be transferred to Jordan within the next two years, Britain concentrated on 'stopping the holes' to ensure the border remained calm in the ensuing redeployment. Tripp urged restraining Jordan, 'Whose violations are more general than those of Israel and are typified by her general intransigent attitude towards Israel and her sustained anti-Israel propaganda conducted in harmony with the Arab League'. The CIGS reluctantly acknowledged that: 'We cannot guarantee to prevent Israel overrunning the Jordanian territory up to the West Bank of the Jordan,' Evans was sceptical that Israel would invade and encounter a hostile Palestinian population, unless it faced extermination.<sup>102</sup>

The corollary of Britain's re-commitment to Jordan was the curtailing of Israeli-Jordanian dialogue as it augmented Jordanian self-assurance that Britain would defend it at all costs and encouraged brinkmanship with Israel. Britain was determined to prevent itself from being embroiled in such an entanglement.<sup>103</sup> Shuckburgh maintained that 'the Jordanian Government are in fact doing their best to suppress infiltration across the border' and Falla insisted that Britain had 'done their damndest to get the Jordanians to agree to come to the meeting [UN in New York] but they had failed'.<sup>104</sup>

British-paid officers failed to stop the infiltrations and terrorist attacks. Avner complained that: Britain 'shields the Jordanian Government all the time from taking the consequences of its own attitude'.<sup>105</sup> The conservation of the deaf continued in the same vein. Kirkpatrick reported of his 'dialogue' with Elath: 'The Israeli Ambassador called today and said that he had come for a general discussion. This turned out to be a monologue lasting an hour ... I did not say anything until the moment came to utter the word goodbye'.<sup>106</sup>

IN SEARCH OF A PERMANENT SOLUTION: FROM AD HOC  
POLICIES TO COERCIVE DIPLOMACY

The CIGS assumed that Israel was likely to launch a second round, in which case, HMG would honour its treaty obligations to Jordan.<sup>107</sup> A farcical and paradoxical feature of their plans was that their success was contingent on Egypt's tacit cooperation only months before British forces were to leave the Suez Canal.<sup>108</sup>

A major obstacle to creating the lines of communication, vital for Britain's defence of the Middle East, was the landmass in southern Israel that effectively cut off the Arab world from Egypt. In order to secure a corridor connecting the landmasses of Egypt and Jordan, Britain went to extraordinary lengths to cooperate with the US on a secret plan to seek a solution, code-named 'Alpha'. It was the logical development of Britain's defence and foreign policy and an ambitious plan. A secondary interest was to seek a solution to the refugee problem.

The emergence of anti-western regimes, the arms race and practical Soviet support for the Arabs, were reminders that unless Britain and the US took it upon themselves to broker a settlement, they would be powerless to influence ensuing events. Evans urged that:

So long as we remain convinced, both that the assets in Arab hands are absolutely vital to us, and that an attempt to force the Arabs to a settlement with Israel would dash them from our grasp, then, I agree that to risk an active policy would be impudent. I am not however, satisfied that the first of these conditions will long obtain.<sup>109</sup>

In January 1954, the Tel-Aviv Embassy reported, 'there is little likelihood that we can do anything in the near future to help Israel in her political dispute with the Arab States... Sharett is the most moderate Prime Minister Israel is likely to choose. It is thus in our interest to strengthen his hand against the extremists'.<sup>110</sup>

Shuckburgh's *raison d'être* was disingenuous: the Arabs 'might be induced to make peace with Israel, and the US and UK would guarantee the settlement'. Eden told him, 'you are much more pro-Arab than you used to be', and Shuckburgh replied that it was 'really incorrigible'. Years after he wrote:

I must say, we miscalculated: we thought that Communism was the fever, which would inevitably seize hold of Israel's Arab hinterland if she did not come to an understanding with her neighbours. The Jews were always telling us that we exaggerated this danger. Perhaps, they were right, for as it turns out, a different and more complicated virus has arisen to dispute this field with Communism, a blend of Muslim fundamentalism and Palestinian terror. But this is to prove no less deadly, for Israel as well as the Arabs—and perhaps for us too.<sup>111</sup>



In the spring of 1954, a convergence of Anglo-American interests led to a *volte-face* in their respective approaches. Imbued with their success in solving the Trieste border dispute between Italy and Yugoslavia, they believed similar mediation could be applied to the Arab-Israeli dispute. The first suggestions were drawn up in December.<sup>112</sup> The need arose to ‘devise some way of getting the Israelis into a psychological condition, which would enable them to adopt a more modest and conciliatory attitude’.<sup>113</sup> Shuckburgh and his US counterpart Russell, (Under-Secretary of State in charge of Middle East Affairs, and former Chargé d’Affaires in Tel-Aviv) were mandated to devise a plan whereby Israel was to make ‘minimal concessions’ while the Arabs would be enticed by financial incentives to reach an agreement with it.

Alpha was launched by the US and Britain over a period of sixteen months between 1954 and 1956. It aimed at brokering a settlement between Israel and the Arab states. It was a radical break, which replaced Britain’s *ad hoc* foreign policy with that of ‘coercive diplomacy’. The planning and drafting of Alpha was an extraordinary exercise in Anglo-American diplomacy, nevertheless it is bewildering how experienced, distinguished, and proficient civil servants, men whose expertise and competence lay in their objective scrutiny of policies and procedures, were capable of zealously pursuing a plan, which was the antithesis of all they had been trained to do. Their obduracy in refusing to grasp the futility of Alpha, a plan so impracticable it was aborted before launch, even more so.<sup>115</sup> A redeeming feature of Alpha’s planners was the extent of the economic, military and political inducements they were willing to invest.

Such was the secrecy, that Nicholls was unaware of its existence. Shuckburgh favoured sending him details but deferred to US objections. It was no disadvantage to him that he did not have to feign ignorance.<sup>116</sup> Beeley, senior Foreign Office adviser, denied all knowledge of Alpha despite being presented with declassified files containing his signature. It was only after he received official clearance that he was prepared to talk about it.<sup>117</sup>

Britain was aware that Israelis and Egyptians met clandestinely between July 1952 and January 1956. In Washington, at the initiative of Britain and the US, Shiloah met Mahmud Riad in charge of Israeli affairs at the Egyptian Ministry of War, but little was achieved.<sup>118</sup> British MPs offered their good offices including Richard Crossman, Hector McNeil, Maurice Orbach and Cyril Banks. Orbach travelled to Egypt three times to plead for the lives of Jews under sentence of death for their part in the bombings of western installations. His mandate for talks with Nasser went far beyond requesting commuting the death sentences. In December 1954, Crossman reported to Ben-Gurion that Nasser was prepared to recognize Israel and would not demand the return of the refugees: however, he was adamant that the southern Negev could not remain in Israel’s hands. From the US, Elmore Jackson, Jacob Blaustein and Ira Hirshman mediated with varying degrees of success. Eisenhower’s personal envoy, Eric Johnston directly mediated over the Jordan River dispute.<sup>119</sup>

British envoys argued that the problem could not be solved by ‘nibbling at the edges’ disconnected from other elements of the conflict, but by tackling all aspects of the problem and achieving a fair settlement. Evans advocated exercising ‘effective influence on the Arab States to adopt a more cooperative approach to Israel’. Russell concurred. The most pressing issue was to resettle the refugee because without a solution, the

conflict would escalate. On the day of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement, Duke cabled from Amman that coercive diplomacy seemed to be the only solution to the morass.<sup>120</sup>

On 17 September 1954, Lloyd announced that HMG were willing to offer their good offices to help implement all UN resolutions. Elath thought it referred to Egypt and announced that Israel would be ‘very ready’ to benefit from Britain’s ‘good offices’, a serious false impression, which Eden took as an indication of Israel’s willingness to discuss major concessions.<sup>121</sup>

Eden and Dulles discussed the Arab-Israeli impasse at their meeting in London on 2 October. Eden envisaged coercive diplomacy to entail thirdparty intervention with suggestions for a settlement, but there were to be no direct meetings between Israelis and Arabs. The US responded positively to Eden’s initiative, which was ‘a challenge to American and British statesmanship and diplomatic skill’. The US hoped that the armistice agreements would be transformed into formal peace treaties within two years. At no stage did Shuckburgh refer to a peace settlement as an objective.<sup>122</sup>

Shuckburgh could not ‘avoid the fear that Israel is in a fair way to losing us the Middle East. It stands in the way of co-operation between the Arab countries and the West in matters of defence and it poisoned our relations to such an extent that we are impotent to counter the Communist advance’.<sup>123</sup> He did not believe that it was feasible to persuade Nasser to co-exist with Israel and there was no basis for believing it was attainable.<sup>124</sup> He was scathing of Israel:

The Israelis are obsessed with their own national struggle. They see it in apocalyptic terms and are always in the right... Their actions are calculated to discredit and weaken the Arab governments and to anger Arab opinion. They are more concerned to score debating success at the United Nations and to avenge minor insolences [my italics] on the frontier than to help the Arab governments to make a settlement with them... Our first task with Israel is to show them how to make it possible for Arab governments to talk to them.<sup>125</sup>

He proposed that ‘the aim should be an overall settlement’ but ‘to avoid speaking of peace’ and suggested the need to set up working parties to study the problem in ‘secret surroundings’. Israel should be sounded out first because it would in all probability, reject compromise, and then Egypt could be approached. The annex to his report provided the keystone for the successful implementation of ‘Alpha’.<sup>126</sup>

Israel would be required to cede the Negev south of Beersheba to Jordan, thus ending ‘the partition of the Arab world’. This ‘might be conceivably balanced by the cessation of the Gaza strip to Israel’ although it was noted that Egypt was willing to give it up to Jordan, and not to Israel. The surrender to Jordan of an area in the Galilee, into which refugees might be returned for settlement, could possibly be offset by the surrender to Israel of some ‘desert’ territory, perhaps ‘south of Hebron’. There were to be frontier ‘rectifications’ along the Jordanian border and an ‘alteration’ of the frontier on Lake Tiberias, which would give Syria access to the Lake. The problem of Jerusalem would be resolved by declaring its neutrality as an international city. Repatriation of small amounts of refugees and compensation were to be paid by Israel in return for relaxing the

blockade and economic sanctions against Israel. In addition, there was to be a resolution of the Jordan waters along the lines of Johnston’s proposals.

As the talks approached, differences emerged. The US encouraged ‘direct talks where possible’ and the US proposal for ‘a free route across Israel linking Egypt with Jordan’ was not the ‘direct’ link envisaged by Britain. At the Washington talks held between 21 January and 11 February 1955, British and US officials met in five high-level meetings co-chaired by Russell and Shuckburgh.<sup>127</sup> They were pleased to learn that there were ‘no serious incidents on the frontiers...largely due to the measures taken by the Arab Legion under General Glubb to prevent infiltration from Jordan’.<sup>128</sup> Methods and tactics were discussed and the cryptic ‘kissing triangles’ (ceding territory in the Negev) were mentioned for the first time. The US would work with Israel while Britain would work closely with the Arabs. They also suggested that Dulles send Sharett ‘private messages’, which would not reveal anything further because it might wreck the plan.

Eden was requested to approach Nasser first in an attempt to win him over by flattery. Caplan concludes that:

The decision to begin first with Egypt and then to turn to Israel was a crucial one for setting the tone and dynamics of Operation Alpha. The unfolding of Alpha would thus be based on the presumption (sometimes challenged by Dulles) that Israel was the petitioner wanting peace, while Egypt was the reluctant party being courted.<sup>130</sup>

US and British protocols differ as to the territorial concessions and compensation Israel was expected to make, Dulles’s emphasis on full peace was omitted from Shuckburgh’s report.<sup>131</sup> Although there was only a moderate chance of success, there was no other alternative. Nicholls warned that Israel’s sense of isolation and increased anxiety over continual rumours about border readjustments did not bode well for a calm Israeli response.<sup>132</sup>

Britain’s one and only direct offer to Nasser was made on 20 February when Eden met him at the Cairo Embassy. It also marked Alpha’s demise. While Nasser’s response was not entirely negative, he got nowhere, partly because of Eden’s condescending attitude and failure to appreciate his stance. Britain made a disastrous error by announcing the imminent conclusion of a British-sponsored Iraqi-Turkish treaty, a direct snub designed to counter Egypt’s aim of hegemony in the region. The paradoxical message to Nasser whom ‘we have cast...for the leading role’, and Egypt’s exclusion was the factor in Nasser’s rejection of Alpha that evening.<sup>133</sup>

For the historical record, the sequence of Nasser’s rejection is imperative because it preceded the signing of the Baghdad Pact and Israel’s Gaza raid, which both occurred within a week of his meeting with Eden. Although the raid did not plunge Egypt and Israel to war as Morris claims, it did ‘at the very least put a spoke in the wheels of Alpha’. His conclusion that this ‘may have decisively put an end to any real interest by Nasser in the initiative’ is inaccurate. Nasser’s interest began and ended on 20 February.<sup>134</sup>

Nicholls’ reaction to Gaza and the future of Alpha was less benevolent:

I conclude therefore, that if we are inhibited from resorting to surgery, in any circumstances, we must face the prospect of administering a long and troublesome course of treatment to this very diseased part of the world. The centre of infection in the region is Israel and I believe that we must treat the Israelis as a sick people. Their illness is psychological... It is not reasonable to expect that a nation made up of individuals so psychologically unstable should be capable of a mature foreign policy, though their superior intelligence tempts one to expect it of them.

Shuckburgh replied that ‘the Israelis perceive as clearly as we do that our interests bind us to the other side; and paradoxically, they are the most likely people to force us to make the choice that they know would go against them’.<sup>135</sup>

### ISRAEL’S REACTION TO ALPHA

It came as no surprise to Ben-Gurion and Sharett that Britain refused to come to accept the finality of the armistice lines. Britain’s policy was a poignant and bitter reminder of Britain’s previous ‘mediation’ efforts to broker agreements in 1939 and in 1947. Sharett observed that Britain’s repetition of the Communist threat ‘had something of the character of a gramophone record’.<sup>136</sup>

Israel had its own demands and conditions; Britain and the US should help stabilize the region by their commitment to Israel’s sovereignty and by encouraging Arab leaders to arrive at a ‘partial’ settlement with it. Preconditions included, an end to all infiltrations, embargos, economic measures, and declarations of an on-going war against Israel, and inflammatory propaganda. In exchange for Arab compliance, Israel was willing to compensate the refugees, declare a free zone in the port of Haifa and assent to an international guarantee upholding the status quo.<sup>137</sup>

Eden ensured that all references to Alpha were kept out of the press but he was convinced that ‘the Israelis are aware that something is going on’.<sup>138</sup> Jon Kimche was the first journalist to leak the existence of a secret Anglo-American plan on 25 March. In an editorial, ‘Egypt names its price’, Kimche commented that:

Ben-Gurion has an uncanny knack of being right. He has been preaching his doctrine of the Negev so persistently that even his supporters have been wondering if it had become an *idée fixe* of exasperating proportions. Then suddenly on Sunday, a statement in Cairo by Egypt’s Guidance Minister, Salah Salem, confirmed the Negev as the crucial problem for Israel—one that can no longer be put off until tomorrow; for tomorrow will be too late.<sup>139</sup>

Elath recalled that he did not know of the existence of Alpha, however:

When Eden raised a question regarding the Lachish area in one of our conversations, this did worry me...the embassy assessed that there was

some plan which was not to Israel’s advantage and that in due course we would no doubt be apprised of the details.<sup>140</sup>

He told Shuckburgh in a heated discussion on 21 March, that ‘he felt there was a sort of Munich in preparation for Israel’. Leaks continued to emanate. Shuckburgh noted that ‘the Jews are beginning a great pressure campaign ... Letters and telegrams and resolutions have begun to pour in too... If the Jews will just keep quiet for another four or five weeks we might get some sort of negotiation going, but I don’t suppose they will’. On 13 April, Shuckburgh noted that he had a ‘tiresomely bad-tempered interview with Elath, *the Israeli*’ [my italics] although the minutes give no indication of an unpleasant exchange. He accused ‘the Jews for organising every sort of pressure and propaganda to get a treaty guarantee of their present conquests, so they shall not have to make concessions’.<sup>141</sup>

Sharett learned details about Alpha from reliable sources who referred him to Eden’s speech to Parliament on 4 April, which hinted that Britain seriously intended to pursue the plan. He found it ‘hard to believe that the British could seriously think about such far-reaching surgery... do they really believe that they can compel us to give up Elath?’. His worst fears that it was a joint Anglo-American initiative were confirmed by Eban who gathered that the US expected Israel to ‘swallow a bitter pill’, from which, it would eventually benefit.<sup>142</sup>

Shuckburgh was undeterred. Israel had to make far-reaching concessions if Alpha was to have any chance of success. Moreover, it was required to concede more than a land-link from Egypt to Jordan as envisaged in the ‘two-triangles’ suggestion. Israel was now be expected to ‘give up a substantial slice of the Negev... they will not like it’.<sup>143</sup>

Nicholls regarded Sharett as ‘far the best bet’ in arriving at a solution because ‘he is the cleverest, he has most understanding of the play of international forces, and by nature, he believes in solving problems by diplomacy and negotiation’. Sharett was to be supported and persuaded that his policies were not a failure.<sup>144</sup>

Sharett did not comply with Nicholls’ expectations. He rejected the return of the refugees and the reversal of Israel’s new borders, which was caused by Arab aggression. His case was unequivocal and clear in his letter to Macmillan and to Dulles, the significance of which was not lost upon the Foreign Office. Shuckburgh found it ‘impossible to read Mr Sharett’s memorandum without indignation at the arrogance and logic chopping of the Israelis’ for not mentioning the Soviet threat.<sup>145</sup>

A sympathetic article in *The Sunday Times* on the importance of the Negev to Israel convinced Shuckburgh that Israel was sabotaging Britain’s regional initiatives. Britain would not yield to Zionist pressure and had:

No intention of coming out with a cut-and-dried plan for the Palestine solution. Nor had we in mind any solution which demanded large sacrifices from Israel, such as taking away the Negev etc. Egypt was merely being approached to work towards a peace solution.<sup>146</sup>

This was deceptive because a ‘peace solution’ was not ‘a peaceful solution’. He was ‘left with the strong conviction that the Jews are doomed if they don’t change their ways. But

they show no signs of recognising it'. Elath told him that Israel would not accept any a priori conditions as a basis of discussions with the Arabs.<sup>147</sup>

In June, Macmillan detailed the estimated cost of a settlement. Britain would help Israel to raise £15m on the London market to pay compensation to the Arab refugees. The Treasury concluded that 'Israel would have to pay in the region of £100m. We do not think a settlement can be bought for less than this'. Israel would be able to provide £30m from its own resources and World Jewry, leaving £70m to be provided in the form of a loan.<sup>148</sup>

Britain and the US decided to make a statement in order to pre-empt Israel, which was expected to expose Alpha by planting a parliamentary question. Amenable editors and envoys were supplied with supportive articles to counter pro-Israeli denunciations. Nicholls maintained that whatever the differences regarding the timing, it would 'be extremely important to make it clear to the Israelis that whatever the Americans do is done in consultation with us'.<sup>149</sup> The Cabinet discussed Shuckburgh and Russell's 15 July draft statement and agreed that the French were 'to be informed sufficiently in advance to give at least some plausibility to a pretence...that they are being consulted... A week in advance would seem to be the minimum time for this'.<sup>150</sup>

US politics affected the timing of the statement as candidates declared their intention to run for presidential office. Alluding to the 'Jewish vote', Nutting complained that it was 'maddening that we should be pushed around by the requirements of American politics in this way. But it is not the first time it has happened nor will it be the last!'<sup>151</sup>

Eden agreed that Dulles should hint at Alpha in his scheduled speech at the US Council for Foreign Relations on 26 August, however, once again, Alpha was undermined by leaks circulating of a massive Egyptian-Soviet arms deal.<sup>152</sup> Dulles's 'Proposals for a settlement in the Arab-Israel Zone' on 26 August, were 'an important contribution towards a solution of the most critical outstanding problem in the Middle East'. *The Times* understood the Arabs' dilemma but urged them to allow the process to continue. Israel was warned, 'today patience is necessary since violence will fail'.<sup>153</sup>

The US took the full brunt of criticism in the Israeli press, construed from the statement that it had received British sanction. Sharett accepted that the statement ended any speculation that the US would agree to a defence treaty with Israel. He considered the speech 'designed to tell the Jews of America what they wanted to hear...while at the same time removing [any security guarantees] from the agenda indefinitely'. More ominous was Dulles's implicit reference to the Negev, 'the difficulty is increased by the fact that even territory which is barren has acquired a sentimental significance'.<sup>154</sup>

Israel's official reaction came when Sharett expressed Israel's disappointment and reservations. The Cabinet was informed that 'the Government... have welcomed the statement as a "constructive act" and are busy seeking detailed explanations of Mr Dulles' ideas'. Sharett's communiqué to Israeli diplomats reaffirmed that 'Israel will refuse to cede any part of her area to satisfy the ambition of any Arab state or for any other purpose'. He requested US Ambassador Lawson to divulge Anglo-American plans because Israel was prepared for 'mutual adjustment of territories' but needed to know which territory it was expected to relinquish. In a clever gambit, Sharett told him that 'the Arabs have never enjoyed a free connection across the Negev. First, there was the Ottoman Empire then [the] British mandate. Israel had not removed a right, which Arabs formerly enjoyed'. The Foreign Office dismissed his argument as 'so patently specious

that it is hardly worth demolishing' but 'that his question is one we must not answer yet but which is difficult to evade'.<sup>155</sup>

A further announcement of Alpha was delayed again following a spate of terrorist attacks. Shuckburgh thought that Israel's reprisal attacks on Egypt were designed to thwart overtures to Nasser. Britain postponed discussions on the 'triangles' until the situation eased. Shuckburgh lamented on 30 August that 'Alpha seems like a beautiful dream'. Alpha was after all a flight of fantasy.<sup>156</sup>

British policy makers still regarded Alpha as the only way out of the morass. The renewed Anglo-American discussions in London on 20 September aimed to clarify the demarcation of the borders. Britain was adamant that, 'the crux of the matter is the Negev. The Egyptian price for a settlement is the cession of the whole Negev up to Beersheba...therefore...; we should take the plunge on the Negev'. However, even before talks resumed, it was clear that Nasser was unwilling to consider further proposals regarding the Negev. The discussions exposed differences. The US urged to capitalize on the 'Alpha momentum' while Britain recommended caution. Britain's prudence paid off. On 27 September the massive Egyptian-Soviet arms deal was announced.<sup>157</sup>

Aware of a looming failure, the Foreign Office prepared to hold Israel responsible for Alpha's demise: 'Apart from factual considerations, we should at each stage try to see that we are in a position where the blame for the failure can be laid wholly or at least partly on Israel'. Israel was erroneously informed that Egypt was prepared to negotiate a settlement. This was an attempt at mollifying Israel 'that we think they will have to do something about the Negev'.<sup>158</sup>

Shuckburgh lamented the futility of British policy: 'Spent all day frantically discussing this, and concluding (with Harold Macmillan in the evening) that we cannot allow it. But how to stop it? The folly and fragility of our Palestine policy is beginning to come home to roost at last'. He urged a new approach. For the 'first time a solution to the Palestine problem must be found in a compromise between the present *status quo* and the 1947 Resolution'. He predicted it would be a painful blow for Israel to hear it from one of the Great Powers. Three days previously, Arthur wrote to Eden that 'we must face the fact that if we are ever to bring about a Palestine settlement we shall have to be nasty to the Israelis at some stage'.<sup>159</sup>

Eden's address to the Annual Lord Mayor's Banquet on 9 November offered an opportunity to unveil the next stage of Alpha, which was a defining moment in Anglo-Israeli relations. He openly declared that Britain did not recognize the finality of the armistice agreement borders and that Israel was expected to abandon large tracts of land for secure and guaranteed borders. Macmillan had told Elath in September that Britain 'could not possibly guarantee frontiers that everybody regarded as unsatisfactory'. Nicholls conferred. It was dubious that Israel would come to the bargaining table because no Arab state was willing to negotiate with it and it would be a tactical error for it to agree to anything, which might lead to her annihilation.<sup>160</sup>

Ben-Gurion (who replaced Sharett as Prime Minister) castigated Eden's proposals as 'tantamount to awarding a prize for aggression'. Sharett wrote to Israeli envoys that, 'England is concerned not with Israel's benefit but with her own position with the Arabs, which she is trying to restore by appeasement at Israel's expense'. Eytan, normally restrained, saw it as 'another Munich' and advised renouncing all British offers to

mediate. The Embassy issued a terse statement that the speech caused ‘great anxiety to Israel’.<sup>161</sup>

Sharett told Dulles that Eden’s speech was not only ‘a blunder but a disaster’. Eden was concerned that US backing for his speech was ignored by the ‘Israelis [who were] increasingly pretending that we have no American support. This could become dangerous if not countered’. Dulles was pleased to see Britain taking the full brunt of the criticism but instructed Lawson to remind the MFA that the US had approved of the speech.<sup>162</sup> For Nicholls, the ‘important thing was to disabuse the Israeli Government of their belief that the Jewish vote in the US will be sufficient to protect them from the necessity of ceding territory’. Britain needed to set Israel’s fears at risk, Shuckburgh pencilled in the column, ‘the Americans will have to do this. We can’t’. Having rejected the offer of mediation, Israel was now blamed for blocking progress towards a peace settlement.<sup>163</sup>

Dulles revealed to Sharett some elements of Alpha. The territory Israel was expected to give up ‘would not necessarily be large nor of great value’. Although he was aware of the plan’s existence, Sharett described it as a ‘bombshell’, the scope and degree to which the US and Britain had invested. Two days later, Eden told Elath that the loss of land was of ‘no substantial value’. Sharett remarked that, ‘It was one of the paradoxes of history that the Arab States should now be clamouring for the revival of the 1947 plan, a plan, which they did their utmost to kill’.<sup>164</sup> On 8 December, subsequent to British approval, Russell briefed Shiloah, the first Israeli or Arab to be shown the full outline of Alpha. It was a deeply frustrating moment.<sup>165</sup>

Ben-Gurion stated that while there would be no discussion on the Negev, Israel had no objection to conceding territory in return for Egyptian territory elsewhere. He was convinced that Britain’s ultimate goal was the implementation of Bernadotte’s ill-fated plan, which called for Israel to relinquish all of the Negev. His obsession with British designs on the Negev was rooted in his conversations with Bevin in 1947 who told him that Britain needed to construct large airfields in the Negev. In October 1945, Ben-Gurion approved of British bases in Palestine: ‘Just as New Zealand and South Africa allow the British to have naval bases wherever she wants and needs them, so the Jews would give such bases in Palestine’. Nicholls refuted the claim that Britain planned for Jordan to annexe the Negev, from where Britain would re-establish MEHQ.<sup>166</sup>

Anglo-Israeli relations were further strained when Elath was the attributed source in *The Times*’ attack on Britain’s policy. At the suggestion of the editor, he wrote a rejoinder disassociating him from the article, which appeared next to an ominous editorial on the chances of peace in the Middle East. While press attaches wrote letters to *The Times*, it was rare for a head of mission to do so. Eden regarded the letter ‘contentious’ and a breach of protocol. He considered demanding his recall, however, little could be done because the Afghan Ambassador was not reprimanded over a letter he wrote three weeks before. Kirkpatrick was instructed to reprimand Elath ‘in a friendly way that he had been sailing too close to the wind but not to administer a rebuke’. The meeting did not take place. Although there is no official documentation, Shuckburgh referred to the incident on 2 December.<sup>167</sup>

Israel attempted to forestall further Anglo-American plans by issuing an *aide-mémoire* to the US. The ‘seven-point’ plan outlined its readiness to discuss concessions. The British welcomed one of the points, provision for communication by air and railway between Egypt and Lebanon; port facilities in Haifa for Jordan, including transit rights



by way of road to and from the port. However, Britain saw nothing new that pertained to the refugee problem or could convince the Arabs that there was anything to negotiate.<sup>168</sup> Israel's inclination to enter negotiations without conditions, even if the Negev issue was raised, gave the US reason to conclude that it had shown sufficient flexibility to justify a further approach to Egypt.

Nicholls believed the Israelis were 'moving steadily towards the idea of a bargain under which they would make territorial concessions somewhere in return for the Gaza strip'. This 'would not give the Israelis their back door but it might psychologically have a good effect in making them feel that they had not been compelled to lose territory without any compensatory gain'.<sup>169</sup> Shuckburgh was unimpressed and insisted these differences could not be surmounted.<sup>170</sup>

Israel Sieff told Macmillan that 'moderate Israeli opinion would consider favourably a link between Egypt and Jordan' and 'would give more of the Negev away in a settlement if we took some military rights in the Israel part of the Negev'. Nicholls believed that Sieff was ill informed since it was precisely the fear of British bases in the area, which caused tension. He noted, 'it is however, unfortunate that these people in Israel from whom he has acquired his impressions seem to have little influence on the counsels of the Israeli Government'.<sup>171</sup>

The Italian Ambassador reported to Nicholls that Sharett 'admitted that mutual adjustments of the frontier...need not necessarily mean equal concessions by both sides. Israel realised that she would have to give up more than she got'. As regards the Negev, Sharett was reported to have said that Israel:

Would consider an exchange of territory, e.g. the Gaza strip against a demilitarised zone of Nizana...this would be worthwhile for Egypt since she would gain a strategic area and lose the embarrassments of Gaza. Israel would take over the 200,000 refugees now in Gaza, but apparently would propose to keep them in camps as they are at present with UNWRA support.<sup>172</sup>

The Anderson Mission was the last attempt to rescue Alpha (*Operation Gamma*). The US initiative was undertaken without British involvement apart from minor consultations and Banks' mediation efforts. Anglo-American planners went ahead with discussions on action to be taken against Israel in the event of aggression against Egypt.<sup>173</sup> Eban recalled that: 'Gamma was a far more rational and, at one stage, hopeful project than the ludicrous Alpha'. Through the US perspective, Alpha's aim was to support Egypt's hegemony over Arab unity, a direct snub to the British-sponsored Baghdad Pact.<sup>174</sup>

Anglo-American unity on Alpha drifted indefinitely apart. By late April, the Foreign Office deemed Alpha a failure.<sup>175</sup> Alpha's strategists failed to perceive that the patient had died on the operating table. The only question was whether the brain (Egypt) or the heart (Israel) determined the cause of death. Despite the fact that Alpha's heart was kept beating on an artificial life support machine, to all intents and purposes, it was brain dead.

Borrowing a restaurant as a metaphor, Alpha's planners were chefs with a secret *pièce de résistance hors d'œuvre*, which they were ready to serve but there were no clientele. They assumed that if they altered the restaurant's façade they would have at least one customer, which would entice additional clientele. However, the repast was unpalatable

because of the expensive menu and the overcooked *plat du jour*. Their persistence seems to have been based on a combination of desperation and wishful thinking. The lynchpin was the Negev, but Israel would not cede it with or without a comprehensive peace settlement.<sup>176</sup>

Britain failed to appreciate the extent to which it was no longer a ‘Great Power’ and its inability to manipulate Egypt and Israel into acting against their best interests. Shuckburgh severely underestimated bitter Egyptian-Iraqi rivalry for hegemony of the Middle East and misjudged Nasser’s motives.<sup>177</sup>

Israel emerged more strident and assured that its policies were vindicated. The collapse of Alpha gave impetus to the planning of *Kadesh* and the demise of Sharett who had done as much as he could to expose Alpha. It was a cruel end to his career, which stayed the course for eight arduous years.<sup>178</sup>

The paradox was that Israel and Britain would find themselves within a few months playing on the same court against Egypt, though it was a match in which the doubles partners, (Britain), played backhanders while its ‘invisible’ forecourt partner, (Israel), played to the net. Israel won the game but Britain lost the match.<sup>179</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Britain was involved, directly and indirectly in the Armistice negotiations, Jan to July 1949; Lausanne Conference, Apr to Sep 1949; Geneva talks, Jan to July 1950; Paris Conference, Sep to Nov 1951; UNGA and UNSG, Nov 1952–Apr 1954. Britain’s services included: serving as ‘postman’ making diplomatic representations, providing diplomatic support or condemnation, offering, delaying, and withholding military aid, offering good offices to the parties, and conciliation and mediation.
2. FO 371/104770 1078/3, 2 Dec 1953; 111070 1072/58, 7 May 1954.
3. The PCC was created by UNGAR 194 (iii) 11 Dec 1948. FO 816/142, 1 Jan; FRUS, 1949, VI, 4 Jan, 607; K. Condit, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, Vol. II (Washington, DC, 1976), 108.
4. FO 371/91368 1072/15, 23 June 1951.
5. *DFPI*, iii; BGA, BGD, 11, 12, 16 Jan 1949; A. Eban, *An Autobiography* (New York, 1977); G. Meir, *My Life* (London, 1975); E. Sasson, *On the Road to Peace* (Tel-Aviv, 1978); M. Dayan, *The Story of My Life* (London, 1976); A. Kirkbride, *From the Wings: Amman Memoirs, 1947–1951* (London, 1976).
6. W. Eytan, *Israel the First Ten Years: A Diplomatic History of Israel* (New York, 1958), 28–48; G. Sheffer, *Sharett*, 425–47.
7. ISA, 3738/81, Feb 1949.
8. There were four stages: 4–11, 12–18, 18–24, Mar; 24 Mar–3 Apr.
9. *The Times*, 26 Feb 1949.
10. FO 371/75054 1026/733, 12, 17 Jan; 75051 1023/932, 10 Jan; FO 816/142, 31 Dec 1948; 75045 1016/367, 5 Jan; 75531 1017/1281, 27 Jan; 1017/1692, 10 Feb; 75386 1095/510, 16 Mar; BGA, BGD, 13 Jan; *FRUS*, 1949, IX, 1 Feb, 716, 1949.
11. Elath and Mahmoud Fawzi, the Egyptian Ambassador, conversed in public and met privately on several occasions.
12. BGA, BGD, 17 Jan; FO 371/75336 1016, Jan; *FRUS*, VI, 15 Jan, 667; ISA, 2329/5, 8 Feb; 2453/17, 15 Feb; 2453/3, 5 Mar; 2431/1, 9 Mar; 3749/2; 2948/1; 2948/3; 2569/12, 10 Mar 1949; 2408/13, 19 Mar 1950. Sharett was sceptical of Abdullah’s ability to deliver an agreement in face of British support for internal opposition. A. Shlaim, *Collusion Across the*

- Jordan* (Oxford, 1988) 364–5, 371–7, 399, 401–7, 428, 430–1, 440–1, 445, 471–2, 519–20, 524, 528–32.
13. BGA, BGD, 3, 11 Mar. The US asked them, 'not to allow any major incident to set off the balloon', *FRUS*, 1949, VI, 10 Mar, 810; CAB 131/8, DO (49) 7, 7 Mar.
  14. Britain was prepared to invoke the treaty with Jordan if she were invaded. CAB 21/1922, 9 Mar; ISA, 37/12, 9 Mar; 38/1; 2498/1, 11 Mar 1949.
  15. A.Kirkbride, *From the Wings: Amman Memoirs, 1947–1951*, (London, 1976), 93; FO 371/75386 1095/3562, 17 Mar; *FRUS*, VI, 23 Mar, 879; 24 Mar, 863, 1949.
  16. BGA, BGD, 11 Mar; CAB 21/1922, 12 Mar; ISA, 3749/2; 2569/12, 10 Mar; 2498/1, 20 Mar; *The Times*, 25 Mar 1949.
  17. FO 371/75386 1095/3679, 21 Mar; 1095/3790, 21 Mar; 1095/3844, 24 Mar; CAB 21/1922, 26 Mar; 68837 16402, 14 Dec. Stabler Wells, in Amman, reported that Kirkbride was doing everything he could to delay the signing of the armistice, *FRUS*, 1949, VI, 23 Mar, 854–61. Abdullah was not informed about Britain's readiness to protect Jordan proper, which led to his willingness to consent to Israeli offers, which involved Jordan ceding territory it coveted itself. I.Pappé, *Britain and the Arab-Israel Conflict, 1948–1951*, (London, 1988), 181.
  18. CAB 21/1922, 24 Mar; A.Kirkbride, *From the Wings*, 90–119; FO 371/75386 1095/3790, 23 Mar 1949.
  19. FO 371/75386 1095/3720; *FRUS*, VI, 24 Mar 1949.
  20. ISA, 2948/1; 2431/1, 18 Mar; 2948/1, 19 Mar; 20 Mar; 64/1, 23–24 Mar; H. Eshed, *Reuven Shiloah, The Man Behind the Mossad: Secret Diplomacy in the Creation of Israel* (London, 1997), 138–47; I.Pappé, *Britain and the Arab-Israel Conflict*, 185–208; BGA, BGD, 3 Apr 1949. Ben-Gurion's suspicion of British motives in the region remained unabated. He maintained that the coup in Syria was instigated by Britain in order to take power from the anti-British Quwetli.
  21. CAB 21/1922, 31 Mar 1949. They suggested lifting the arms embargo as a means of protecting British interests. The Foreign Office was concerned with the Arab League's reaction to the armistice, which maintained that a secret annex threatened its interests. The League did not act against the agreement.
  22. A.Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, 426.
  23. BGA, 2 Jan 1949; FO 371/81911 1023/1, 5 June 1950.
  24. Israel announced that it was prepared to recognize the armistice lines as its permanent borders, its willingness to pay compensation to those refugees who had cultivated their land before the war and to enable the reunification of families. The Arabs claimed that, by signing the Protocol, Israel recognized the 1947 Partition Plan. Israel held that the map was to be taken, as the text of the Protocol stated, and not the basis for negotiations. Ben-Gurion was shocked to learn that Israel had suddenly accepted the Partition Plan as the basis for discussion. ISA, 2447/6, 30 Apr, 9 May; 2447/1, 12, 14, 15 May; *FRUS*, VI, 11 May 1949, 988; FO 371/82719 1011/73, 8 Dec 1950; I.Pappé, *Britain and the Arab-Israel Conflict*, 203–43; N.Caplan, *The Lausanne Conference, 1949* (Tel-Aviv, 1993); G.Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett*, 448–93; Z.Shalom, 'The Lausanne Conference, Anatomy of a Failure Known in Advance', *Iyunim Btkumat Israel*, 4, 562–70.
  25. CAB 129/1, Part 1, CP (49) 15 Jan; FO 371/75334 1016/358, 11 Jan. Bevin argued that the creation of the PCC did not require a British initiative, unless it was intending to bring Egypt and Jordan together on the question of the Negev; 75346 1017/157; 1017/166, 1017/676; 4 Jan 1949; N.Caplan, *Lausanne*, 86–8.
  26. IMDEA, 230.72/897, 13–14 Jul; *FRUS*, VI, 1949, 1003–5, 1072–3; ISA 2444–7; 2443/3, 29 Apr; 24419/19, 25 Jul; 2444/1, 30 Apr; *The Times*, 13, 14 Apr 1949.
  27. FO 371/75350 1017/8393, 9 Jul 1949.
  28. FO 371/82706 1017/2, 2 Aug; 75072 1058/9044, 22 Jul; *FRUS*, 1949, VI, 14 Jul, 1226. Nuri Said raised the possibility of exchanging Iraqi Jews for the refugees. He had privately threatened to expel all Iraqi Jews if Israel did not allow the refugees to return, 75182.

- 1571/3653, 3 Mar; 2118, 14 Feb 1949. In Jan, the Board of Deputies implored the FO to 'make an approach' to the Iraq regarding the persecution of their co-religionists, 75182 1571/770, 14 Jan. Mack complained that remonstrations on behalf of Iraqi Jewry could damage Britain's fragile relations with Iraq and the Arab world and disputed the allegations as exaggerated and without foundation. Discrimination against Jews was inevitable given Arab-Israel hostilities and it was 'surprising that... there has been comparatively little discrimination against Jews', 75182 1571/3653, 3 Mar; 1571/3609, 20 Mar. When a report was finally compiled in April, the FO prevented the Board from reading it since, 'all kinds of undesirable use could be made of it', 1571/3653, 3 Mar, 8 Apr; 75438 11150, 15 Sep; 75051 1023/8512, 7 Jul; 75136 1026/8537, 11 Jul; 75446 1821/13568, 15 Sep. ISA, 36/14, 19 July; A. Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945–1951* (Oxford, 1985), 713. 'There were indications that the Iraq Government intended deliberately to embarrass the Israel Government by carrying out as rapidly as possible the transfer of their Jewish population to Palestine', CAB 128/18 CM (50) 67. M. Bishku, 'The Other Side of the Arab-Israel Conflict: Great Britain and the Issue of Iraqi Jewry Prior to "Operation Ezra and Nehemia"', *Studies in Zionism*, 12.1, 1991, 29–41; Y. Shenhav, 'The Jews of Iraq, Zionist Ideology, and the Property of Palestinian Refugees of 1948: An Anomaly of National Accounting', ISME, 31.4, 1999, 605–30; M. Gat, 'Between Terror and Emigration; the Case of Iraqi Jewry', 1–24; 'Britain and the Jewish Community of Iraq, 1948–1951', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 8.3, 1989, 201–22; *The Times*, 10 May; 2602/3, 12 Nov 1953.
29. ISA, 2451/9, 2 May; *FRUS*, VI, 15 June, 1137, 1949; ISA, 2582/3, 26 July; BGA, BGD, 26 June; *Dvrei Haknesset*, 15 June; PCC, 4th Progress Report, A/922, 22 Sep; FO 371/81911 1023/110, 5 June; 2412/29, 9, 12 Nov 1950; IMDEA, 21 Dec 1951; I. Pappé, *Britain and the Arab-Israel Conflict*, 213–18, 228–33; M. Gazit, 'Ben-Gurion's Proposal to Incorporate the Gaza Strip with Israel', *Studies in Zionism*, 8.2, 1987; G. Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett*, 259–60; A. Plascov, *The Palestinian Refugees in Jordan, 1948–1957* (London, 1981); I. Pappé, 'Sir Alec Kirkbride and the Making of Greater-Transjordan', *Asian and African Studies*, 23.1, Mar 1989, 43–70; W. Eytan, *Israel the First Ten Years*, 118–37; V. Schiffer, 'The 1949 Israeli Offer to Repatriate 100,000 Palestinian Refugees', *Middle East Focus*, 9.1, 1986, 14–20.
30. UNRWA's first year, was a failure. Not one refugee was resettled, destitution increased, and the refugees refused to participate in work projects. FO 371/75329 12423, Sep; 75448 1821/14139, 13 Nov; 75449 1821/14332, 29 Nov; 1821/14428, 2 Dec; 1821/14459, 3 Dec 1949; 81914 1025/5, 7 Feb 1950; *New Statesman*, 17 Feb; *Hansard*, 494, 42, 20 Nov; FO 800/807, 22 Nov 1951.
31. *FRUS*, VI, 12 June, 1124–5; *Dvrei Haknesset*, I, 717–38; 4 Aug; ISA, 2582/5, 26 Jul 1949.
32. *Herald Tribune*, 21 Nov 1949.
33. FO 371/82177 1015/7, 16 Jan 1950.
34. *The Times*, 21 Jan, 5 Apr, 27 May, 2 Aug, 8, 14 Sep; 9, 22 Dec 1949; FO 371/82177 1015/11, 2 Feb 1950.
35. *FRUS*, 1950, VI, 783; J. McDonald, *My Mission in Israel, 1948–1951* (New York, 1951), 713; FO 371/82572 1053/3, 20 Jan 1950; ISA, 47/9, 13 Feb 1955.
36. ISA 2592/22, 17 Apr; 36/12, 2 May; *The Times*, 15 Apr 1950. The MFA disseminated unfavourable and embarrassing reports about the Arab Legion.
37. BGA, BGD, 20 June; A. Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, 561; *The Times*, 8 Feb 1983; *Ma'ariv*, 13 Oct 1964, 561.
38. FO 371/82178 1051, 31 May 1950.
39. ISA, 2412/26, 16 May 1950.
40. *New Statesman*, 29 Apr, 6 May 1950; 10, 17 Feb; 3, 10 Mar 1951.
41. ISA, 36/2, 30 Dec 1949; 2592/2, 2 Feb; 2595/8, 27 Feb; 36/2, 2 May; 36/14; 2412/26, 16 May 1950; 2582/6, 28 Jan, 3 Mar 1953.
42. FO 371/82179 1015/77, 14 Jul 1950.

43. FO 371/82179 1015/88, 22 Aug 1950; 91368 1072/21, 24 Aug 1951.
44. ISA, 2412/29, 6 Oct; 2318/8, 6 Oct 1950; 2582/4, 7 Mar, 27 Jul; 2582/5, 2, 3, 14 Aug, 1951; H.Eshed, *Reuven Shiloah*, 138–63; D.Schueftan, 'The Israel-Jordan Peace Negotiations', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23.3, 1988, 409–24; A. Sela, 'Transjordan, Israel and the 1948 War', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 28.4, 1992, 632–88; J.Nevo, 'Peace Negotiations Between Israel and Jordan after the 1948 and 1967 Wars', *Conflict Quarterly*, 4.3, 1984, 39–55.
45. N.Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy*, Vol. 3 (London, 1977), 8.
46. FO 371/91368 1072/21, 24, 31 Aug; 91368 1072/25, 14 Sep; 1072/27, 20 Sep 1072/32, 11 Oct 1951; 98257 1056/80, 19 June; 1071/2, 24 Dec; 104753 1071/1, 26 Dec; 1072/1, 28 Dec; 1071/4, 1952; 2 Jan; 1071/11, 24 Jan, 19 Feb; 1071/4, 9 Feb; 1071/11, 1953.
47. The PCC conference spanned 12 meetings from 12 Sep–14 Nov. FO 371/91365 1071/11, 14 Aug; 91200, 29 Oct 1951.
48. FO 371/91365 1071/14, 14 Aug 1951.
49. PCC A/1985; ISA, 40/14, 11 Dec 1949.
50. FO 371/98476 1073/28, 28 May; 1073/30, 2 June; 98258 1056/83, 23 June, 29 Jul; 1952.
51. UNGAR 394 (V), 14 Dec 1950; A/1905, Oct; A/1985, Nov 1951; FO 371/98258 1056/83, 29 Jul 1952.
52. FO 371/1073 1056/104, 9 Dec 1952.
53. FO 371/104477 1821/3, 25 Feb, 6 Mar; 104754 1071/36, 26 Mar; 14 Apr; 1, 5 May; 1071/52, 12, 21 May; 104466 1825/77, 29 June 1953.
54. ISA, 2584/1, 1 Jan; 2582/6, 10 Jan; 40/14, 23 Jan; FO 371/98478 1073/78, 27 Sep; 98263 1071/43, 4 Oct; 98478 1073/78, 9 Oct; 98479 1073/90, 21 Nov 1952; 104753 1071/14, 12 Feb; 104753 1071/23, 11 Mar; 1071/25, 13, 23 Mar; 1071/27, 12, 23, 25 Mar; 104780 1091/129, 29 Apr 1953.
55. FO 371/98479 1073/90, 7 Nov 1952; 104759 1072/73, 28 Oct; 2 Nov; 1072/68; 29 Oct; 1072/120, 13 Nov; ISA, 2593/17, 17 Nov 1953. Interviews with Eliahu Elath, Mordechai Gazit, Gershon Avner, and Eliezer Yapou.
56. FO 371/104759 1072/87, 30 Oct; 1072/72, 2 Nov; 104770 1078/3, 3 Dec 1953; 111069 1072/6, 18 Jan; 1072/16, 23 Mar 1954.
57. FO 371/111069 1072/34, 30 Mar 1954.
58. Y.Tenembaum, 'British Policy towards Israel; the Arab-Israel Dispute, 1951–1954', (Ph.D.) Oxford, 1991, 269.
59. On 11 Dec 1948, the UNGA directed the PCC to present 'detailed proposals for a permanent international regime for the Jerusalem area', UNGAR, III, 1, Doc. A/810. After 1949, Britain rejected *corpus separatum* because of its impracticability. ISA 2583/4, 28 Apr 1954.
60. FO 371/82633 1081, 4 Dec; *The Times*, 9 Dec; ISA, 36/14, 19 Dec 1949; *Hansard*, 27 Apr, 474, 1138; 2595/8, 14 Sep; 36/12, 27 Oct; 4 Apr; 16 June 1950; 22 Dec; 10 May; FO 953/1340 1531/1, 29 May 1952; 104775 1082/23, 5 Oct 1953; 111071 1072/80, 10 May 1954.
61. U.Bialer, 'The Road to the Capital', *Studies in Zionism*, 5.2, 1984, 273–96; 2443/8, 26 May; 2412/29, 27 Oct 1950.
62. FO 371/91755 1892/10, 11 Jan; 1892/8, 1051/3, 14 Jan 1951; ISA, 39/19, 12 May; 98792 1010/1; 98786 1013/6, 6 May; 98792 10110/4; 98792 10110/4, 12 May; 10110/5, 17 May; 98796 1013/8, July; 953/1340 1531/1, 24 May; 29 May; 98248 10345/30, 9 June 1952; 104738 1018/1, 17 Jan; 104838 1891/1, 13 Mar 1953; H.Cattan, 'The Legal Status of Jerusalem', in J.Piscatori and G.Harris (eds), *Law, Personalities, and Politics of the Middle East*, 45–63; S.Slonim, *Jerusalem in America's Foreign Policy 1947–1997* (The Hague, 1998); Y. Feintuch, *U.S. Policy on Jerusalem*; M.Brecher, *Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy* (Oxford, 1988); A.Beker, *The UN and Israel* (Mass., 1988); Y. Tenembaum, 'British Policy towards Israel', 147–209.
63. FO 371/98816 1893/4, 25 Apr 1952.

64. ISA, 2582/6, 2 Mar; FO 371/104838 1891/1, 13 Mar; 104739 1018/17, 1018/67, 27 July; 10Aug. 1953.
65. FO 371/98792 10110/30, 15 Jul; 98793 10110/33, 21 Jul; ISA, 39/19, 25 Jul; 98799 1051/20; 31 Jul; 39/19, 7 Aug 1952; 104738 1018/17, 25 Feb; 1018/21, 28 Feb; 1018/21, 4 Mar 1953. Eytan recalled: 'On July 12, 1953, the Ministry completed its day's work normally in the old offices at Hakiryia in Tel-Aviv. The following morning, it opened its doors in Jerusalem', W.Eytan, *Israel the First Ten Years*, 79. He should have written, 'working day' since the next day was the Sabbath. My deep thanks to Rehavam Amir for his invaluable cooperation. I had the honour and the privilege to learn much from about the functions of the MFA and the Embassy in London where he served as Consul. His modesty and accuracy concerning his role 50 years ago is an important contribution to scholars and diplomats. R.Amir, 'The Decision to Transfer the MFA to Jerusalem in 1953', in M.Yagar, Y.Guvrin and A.Oded (eds), *The Israel Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the First Fifty Years* (Jerusalem, 2002).
66. ISA, 40/14, 22 Jul; *The Times*, 3, 5 Aug; FO 371/104258 10345/48, 4 Aug 1953; 111059 1015/3 19 Jan 1954.
67. FO 371/91755 1892/17, 7 Feb; 1892/20, 12 Mar 1951; 98785 1011/1, 27 Feb; 98816 1893/4, 25 Apr 1952.
68. ISA, 2412/29, 8, 20 Feb, 13 Dec 1954.
69. FO 371/91192 10211/2, 29 Nov 1951; 98241 1023/13, 13 Nov 1952; 98241 1023/8, 15 July 1953; 104739 1018/85, 18 Sep; 1018/79, 26 Aug; 104839 1892/3, 25, 29 Sep, 5 Oct; 111130 1903/11, 17, 23 Feb 1954.
70. FO 371/111130 1903/22, 24 Apr; 111131 1903/25, 25 Apr; 1903/39, 21 June 1954.
71. FO 371/104784 1091/232, 30 May 1953; ISA, 2595/8, 9 Jul 1954.
72. ISA, 2412/29, 2 Aug 1950; FO 371/91386, 17 Feb 1951. A.Kirkbride, *From the Wings*, 105–6. Israel was referred to as 'usurpers'. B.Morris; 'The Israeli Press and the Qibya Operation, 1953', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 35.4, 1996, 40–52; *Righteous Victims* (New York, 1999); Z.Shalom, *Policy in The Shadow of Controversy The Routine Security Policy, 1949–1956* (Tel-Aviv, 1996); 'War, Military Force and Fighting Morality in Ben-Gurion's Political Thinking', in M. Golani, *War Policy and Peace Policy, Issues in Security History of the Yishuv and the State of Israel, Aley Zait*, 3 (Tel-Aviv, 2000); 'Protocol of General Staff Meeting of 27 Jul 1954', *Iyunim Btkumat Israel*, 9; 'The Arab-Israeli Conflict in Ben-Gurion's Political Thinking, 1949–1956', M.Golani (ed), *Hetz Shachor* (Haifa, 1994); 'Strategy Debated: Arab Infiltration and Israeli Retaliation Policy in the Early 1950s', *Iyunim Btkumat Israel*, 1991; D.Tal, *Israel's Day to Day Security Conception* (Sede-Boker, 1998) 64–114; M.Bar-On, 'Israel Confronts the "Arab Question," 1948–1967', *Iyunim Btkumat Israel*, 1, 1992.
73. FO 371/104777 1091/25; 104780, 1091/115, 24 Apr; 1091/129, 28 Apr; 104779 1091/82, 104790 1091/444, 27 Oct; *FRUS*, IX, 1952–54, 27 Jan, 1106–7; 104779 1091/67, 28 Feb; 14 Apr; 18 Aug, 1287; ISA, 40/11, 6 Feb 1953.
74. *The Times*, 18 Feb; FO 371/104777 1091/32, 2 Feb; 1091/16, 3 Feb; 1091/11, 4 Feb; 104733 1011/1, 13 Feb; 104778 1091/64, 1 Mar; 104779 1091/69, 16 Mar; FO 800/698, 27 May; 104784 1091/232, 16 June; ISA, 2595/8, 5 Feb, 26 May; 2582/6, 6 Feb 1953; 2382/8, 13 Jan 1954.
75. Israel's protests at the loss of life went unanswered. Z.Shalom, *David Ben-Gurion, the State of Israel and the Arab-World, 1949–1956* (Sede-Boker, 1995), 157–86; ISA 2428/4, Jan; 2474/13, 12 March 1953; B.Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 1949–1956* (Oxford, 1993) 249–70; U.Milstein, *Parachute Corps; Ha'aretz*, 8 Feb 1999.
76. He told Byroade that: 'Israel's policy of retaliation was self-defeating', NA, RG 59, LM, Roll 6, 20 June 1952; FO 371/104784 1091/249, 16 June; 104777 1091/14, 3 Feb; 104778 1091/14, 7 Feb; ISA, 4373/15, 2 Feb, 2949/2, 11 June; 2310/2, 12 June; 2413/9, 16 June 1953.

77. BGA, BGD, 11 Aug. Churchill sent a personal letter to him regarding the clashes in Jerusalem, FO 808/800, 27 Apr. Ben-Gurion's reply was swift: 'I deeply appreciated your personal interest which has always meant so much to us', ISA, 2595/8, 23 May. Comay denied involvement in the attacks on the nights between 20–24 May as Churchill had alleged, 2602/2, 25 May; 2412/29, 2 Jul; 2582/7, 6 Jul; 2582/2; 2582/52; 2582/353; 2582/357, 11, 12 Aug 1953.
78. *DFPI, 1953, Companion* viii, xxvi-xxxiv. Interview with Shlomo Baum, deputy commander '101'. Ben-Gurion's official explanation was that frustrated angry inhabitants of Jewish border towns had lost patience and had taken matters into their own hands. He steadfastly denied that Israel was responsible for the raid and that all army units were at their post.
79. *DFPI 1953, Companion* viii. Ben-Gurion's extended leaves of absence from July to his official resignation in Oct 1953 hindered defence policy. ISA, 2319/4, 14 Oct; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 34–47; 2382/22, 23 Oct. There is no reference to Qibya in Dayan's autobiography.
80. FO 371/104790 1091/429; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary* (Tel-Aviv, 1978) 10 Nov 1953, 34–47, 131–7; J.Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, (London, 1957), 309–15; 33–66; *Ha'aretz*, 'As long as he doesn't hurt us again', 16 Feb 2001; B.Morris, The Israeli Press.
81. FO 371 104926 1192/45, 16 Oct, 104790/430, 19 Oct 1953.
82. FO 371/104789 1091/394, 15 Oct; 1091/81; 1091/409; FO 800/698; ISA, 2429/5; 40/14, 16 Oct; 104759 1072/54, 23 Oct; 1072/84, 28 Oct 1953.
83. FO 371/104789 1091/386, 20 Oct; 104818 1013/44, 21 Oct; 104790 1091/242; 27 Oct 1953.
84. FO 371/104789 1091/131, 16 Oct; 104758 1072/20, 19 Oct; 104758 1072/35, 22 Oct; 104759 1072/8, 28 Oct; 1072/87, 30 Oct; 1072/84, 1072/80, 2 Nov; 104760 1072/106, 10 Nov, 104926 1192/45, 12 Nov, 1953; N.Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy*, Vol. 3, 230–56.
85. FO 371/104759 1072/87, 31 Oct; 1072/72, 13 Nov; 104760 1072/119, 13 Nov; 1072/109, 13, 14 Nov 1953.
86. *Hansard*, 518, 2425, 26 Oct 1953.
87. FO 371/104759 1072/54, 27 Oct 1953.
88. FO 371/104275 1024/2, 1 Dec 1953. It was ironic that the 101st session of the UNSC condemned the 101 unit attack on Qibya.
89. CAB 128/26 CC 62, 29 Oct; ISA, 319/5, 5 Nov; CAB 128/26 CC (53) 67, 17 Nov; CAB 128/64 CC (53) 318; CC (53) 323, 13 Nov; CC (53) 68, 19 Nov 1953. Eden warned his colleagues of the serious consequences: 'If we do not accept their invitation... we may let slip a valuable chance of building up our position there and getting a foot in the door as regards the eventual redeployment of larger forces'. CAB 129/65 C (54) 17 (revise), 20 Jan; 128/27 CC 4, 21 Jan; ISA, 2412/29, 9 Feb 1954. Churchill 'regretted these tendencies because first and foremost as a Zionist, because the State of Israel needs a good reputation more than anything else'.
90. *The Times*, 9, 10 Nov; UNSCR 3140, 23 Nov; FO 371/104761 1072/156, 23 Nov; 1072/157, 23, 24 Nov; 1072/166, 25, 26 Nov; 104763 1072/215, 3 Dec; 104762 1072/196; 1072/197, 3 Dec; 104764 1072/236; 1072/252, 16 Dec 1953; 111068 1071/12, 8, 23, 26 Jan; 1071/15, 26 Jan. Lloyd told Elath that: 'The Israeli Government had been rather too clever over this matter [and] had taken advantage of a technical right but, by doing so, they had made it extremely difficult to set up a conference in which Jordan would willingly and usefully take part', 111068 1971/31, 19 Mar 1954.
91. FO 371/104751 1053/10, 24 Nov; 104790 1091/444, 3 Nov; UNSCR 3139, Rev. 2, *UN Yearbook*, 223–4; BGA, Chron. Docs, 22 Nov; *DFPI, 1953*, 439–40; 111057 1011/1, 8 Dec; *The Times*, 17, 27 Nov 1953; 111065 1051/12, 30 Sep 1954.
92. FO 371/104778 1091/60, 7 Feb; 1091/61, 12 Feb; 1091/64, 1, 16 Mar; 111066 1052/1, 4 Jan; 111072 1072/102, 10 June 1954.
93. ISA, 41/13, 29 Oct; 2949/14, 15 Oct; 2319/4, 19, 20 Oct 1953. Interviews with Eliahu Elath and Gershon Avner. They depicted their revulsion over the issue.

94. ISA, 36/14, Ben-Gurion's broadcast noted that, 'we have carried out a searching investigation and it is clear beyond a doubt that not a single army unit was absent from its base on the night of the attack on Qibya'. 2440/1, 21 Oct; 41/13, 3 Nov; 41/14, 3 Nov; FO 371/104759 1072/72, 3 Nov; ISA, Cabinet minutes, 18, 19 Oct; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 18–19 Oct, BGA, BGD, 22 Oct 1953; G.Sheffer, *Sharett*, 684–90.
95. ISA, 2486/1, 20 Oct; 2602/3, 12 Nov; 41/13, 17 Nov; ISA, 2377/1, 23 Nov; 2319/5, 24 Nov; 2419/1, 27 Nov; *Dvrei Haknesset*, XV, 30 Nov, 268–323; 2319/5, 4 Dec; 41/12, 9 Dec 1953. It coincided with a Grant-in-Aid conference where Israel's request was expected to be approved. Eban's tribulations were well documented. After addressing the UNSC on 12 Nov, he remarked to a colleague, 'Not a bad speech for someone who does not believe a word he said'. Interviews with Eliahu Elath, Shneur Levenberg, Lords Sieff and Shinwell.
96. ISA, 2428/10, 20 Dec; 2474/13, 31 Dec 1953; 2595/5, 4 Jan 1954; 2448/15, 5 June 1955; G.Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett*, 734–5.
97. FO 371/111078 1073/59, 26 Mar; 111110 1091/69, 9 Apr 1954; *Dvrei HaKnesset*, 24 Mar, 1954. Israel withdrew from the MAC after the chairman abstained from casting his vote to find Jordan guilty. B.Morris, *Israel's Border Wars*, 308–14.
98. B.Morris, *Israel's Border Wars*, 313.
99. FO 371/111069 1072/28, 21, 30 Mar; 111099, 31 Mar; 111102, 1 June; 111101 1091/87, 14, 25 May, 1 June; 111104 1091/168, 27 Jul; 111079 1072/181, 31 Aug; ISA, 2530/5, 21 Sep; 2582/8, 6 Oct; 40/14, 1, 10 Nov; 6, 9 Dec; 2412/29, [date unclear]; 2448/15, 12 Apr, 30 Aug; G.Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett*, 727; B. Morris, *Israel's Border Wars*, 314–18, 400–4. Sharett's diary of 18 March confirms Evans' conclusion; CAB 128/27 CC (54) 22, 24 Mar; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 27 Mar 1954.
100. FO 371/ 111070 1072/43, 1, 6 Apr; 111069 1072/34, 30 Mar; 1072/35, 2 Apr; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 4 Apr 1954; G.Sheffer, *Sharett*, 728–9; U.Bialer, *Between East and West: Israel's foreign Policy Orientation, 1948–1956*, 262–3.
101. CAB 128/27, CC (54) 23, 21 Mar; FO 371/111069 1072/35, 30 Mar; 111070 1072/43, 31 Mar, 1 Apr; 111070, 1072/68, 13, 23 Apr; Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 20 Apr; 1954. He noted that he received a letter from Churchill, yet there was no other mention of it in his diary. Interview with Elath.
102. FO 371/111072 1072/141, 30 June; ISA, 2412/29, 20 June; 111114 1105/2, 26 Jul; 111073 1072/163, 3 Aug; 40/14, 7 Dec. The MFA was confused by contradictory information emanating from the FO and the BMEO regarding refugees and resettlement on the West Bank, 40/14, 20 Dec. *The Times*, 22 June; CAB 131/14, D 36 22 Oct 1954. Interview with Mordechai Gazit. S.Cohen, 'A Still Stranger Aspect of Suez, British Operational Plans to Attack Israel, 1955–56', *International History Review*, 10.3, 1988.
103. DEFE 5/57, COS (55) 76, 12 Apr; 5/58, 87, 14 Apr 1955; Tenenbaum, 'British Policy towards Israel', 91.
104. FO 371/111065 1051/6, 2 June 1954.
105. ISA, 2582/8, 40/14, 9 Jul 1954.
106. FO 371/111065 1051/6; ISA, 2412/29, 12 May 1954.
107. DEFE 4/79, JP (55) 88 (Final), 16 Sep 1955.
108. The COS devised plans to intensify flights of bombers over the border to serve as an effective deterrent against an Israeli attack. DEFE 4/75 COS (54) 92, 27 Aug; 5/55, COS 341, 29 Oct; 4/80, COS 92, 8 Nov; ISA, 40/14, 7 Dec 1954; FO 371/115840 1072/76, JP (55) 31 (Final) 20 Apr; 115840 1072/76, COS 91, 22 Apr; 4/76, COS 28, Confidential Annex, 22 Apr; 4/77, JP (55) 40 (Final) 25 May; 5/58, COS 125; 5/58, COS 126, 3 June; 4/77, COS 40, 7 June; 4/78, COS 63; 115846 1072/235, COS minute, 4 Aug; 5/60, COS 187, 5 Aug; 4/80, COS 91, 1 Nov; 4/82, COS 100, 22 Dec; 4/81, COS 103, 13 Dec 1955.
109. FO 371/111066 1052/4, 8 Dec 1953.
110. FO 371/111065 1051/2, 26 Jan 1954.



111. E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries, 1951–1954* (London, 1986), 147, 211, 213, 251, 255, 297; 307, 309, 317.
112. FO 371/111070 1072/56, 12, 13 Apr 1954; *FRUS*, 1955–57, XIV, 1561–4. Oren claims that the starting point was in April 1953. Although evidence suggests a growing awareness to adopt a different approach to solving disputes in the region, no formal arrangements were made and thus, one is obliged to conclude that the 'roots' of Alpha cannot be compared to when it was 'devised', M.Oren, *The Origins of the Second Arab-Israel War* (London, 1992), 111.
113. FO 371/115825 1051/8, 8 March 1954.
114. S.Shamir, 'The Collapse of Project Alpha', in R.Louis and R.Owen (eds), *Suez 1956* (Oxford, 1981), 84; FO 371/115864 1076/5, 6, 12, 15 Jan 1955. Alpha's success depended on absolute secrecy. All files pertaining to it were classified 'Top Secret' with restricted distribution. MI6 worked on cover stories for the press regarding the increase in FO personnel visits to Washington. Such was the secrecy, that Eban dismissed a well-informed source of Anglo-US planning to extract territorial concessions from Israel referring to the 'State Department's more realistic approach'. 111095 1079/10, 17, 21, 30 Dec; *FRUS*, 1952–54, IX, 1561–4, 1720–38; ISA, 2595/22; 40/14, 22 Dec 1954; N.Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy*, 4, 33.
115. FO 371/111095–115887; Z.Shalom, 'Gideon Raphael's Summary and Lessons from the Negotiations with Egypt, 1949–1955', *Iyunim*, 10, 2000, 753–3; I. Asia, *The Core of the Conflict: The Struggle for the Negev, 1947–1956* (Jerusalem/Sede-Boker, 1984), 141–54; M.Oren, 'Secret Egypt-Israel Peace Initiatives Prior to the Suez Campaign', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 26.3, 1990; 'The Diplomatic Struggle for the Negev, 1946–1956; The Origins of the Second Arab-Israel War', *Studies in Zionism*, 10.2, 1989; R.Louis, 'Britain at the Crossroads in Palestine, 1952–1954', *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, 12.3, 1990; W.Eveland, *Ropes of Sand: America's Failure in the Middle East* (New York, 1980), 125–31, 155–8.
116. ISA, 40/14, 7 Dec 1954; FO 371/115838 1072/30, 13 Apr 1955.
117. FO 371/104754 1071/45, 29 Apr 1953. An anecdote: When I presented him with documents on Alpha containing his signature he remarked, 'Oh, I suppose I'll have to admit it now'. I gave him a postcard of my Negev campus. If the FO plan had succeeded, I would not be there today.
118. The meetings were held in Athens and Brussels. Arab diplomats included, Mahmud Azmi, Abdel-Hamid Ghaleb and Salah Gohar. FO 371/121709–10; ISA, 2454/2, 24600/4, 10–19 Jan 1956; *FRUS*, 1952–54, IX, 1240–1, 1624–5; Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 459–66; M.Heikel, *The Suez Files*, (Cairo, 1986), 613–927; 2453/20, 21; G.Rafael, *Destination Peace* (London, 1981); D.Wishart, 'The Breakdown of the Johnston Negotiations over the Jordan Waters', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 26.4, 1990, 536–46; E.Kafkafi, 'Ben-Gurion, Sharett and the Johnston Plan', *Studies in Zionism*, 13.2, 1992, 165–86.
119. CZA, C2/1603, 22 Nov; ISA, 2453/21, 15 Dec; Avner wrote of Crossman: 'I have no doubt that of all our British friends he is perhaps the most dedicated and involved in supporting our cause than anyone else', ISA, 2590/14, 2, 8 Dec 1954; M.Brecher, *Decisions*, 173–224; G.Jackson, *Middle East Mission* (New York, 1983); M.Orbach, *New Outlook*, Oct 1974, 6–23, Nov-Dec 1974, 8–21, Jan 1975, 12–20; A.Shlaim, *The Iron Wall* (London, 1999), 119–20.
120. FO 371/111069 1072/34, 30 Mar; 111070 1072/51, 13 Apr; 1072/74, 27 Apr; 111070 1072/58, 14 Apr, 7 May; 111104 1091/168, 27 Jul; *FRUS*, 1952–54, IX, 17–19 Apr, 1519–27; 21 Aug 1954, 1619.
121. FO 371/111065 1051/12, 20 Sep; 111074 1072/202, 21 Sep; 1072/167; 1072/209, 22 Sep; ISA, 2530/5, 21 Sep; *The Times*, 22 Sep 1954.
122. FO 371/111075 1072/223, 2 Oct; 111095 1079/2, 5 Nov; 111076 1076/267, 8 Nov; 111107 1091/259, 19 Nov; 115865 1076/19, 7 Dec; *FRUS*, 1952–54, IX, 5, 17, 22, Nov, 1684–1700;

- ISA, 40/17, 9 Nov; 2592/22, 26 Nov; 2400/14, 28–30 Dec 1954. Elath fared no better with Eden, 2582/8, 10 Feb 1955. E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 11 Oct, 238; N.Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser: Anglo-American Relations and the Problem of Nationalism, 1955–1959*, (Basingstoke, 1996), 59.
123. FO 371/111095 1079/10, 15 Dec 1954.
124. FO 371/111119 1195, 17 May 1954.
125. In his meeting on 29 Nov, Eytan sardonically summarized Shuckburgh's attitude: 'If only Israel would allow herself to be thoroughly levantised, all would be well with her neighbours', ISA, 40/17, 29 Nov 1954. He argued that Ben-Gurion's spectre was undermining Sharett and other moderates.
126. *FRUS*, 1955–57, XIV, 32; FO 371/111095 1079/10, 15 Dec 1954. The action required inducing Israel to give fuller rights to UN patrols; the speeding up of compensation to the refugees; no further concessions to either side; utilizing British strength on the ground to establish confidence in the US and Britain, and; increased propaganda of the Communist threat. The Arabs for their part would be required to 'accept' Israel's existence as a fact. Shuckburgh told Russell that it was no use trying for a formal peace when 'the chances were only 51–49 in favour of achieving a settlement short of formal peace'. Suggestions included a settlement on territory, refugees, Jordan waters, economic aspects, political guarantees, and supply of arms.
127. FO 371/115864 1076/9, 22 Jan 1955. Shuckburgh praised Russell's ability to understand Israel's viewpoint without being overawed by it, E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 246. *FRUS*, 1955–57, XIV, 24–32.
128. Lloyd told Elath that if 'a practical solution be obtained over water it might pave the way for political cooperation', 111065 1051/9, 30 June; *FRUS*, 1952–54, IX, 21 Dec 1954, 1733; FO 371/115837 1072/5, 17 Jan. Britain's policy was still limited to 'nibbling at the edges'. The working parties switched location to Washington to reduce detection and attention. The US was anxious that resumption of Johnston's mission on the Jordan waters planned from 23 Jan–26 Feb would not be compromised. Shuckburgh was unreceptive because if the mission were a success, an important element of Alpha would have been achieved. Johnston was not told about Alpha until the end of June out of concern for his success in the intricate ongoing negotiations. *FRUS*, 1955–57, XIV, 9–19, 114; 115864 1076/1, 3 Jan; 1076/3, 11 Jan 1955.
129. In an attempt to cajole Israel, which had 'an almost mystical attachment to the Negev' to agree to a land link, Britain needed 'to find a concession which will attract the Arabs and yet be small enough not to make Israel reject it out of hand', FO 371/115866 1076/34, 26 Feb; *FRUS*, 1955–57, XIV, 49–51; CAB 129/75, CP (55) 35, 11 June 1955.
130. N.Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy*, 4, 92; *FRUS*, 1955–57, XIV, 35–42.
131. *FRUS*, 1955–57, XIV, 35–42; FO 371/115864 1076/10, 2 Feb 1955.
132. FO 371/115837 1072/12, 8 Feb; 115865 1076/25, 18 Feb; 115866 1076/34, 26 Feb; 115838 1072/30, 22 Mar 1955.
133. Nasser had earlier told Eden of the need to acquire 'some part of the Southern Negev, which would provide direct land connections between Egypt and Transjordan. How far "up" the Negev the proposed frontier would be drawn, would be a matter for bargaining.' FO 371/115865 1076/22, 15 Feb; 115866 1076/28, 1955; M.Heikel, *The Suez Files*, 60–3; D.Carlton, *Anthony Eden* (London, 1981), 23–5.
134. *FRUS*, 1955–57, XIV, 82. The raid was inextricably linked to the arms deal, which triggered the escalation to Suez. Nasser's claim was unquestioned and replicated in envoys' reports. B.Morris, *Israel's Border Wars*, 334; N.Aridan, 'The British Reaction to the Gaza Raid of 1955', Golani (ed) *The Gaza Raid and the Israeli Policy of Retaliation during the Fifties*, 47–57; Byroade reported that, 'all this bodes ill for operation Alpha' and the effect of the raid was at the very least, the readjusting of the timetable.
135. FO 371/115865 1051/8, 8, 25 Mar 1955.
136. ISA, 2592/22; 40/17, 29 Nov 1954.

137. ISA, 2403/12, 6 Dec 1954.
138. FO 371/115866 1076/41, 10–11 Mar; 1076/45, 16 Mar; 1076/44, 21 Mar; ISA, 2582/8, 22 Mar; E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 252; FRUS, XIV, 95–107, 111, 1955, XIV.
139. *Jewish Observer*, 25 March 1955.
140. E.Elath, *Through the Mist of Time*, 67.
141. FO 371/115838 1072/26, 21 Mar; 1072/36, 5 Apr; 115867 1076/56, 6 Apr; 115839 1072/65, 13 Apr, 255, 1955; E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 254; E.Elath, *Through the Mist of Time*, 67–8.
142. *The Times*; ISA, 2412/27, 5 Apr; 2457/2, 7 Apr; 2412/28, 12 Apr; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 12–14 Apr 1955; G.Sheffer, *Sharett*, 798.
143. FO 371/115867 1076/72, 26 Apr; E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 18 Apr 1955, 256, 259.
144. FO 371/115839 1072/65, 3 May. Ben-Gurion was 'an aging man with certain ideas fixed firmly in his mind, and that he is unreceptive to new thoughts and unready to adapt himself to new situations'.
145. ISA, 2412/28, 4 May; FO 371/115868 1076/86, 6, 17 May; 115869 1076/93, 6, 7 May; 2593/21, 8, 9, 11 May; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 10 May 1955.
146. E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 259; FO 371/115868 1076/86, 21 May. Ben-Gurion, (alluding to Britain) told a rally that: 'If you want to take the Negev-you will have to fight. Our army will confront yours', *The Sunday Times*, 3 May; ISA, 2583/5, 4 Jul 1955.
147. ISA, 2593/21, 11 May; FO 371/115840 1072/99, 13 May; E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 23 May, 259; 115869 1076/110, 4 June, 2595/8, 2 June; 115844, 1072/171, 14 June 1955.
148. PREM 11/945; CAB 128 C (55) 96, 6 Apr; C (55) 35, 11 June; CAB 128/29 CM (55) 15, 16 June; FO 371/115877 1076/256, 17 Sep 1955. Arthur minuted on 18 Oct that 'even if Alpha is dead'. This is the first reference to the demise of Alpha in British documents. There was no mention as to how world Jewry would react.
149. FO 371/115869 1076/102, 28, 31 May, 1 June; 115869, 123, 25 June; 115874 1076/181; 115875, 198; 115870, 121; 115871, 131, 134; 115872, 147; 115873, 157–8, 167–8, 175; PREM 11/945, 24–25 Aug; ISA, 2412/29, 29 May; 2412/27, 22 June 1955. Interview with Elath.
150. CAB 128/29, CM (55) 23, 14 Jul; 129/76, CP (55) 87, 22 Jul; FRUS, 1955–57, XIV, 298–9, 310–18; FO 371/115871 1076/144; 115872 1076/147; 115873 1076/158; E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 15 Jul; 115873 1076/5154, 26–28 Jul. Nicholls asked whether the Negev would be specifically mentioned but did not receive a reply, 115873, 1076/165, 1 Aug 1955.
151. FO 371/115871 1076/131, 8, 11 Jul 1955; E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 266–7.
152. PREM 11/945, 20, 23 Aug; FO 371/115874 1076/181, 24 Aug; 115875 1076/200, 25 Aug; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 24 Aug; M.Oren, *The Origins of the Second Arab-Israel War* (London, 1992), 116; B.Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 1949–1956: Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation, and the Countdown to the Suez War* (Oxford, 1993), 334–54; E.Burns, *Between Arab and Israel* (Beirut, 1962) 345–51; E.Jackson, *Middle East Mission*, 40–56; D.Carlton, *Anthony Eden*, 382.
153. *The Times*, 29 Aug; Department of State Bulletin, 5 Sep, 378–80; FO 371/115875 1076/197; 203, 27 Aug. France initially supported the statement but was later reluctant to support further British initiatives. 115875 1076/203, 26 Aug; 209, 28 Aug; 115887, 513, 13 Dec 1955.
154. M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 24 Aug; FO 371/115877, 1076/250, 28 Aug; ISA, 2446/3; 2455/4, 29 Aug 1955; N.Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy*, Vol. 4, 141–8. Eban equated it to the eve of the 1939 White Paper.
155. FO 371/115875, 1076/217, 29 Aug; ISA, 2466/3, 2595/5, 9, 13 Sep; 115877 1076/283, 9, 13 Sep; CAB 129/77, CP (55) 127, 20 Sep 1955.

156. FO 371/115877 1076/254, 31 Aug; 115876 1076/243, 1 Sep; 1076/244, 2 Sep; CAB 128/129 30, 5 Sep 1955.
157. FO 371/115879 1076/314, 19 Sep; 1076/306, 20 Sep; 1076/309–10, 20–21 Sep; 113674 1194/78, 27 Sep; *The Times*, 12 Oct; ISA, 2589/7, 12 Oct 1955.
158. FO 371/115879 1076/314, 17, 19 Sep 1955.
159. E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 278–9, 285–6; FO 371/115880 1076/331, 4 Nov; 1076/334, 7 Nov 1955.
160. FO 371/115878 1076/294, 15 Sep; ISA, 2595/5, 15 Sep; 115880 1076/335; 115469 1023/23; 2592/23, 9 Nov; 1076/332, 11 Nov; 115882 1076/400, 12 Nov; 115881 1076/360, 14 Nov; 115884 1076/454, 22 Nov; *The Times*, 10 Nov 1955.
161. *Dvrei Haknesset*, 25, 15 Nov; FO 371/115881 1076/383; D.Ben-Gurion, *The Sinai Campaign* (Tel-Aviv, 1958), 33–6. He told the *Observer* that ‘Britain and the Soviet Union were pursuing policies in the Middle East, both of which might lead to the destruction of Israel’, 115885 1076/468, 28 Nov; ISA, 2403/12, 10 Nov; 2446/4, 21 Nov; 2446/4, 11 Nov; the *Observer*, 13 Nov; *The Times*, 14 Nov 1955.
162. FO 800/680, 15 Nov; *FRUS*, 1955–57, XIV, 6 Dec 1955, 828. There is no mention of this in Sharett’s diary.
163. *Hansard*, 15 Nov; *The Times*, 16 Nov; FO 371/115883 1076/420; 1076/433; 1076/435, 21 Nov, 2 Dec 1955.
164. FO 371/115469 1023/14, 11 Nov; 115880 1076/342; 115884 1076/463; ISA, 2455/7; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 21 Nov; 115883 1076/434, ISA, 2457/1; 2594/6, 24 Nov 1955. E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 302.
165. E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 309; H.Eshed, *Reuven Shiloah*, 221; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 6 Dec; ISA, 2456/3, 12 Dec; 1955.
166. *New York Times*, 26 Nov; FO 371/115884 1076/457, 28 Nov; 115883 1076/457, 2 Dec; 115886 1076/500, 14 Dec; 115887 1076/533, 19 Dec; 1076/532; 1076/529, 22 Dec; 18 Dec 1955. There is no record of Bevin having mentioned this in his minutes of the conversation. Although Beeley was present, he was unable to keep a record owing to an attack of dysentery, [interview with Sir Harold Beeley]. In Ben-Gurion’s record, there was no mention of the Negev bases in the resume he sent to Bevin, 61762 1489; 1670; 1721/158, 1947. There was a memo, which Kollek sent him regarding the importance of the Negev; 121708 1071/23, 4 Jan 1956. Beeley’s comments on the memo suggest that British bases in the Negev were discussed. Ben-Gurion’s Address at Chatham House, 121708 1071/23, 26 Jan 1956. References to NZ resurfaced in 1951.
167. FO 371/115885 1076/486, 30 Nov; *The Times*, 29, 30 Nov, 3 Dec; 115886 1076/493, 2 Dec; 1076/494, 5 Dec 1955. Arnon had written on the West’s attitude to infiltration on 16 Sep 1954. E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 307; E.Elath, *Through the Mist of Time*, 67.
168. ISA, 2412/28, 6 Dec; 2455/8; *FRUS*, 1955–57, XIV, 823–5; FO 371/115887 1076/527, 23 Dec; 121708 1071/3, 29 Dec; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 8 Dec; *The Times*, 21 Dec 1955.
169. FO 371/115886 1076/488, 29 Nov 1955; 121709 1071/31, 17 Feb 1956.
170. *FRUS*, 1955–57, XIX, 843; FO 371/115884 1076/482, 5 Dec; 115887 1076/408, 17 Dec; 1076/522, 23, 30 Dec; ISA, 2456/3, 27 Dec; 121722 1073/7, 29 Dec 1955; 121271 1075/5, 1075/11, 1075/16, 1075/35, 1075/39, 29 Jan, 1 Feb; 2595/5, 4 Jan; 2454/2, 18 Jan; 118861 1053, 22 Feb 1956; E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 350–1.
171. FO 371/115886 1076/501, 8, 15 Dec; ISA, 2594/6, 12 Dec; 121708 1071/8, 31 Dec 1955.
172. FO 371/121722 1071/31, 17 Feb 1956. There is no mention of this document in Sheffer’s biography. Z.Shalom, ‘British document sheds light on the reasons for failure of ‘Alpha’...’ *Iyunim Btkumat Israel*, 3, 582–6. The Italian protocol is unavailable. If the report was accurate, it is understandable why Britain and the US were still willing to pursue Alpha. It also gave credence to Ben-Gurion’s suspicions of Sharett.

173. *FRUS*, 1955–57, XV, 1–337; ISA, 48/2, 12 Jan; 121722 1073/11, 15, 19 Jan; 121733 1073/47, 16 Jan; FO 371/121708 1071/22; 121722 1073/18; 121723 1073/29, 1073/45, 1073/46; 121724 1073/53, 1073/55, 1073/63; 121725 1073/94, Jan 1956. E.Shuckburgh regarded Banks as a 'bumptious charlatan if ever there was one, who fancies himself as a potent intermediary in Middle East affairs', E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 273; N.Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy*, 4, 220–52; I.Asia, *The Core of Conflict*, 206–12; M.Oren, *The Origins of the Second Arab-Israel War: Egypt, Israel and the Great Powers, 1952–1956* (London 1992), 121–8.
174. A.Eban, *Personal Witness*, 246; FO 371/121725 1071/19.
175. FO 371/121738, 1071/49, 24 Apr 1956.
176. N.Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy*, 4, 276. Interview with Sir Harold Beeley.
177. ISA, 40/14, 6 Oct 1953; FO 371/115874 1076/196, 19 Aug 1955; 121711 1071/127, 9 Nov 1956; E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 249, 291; G. Rafael, *Destination Peace*, 51; M.Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza* (London, 1994), 109–12. Interview with Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh.
178. FO 371/121693 1015/17, 20 June 1956.
179. Shamir curtly concludes: 'In the year of the Suez Crisis scoring points was the "name of the game" and each player's purpose was to expose the other's intransigence. It seems that in the end Israel won this game,' S.Shamir, *The Collapse of Project Alpha*, 100.

## Adversaries and reluctant partners: The Sinai-Suez Crisis 1956–1957, a retrospective

### PROVIDING THE CONTEXT: THE PARALLEL SEARCH FOR A CASUS BELLI

#### *The Gaza raid and the Baghdad Pact*

In March 1956, Shuckburgh noted in his diary that Nasser was a ‘second Mussolini [who] must be got rid of. It is either him or us, don’t forget that... Ministers led by the PM [are] mad keen to land British troops somewhere to show that we are still alive and kicking, poor England we are in total disarray’.<sup>1</sup> Shuckburgh thought ‘it would be nice, if Israel could attack and defeat Egypt, and do it quick before any of us (including the Russians) had time to save Nasser: then we could fall upon them as aggressors’. The second part of the scenario was realized but it was unthinkable to him that Britain and Israel, the unlikeliest of partners, would collaborate in a war against Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

On the night of 28 February–1 March 1955, there was an unprecedented escalation on the Israeli-Egyptian border when Israel launched a retaliatory raid, Operation *Black Arrow*, near the town of Gaza, which took an unexpected turn when IDF and Egyptian troops engaged in a battle resulting in the loss of 38 Egyptians and 8 Israelis.

Nasser argued that the raid led him to conclude an arms deal with the Czechs. This claim was regurgitated by diplomats and historians as the expedient turning point to a ‘second round’.<sup>3</sup> The facts suggest otherwise.<sup>4</sup> Mohamed Heikel, Nasser’s closest confidant, pointed to the sense of shock and frustration, which could be alleviated by arms deliveries but did not mention the raid as the turning point in Nasser’s decision to conclude the arms deal.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps he was cognizant of the negotiations with the Czechs before the raid.

The Foreign Office claimed that the raid postponed the launching of Alpha indefinitely. Nicholls did not doubt Nasser’s claim: ‘it is no flight of fancy to suggest that Israel by her attack on Gaza was herself responsible for Egypt’s decision to accept Communist arms’. Unless Israel was willing to detach itself ‘from Old Testament methods to which, many of his [Sharett’s] colleagues are prone’ there was little hope of a respite in reprisals. Eden believed the ‘incident was the most serious of its kind since the signing of the armistice in 1949’. Nutting remonstrated that, ‘Israel must be aware of the dangers she was running in staging this type of wanton attack’.<sup>6</sup>

*The Times* commented: ‘What is certain is that Western hopes of better relations between Israel and Egypt have been shattered’. Not all the press agreed. The *Spectator* maintained that ‘the ultimate guilt is largely Egypt’s, which is by her own will at war

with Israel; and to protest that one of the battles in the war has gone against her through Israel “cheating” is naïve’.<sup>7</sup>

The raid came after a week of British diplomatic failures. On 20 February, Nasser and Eden’s first and only meeting in Cairo was a fiasco; on 21 February, Ben-Gurion became Minister of Defence and the following day accurate leaks on Alpha surfaced. On 24 February, the Baghdad Pact was announced.<sup>8</sup>

It was more expedient for Britain to blame Israel for the impasse than to rebuff Nasser because the salient factor in his decision to seek Soviet arms lay in the imprudent announcement of the Iraqi-Turkish alliance, the kernel of the Baghdad Pact. This was far more deleterious to his prestige because it sponsored Iraq, Egypt’s rival for the hegemony of the Arab world.<sup>9</sup>

Sharet regarded *Black Arrow* as his ‘greatest failure as prime minister’. He ‘had never been enthusiastic about retaliation, doubting its political and military efficacy either as a punishment or deterrence’. He castigated his fellow Israelis’ lust for revenge under the guise of security-based reprisals: ‘I do not believe that the reprisal will help in any way in terms of [improving] security’. He was forced to notify the US that the incident did not signify a change in policy and asked himself ‘who will believe we are telling the truth?’.<sup>10</sup>

Britain looked in trepidation at the map of the Middle East with no sure staging post between Cyprus and Aden or Bahrain. Nasser’s decision not to renew the lease on Britain’s base instigated a frantic search for alternative bases and regional alliances. It faced a clear choice: to leave Middle East security arrangements to develop on a local initiative, anticipating that no government would dare turn to the Soviets, or to join the Iraqi-Turkish alliance, and by so doing, impart strength to the Pact necessary to attract Arab support.

Mindful of the humiliating negotiations with Egypt, Eden was determined to reach new terms with Iraq, for the Treaty under which the British held bases in Iraq was to expire in 1957. As the architect of the Arab League, he had to choose between two halves, Iraq aligned with Turkey and Egypt on the other. He preferred Iraq and initiated the Turco-Iraqi strategic treaty and the expanded Baghdad Pact, which Britain joined on 4 April, the day before he became Prime Minister. The compromise enabled Britain to retain its bases and satisfy Iraqi nationalism. The US declined to join, but gave its approval.<sup>11</sup>

Eden ignored Arab nationalism, Dulles’s sympathy for Arab aspirations and Egypt’s pivotal role in Middle East policy, and in so doing, adversely affected the balance of power and stability in the region. Nasser vilified Nuri Said for his ‘bare-faced treason’ and ‘act of treachery against Arabism far more damaging to the Arab League than anything done by Israel or Zionism’.<sup>12</sup> He was reminded that:

Egypt is the centre of the Arab world, whether we like it or not. Attempts to isolate her will probably not succeed. Nasser has the makings of a hero to Arab youth: but Nuri belongs to a time that is past, whatever the admiration for his statesmanship. Iraq is perhaps the Arab country of the future, but the present is with Egypt.

Israel was concerned about proposed revisions to the Anglo-Iraqi treaty because of the absence of an armistice agreement and bi-lateral arrangements between Israel and Iraq. Elath sought Shuckburgh's interpretation of an ambiguous clause in the proposed agreement, 'an attack from within the area' but received no reply. Israel failed to prevent the inclusion of an Arab state in the 'northern tier' regional defence system. Furthermore, Turkey, which maintained diplomatic relations with it, was now committed to help effect all 'UN resolutions concerning Palestine'.

It was difficult for Israel to accept Eden's claim that it was in Israel's interests. Instability in the region was likely to increase, given the number of British agreements with Arab states, and the absence of an agreement with Israel. Elath observed that following its support for the Baghdad Pact, 'England is no longer the supreme arbiter determining the policies of the West in the Middle East'.<sup>13</sup>

#### THE CZECH-EGYPTIAN ARMS DEAL AND ISRAEL'S PLANS FOR A 'SECOND ROUND'

In May 1955, Shuckburgh told an Israeli delegation that Britain was prepared to supply Egypt with any upgraded weapons it requested.<sup>14</sup> Nasser preferred US arms but the US refused to compete with the \$200m of sophisticated Soviet weaponry. Egypt was unwilling to guarantee that US arms would not be used for aggressive purposes as was required by US legislation.

Egypt conducted advanced negotiations with the Soviets in November 1954, and in June 1955, an agreement was concluded. On 19 September, formal verification reached the US and Britain who publicly announced the deal on 27 September. Having initially accused Israel of pushing Nasser into the arms of the Soviets, Nicholls blamed Israel's irresponsible reprisal raids for having 'destroyed Israel's chance of acquiring counter-balancing supplies of arms from the West'. However, the deal was reached before the Gaza raid.<sup>15</sup>

In June, Lloyd told Peres that owing to the deteriorating border tension, Israel's request for arms could not be considered. Peres recalled:

I came to get his approval for the purchase of Centurion tanks and destroyers. I thought our chances were good for getting the tanks and slim for getting the warships; for you cannot hide a destroyer, they are there for the world (and our enemies) to see and their appearance is quite impressive...., To my surprise, Mr Lloyd informed me that there would be no objection to our requiring destroyers, but under no circumstances could we get tanks. When I asked him why, he gave me this frank answer: 'the kingdom of Jordan has no seacoast; you can therefore have the destroyers. But Jordan shares a land frontier with you, so you can't have the tanks'.

Shuckburgh told him that it was Israel's 'fault for pursuing a policy of reprisals against Nasser, putting his army in a humiliating position with their boastings'.<sup>16</sup> The Foreign Office considered 'whether there is anything we might do to hurt Egypt in the political and economic fields'. Macmillan recommended that the 'the right policy now, was to



recognise the existence of the arms contract' but hinted at further action because 'Nasser's government had no legitimate basis'. This legitimacy was not questioned when Alpha's progress depended upon his cooperation.<sup>17</sup> Shuckburgh countered that it was no use:

Attempting to browbeat Egypt into renouncing the arms deal with Czechoslovakia. We have no means of pressure unless we occupy the country and overthrow Nasser... Only his elimination could prevent it and we have no means of bringing this about. Nor do we have any alternative leader likely to be more amenable...the concept of 'balance' no longer has any reality and will have to disappear from our vocabulary.<sup>18</sup>

Kirkpatrick argued that 'Israel should be urged in her own interests to try to reach a settlement with the Arab States. If she is to survive, she cannot afford to pursue a policy which estranges the Arabs from the West'. Britain refused to consider that 'the security of a nation of one and a half million Jews surrounded by forty million Arabs could be assured through arms'.<sup>19</sup>

From the outset, Britain's arms policy was not contingent on Israel's good behaviour, there were no rewards, only sanctions. When Israel complained that while Britain had agreed to supply Egypt with 64 Centurions, none were available to Israel, Macmillan explained that Britain was merely preserving the *status quo*. Two weeks later, arms to Israel were reduced to a trickle following the *Kinneret* raid and on 3 January 1956 all arms sales to Israel were suspended.<sup>20</sup>

British intelligence believed that a 'second round' was inevitable and convinced that Israel was planning a preventive war no later than the summer of 1956:

The most likely way for an Arab/Israel war to occur in the next six months would be a full-scale Israeli attack on Egypt as the culminating point of a series of reprisal raids of increasing intensity. The Israeli forces would wish to attack before the Egyptian forces become proficient in the use of the new arms from Czechoslovakia.<sup>21</sup>

The CIGS acknowledged that British forces would be 'too few in number to exercise a decisive influence on any land battle'.<sup>22</sup>

Golani argues that: 'Israel had been in search of a war before the onset of the Suez Crisis and without any connection to the Gaza Raid'. Sheffer maintains that as early as November 1953, Ben-Gurion revealed plans:

Based on the assumption that the 'second round' would occur in 1956 when, according to his evaluation, the Arab armies would be ready to launch a new war against Israel. This assessment dictated Ben-Gurion's future political and military actions, moves, and would contribute to the decision to launch a 'war of choice' in 1956.<sup>23</sup>

The Czech arms deal convinced Ben-Gurion that a preventive war could not be launched until Israel acquired arms to match those received by Egypt. He told *The Times* on 1

November 1955, that talk of a preventive war was ‘all nonsense’ but if reprisals proved ineffective, Israel ‘would break up’ the Egyptian army in the Gaza Strip and Sinai.<sup>24</sup> In March 1956, he declared that:

The Czech deal has transformed the situation in the Middle East. We have not one tank, which equals in power the British ‘Centurion’ supplied to Egypt or the Soviet ‘Stalin’, and which is worse, we have not one fighter plane equal in speed to the Russian MIG or one bomber in quality to the Soviet Ilyushin bomber.<sup>25</sup>

Ben-Gurion appealed to Eden that Egypt’s campaign of hatred and revenge towards Israel relentlessly pursued by its propaganda machine ‘impels, in the first instance, to seek elementary safety by reinforcing our defensive strength’. He was informed that the arms balance still favoured Israel.<sup>26</sup>

Mutual Franco-Israeli interests provided Israel with sophisticated arms following a relentless but unsuccessful attempt to procure US and British arms.<sup>27</sup> In February 1955, Nicholls complained that France was attempting to secure sufficient influence to justify the claim to a substantial, if not equal share with Britain and the US in the Middle East. When France forewarned of an impending Soviet-Egyptian arms deal it was rebuffed because the French were ‘incapable of such intelligence’.<sup>28</sup>

British diplomats believed that they were loved and respected in the Middle East and certain that the French were hated. Foreign Minister, Pineau, was derided for his ‘curious attempt to give the misleading impression that he is following a foreign policy different from that of his predecessors’.<sup>29</sup> Eden regarded the French as ‘Our enemies in [the] Mid East’ who were ‘irrationally obstructive’, ‘a nuisance’, ‘double-crossing’, and so ‘powerless in the Middle East now that any foothold has to be exploited’.

France was accused of indifference about the Communist threat and irresponsible: ‘anything we say to the French on Palestine is passed in a matter of hours to the Israelis’. French opposition to the Baghdad Pact was dismissed as ‘psychopathic’.<sup>30</sup> While cooperating with the US and Britain, France tried fastidiously not to be confused with them. It considered western defence arrangements an Anglo-Saxon affair and resented its ostracism. Its refusal to join MEDO and the Pact was motivated by its suspicion that Britain was buttressing Iraq to the detriment of Syria and the Lebanon, traditionally tied to France.

France’s signature on the Tripartite agreement did not limit the flow of arms to Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. In September 1953, the NEACC refused France’s request to supply Israel, but the French Defence Ministry overruled the Quai d’Orsay because of prior commitments to Israel.<sup>31</sup> Britain was enraged to learn from France in August 1954 that it had sold Israel six jet aircraft, because it gave Israel the qualitative edge to which the RAF had no rejoinder in the Middle East.<sup>32</sup> French arms sales to Israel were condemned as ‘reckless’ and contravening NEACC policy: ‘France could seriously disrupt our policy of balance and restriction by persisting in their present independent deliveries to Israel’. France was reprimanded for arming the ‘Israeli aggressors’ but refused to accept that only Israel was capable of aggression, or that it enjoyed a decisive military advantage, as Britain alleged.<sup>33</sup>

Britain was angered at Israel's decision that the aeronautical purchasing mission director was to reside in Paris and not in London as had his predecessor. Similarly, the decision to send an air attaché to Paris with accreditation to London was also considered a snub. At the secret Franco-Israeli Vermars conference on 26 June, France agreed to supply large quantities of heavy arms, which were necessary to close the gap with Egypt. Macmillan admitted that it was 'impossible to prevent the delivery of French Mystère aircraft to Israel'.<sup>34</sup> He considered denying the French landing rights in Cyprus for the transfer of the aircraft, but thought it imprudent, since France allowed Britain similar facilities in transferring aircraft to the Arabs.<sup>35</sup>

A marked change in Britain's policy towards French arms sales to Israel was discerned the day after the nationalization of the Canal. When France sought permission to supply Israel with six additional Mystère IVs, Eden wrote to Macmillan: 'Need we concern ourselves with the Egyptian, Jordanian, or Syrian reaction? I should have thought not. If Israel is stronger, that may make them behave better. They could hardly behave worse'.<sup>36</sup>

Canada continued to supply arms to Israel. When reminded of the importance of the Tripartite Declaration, Sharett responded that they would not set off an arms race because 'one is already in full swing', and that Israel 'never attached much importance to it and now even less at any time in the past'. Britain found itself in the paradoxical situation that Israel's contribution to its regional interests was made possible in part by the French and Canadians flouting the Tripartite agreement. In May 1956, Pearson, Canadian Minister for External Affairs, noted that: 'France had already sold Mystères to Israel. Both the United States and the United Kingdom were urging Canada to send 12f-86s but this could not be revealed'.<sup>37</sup>

#### 'THE CRUX OF THE MATTER IS WHETHER WE STAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST, OR DO WE GO?'

In April, Nicholls encapsulated Britain's dilemma with Israel: 'One of our difficulties seems to me that we can neither offer Israel a defence treaty nor convince her we intend to honour our obligations under the Tripartite Declaration, whether she is the victim of aggression or the aggressor'.<sup>38</sup>

Britain's position in the Middle East became untenable in October, when she prepared itself for two simultaneous scenarios, which called for declaring war on Israel, in accordance with its treaty with Jordan, and concomitant, to signing an agreement with Israel, to attack Egypt. Hours before the outbreak of the Suez-Sinai war, the CIGS were inundated with enquiries from top commanders as to who constituted the enemy in the battle plan.

Britain was pledged to protect the integrity of Jordan under the Anglo-Transjordanian pact of 1946, the Treaty of Alliance in 1948, and in the Tripartite Declaration of 1950. The treaty signed in March 1948 specifically obliged Britain to provide immediate and direct military assistance if Jordan were 'attacked'. This term was open to interpretation, as attested in Israel's reprisal raids on Jordan.<sup>39</sup> The desire to protect Jordan became paramount following the withdrawal from its Suez bases.<sup>40</sup> Lloyd argued that: 'Our credit in the Middle East will be irrevocably lost if there is an Israeli attack on an Arab country and HM Government takes no early visible action to help the Arabs'.<sup>41</sup>

Israel understood that Britain's guarantee to defend Jordan in the event of an Israeli attack was irresolute.<sup>42</sup> In the event of aggression against Jordan, political and economic measures were to be taken against Israel. Glubb suggested bombarding Israel and occupying the Negev. It remained 'inexpedient for the Government to base their policy on the assumption that friendly relations between this country and Jordan could not be restored, but, 'the plan to fulfil our commitment under the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty (*Cordage*) remained valid'.<sup>43</sup> Stuart Cohen overemphasizes Britain's 'unparalleled' plans to attack Israel in the event of an attack on Jordan. Such plans entailed 'the rapid neutralisation of the Israeli Air Force, an essential prerequisite to the reinforcement of our land forces in Jordan'.<sup>44</sup> However, these plans were standard procedure where British interests were threatened.

The CIGS, Sir Gerald Templer, visited Jordan in December 1955, in an attempt to bolster relations and to encourage Jordan to join the Baghdad Pact. His mission ended in failure, in part because Britain underestimated the strength of anti-western/British sentiment, which followed a severe economic crisis. Nicholls played down the violence as of 'no great importance'. The US Embassy in Amman however, reported that: The decline in the British position is significantly important and largely unperceived by them until now. Never so great, as popularly supposed, their power atrophied from lack of exercise'. *The Times* regretted that 'the manner in which the British Government sought to press Jordan to join the Baghdad Pact leaves something to be desired'.<sup>45</sup>

Lloyd's visit to Israel in early March (part of his tour of the Middle East) was indicative of the low ebb in Anglo-Israeli relations. It was hoped that his visit might lessen 'Israel's sense of isolation and strengthen the hands of the moderates'. However, the visit was marred by his refusal to meet with Ben-Gurion and Sharett in Jerusalem. After receiving Israeli assurances that his meetings in Jerusalem would not be construed as British *de facto* recognition of Israeli sovereignty, Lloyd relented. The first visit of a British Foreign Secretary to Israel did not pave the way for improved bilateral relations and suspicions and animosity persisted.<sup>46</sup>

During Lloyd's tour, the long sequence of British setbacks culminated with Glubb's humiliating dismissal and expulsion on 1 March.<sup>47</sup> The announcement coincided with his hosting of Nasser and Foreign Minister, Fawzi. His removal added to the failures of Alpha and Gamma and the escalation of border violence.

Waterhouse, of the Suez Group, viewed the dismissal as a 'studied affront' and a 'calculated insult,' and that Britain was now 'marching with dreadful certainty' to a third world war over oil. Amery believed that: 'We are now close to final disaster the Government has the chance, as they have the duty, to confound their critics and promote a rescue operation to save Britain from disaster in the Middle East'. *The Times* encapsulated much, which had transpired and was to unfold:

The dismissal of Glubb Pasha is not an isolated event but in the whole context of diminishing British influence in the Middle East... Britain ought to have been able to establish a new relationship of friendship with all these states. [This was prevented by complications]. *The first, and by far the most important, is the existence of Israel. The injection of this alien polity into an Arab world fermenting with nascent nationalism...*[My italics].<sup>48</sup>

*The Times* was inundated with letters opposing the editorial. Amery wrote:

The existence of Israel has no doubt aggravated the tension but to believe that all would be well if that problem were to be solved is to believe that you can cure the measles by dabbing the spots with powder. The crux of the matter is whether we stay in the Middle East, or do we go?<sup>49</sup>

The Cabinet commended Glubb for having ‘exercised a great influence for restraint in Jordan against the creation of incidents which might lead to a war with Israel’.



Figure 6.1 Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett, British Foreign Minister, Selwyn Lloyd and Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion during Lloyd's 21-hour visit to Israel, March 1955

*Source:* Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office

## PROVIDING THE SCENARIO FOR A CASUS BELLI

In March 1956, the US and Britain coordinated efforts to isolate Nasser. Following Eden's directives, Young, Deputy Director of MI6, told Eveland of the CIA that 'Britain is now prepared to fight its last battle, no matter what the cost, we will win [and] we have to face the possibility that Nasser might close the canal'. The US and Britain agreed on punitive measures against Egypt for its rampant anti-western policy and on 19 July, they announced that the western offer to finance the Aswan Dam was withdrawn.<sup>50</sup>

Nasser's response was swift. With double effrontery on 26 July, while Eden was hosting Egypt's arch-rivals, Iraq's Feisal and Nuri Said at 10 Downing Street, he received news that Nasser had nationalized the Anglo-French Suez Canal Company.<sup>51</sup> As the guests were leaving, Nuri Said, pointed to the bust of Disraeli, and remarked, 'that is the old Jew who got you into all this trouble,' Eden was not amused.<sup>52</sup> Rhodes James, Eden's biographer, wrote that 'no one remotely anticipated what Nasser's response would be'. This is contradicted by an official memo, which warned him in June that if Britain were to renege on its offer to finance the dam, the Canal would be a likely target for retaliation. Ben-Gurion recalled that Abel Thomas, French Cabinet Director of the Ministry of Defence, knew of Nasser's plans since February.<sup>53</sup>

Advisers warned Eden that there were only six weeks of oil reserves.<sup>54</sup> He told the Cabinet on 27 July that: 'any failure on the part of the Western powers to take the necessary steps to regain control over the canal would have consequences for the economic life of the Western Powers and for their standing and influence in the Middle East'. Lord Mountbatten, First Sea Lord, was urged to take 'resolute action'. As the last Viceroy to India, he asked: 'Can the British way of life, which you and I believe must be preserved at all costs, survive if we use our young men to repudiate one of its basic principles, the right to self-determination as permanent occupation troops?'<sup>55</sup>

Eden informed Eisenhower that military action against Nasser was likely. Although the US was not averse to undermining Nasser, and 'completely accepted the impossibility of leaving control of the Suez Canal in the hands of a man like Nasser', it opposed military intervention. Pineau thought that Britain was wasting its time talking to the US, which would never authorize 'any action likely to provoke the fall of Nasser, at any rate until after the American elections, which could mean that we should never be able to take any action at all'.<sup>56</sup>

He told his colleagues that: 'while our ultimate purpose was to place the Canal under international control, our immediate purpose was to bring about the downfall of the present Egyptian Government'. While agreeing to attend a maritime conference, Eden established a parliamentary *ad hoc* Egypt Committee consisting of six ministers sympathetic to military action who directed policy.<sup>57</sup>

It would be mistaken to portray Eden's militant stance as at odds with public opinion. With the exception of the *Guardian*, the press called for strong and decisive action against Nasser. The appeasers of 1938 had a chance to be redeemed; 'the British government will be fully justified in taking retaliatory action', declared the *Liberal News Chronicle* and the Labour *Daily Herald*, called for 'no more Hitlers!'<sup>58</sup>

These views were articulated by Colonial Secretary Lennox-Boyd, who wrote to Eden that, 'if Nasser wins or even appears to win we might as well as a government (and indeed a country) go out of business'. Macmillan stressed that Britain 'could not afford to lose this game. It was a question not only of honour, but survival'. On 24 August he proposed to Eden that following Nasser's downfall and the installing of a pro-western Egyptian government, Britain's aim:

Should try to appear not as a reactionary power returning to the old days of 'colonisation' but as a progressive force trying to bring about a permanent and constructive settlement. We must not be like Louis 18th returning in 1815 to a dull restoration, but rather like Napoleon breaking through the Alps towards the unification of Italy.<sup>59</sup>

In early October, Eden's obsession in removing Nasser and reopening the Canal was demonstrated by his purge of all dissenting voices from policy decision-making, which was done in liaison with MI6.<sup>60</sup> Consequently, information reaching the political and military sectors was filtered to such a degree that there was little discussion on the wisdom of policy. An example was Macmillan's selective reports of his conversation with Eisenhower, which led Eden to dismiss the US's warnings against military intervention.<sup>61</sup>

Eden ignored the advice of Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice, Senior Legal Advisor to the Foreign Office who warned that although Nasser may have acted illegally, it did not justify Britain taking the law into its own hands.

Even if some 'incident' can be provoked, I am afraid that matters will by then have gone so far that no-one will credit its genuineness and it will appear mere pretext. Our preparations will have been such that we shall not be able to escape the charge of having launched a deliberate and prepared attack.<sup>62</sup>

Monckton, a dissenter, officially resigned on 18 October but had ceased to play an active part two weeks before. Beeley warned of dire consequences if military action was used but was rebuffed by Kirkpatrick and his memos to Eden were intercepted. Shuckburgh, who initially supported Eden, was also silenced after questioning policy decisions. His input conveniently evaporated when he was appointed in September to a high-ranking position in NATO.<sup>63</sup> Jebb was emphatic that 'we and the French...should agree to use our influence to keep Israel out of the dispute'. Unswervingly loyal, he was excluded from the secret talks. He protested the 'novel arrangement for diplomatic business of the highest importance to be conducted by the Principals without any official being present'. He learned about the talks with Israel when Lloyd 'let slip the fact of collusion' on 26 October.<sup>64</sup>

## THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE: ISRAEL, FROM PARIAH TO COLLABORATOR

Britain did not ‘wish to see the Israel problem injected into the Suez Canal problem’ and requested from Israel to refrain from intervening in the dispute.<sup>65</sup> Britain and France wanted decisive action against Nasser. Unable to concoct a clear plan, they were in a quandary as to whether it could be done with or without Israel. The CIGS reluctantly accepted that in the absence of a suitable base, Britain was unable to launch an attack against Egypt.

Ironically, only Israel could extricate Eden from the morass he had plunged into.<sup>66</sup> Ben-Gurion noted that the: ‘Western powers are furious... but I am afraid that they will not do anything. France will not dare act alone; Eden is not a man of action; Washington will avoid any reaction’.<sup>67</sup>

Foreign Minister Meir informed the Cabinet on 29 July that opponents from within Eden’s party had made overtures to Israel by demanding that the government permit arms sales to Israel immediately.<sup>68</sup> She recommended that Israel wait discretely on the side, content to allow others to play the main role of defender of regional security.<sup>69</sup> On 5 August, Anglo-Israeli cooperation was suggested, but Ben-Gurion and Meir were unwilling to discuss the matter. Shlaim offers no evidence to substantiate his claim that Ben-Gurion ‘put out feelers to the CIA about joint action to topple Nasser’.<sup>70</sup>

By 1 August, Israel learned from the French of plans to take joint military action with Britain against Egypt. Ben-Gurion instructed that France receive all the assistance it required. The press quoted Gilbert, that if France and Britain sent a military expedition to Israel it would join in the war. The Foreign Office feared that the ‘French insistence on trying to drag Israel into the Suez Canal dispute may still land us in trouble’.<sup>71</sup>

Macmillan was keen to enlist Israel’s support and asked the Cabinet to consider cooperation with Israel in defeating Nasser, the only drawback, however, was the price. On 3 August, he told the Egypt Committee that if Israel intervened simultaneously or after the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt and, having been compelled to withdraw to the positions it took before the attack, it would be possible for Britain to implement Alpha by ‘pushing the Israelis even further back than their existing frontiers, or indeed from arranging some transfer of territory’. His proposal was rejected. Although ‘there were obvious military advantages if Israel were to engage a part of the Egyptian forces it would rule out any cooperation with Egypt following an operation’. The Committee stressed that ‘it is essential that our quarrel with Nasser should be isolated as completely as possible from the quarrel of Israel and the Arab states’.<sup>72</sup> An enthusiastic Churchill invited himself to a meeting with Eden and offered his services, which were rejected because military intervention with Israel was out of the question.<sup>73</sup>

Elath’s request for Canberra bombers and Centurions was rejected despite hints that Israel would make them available to Britain should they be needed against Egypt.<sup>74</sup> Israel’s request for training facilities at Malta for two destroyers was also rejected; ‘if anything there is even more reason not to show ourselves cooperating with the Israelis now than before’. All Israeli gestures were turned down, including Rutenberg’s proposal for a consortium of British and Israeli industrial interests. The animosity was epitomized



by Elath's official protest at explicit anti-Israel statements broadcast by British Cyprus radio.<sup>75</sup>

Israel was not invited to the London Maritime Conferences in August and September on the feeble grounds that Nasser should not be provided with an excuse for not attending.<sup>76</sup> Britain suspected that Israel would sabotage any agreement, which did not guarantee freedom of navigation for Israeli shipping.<sup>77</sup> The Conferences ended in failure with open disagreement between the French and the British about the Baghdad Pact and arms to Israel.

The failure of the Second London SCUA, 19–21 September, to approve of immediate military action against Nasser strengthened Anglo-French resolve to resort to military action. Without British agreement to Israel's military involvement, a *casus belli* for regaining the Suez Canal was unachievable. This was at variance with standing orders for the invasion of Egypt, 'it is politically most important that there should be no association or appearance of association between your forces and Israeli forces'. Mountbatten pointed to a nightmarish scenario:

That if during Musketeer Israel attacked Jordan and the United States went to Jordan's aid against Israel, then we and the United States would be fighting on opposite sides. We should be the willing allies of Israel and our forces in Jordan would be hostages to fortune.<sup>78</sup>

France acted as matchmaker between Britain and Israel in seeking a solution to the impasse. The French invited Israel to secret talks at St Germain between 30 September and 1 October. Despite French goodwill, Ben-Gurion derided British motives and instructed Meir to inform Mollet that:

We will not participate in this action unless England agrees to our participation and guarantees that Jordan and Iraq will not open a second front against us. We are willing to promise the British that we will not touch Jordan if she does not interfere, but if we are attacked, we shall respond vigorously, without British intervention and without any complaints against us.

He also requested that 'our participation does not harm us in America'. Meir asked whether, in the event of Israeli-French joint military action, and in the likely event that Britain would not cooperate, what would Britain's response be to an Israeli invasion of the Sinai, and its policy towards Arab countries' opposition. Pineau had no doubt that Britain would 'view the operation positively'.<sup>79</sup>

Eden did little to prevent the escalation of border tension, which became a daily occurrence in the summer of 1956.<sup>80</sup> He urged the US to impress upon Israel that 'reprisal raids merely weakened' its hand and that 'not a single Israeli life would be saved by retaliatory raids. The result would be that more Israelis would be killed'.<sup>81</sup> However, although Eden knew of Iraq's intention to send troops to Jordan, he did nothing to deter it.<sup>82</sup> Israel regarded the entry of Iraqi troops as a serious breach of the *status quo*. Dayan confessed to the feeling that:

Save for the Almighty, only the British are capable of complicating affairs to such a degree. At the very moment when they are preparing to topple Nasser, who is the common enemy of theirs and Israel's, they insist on getting the Iraqi Army into Jordan... I doubt whether anyone can explain why Britain does not hold off her Iraqi plan until after the Suez Campaign.<sup>83</sup>

On 1 October in reaffirming its commitment to Jordan, Britain, was not certain what its resources would be, although it was pledged to honour Treaty's proviso to give 'all available air and naval support'. Jordan was advised that in the event of it purchasing Soviet arms, Britain would not be obliged to abide by her treaty.<sup>84</sup>

On 11 October, in retaliation for the brutal murder of two Israeli farmers, Israel launched an unprecedented large-scale reprisal on the Jordanian town of Qalqilya in a new phase from reprisals to a fully-fledged war. Forty-eight Jordanians and 18 Israelis died in the assault. Britain and Israel were close to military confrontation, Eden recalled that 'our aircraft were on the point of going up' to answer the call, the IDF retreated at daybreak and averted a clash.<sup>85</sup>

Hussein demanded that Britain honour its commitments under the Treaty. Hours before the raid, Duke in Amman had warned of an imminent Israeli attack and that 'failure on our part to respond to the Jordanian request would make it difficult for us to justify the continued presence of the RAF in Jordan in face of hostile criticism'. On 11 October, Kirkpatrick warned Elath against the use of 'modern' weapons in attacks on Jordan. The following day he was re-summoned and given notice that: 'The Israel government must realise the impudence of using weapons which the Jordan Government do not possess so creating a situation in which we were called on to fulfil our obligations under the Treaty'. It was cited in refusing to sell arms because they could be used against Jordan.<sup>86</sup> Kirkpatrick argued that 'the hub of the problem is to convince the Jordanians that they cannot have their cake and eat it':

It is manifestly not in our interest or in Jordan's interest to treat the raids as an act of war and intervene. The situation is that Jordan by an act of her own violation has dismissed Glubb, diminished the efficiency of the Arab Legion and expressed a wish to dispense with British assistance on land. There is no prospect of any help from Egypt. In consequence, Israel can at any moment destroy the Jordan army and occupy the country.

Duke charged that 'our promises are worthless'.<sup>87</sup>

The British position became incongruous even before the Qalqilya raid when the CIGS concluded that they should 'bring home forcibly to Ministers that we could either go to the aid of Jordan against Israel with sea and air power, or we can launch *Musketeer*, we could not do both'. *The Times* commented:

For a time over the weekend, it looked as though the crisis with Egypt would be submerged by another Middle Eastern crisis between Israel and her neighbours. The British Government is left with the unhappy and inevitable stance of facing in two ways.<sup>88</sup>

Military planning against Israel was unconnected to plans to attack Egypt. On 20 October, *Cordage* (winter plan) was still the order of preference over *Musketeer* because ‘anything might happen in the Middle East and we are trying to be prepared for all contingencies’. Nevertheless, Eden was confident there was little likelihood of ‘our fighting Israel on behalf of Jordan’.<sup>89</sup> On 26 October, commanders were notified that *Musketeer* was to be implemented. Although *Cordage* faded away it was not officially replaced.

#### PRODUCING THE SCENARIO: BRITAIN’S ‘ONE-NIGHT STAND’ WITH ISRAEL AT SÈVRES

Without French assistance, cajoling and above all, patience, Britain and Israel would not have been prepared to collaborate.<sup>90</sup>

On 14 October, Eden learned from Albert Gazier, Minister for Social Affairs and General Challe of the General Staff, of the scenario whereby Israel would invade Egypt and Britain and France would intervene to separate the combatants. Challe was surprised that Eden had not thought of it before.<sup>91</sup> In their meeting on 16 October, Eden, Lloyd, Mollet and Pineau agreed to use an Israeli attack on Egypt as a pretext to capture the Canal. *Musketeer* was to be an Anglo-French initiative unconnected with Israel’s attack on Egypt’s positions in the Sinai.

Ben-Gurion was informed of Eden’s promise that Britain would not attack Israel. Although Eden wanted Israel to act without any written guarantee, he later relented. Ben-Gurion’s reaction was not what the French had expected. He reviewed the proposal as the height of British hypocrisy aimed at harming Israel rather than at eliminating Nasser: The British plot, I imagine is to get us involved with Nasser and bring about the occupation of Jordan by Iraq’. He resented Eden’s arrogance in performing an assignment with their connivance without acknowledging directly or indirectly, Israel as a collaborator let alone ally. This was reflected in Eden’s report to the Cabinet ‘on the results of the conversations with the French’.<sup>92</sup>

The Foreign Office’s reaction to the Anglo-French talks reveals how little it was informed of Israel’s involvement. Nicholls was in consternation at Gilbert’s suggestion that an aggressive Israeli policy was helpful to the West, which led to the conclusion of his superiors that it ‘would seem to confirm that the French have been encouraging the Israelis to be aggressive and intransigent’.<sup>93</sup>

Mountbatten was anxious to launch *Musketeer* immediately because Israel was expected to launch a preliminary attack on Egypt, or on Egypt and Jordan.<sup>94</sup> Shuckburgh’s scenario, envisaged seven months earlier, was now about to unfold. Ben-Gurion was ambivalent about accepting an invitation to attend a conference of representatives from Britain, France and Israel. No one would be fooled by the British charade and unless there was a written undertaking, Israel would not participate in any covert or overt operation. However, he did not want to rebuff the French, and by so doing would jeopardize all that had been achieved, and would certainly have disastrous ramifications for Israel.

On 21 October, Elath presented the Cabinet with a synopsis of Anglo-Israeli relations, which he described at their lowest ebb. He pointed to three positive developments; rising

public criticism in favour of action to regain the Canal, Britain's humiliation in Jordan and the exposure of Arab ingratitude and untrustworthiness. However, Elath underestimated Eden's resolve to confront Nasser at the cost of Britain's 'special relationship' with the US. The Cabinet was not informed about the secret talks to be conducted the following day.

It was unclear whether Lloyd would participate in the secret conference held at a private villa located in Sèvres, a Paris suburb. The French hoped that he would not attend, however, on the evening of 22 October he arrived, discomfited by the high-level Israeli and French delegation and departed that night without concluding an agreement, leaving the inexperienced Dean and Logan to 'represent' HMG. Dayan recalled that he was 'antagonistic' exuding 'distaste for the place, the company and the topic'. Bar-On writes that he was 'cynical', 'snobbish', 'cold' and gave 'the impression of something stinking hanging permanently under his nose'. Lloyd's encounter with Ben-Gurion was fraught with mutual suspicion. Lloyd noted that he was 'rather aggressive' and implied 'that the Israelis had no reason to believe in anything that a British Minister says'. Ben-Gurion felt like a subordinate.<sup>95</sup>

By all definitions, Sèvres was a joint military pact. Dean signed the Sèvres Protocol on behalf of Britain on 24 October in which Israel committed itself to launch an offensive against Egypt on 29 October. Britain's signature provided irrefutable proof of its duplicity. The protocol required Eden's signature and Ben-Gurion demanded that Britain affirm it would not come to the aid of Jordan should it or Iraq attack Israel.<sup>96</sup> While ratifying Ben-Gurion's demands, Eden omitted any reference to British participation in the talks, or to Israel in his authorization of the agreed plan in his letter to Mollet.<sup>97</sup>

The charade and deception continued when a furious Eden learned that the protocol was signed on behalf of Britain and ordered Logan and Dean back to Paris to retrieve the document, by which time, Ben-Gurion had left for Israel. France refused to destroy its copy for fear of leaving Israel with the only remaining copy. Heath, then Conservative Party Chief Whip, testifies that:

Brook said, 'he's [Eden] told me to destroy all the relevant documents. I must go and get it done'. With that Sir Norman, loyal as always to his prime minister, went off to destroy the Sèvres Protocol and other documents which confirmed the collusion.<sup>98</sup>

Aware of the immense responsibility Ben-Gurion was willing to shoulder international derision. It was 'a unique opportunity, when two not insignificant powers try to eliminate Nasser, so that we need not stand alone against him as he gains power and conquers all the Arab lands'.<sup>99</sup> The extent to which he was amenable to the French was remarkable given his initial negotiating guiding principles and the final protocol. Israel acquiesced to the 'British scenario', albeit containing certain revisions. Israel was to launch an attack, be branded the aggressor, and deny all connection with the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt. In keeping with his promise to Eden, for the rest of his life Ben-Gurion denied the 'collusion'.

Eden's naïve belief that Sèvres could be kept secret remains a conundrum given the translucent Anglo-French-Israeli collaboration against Egypt. It was so secret that British pilots did not know until the last moment which country they were to bomb.<sup>100</sup> The

Cabinet minutes were a masterpiece of deception. Ministers maintained 'collective responsibility' without knowing what they were responsible for. The Egypt Committee was conveniently not notified because it did not meet between 17 October and 1 November.

On 23 October, Lloyd 'updated' the Cabinet on his talks at Sèvres. A confidential annex was attached to the meeting, of which there were two versions; the first was received by all but close confidants and the second was recorded but not distributed. The missing lines in what were otherwise identical documents read: 'From secret conversations, which had been held in Paris with representatives of the Israeli Government, [included in the annex] it now appeared that the Israelis would not alone launch a full-scale attack against Egypt'.<sup>101</sup> The following day the Cabinet was presented with two versions of confidential annexes, as they had been the day before. Omitted from the first annex was the sentence: 'It was now known, however, that, if such an operation were launched, [Musketeer] Israel would make a full-scale attack against Egypt'.<sup>102</sup> It was not informed that Dean and Logan had been sent back to Paris to retrieve the incriminating evidence.

The next day, the Cabinet learned of Challe's scenario, which was disguised as a 'contingency plan'. *Musketeer* (revise) replaced *Cordage* and in the event of an outbreak of hostilities near the canal, British forces would join the French in 'calling on the belligerents to stop hostilities and withdraw their forces to a distance of ten miles from the Canal'.<sup>103</sup> Monckton expressed grave reservations of aligning 'with the Jews' but with all the obvious flaws in *Musketeer*, no one was able to pinpoint the precise problem, offer a viable alternative, or be prepared to resign.<sup>104</sup>

### ISRAEL'S OPERATION KADESH

Ben-Gurion first informed his fellow *Mapai* Cabinet ministers about *Kadesh* on Friday 26, followed by other factions. The day before *Kadesh*, the other ministers were notified and asked to endorse what the rest of the Cabinet had already approved. Although they requested clarifications, they raised no objections. Conveniently, for Ben-Gurion, Sharett was on a goodwill mission to Asia.<sup>105</sup>

The public was prepared for an outbreak of hostilities on the Jordanian border. On 28 October, citing *fedayeen* activities and Iraqi troop movements in Jordan, Israel mobilized a number of reserve battalions. Eban and Eytan stated that Egypt's alliance with Syria amounted to a declaration of war.<sup>106</sup> Unaware that Ben-Gurion had Anglo-French support, Eisenhower wrote to him the same day that he was 'impelled to emphasise the dangers inherent to the present situation'. Ben-Gurion's reply, hours before launching *Kadesh* stated the dangers permeating from the Jordanian border.<sup>107</sup> On the eve of *Kadesh*, Ben-Gurion told Nicholls that there was no ill feeling towards Britain, but he could not ignore that Britain sided with the Arabs. Unaware of what was to unfold, Nicholls assured him that Britain and Israel 'had a special relationship'. Ben-Gurion quipped 'it was more special than Nicholls could fathom'.<sup>108</sup>

Israel's aims at the launching of *Kadesh* were outlined by Dayan on 24 October: to 'threaten' the Suez Canal, thus providing the pretext for the Anglo-French invasion, to seize the straits of Elath-Tiran to guarantee free Israeli navigation, protect the Negev

hinterland, conquer the Sinai Peninsula, and to crush the Egyptian Army. Israel launched *Kadesh* according to plan on 29 October. It marked the beginning of two separate operations, which overlapped in four distinct phases.<sup>109</sup>

Late on 30 October, the Anglo-French *appeal-cum-ultimatum* was handed to Egypt and Israel who were told to comply with a ceasefire and withdraw to positions ten miles from the Canal.<sup>110</sup> The decisive moment in testing Anglo-Israeli trust proved disastrous. Israel, facing reinforced Egyptian resistance, waited for the promised British strikes against enemy airfields, which were delayed 24 hours without informing it. Ben-Gurion considered recalling the IDF.<sup>111</sup>

Notwithstanding complaints, the Foreign Office surmised that the Israelis ‘were probably better informed than Sir J. Nicholls as to the Anglo-French effort’. He was perturbed by the lack of British response to Israel’s mobilization. The copy of the ultimatum arrived ‘so late that the Embassy in Tel-Aviv was asked by the MFA if it had received a copy, to the Embassy’s complete surprise’. He was not the only diplomat left out of the picture. Elath, having been recalled to Israel, left the unenviable task of holding the fort to Avner, a well-seasoned and able deputy. Avner received the ultimatum and frantically sent a coded message to Meir. Barely had he had time to send the catastrophic contents of the ultimatum when she rang him with the reply. He was ‘flabbergasted’ that she had read the message and, with amazing dexterity, prepared a reply within four minutes!<sup>112</sup>

Israel fulfilled its obligations and watched in bewilderment the bungling of the Anglo-French offensive. Israel informed France that it would be amenable to military collaboration, but Eden vehemently opposed any contact with Israel whatsoever. An embarrassed General Martin, was ordered to tell Israel that after performing its part, its services were no longer required, ‘the partnership with Israel and the allies is now liquidated’.<sup>113</sup>

‘PERFIDIOUS ALBION’: SNAFU (SITUATION NORMAL, ALL  
FOULED UP)

Eden was fanatical in covering up any trace of cooperation with Israel and even spurned offers to help search for missing British airmen.<sup>114</sup> On 1 November, he wrote to Mollet castigating France for providing Israel air cover, operating from Israeli airfields, and shelling Rafah (as was agreed at Sèvres):

Actions of this sort, which cannot possibly remain secret, are extremely embarrassing. I hope you will agree that in our common interest they must be discontinued. Nothing could do more harm to *our role as peacemakers* [my italics] than to be identified in this way with one of the two parties. I am sure you will share my view.<sup>115</sup>

RAF logbooks suggest that British planes had landed and taken off from Israeli air force bases.

It was no surprise to Israel that Britain carried on where it left off before 29 October. While Israel was mopping up in the Sinai, Britain called upon it to withdraw from all

territory immediately. The Foreign Office urged exploiting the situation to cajole Israel to return to the 1947 Partition Plan borders, which would redeem itself in the eyes of the international community. This ‘would at least help to puncture the accusations that we are in collusion with Israel’.<sup>116</sup>

Lloyd’s statement on Israel’s plans to attack Egypt was a mastery of deception. Asked whether prior agreement was reached with Israel before the attack on Egypt, he replied that it was not impracticable to have prior agreements for emergency contingencies but in this case, ‘it was quite wrong to state that Israel was incited to action by HMG. There was no prior agreement between us about it’.<sup>117</sup> The first part is open to interpretation, the second was a flagrant lie. He maintained that Britain did not incite Israel (the decision to attack was only made on 28 October); furthermore, the onus was on his accusers to prove that Israel would not have attacked Egypt anyway. He implied that ‘the explosion was inevitable’ and alluded to Israel’s record on reprisal raids, the Egyptian-Czech arms deal, and its readdressing of the military balance. He conveniently omitted the ‘combustion’ signed at Sèvres.

Eden informed the Cabinet that ‘suggestions that Her Majesty’s Government are concerting military action with Israel as well as France are entirely untrue’. The statement delivered after the ultimatum was technically correct, because Britain was not militarily aligned to Israel at that hour:

Little imagination is needed to visualise what the effect in other Arab countries controlling vital oil supplies would be if the Israelis penetrated far into Egypt. If we had not taken immediate action we may well ask our critics whom else do they think could take it?<sup>118</sup>

The confusion as to who was ally or enemy became evident following a bizarre report of a skirmish between Israel and Britain on 5 November. Nicholls reported with full confidence that a ‘British frigate had brought down an Israeli aircraft which interfered with her patrol’ and the following that ‘the Israelis intend to deny that British frigate brought down one of their aircraft. They say that none of their aircraft is missing and that aircraft shot down may have been an Egyptian one escaping to Saudi Arabia’.<sup>119</sup> Both countries were sensitive of a recurrence of the air clash in January 1949 and censored details about the incident. This may explain why Nicholls did not receive comment on his note the previous day.

The facts were somewhat different. On 3 November, the Egyptians brought down a British plane. On that day, convinced they had spotted an Egyptian frigate, four Israeli planes attacked HMS ‘Crane’, which was not severely damaged. The Admiralty made no press release. Israel admitted that it had lost a *Mystère* on 2 November but it was suggested that the plane shot down by HMS ‘Crane’ ‘might have been a MIG escaping from Egypt to Saudi Arabia’. The Foreign Office alleged, ‘that the only nationality that the aircraft could reasonably have been was Israeli’. The incident illustrated the precarious situation and the fickle nature of Anglo-Israeli relations.<sup>120</sup>

Within two days, Ben-Gurion received ominous telegrams from the two Superpowers. The Soviets implied the use of force if Israel did not comply with the UNSCR. Ben-Gurion noted that:

The whole world, except for France, is uniting against us to the end... But even France will not be able to support us to the end. We must generate foreign interests in our remaining in Sinai. There is a strategic aspect in this: if it is desired that the Canal will be international then it is desirable that we remain in Sinai... There is a possibility of settling refugees in Sinai.<sup>121</sup>

He was resigned to Israel's evacuation from the Sinai and Gaza but held out for some concession in a falling market. With less than two weeks to the US presidential elections and Eisenhower expected to be re-elected, time was not a helping factor for Israel. *Kadesh* also coincided with the Hungarian revolution and its violent suppression at the end of the Soviet tanks.<sup>122</sup>

Britain's military involvement was an unremitting failure. Eden's biographer, Rhodes James, blamed the military, which incessantly revised his plans, procrastinated and failed to take advantage of the momentum vital for *Musketeer's* success. However, he overlooked the constant threats of resignations if adjustments were not made. Gore-Booth, of the Foreign Office, reported on 2 November that he was 'deeply impressed with the dismay caused throughout our ranks by HMG's action. People are doing their duty but with a heavy heart and a feeling that, whatever our motives, we have terribly damaged our reputation'.<sup>123</sup>

Military historians accused the politicians of causing the failure, 'SNAFU', (situation normal, all fouled up).<sup>124</sup> A damning indictment of Eden was that the armed forces were neither consulted, or enjoyed his confidence. *Musketeer* was postponed five times, there were seven changes of plan, endless meetings, serious logistical problems and internal and external dissension. It took two weeks, using a commercial moving company, to cart 93 tanks to their embarkation port and material needed upon landing was inconveniently stowed at the bottom of the holds. There was the lack of equipment suited to the terrain. More devastating was that the armed forces were not fully prepared, there was a breakdown in communications, and each unit had its own timetable, with little faith in the other's capacity to carry out the mission. To confound the situation, they were expected to coordinate their plans with the French and the Israelis, neither of whom commanded Eden's confidence. The French were subordinated in every field of planning, the commanders were generally British and their deputies invariably French.

Mountbatten told Keightley, commander of the Anglo-French Force, who was 'apparently' somewhere in the Middle East, 'I don't envy your job in the next few days; this will be the hardest war to justify ever'.<sup>125</sup> This was the first time, since Hitler's *Blitzkrieg* on Poland, that a world power bombed another country without officially declaring war. Mountbatten requested to resign but was warned that it would be 'unconstitutional' for a military officer to resign upon 'receiving orders for a military operation'.

Anglo-American relations sank to a lower level than at any time since 1812. The gravity of the US response and its backing of UN sanctions were concealed from the Cabinet. Eden deceived his colleagues on 30 October when he told them that it was 'not certain that the US would be influenced' by his 'explanation to Eisenhower'. He presented US condemnation as a mere difference of opinion between allies.<sup>126</sup> Eisenhower insisted that he first learned of the outbreak of hostilities by 'reading about it



in the newspapers' however, he knew that a U-2 spy plane was above the Sinai on 29 October taking high-altitude photos of the allied activities. CIA Director, Allen Dulles admitted that 'intelligence was well alerted as to what Israel and then Britain and France were likely to do...in fact US intelligence had kept the government informed'. On 27 October, his deputy Amory was 'positive the Israelis will attack shortly after midnight tomorrow... I'm prepared to lay my job on the line that there's a war coming tomorrow or the day after'.<sup>127</sup>

Eisenhower was astonished to find Britain 'completely unsympathetic' to any action being taken against Israel and called for an immediate meeting of the UNSC to end the hostilities. This was the first instance in which Britain had exercised its veto at the UNSC. Had the US approached Britain the next day, it would have had no qualms in supporting US condemnation of Israel because the ultimatum had only a few more hours to run.<sup>128</sup>

On 4 November, the Cabinet discussed whether to continue operations, six expressed reservations and of the three defence ministers, only one voted for continuance. Eden cited Ben-Gurion's declaration that the 'armistice agreement with Egypt was dead' in justifying the invasion, which aimed at ensuring the West's oil supplies.<sup>129</sup> By the time the Anglo-French force finally landed at Port Said the next day *Musketeer* had failed to reach most of its objectives and casualties were heavy.<sup>130</sup> His insistence that 'we are not at war, we are in armed conflict' was tenuous and subjected to ridicule.<sup>131</sup>

The defining moment of the crisis came the next day when Macmillan, Eden's staunchest supporter, put the Cabinet out of its misery by stating that the moment had come to cut Britain's losses. The Cabinet agreed to the 'desirability' of a ceasefire in the light of Israel's acceptance.<sup>132</sup> On the 22 November, the Cabinet agreed to a token withdrawal, and on 30 November approved a total and unconditional withdrawal from Egypt to be completed by 22 December. A \$500m loan from the US Export-Import Bank was contingent on a complete evacuation.<sup>133</sup>

With the ceasefire, Britain 'had the task of saving what was to be saved from her botched endeavour'. Darling, Stockwell's Chief-of-Staff, wrote on 8 November: 'About a week ago, our aim was to secure a twenty-mile corridor astride the Canal; now we find ourselves halted in our tracks with a toehold in Egypt. Tactically, our position could hardly be worse.'<sup>134</sup> The evacuation was a humiliating exercise for France who found incredulous, Lloyd's emphatic statement on 3 December that 'we have stopped a small war and prevented a large one'. The Quai d'Orsay candidly admitted that the naïve belief in a Franco-English magic formula proved redundant.

Jebb was convinced that 'if the United States had backed us up, (even negatively) we could have successfully called the Soviet bluff'. Eban reported that the US were curious as to why 'the British ceased firing instead of carrying on for another day and finishing the conquest of the Canal'. Ben-Gurion asked himself, 'why had the Americans pushed them?'<sup>135</sup> Nicholls doubted whether the Franco-Israeli relationship was deep rooted: 'My French colleague (locally known as *Mystère Gilbert*) has described the present relationship as "love without marriage". Israel I am sure would change partners if she saw any chance of a liaison with the United Kingdom'. He reported reliable evidence of witnesses to collusion but proposed to refute their claims because there was no alibi, and inaccuracies regarding dates.<sup>136</sup>

On 20 December, Eden sealed his fate when he lied to Parliament:

I want to repeat to the House that Her Majesty's Government were engaged in some dishonourable conspiracy is completely untrue, I most emphatically deny it... want to say this on the question of fore-knowledge, and to say it quite bluntly to the House, that there was no foreknowledge that Israel would attack Egypt.<sup>137</sup>

He had misled his Cabinet colleagues, his devotees at the Foreign Office, his generals and his own party Perhaps most tragic of all, he had deceived himself. The most damning criticism came from Bevan two weeks earlier:

I am bound to say that I have not seen from the Prime Minister in the course of the last four or five months...any evidence of sagacity and skill that he should have acquired in so many years in the Foreign Office. There is something the matter with him.<sup>138</sup>

Israel's press berated Britain's incomprehensible and unjustifiable attitude. Conversely Ben-Gurion's *Knesset* speech on 7 November was notable for the lack of any reference to or criticism of Britain's behaviour and role. He reasoned that, 'our enemy now is Nasser, not England, we have scores to settle but we shall raise them at an appropriate time in the future'. Although he understood that Israel would have to return to the armistice borders of 1949, he was in no hurry to do so until Israel had exacted concessions.<sup>139</sup>

Ben-Gurion ridiculed the botched invasion, boasting that had the British and the French 'appointed our commander over this force, Nasser would have been destroyed in two days'. He castigated Eden who, 'sent the army but did not care to take any action... Eden, in fact cheated everybody as well as himself'. He learned that the US would not be prepared to 'make up with the English until Eden resigns...why isn't there any anger at Guy Mollet. Isn't he a major partner?'<sup>140</sup>

Nicholls described Ben-Gurion in a philosophical mood: 'It was no use crying over spilt milk; the Allies had not succeeded in upsetting Nasser and that was that'. Ben-Gurion was sceptical of Nicholls' assumption that Britain would not evacuate the Canal on 22 December until its demands were met.<sup>141</sup>

When Elath returned to his post on 1 November he stated that the objective had been 'the overthrow of Nasser and to ensure that they would not have to undertake another operation like the present one in six month's time'. He was inundated with demands from Israel's supporters for his reaction to contradictory reports regarding collusion. Anglo-Jewish leaders refused to accept his protestations that he knew nothing of the plot. In explaining subsequent events, he had no option but to lie.

I do not know what is really meant by the word 'collusion' and what this concept entails... Israel did not initiate the Sinai battle in order to provide Britain and France with an excuse for military action in the Suez Canal Zone. Rather the contrary is the case, we entered Sinai in spite of the possibility that this would provide the British and the French with that excuse... To the best of my knowledge not a single British or French bomber or fighter plane or naval craft went into action against the Canal Zone from Israel's territory or Israel's harbours.<sup>142</sup>

## BRITISH DOMESTIC CONSTRAINTS

Hennessy argues that: ‘Suez was the greatest professional trauma experienced by the British Civil Service before or since 1956. Yet, discipline held. Nobody flouted the rules or spilled the beans. In its way, it was a remarkable tribute to the ethos of the profession’.<sup>143</sup> The only resignations of protest came from Sir Edward Boyle, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Anthony Nutting, Foreign Office Minister and, William Clark, Eden’s Press Secretary.<sup>144</sup>

British military action was doomed without cast iron guarantees of an IMF loan or US support of sterling. In the absence of guarantees, Britain banked on a successful swift invasion, which would raise confidence in sterling, but the failure to carry out *Musketeer*, was perhaps the *coup de grace*.<sup>145</sup> Macmillan, Chancellor of the Exchequer, told the Cabinet on 2 November that £280m (\$100m) of Britain’s Gold Reserves had been lost within the previous week, which amounted to 12 per cent of Britain’s total Gold Reserves. He did not refer to the loss in dollar reserves that precipitated the crisis. Only an immediate ceasefire that night would secure US support for an International Monetary Fund loan to save sterling. If his suggestion was rejected, he could not be responsible for the Treasury and would resign.<sup>146</sup> Cynics noted that he was ‘first in’ as Minister of Defence in his vehement support of military action and ‘first out’ as Chancellor to demand accepting the ceasefire. For his services, he was awarded the next job in line, the premiership.<sup>147</sup>

The events leading to Macmillan’s decision are omitted in Diane Kunz’s narrative of the crisis. She erroneously argues that his belief that sterling was under pressure reflected a ‘sensational loss of nerve’.<sup>148</sup> She maintains there is no documentary evidence that there was a serious run on sterling in the first week of November and overlooks reserve movements and the weakness of sterling. Klug and Smith, in their pioneering study of Suez and sterling proved that support for sterling had lost credibility before the nationalization and its collapse had started much sooner than otherwise assumed.<sup>149</sup> Figures at the Bank of England suggest that the sterling exchange rate ceased to be credible months before and that the invasion reduced it further.<sup>150</sup>

A closer examination of events leading to the crisis by the IMF suggests that Macmillan had not lost his nerve. He may be faulted for ignoring a Treasury warning on 8 August, less than two weeks after nationalization of the Canal, of the need to protect sterling five days later when the Treasury and the Bank of England frantically warned him that: ‘Our reserves are still dangerously low and are certain to fall pretty sharply by the end of this month’.<sup>151</sup>

In his attempt to exonerate Macmillan by blaming inept Treasury officials, Horne fails to explain why he ignored their advice that sterling was overvalued and refused to accept devaluation. On 17 October he wrote, ‘we should regard a further devaluation of sterling as a disaster to be fought with every weapon at our disposal’. He was convinced that the US would back sterling, however there is no evidence that the US undertook any guarantees. The Bank of England continued to sell off dollar reserves to maintain the \$2.80 exchange rate.<sup>152</sup>

At the start of the Suez Crisis, there was a tide of genuine public support for Eden’s policies. The press provoked a predictable wave of jingoistic fervour in the right wing British press. On 31 October the *Economist’s* reporter prophetically wrote: ‘Britain seems

tonight to have embarked on a policy which should produce a local victory and ultimate defeat'. Although the *Daily Telegraph* welcomed Eden's initiative to separate the combatants and to prevent an escalation of hostilities, it would not condone Britain's support of Israel in deference to its traditional ties with the Arabs: 'it must be remembered that full-scale Arab-Israel war would unite the whole Arab world behind Egypt'.<sup>153</sup> The *Daily Express* supported Eden's interventionism but was unable to justify occupying the Canal on behalf of Egypt against Israeli aggression as set out in the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. Other proConservative newspapers urged the UN to act against both Israel and Egypt.<sup>154</sup>

Arguably for the first time, there was a countervailing popular wave of revulsion against imperialist aggression. The circulation of the *Manchester Guardian*, which was critical of Eden's policies and opposed the war, fell markedly during the first week of the crisis. Its editorials and reports from Richard Scott, the paper's diplomatic correspondent, were frequently quoted on BBC discussion programmes and aired to the troops overseas.<sup>155</sup> The centrist *Observer* published a dramatic editorial on 4 November, which was widely regarded as one of the 'great leaders' of the twentieth century. Having told its readers that Britain would not ignore international public opinion, it informed them:

We wish to make an apology. The events of the last week have proved us entirely wrong... We had not realised that our government was capable of such folly and crookedness... Sir Anthony Eden must go. His removal from the Premiership is scarcely less vital to the prospects of the country than was that of Mr Neville Chamberlain in May 1940.<sup>156</sup>

The editorial created a storm of protest, receiving 1,227 letters, of which, 866 were hostile.

*The Times*, quoted Churchill on his bewilderment at government policy: 'I hold it perfectly justifiable to deceive the enemy even if at the same time your own people are for a while misled. There is one thing, however, which you must never do, and that is to mislead your ally'. Attlee added his criticism from the Lords in a letter to *The Times*, in large capitals, 'a charge to be answered: alleged collusion with Israel'. There was no reply from the Government.<sup>157</sup>

Mollet's links with the Suez pressure group cannot be overestimated.<sup>158</sup> Before the Conservative Annual Conference in October, he urged Amery to maintain the pressure on Eden, 'as it may be our last chance to fuel the fire'. Throughout the Crisis, he maintained direct contact with Amery who was informed about the Franco-Israeli contacts. It had considerable influence on the government, before, during and immediately after the invasion, but no one with the exception of Julian Amery came out in support of Israel's actions.<sup>159</sup>

The British Institute of Public Opinion carried out surveys during the Crisis. Unlike Mollet, Eden at no stage enjoyed a majority in favour of continuing military action against Egypt. However, this was offset by a large category of 'don't knows', which were published or withheld depending on the political leanings of those quoting the figures. Some of the polls phrased the question in terms of *Eden's personal policy*, others, *as to the Government's policy*. Throughout the crisis, the one opinion poll, which referred to

Israel, was appended to Eden's policies. None asked whether Israel's attack on Egypt was justified or was in Britain's interests.

In a Gallup poll conducted in August, 74 per cent approved of *economic measures* against Egypt but only 33 per cent favoured *military action*. In September, 34 per cent approved of using force while 49 per cent opposed. Between, 1–2 November, 40 per cent agreed with *Eden's handling of the Middle East situation since Israel marched into Egypt*; while 46 per cent disagreed and 14 per cent 'did not know'. A *Daily Express* poll, between 30 October and 3 November phrased the question differently, *the reasons for Britain's occupying the Suez Canal* contrasted to *Israel's invasion of Egypt*. The results differed from the BIPO polls: 48.5 per cent supported, 39 per cent opposed and 12.5 per cent 'did not know'.<sup>160</sup>

An analysis of constituencies' attitudes to the crisis and their MPs' performance suggests that Israel's involvement played a negligible part in the discussions.<sup>161</sup> No Jewish organization conducted a poll. In the absence of a clear set of questions relating to Israel's policies and invasion, it is thus difficult to quantify public opinion towards Israel's specific action.

#### BRITAIN'S POLICY ON ISRAEL'S SEARCH FOR GUARANTEES

Whether Britain liked it or not, Ben-Gurion remained the undisputed leader of Israel. He insisted that the only power, which could force Israel to withdraw, was the US and from Britain he demanded parity and would settle for nothing less.<sup>162</sup>

British policy aimed to heal the rupture with the Arab world by giving firm guarantees to Arab states against 'Israeli encroachment'. Britain intended to use its best offices to promote the repatriation of refugees, demand compensation for property, and support UN policing on Israel's borders. Eden insisted that Suez was not a tactical defeat; Soviet influence in the Middle East was exposed and considerably weakened, a third of Egypt's army was destroyed; Jordan and Syria were temporarily kept at bay from Nasser's influence; the decrease in *fedayeen* attacks reduced tension on the Israel-Arab borders; the UN was given a chance to take effective action to prevent hostilities, and despite Nasser's influence, Jordan, Kuwait, and the Gulf States maintained military pacts with it.<sup>163</sup>

The Foreign Office noted that 'what has happened in effect is that internal prospects of a settlement have declined while the external prospects have improved'. Nicholls believed that 'the only safe assumption is that there will be no immediate change of heart on either side. The Arabs will continue to dream of driving the Jews into the sea, just as the Saracens drove out the Crusaders. The Jews will continue to dream of their eventual occupation of Jerusalem and the whole of Palestine'. The spirit of Alpha still lingered in 'the suggestion that there should be a band of neutral territory running from the Mediterranean on the north of the Gulf to Aqaba on the south is attractive'.<sup>164</sup>

On 22 December, Anglo-French forces withdrew from the Canal Zone. For Ben-Gurion, this had negative and positive aspects. On the one hand, Israel faced unprecedented mounting world pressure following the speedy Anglo-French withdrawal, on the other hand it served to disconnect the Anglo-French military invasion from *Kadesh* and highlighted Israel's genuine need for security guarantees. Ben-Gurion had

repeatedly stated that the ‘war was not a campaign for territorial conquest but a campaign of deliverance’. In view of the Israeli Treasury’s warning that Israel could survive no more than five months, the question was how long Israel could hold out against the combined pressure of the UN, the US and the Soviets.<sup>165</sup>

Paying his farewell visit before leaving Israel, Nicholls told Ben-Gurion that while he was sympathetic to Israel’s claims to free navigation and security, he believed the ‘time had arrived to ask themselves whether half a loaf was not better than no bread’. Ben-Gurion replied that:

Half a loaf was not good under Arab pressure; the United States Government was likely to withdraw it any time... Despite the warmth felt for the British people Anglo-Israel relations would continue to be tense so long as Britain had a foothold or aspired to have a foothold in an Arab country.<sup>166</sup>

The US appealed to France and Britain to persuade Israel to withdraw because it had received all the assurances it could reasonably expect.<sup>167</sup> Nicholls argued that ‘sanctions may well be needed to force Israel out of Gaza’. This view was amplified by *The Times*, which argued that Israel required the threat of sanctions to enable it to accelerate withdrawal.<sup>168</sup>

On 22 February the British Cabinet admitted that ‘public opinion in this country was now actively concerned to secure a just settlement for Israel’.<sup>169</sup> Notwithstanding an appreciation of Israel’s dilemma to evacuate before guarantees were given, or risk sanctions for refusing to abide by UN resolutions, a final decision was considered ‘premature’. This was not ‘a limited breakthrough in Anglo-Israel relations’ as Orna Almog suggests. The decision neither to initiate sanctions nor guarantee Israel’s demands was in part because the government wished to avoid making a precedent.<sup>170</sup>

On 1 March, Israel announced a full and prompt withdrawal from Sharm-el-Sheikh area and the Gaza strip.<sup>171</sup> *The Times* greeted the decision as a ‘ray of hope’.<sup>172</sup> Lloyd noted that Egypt’s stated intentions to exercise belligerent rights in the Gulf of Aqaba ‘could be interpreted as meaning that the Egyptian Government regarded themselves as still at war with Israel; and in that event Israel would be entitled to attempt to reoccupy the Gaza Strip by force’. The Cabinet feared that Israel might still retract its decision if tensions continued to escalate. In view of rumours that Israel was preparing to test its right to use the Suez Canal by sending a 3,500-ton vessel as soon as it was open for ships of that size, Britain was willing to tone down criticism of Israel and give the US full rein.<sup>173</sup>

*The Times* noted that Ben-Gurion’s decision to withdraw was a defeat for Israel, which had held out for lasting guarantees. Ben-Gurion had failed to achieve the conditions he had set for Israel’s withdrawal: there would be no de-militarization of the Sinai; no cast-iron regime for the Gulf of Aqaba; and no prevention of military Egyptian rule in Gaza:

Mr Ben-Gurion was therefore, left with little choice. The weights of power were heavily against him. What now? He can hardly rely on the vague UN resolutions, which, for all their talk of peace and security, mean nothing until it is seen whether they apply equally against Egypt. What he

has is his faith in the word and good intentions of President Eisenhower—even these have been expressed, so far as is known, only in the most general way.<sup>174</sup>

Macmillan became Prime Minister on 11 January. Eden's government failed to achieve what he set out to do, but whereas he paid the price, the majority of his Ministers continued to serve under Macmillan, whose succession indicated not so much a break with the past but a second chance to re-think Britain's world standing. It was all the more poignant when the half-American, Macmillan, tutored the young and inexperienced President Kennedy in the workings of *realpolitik*.

Israel welcomed the departure of Eden as Prime Minister. As the architect of the Arab League, he was considered anti-Israel and a poor successor to Churchill. Much was expected from Macmillan but there was no immediate change in British policy towards Israel.<sup>175</sup> Despite protestations to the contrary Britain complied with the Arab League's boycott on Israel, which was manifested in the government's decision that it 'should not attempt to persuade the Shell Oil Company and British Petroleum Company to reconsider their decision to withdraw their distribution organisation from Israel'. The Cabinet accepted that 'any unilateral attempt on the part of the United Kingdom to oppose the Arab boycott of Israel would be ineffective'.<sup>176</sup> The claim that the government was unable to help blacklisted companies for trading with Israel was spurious given the fact that companies, which were prepared not to trade with Israel, were compensated in the form of tax relief.

Israel continued to regard the Foreign Office as the bastion of proArabism despite the support of public opinion's positive attitude to Israel. Elath accused Britain of poisoning the minds of the emerging Commonwealth countries against Israel in its pursuit to develop ties with developing nations. Israel cited Britain's policy during *Kadesh* and in the wake of the Suez debacle; renewed arms sales to Arab states, capitulation to the Arab League's boycott; uncertainty over the termination of the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty; and, Nutting's ill-fated trip to Israel in May, as the reason for deep tensions in Anglo-Israeli relations.<sup>177</sup>

#### THE SINAI-SUEZ WAR: BRITAIN, A RETROSPECTIVE

Suez was more a turning point than 'the hinge point in history' as Neff claims and had more of an impact on European affairs than on those of the Middle East. It was a catharsis in the post-war decline of British power and prestige and it took more than two decades for textbooks to state that Britain was no longer 'Great Britain'.

Eden's main drawback was that as Churchill's unchallenged heir, he had little, if any, experience in domestic affairs and was impervious to public opinion. He was unable to replicate Churchill and Macmillan's natural rapport with the US, which partly derived from their half-American lineage by virtue of their mothers.

Eden lacked a long-term perspective: 'He knew too that the country would welcome some daring stroke of foreign policy independent of the USA and that there was a case for riding roughshod over the mandarins of the civil service. He picked indeed the right horses; but not unfortunately, the right race'.<sup>178</sup> In writing his memoirs, he surpassed his

predecessor Lloyd George, in breaking etiquette. He earned £100,000 for serial rights and royalties, contravened the Official Secrets Act, divulged sources given in confidence of serving ministers and published Keightley's classified reports.<sup>179</sup>

Eden alienated the combined Civil and Armed Services, and British officials whose support was imperative. The lies, dishonesty, misinformation and suspicion severely hampered the very mission they were supposed to be working on together. He acted as though Britain was at war and expected them to act accordingly, except, he had not legally declared war. The only lesson he could draw from Suez was for Britain to 'play an independent part in the world, even on a modest scale than we have done hitherto, we must ensure our financial and economic independence'.<sup>180</sup> As Nutting astutely titled his book, there seemed 'no end of a lesson'.

In October 1957, the long awaited official unattributed *Memorandum on Relations between the United States and France in the months following Egyptian Nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company in 1956*, pointed to dual objectives; the Canal to be returned to international control and to bring about the downfall of Nasser, neither of which was achieved. There was no mention of Britain's collaboration with France and Israel, no analysis or recommendations. Prominence was given to US ambiguous messages to Eden. It concluded that Britain's attack on Egypt was justified because of the threat of an 'Israeli invasion that would have escalated into a full-scale war...had Britain not intervened in the name of the international community'.<sup>181</sup>

Generals often fight the last war, politicians the last election, but in Eden's case, he believed he was reshaping history by preventing another Munich. Churchill's remark was the most poignant, 'I am not sure I should have dared to start; but I am sure I should not have dared to stop'.

## THE SINAI-SUEZ WAR: ISRAEL, A RETROSPECTIVE

Ben-Gurion's unrelenting suspicion of Britain proved justified but his pragmatism allowed him to make a momentous decision to associate Israel with British interests, which returned Israel to its previous pariah status.

Israel claimed that under UN 'Article 51' it fought a war of self-defence. It failed to achieve many of its initial objectives; the Sinai was not de-militarised, Gaza was returned to Egypt, freedom of navigation through the Canal was not guaranteed, and Nasser having remained in power, succeeded in turning a military defeat into a political victory.<sup>182</sup> It did however, achieve important gains. It eliminated terrorist attacks, in the course of five days, defeated three Egyptian divisions in the Sinai and Gaza Strip, captured large quantities of Egypt's military equipment, sabotaged Egypt's ability to wage war, restored confidence in the IDF, strengthened its economy, guaranteed uninterrupted oil supplies, and developed relations with African states.<sup>183</sup> The threat to Israel of British troops in Jordan was diminished and British attempts to repair 'the king's highway' between Egypt and Jordan was foiled. Avner poignantly noted 'that Britain today cannot do much harm to Israel'.<sup>184</sup> An important development was the stationing of a UN peace-keeping force on Egyptian soil, which separated Israeli and Egyptian forces. By agreeing to abide by UN resolutions, Ben-Gurion's acceptance of the UN's role in



international affairs was a reluctant accolade to Sharett's indefatigable diplomatic efforts.<sup>185</sup>

The salient long-term achievement for Israel was access to French nuclear knowledge, which provided Israel's leading deterrent and guaranteed its continued survival.<sup>186</sup> Its future was no longer dependent on an association with a bloc. Suez was the first and the last time Israel was required to align itself militarily with other countries in order to achieve her goals.

#### NOTES

1. E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries, 1951–1954* (London, 1986), 345–8.
2. The *Kadesh* Operation refers to Israel's campaign on 29 Oct. We are assisted by a comprehensive article by Moshe Shemesh outlining the Middle East stage before the Crisis, 'The Kadesh Operation and the Suez Campaign: The Middle Eastern Political Background 1949–1956,' *Iyunim Btkumat Israel*, 4, 1994. It is curious to note the absence of diary entries of those closest involved. The Earl of Stockton (Harold Macmillan) told me: 'When you are behind the lines you keep a diary, but when you are over the top you stop keeping a diary'. He explained that he made no diary entries from 4 Oct 1956 to 3 Feb 1957, because events of the previous months had begun 'to move at such a speed and with such pressure upon us all, that I was unable to keep up the diary', A.Horne, *Macmillan, 1894–1956* (London, 1988), 430. Although bereavement in the Gaitskell's family detracted his attention, there are no published entries during the second part of Oct and early Nov. Ben-Gurion made no diary entries from 29 Oct to 7 Nov. The nine-day lapse cannot be explained simply because of illhealth, because in previous and subsequent circumstances, he wrote, or at least re-constructed events.
3. Nasser, Filastin speech, 2 Oct 1955. K.Love, *Suez The Twice-Fought War* (New York, 1969); M.Golani, *The Gaza Raid and the Israeli Policy of Retaliation During the Fifties* (Haifa, 1994); A.Shlaim, *The Iron Wall* (London, 1999) 123–9. Donald Neff dogmatically writes, 'with the Gaza Raid, the countdown to war began', D.Neff, *Warriors at Suez* (New York, 1989), 33. Morris argues that 'the Gaza Raid proved to be a turning-point in Israeli-Egyptian relations and in the history of the Middle East... Gaza had not only led to Egyptian counter-raiding. It had also set in motion a massive arms race, bound to end in war', B. Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 1949–1956* (Oxford, 1993), 350, 443.
4. ISA, 2454/5, 22 Mar; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary* (Tel-Aviv, 1978), 26 Feb–22 Mar; FO 371/115897 1092/49, 8 Mar; 1092/55, 6 Mar; 115837 1072/25, 22 Mar; E.Burns, *Between Arab and Israel* (Beirut, 1962), 17–21, 41–8; B.Morris, *Israel's Border Wars*, 340–50; *Jewish Observer*, Mar 1955.
5. M.Heikel, *Cutting the Lions Tail: Suez Through Egyptian Eyes* (London, 1986), 66–8.
6. FO 371/115887 1092/49; 1092/71, ISA, 47/2, 2 Mar; 2440/6, 3, 7 Mar; 115898 1092/78; 115825 1051/8; 2595/8; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 8 Mar, 821; UNSCR 3378, 28 Mar; *FRUS*, 1955–57, XIV, 92–101, 1955; ISA, 2582/5, 23 Mar; 2445/14, 7 Apr; 121692 1013/56, 20 Feb 1956.
7. *The Times*, 8 Mar; *The Spectator*, 11 Mar. The *Jewish Observer* noted Egypt's restraint because it was preoccupied with the Iraqi-Turkish Pact, 11, 18 Mar 1955.
8. *FRUS*, 1955–57, XIV, 1 Mar, 75–6; UNSCR, 3365, 3367, 2 Mar 1955.
9. BGA, BGD, 1 Mar; CAB 128/29, CM (55) 14, 14 Jun; *FRUS*, 1955–57, XIV, 11 Oct, 574; ISA, 2592/23 20 Oct 1955; 2595/5, 12 Apr 1956.
10. M.Sheffer, *Sharett*, 694, 787, 798; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 1 Mar, 805; 3 Mar, 810–11; 11 Apr, 924; CAB 129/76 CP (55) 84, 18 Jul 1955.

11. Cmd. 9429; CAB 129/74, C (55) 70, 14 Mar; J.Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*, (Princeton, NJ, 1956), 390–2; R.Jasse, 'The Baghdad Pact: Cold War or Colonialism?', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 27.1, 1991, 140–56; E. Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914–1971* (Oxford, 1963), 178–87; M.Heikel, *Cutting the Lions Tail*, 52–9; M.Fitzsimons, *Empire by Treaty, Britain and the Middle East in the Twentieth Century* (Indiana, 1964), 117–35.
12. FO 371/11484 1073/30; 115845 1073/8. Nuri told his Egyptian critics: 'We have two foes; the first is Israel, and the second is communism. As regards the first, Iraq's policy is to seek the assistance of as many Moslem combines as possible. ... I always placed first the Zionist danger and the need to secure the support of the world in order to eliminate the danger', 2 Feb, E.Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914–1971* (Oxford, 1963), 185; *The Times*, 21–28, 31 Jan; 8–9 Feb; 4, 7 Mar; 25 Aug; 28 Oct; 23 Nov; 115469 1023/25, 9 Nov 1955; N.Aridan, 'The British Reaction to the Gaza Raid of 1955', in M.Golani, *The Gaza Raid and the Israeli Policy of Retaliation During the Fifties* (Tel-Aviv, 1994), 47–57.
13. FO 371/115825 1051/4, 10 Feb; 115837 1072/22, 14 Mar; *Jewish Observer*, 8 Apr; ISA, 2583/5, 15 Apr; 2445/14, 23 Apr; 2595/5, 1 May; 115868 1076/86, 5 May; *FRUS*, 1955–57, XIV, 11 Oct, 574, 1955; 136498 1075/39, 7 Jan; 115825 1051/6, 18 Feb; 2412/29, 6 Mar; CAB 129/74 C 70, 14 Mar; 129/76, CP 84, 18 Jul 1956.
14. ISA, 194/4, 20, 26 May 1955.
15. British historians ignore Israeli sources, which suggest that the raids were an attempt to provoke Nasser into a war with Israel. *FRUS*, 1952–54, XIV, 237–40, 852–60, 866–8, 1954; FO 371/113699 1205/25, 22 Feb; 1205/40, 21 Mar; 113672 1194/107, 28 Jun; 113680 1194/368, 24 Oct; ISA, 2450/7, 1 Nov; CAB 131/16 DC (55) 14, 8 Nov; 2456/3, 8 Dec; BGA, weekly minutes, 1 Dec; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 8, 11–17 Dec, 1306–10; 115887 1076/522, 13, 14 Dec; 115885 1076/475; 20 Dec 1955; 128/30 (i) CM 1, 3 Jan; 121692 1011/1, 20 Feb 1956; M.Golani, 'The Historical Place of the Czech-Egyptian Arms Deal', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 31.4, 1995, 803–27; M.Oren, 'Escalation to Suez: the Egypt-Israel Border War, 1949–1956', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 24.2, 1989, 347–73; R.Ginat, *The Soviet Union and Egypt 1945–1955* (London, 1993), 210; B.Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 364–9*; A.Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 149–55; M.Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, (London, 1994), 57–68, 209; M.Medzini, *Israel's Foreign Relations, Selected Documents, 1947–1974* (Jerusalem, 1976), 325–34; D.Ben-Gurion, *Israel A Personal History*, (New York, 1970), 455–7; D.Hacohen, *Burma Diary*, 1953–55 (Tel-Aviv, 1963). Interviews with Sir Harold Beeley and Fred Lowens.
16. ISA, 330/7, 29 Jun; FO 371/115564 1192/276, 30 Jun; 2595/8, 15 Aug; 3432/1, 1, 6, 7, 8, 15, 21 Sep; 4304/3, 2 Oct, 26 Oct 1955; S.Peres, *David's Sling* (London, 1970), 39–40; E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 285–6.
17. DEFE 5/61, COS (55) 241, 27 Sep; CAB 128/29, CM (55) 53, 4 Oct; FO 371/111152 10399/1, 14–21 Oct 1955.
18. FO 371/115840 1054/5, 14 Oct; 115571 1192/461, 7 Oct 1955.
19. CAB 128/29 CM 36, 20 Oct; FO 371/115469 1023/19, 30 Oct; 1955. Kirkpatrick believed the Soviets 'deliberately elected to open a new Cold War front in the Middle East'. Israel was 'allowed to buy sufficient arms for reasonable defensive purpose but it would be a mistake to attempt to match Russian deliveries to Egypt'. FO 371/121701 10345/1, 15 Jan 1956. In Feb 1955, Israel proposed joint exercises with the RAF in Cyprus. The FO thought it could enable Britain to 'soften' Israel's sense of isolation and the RAF could assess Israel's capability and carry out photographic reconnaissance. Z.Levey, *Israel and the Western Powers, 1952–1960* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998), 772–802.
20. Israel continued to inundate Britain with requests for arms: ISA, 2412/29, 4 Jan; 2594/6, 5 Jan; 2587/1, 11, 17 Jan; 2595/5, 25 Jan, 4, 12, 24 Apr, 26 Jun; 2595/9, 1 Feb; 2595/10, 13 Feb; FO 371/115921 1226/4, 8 Feb; 2595/7, 17 Feb; CAB 131/15 D 13, 10 Mar; 2583/5, 23 Mar; 2595/5, 5 Apr; 121369 1195/19, 21 Apr; 2412/27, 23 Apr, 2 May; 2587/10, 12 Apr, 8

- May, 19, 23 Jul; DEFE 5/58 103, 4 May; 115844 1072/174, 31 May; 131/16, 15, 17 Jun; 131/13, 6 Jul; 131/22, 9 Jul 1955. 2409/5, 30 Jul; 2595/2, 10, 23 Aug; 115537 1076/4; FO 800/680, 26 Oct; CAB 131/16 DC (55) 12, 28 Oct 1955; 121722 1073/18, 19 Jan; 121705 1052/15, 6, 20 Apr; 24 Jul; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 26 Oct, 1251–2, 1956. The request was leaked to the press that officers serving in Cyprus were not adverse to an Israeli attack on Egypt, as it would permit Britain to reactivate the Suez Canal base, 115909 1092/407, 12 Nov; 192/41, 15 Nov 1955.
21. DEFE 5/62 COS (55) 304, 23 Nov 1955.
  22. *FRUS*, 1952–54, XIV, 412–723; FO 371/115844 1072/177, 15 Jun; 113674 15, 26 Sep; M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 28 Sep 1955, 1176–7; 121619 1201/1, Jan; ISA, 192/36, 14 May 1956; Barraclough wrote of ‘the electrifying effect’ the arms deal had on the region but made no mention that Nasser had met with Chinese and later Soviet representatives, G.Barraclough, *Survey of International Affairs, 1955–56* (Oxford, 1960), 95; Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, 16–18; ‘The Egyptian-Czech Arms Deal’, *Ma’arachot*, 306–7, 38–42; R.Ginat, *The Soviet Union and Egypt, 1945–1955* (London, 1993), 215; *The Times*, 24 Jan 1956.
  23. M.Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett: Biography of a Political Moderate* (Oxford, 1996), 680; Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 18 Oct 1953; IMDEA 847/62/31, 3 Apr 1956.
  24. FO 371/115909 1092/406, 1 Nov 1955; M.Gazit, ‘Sharett, Ben-Gurion and the Large-Scale Arms Deal with France in 1956’, *Gesher*, 1/108, 1983, 86–100.
  25. Ben-Gurion speech to the *Histadrut*, 18 Mar 1956, quoted in 121693 1015/6.
  26. FO 371/121369 1195/21, 10 May; ISA, 2597/10, 10 May 1956.
  27. M.Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza, 155–75*; Z.Levey, *Israel and the Western Powers, 55–73*; K.Kyle, *Suez* (London, 1991), 110–19; M.Vaisse, ‘France and the Suez Crisis’, in R.Louis and R.Owen (eds), *Suez 1956* (Oxford, 1989), 131–43; J.Duroselle, ‘French Diplomacy in the Postwar World’, in S.Kertesz and M.Fitzsimons (eds), *Diplomacy in a Changing World* (Paris, 1959), 244–6; H.Tint, *French Policy since the Second World War* (London, 1972), 234–6; V. Feske, *The Road to Suez; The British Foreign Office and the Quai d’Orsay, 1951–1957*, in G.Craig and F.Lowenheim (eds), *The Diplomats, 167–200*; S. Crosbie, *A Tacit Alliance* (New Jersey, 1974); A.Williams, *Britain and France in the Middle East and North Africa, 1914–1967* (London, 1968).
  28. Pierre Gilbert at his own request in Apr 1953 ‘began a conscious effort to build up pro-French sentiment in Israel’. His knowledge of classical Hebrew quickly adapted to Modern Hebrew. A.Williams, *Britain and France in the Middle East*, 118–19; *Davar*, 20 Aug 1954. FO 371/115468 1022/23, 11 Oct 1955; E. Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 281–2. Mollet’s redeeming quality was that he was an anglophile.
  29. FO 371/124422 1015, 2 Mar 1956; Interviews with Sir Harold Beeley and Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh.
  30. FO 371/115468 1022/1, 5 Feb; 115860 10317/1 22 Feb; 115502 1073/569, 24 Mar; 115468 1022/15, 13 Apr 1955; PREM 11/1344, 19 Jan; 121761 1076/55, 18 Mar 1956. E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 308–9. Jebb believed ‘Bourguès [Manoury] as you know has always been passionately in favour of the Baghdad Pact’, 127728 10317/3, 4 Feb 1957; K.Kyle, *Suez*, 110.
  31. S.Crosbie, *A Tacit Alliance*, 58.
  32. FO 371/110813 1192/332, 10, 11 Dec 1954. Britain poured contempt on the NEACC for rearming Israel. 115579 1102/713, 7 Dec; 115470 1024/17, 15 Dec; 121336 1192/469, 29 Mar; 121348 1192/581, 20 Jun; 115565 1192/323 28 Jul; 115570 1192/452, 28 Oct; 1192/540, 16 Nov; 115579 1192/470, 10 Oct 1955.
  33. FO 371/115818 10317/1, 22 Feb; 115468 1022/10, 26 Feb; 115468 1022/22, 3 Oct 1955; E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 284, 290. The MFA was also concerned that the Franco-Israel friendship was based ‘solely on the blood spilled in North Africa and bound to change at any moment’, ISA, 193/1, 11 Mar 1956.

34. CAB 128/29, CM (55) 33 22 Sep 1955.
35. FO 371/115579 1192/472, 9 Oct 1955; CAB 128/30i, CM 30, 19 Apr 1956; S. Peres, *The Night of Decision, IMDEA*, 529/72/20, 14; A. Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 165; Z. Levey, *Israel and the Western Powers*, 64–74; M. Vaisse, ‘France and the Suez Crisis’, 131–4; M. Golani, *Israel in Search of a War: The Sinai Campaign, 1955–1956* (Brighton, 1998), 184–6; E. Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 313.
36. FO 371/121349 1192/791, 29 Jul; 1192/468, 27 Jul 1956.
37. DEA 21, 556, 22 Jun; 50000–B–40 554, VI, 24 Feb; 559, 5 Aug; 554, 1 Dec; 560, 21 Dec 1955; 5000031–B–40, 22, 39, 10 May; 40, 11 May; 22, 23 Dec 1955; 41, 15 May; 42, 22 May; 43, 28 May; 44, 1 Jun; 45, 11 Jun; 46, 14 Jun; 47, 19 Jun; 47, 20 Jun; 49, 21 Jun; 50, 13 Jul; 51, 13 Jul; 52, 17 Jul; 53, 25 Jul; 54, 27 Jul; 55, 28 Jul; 56, 31 Jul; 57, 31 Jul; 22, 64, 24 Aug; 67, 19 Sep; *Sunday Times*, 29 Apr 1956; ISA, 2587/10, 27 May 1956.
38. FO 371/121762 1076/99, 16 Apr 1956.
39. DEFE 4/76, 7/206; CAB 128/9, 6, 22 Apr 1955; FO 371/110813; 115553–4.
40. AIR 8/1895, 21 Apr, 2 May 1955.
41. FO 800/731, 25 Jan 1956.
42. FO 371/121761 1076/54, 18 Feb; 121722 1073/20; CAB 128/30 (i) CM (56) 17, 28 Feb; ISA, 2593/1, 6 Mar 1956.
43. DEFE 4/85 JP (56) 65 19 Mar; COS 33, 20 Mar; CM 25, 27 Mar; CM 27, 10 Apr; 121726 1023/133, JP 76 16 Apr; 1023/135, COS 41 76, 16 Apr; 42, 18 Apr; 5/67, COS 153, 18 Apr; 154, 18 Apr; 150, 18 Apr; 155, 18 Apr; 131/17, DC 10, 27 Apr; 11 27 Apr; 12, 27 Apr; 32, 3 May; CAB 30 (ii) CM (56) 59, 14 Aug 1956.
44. S. Cohen, ‘A Still Stranger Aspect of Suez; British Operational Plans to Attack Israel, 1955–56,’ *International History Review*, 10.2, 1988, 261–81; At the PRO, I found similar global contingency plans for other countries. DEFE 5/62 COS (55) 304, 23 Nov; 6/32, 2, 10; 5/62 COS (55) 293, 14 Nov 1955; 4/83 COS (56) 11, 24 Jan 1956.
45. FO 371/115658 1051/127, 16 Dec; 2412/29, 20 Dec; *The Times*, 22 Dec 1955; CM (56) 3, 11 Jan; *FRUS*, 1956, XIII, 5, 13, 20–21, 30 Jan.
46. FO 371/121233 1054/27, 18 Feb; 1054/31, 24 Feb; PREM 11/1476, 1 Mar; ISA, 329/1, 9 Mar 1956; S. Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account* (London, 1978), 58.
47. *Davar*, 1 Jun; FO 371/121725 1073/98, 7 Mar; ISA, 2412/27, 13 Mar; 2412/27, 14 Mar; 2595/7, 15, 22 Mar; CAB 128/30 (i) 24, 21 Mar; 2595/5, 6 Apr; 121775 1091/147, 30 May; 118862, 1053, 28 May; 121776 1091/153, 5 Jun; 121693 1015/15, 14 Jun; 1091/162, 16 Jun; 2595/2, 24 Jul 1956; S. Lloyd, 44–8, 57–8; M. Heikel, *Cutting the Lions Tail*, 95–8; L. Kilmuir, *Political Adventurer* (London, 1964); E. Burns, *Between Arab and Israeli* (Beirut, 1962), 268; 123–35; L. Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis* (Illinois, 1964), 41–60.
48. *The Times*, 5 Mar 1956.
49. *The Times*, 7 Mar 1956.
50. *FRUS*, 1956, XV, 192, 298, 223–6, 294, 370–1, 406; CAB 128/30 (i) (56) 24, 21 Mar; CM 37, 17 May; CM 40, 7 Jun; CM 50, 17 Jul; CM 51, 20 Jul; CM 36, 20 Oct; CM 37, 25 Oct; 129/78 CP 168, 1 Nov; FO 371/113608 1057, 28 Oct; CM 39, 3 Nov; CM 40, 10 Nov; CM 42, 22 Nov; CAB 129/78 CP 191, 5 Dec; CM 45, 6 Dec 1955; CM 16, 22 Feb; FO 371/121540 1201/16, 1 Mar; 1201/21, 121541 1201/30, 3 Mar; 121492 1051/7, 4 Mar; *FRUS*, 1956, XIII, 2 Mar, 26–9; 5 Mar, 28–9; 16 Mar, 32–4; CAB 128/30 (i) 13 Mar; 121492 1050/50 4 Mar; CM 18, 5 Mar; CM 19, 6 Mar; CM 24, 21 Mar 1956. 118862 1053, 28 May 1956; R. Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden* (London, 1986), 431; W. Eveland, *Ropes of Sand: America’s Failure in the Middle East* (New York, 1980), 170–1; S. I. Troen and M. Shemesh, *The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956* (London, 1990), 100–9; R. Lamb, *The Failure of the Eden Government* (London, 1987), 193–7; K. Kyle, *Suez*, 128–9.
51. FO 371/119056 1422/226, 11 Jul; 1422/230; CAB 128/30 CM (56) 2, 17 July; 1422/241, 19 Jul; *FRUS*, XV, 1956, 19 Jul, 863–7; PREM 11/1098, 30 Jul; Heikel, *Cutting the Lions Tail*,

- 119–22; *The Times*, 27 Jul; *Royal Institute for International Affairs*, 1956, 77–113; K.Kyle, *Suez*, 130–4; Troen and Shemesh, *The Sinai-Suez Crisis 1956*, 359–61.
52. H.Wilson, *The Chariot of Israel* (London, 1980), 244; L.Mosley, *Dulles* (New York, 1978), 405.
53. CAB 134/1298, ME (O) (56) 23, 12 Jun; Rhodes James, *Eden*, 445–53; BGA, BGD, 5 Aug 1956; A.Thomas, *Comment Israel fut sauvé Les Secrets de l'Expédition de Suez* (Paris, 1978).
54. Eden, *The Eden Memoirs: Full Circle* (London, 1960), 429; PREM 11/1098. In 1955 more than half of Britain's annual imports came through the Canal and over 60,000 British troops went through the canal annually. Of the 10,420 vessels which passed through the Canal, 3,952 were British, accounting for nearly 38 per cent of total traffic, *Suez Canal Annual Report 1956*. R.Bowie, *Suez 1956*, (Oxford, 1975), 1–52.
55. CAB 128/30 (ii) CM (56) 54, 27 Jul. Home, wrote to Eden, 'I am convinced that we are finished if the Middle East goes and Russia and India and China rule from Africa and the Pacific', 24, 25 Aug; CAB 128/30 (ii) 57, 2 Aug; 64, 11 Sep 1956; P.Ziegler, *Mountbatten: The Official Biography* (London, 1985), 539–40.
56. PREM 11/1177, 27 Jul; 11/1018, 30 Jul; *FRUS*, XV, 1956, 31 Jul, 69–71, 1 Aug, 98–9; PREM 11/1098 352/56, 5 Aug. Eisenhower 'felt that the British were out of date in thinking', *FRUS*, XV, 1956, 31 Jul, 60–3; CAB 128/30 (ii) CM 62, 28 Aug; 11/1100, 3, 6, 8, 9 Sep; 11/1102, 5, 25 Sep; CM 62, 6 Sep; FO 800/740, 5 Sep 1956; T.Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster Dulles* (London, 1974).
57. PREM 11/1098 EC (56) 3, 30 Jul. It comprised of Eden, Lloyd, Macmillan, Monckton, Salisbury and Home. CAB 128 30 (ii) CM (56) 56, 1 Aug; CM 58, 3 Aug; *Hansard*, 2 Aug; CM 64, 11 Sep; CM 65, 14 Sep; CM 67, 26 Sep; CM 64, 11 Sep 1956; K.Kyle, *Suez*, 192–9.
- 58 FO 371/118809 1002, Aug; *News Chronicle*, *Daily Herald*, 28 Jul 1956; T.Shaw, *Eden, Suez and the Mass Media Propaganda and Persuasion during the Suez Crisis* (London, 1996), 22–39.
59. FO 371/121622 1051/44, 1 Aug; 121237 1054/117–139, 24 Aug; PREM 11/1102, 24, August; R.Murphy, *Diplomat among Warriors* (London, 1964), 461–5; H. Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, 106.
60. CM (56) 68, 3 Oct 1956; Avon Papers, 20/34/40, Jan 1957; S.Lucas and A.Morey, 'The Hidden "Alliance": The CIA and MI6 During and After the Suez Crisis', in R. Jeffreys-Jones and D.Stafford (eds), *US and British Intelligence Services* (London, 2000); S.Dorriell, *MI6: Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service* (New York, 2000); *Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service*; Lucas, 'The Missing Link? Patrick Dean', in S.Kelly and A. Gorst (eds), *Whitehall and the Suez Crisis* (London, 2000). Dean linked the FO, the military and MI6, bypassed official channels, and passed on messages to the secret services from the PM., M.Copeland, *The Game of Nations* (New York, 1974), 165–6, 202–5; P.Wright, *Spycatcher, The Candid Autobiography of a Senior Intelligence Officer* (New York, 1987), 84–5, 160–1.
- 61 FO 800/726, 8 Sep; CAB 128/30 (ii) (56) CM 62, 28 Aug; PREM 11/1102, 26 Sep; 1956; A.Nutting, *No End of a Lesson: The Story of Suez* (New York, 1967), 94; G. McDermott, *The Eden Legacy and the Decline of British Diplomacy* (London, 1969), 105. Interviews with Sir Edward Heath and Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh.
62. L.Johnman, 'Playing the Role of a Cassandra: Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice', *Whitehall*
63. FO 371/119128 14211/1390, 18 Aug 1956. Interview with Sir Harold Beeley. A. Lane, 'The Past as Matrix: Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick', *Whitehall*; E.Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez Diaries*, 360; A.Horne, *Macmillan*, 429–30.
64. C.Goldsmith, 'In the Know? Sir Gladwyn Jebb', *Whitehall*; A.Adamthwaite, 'Suez Revisited', in M.Dockrill and J.Young, (eds), *British Foreign Policy, 1945–1956* (Oxford, 1989), 237; G.McDermott, *The Eden Legacy and the Decline of British Diplomacy* (London, 1969), 133, 144–5. During the Crisis, only three civil servants were privy to both political

- and military documents; Kirkpatrick, Dean, Chairman of the Intelligence Committee, and McDermott, Dean's deputy. Brook, Cabinet Secretary was privy to all documents and entrusted to destroy incriminating documentary evidence of collusion. Makins had the difficult task of placating Eisenhower while carrying out instructions from London. He was appointed Joint Permanent Secretary to the Treasury in mid-October. Caccia, his replacement, took more than a week to arrive leaving UN Ambassador, Dixon (who was kept in the dark about Suez), with the onerous task of defending Britain's use of force against Egypt. The delay was a grave error in Eden's judgement. S.Kelly, Transatlantic Diplomat: Sir Roger Makins', *Whitehall*; E.Johnson, The Diplomat's Diplomat: Sir Pierson Dixon', *Whitehall*; H.Wilson, *The Chariot of Israel*, 283; J.Gladwyn, *Memoirs* (London, 1972), 282; G.McDermott, *The Eden Legacy* (London, 1972), 144.
65. FO 371/121706 1052/23, 28 Jul; BGA, BGD, 30 Jul; 121706 1052/31, 8 Oct 1956.
66. FO 371/121761 1076/78, COS (80) 115, 19 Mar; DEFE 5/67 152, 18 Apr; 118865 1053/6, 7 June; 119078 1421/36, 30 July 1956; M.Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, 182; A.Horne, Macmillan ii, 90; M.Vaisse, 'France and the Suez Crisis', 139.
67. BGA, BGD; ISA, Cabinet minute, 29 July 1956.
68. FO 371/121693 1015/17, 20 Jun 1956. Nicholls had failed to grasp the magnitude of Sharett's demise and did not 'expect a deliberate switch towards a more activist policy' despite 'unwelcome changes'.
69. BGA, BGD, 29 Jul 1956; Hammarskjold was scathing in his criticism of Israel, which he blamed for the impasse. It 'did not have the makings of a state, it was not really a nation. The motive power came from a few fanatics at the top'. Ben-Gurion possessed 'so many faults that he could not be relied upon to lead the country into nationhood'. Whereas the Arabs were 'just plain simple crazy', the Israelis were 'as doomed as Oedipus', FO 371/121740, 11 May.
70. A.Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 166; ISA, Cabinet minute, 18 Jun, 5 Aug 1956. G. Sheffer, 'Sharett, Ben-Gurion and the 1956 War of Choice', *Medina Memshal, Vayahasim Beinleumim*, 27, 1988, 1–26.
71. BGA, BGD, 30 Jul, 3 Aug; M.Dayan, 5 Aug; *L'Express*, 9 Sep; FO 371/121696 1022/15, 19 Sep 1956; M.Carmel, 'How the Decision was Taken', *Skira Hodshit*, 33.15, 1986, 10–11, 30–2; C.Pineau, 1956, *Suez* (Paris, 1976), 82.
72. CAB 134/1216 28 Jul, 2–3, 7 Aug; CAB 134/1217, 3 Aug; PREM 11/1099, 7 Aug 1956; W.Clark, *From Three Worlds: Memoirs* (London, 1988), 171.
73. R.Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden*, 496.
74. FO 371/121369 1195/24 3 Sep; ISA, 2409/8, 4 Sep 1956.
75. FO 371/121817 1152/1, 22 Aug; 1152/3, 30 Aug; 121820/1213/1, 27 Sep; 121820 1213/11, 1 Oct; 2409/9; 121706 1052/30, 3 Oct; 121829, 1423/1, 4 Oct 1956; G.Rawnsley, 'Cold War Radio in Crisis', *Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television*, 16.2, 1996, 197–219; 'Overt and Covert: The Voice of Britain and Black Radio Broadcasting in the Suez Crisis, 1956', *Intelligence and National Security*, 11.23, 1996, 497–522.
76. ISA, 2595/2, 9 Aug; 2409/7, 27, 29 Aug; 2409/9, 3 Oct; CAB 134/1302, 10 Aug; PREM 11/1099 CM 59, 14 Aug; 60, 21 Aug; 61, 23 Aug; 62, 28 Aug; *FRUS*, XVI, 1956, 231–86; C.Pineau, 1956, *Suez*, 96.
77. FO 371/121696 1022/17, 20 Sep 1956.
78. DEFE 4/91 COS (56) 96, 10 Oct 1956.
79. CAB 134/1225 EOC (56) 1, 5 Sep; ISA, 2409/8; 2409/1, 18 Sep; BGA, BGD, 25, 27, 29 Sep; M.Dayan, *Diary of the Suez Campaign* (New York, 1966), 25, 27 Sep, 1 Oct 1956, 29–36; M.Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, 188–9; Y.Ne'eman, The Franco-British Connection and the Sinai Campaign', *Ma'arachot*, 306–7, 28–37; M.K.Kyle, *Suez*, 252–5, 266–71; A.Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, 105–6; K.Thomas, *Suez*, 100; Interview with Sir Edward Heath.
80. FO 371/121734–45, 1074.

81. FO 371/121706 1052/30, 3 Oct; 121486 10393/109, 9 Oct 1956; E.Burns, *Between Arab and Israeli*, 165; *The Times*, 27 Sep; B.Morris, *Israel's Border Wars*, 402–18.
82. AIR 8/2076–80, 1956.
83. M.Dayan, *Diary*, 61; CAB 131/17 DC (56) 17 3 Jul; 128/30 (ii) CM 47, 5 Jul; FO 371/121762 1076/117, COS (56) 310, 17 Aug; T 236/4188, 7, 11 Sep; CM 64, 11 Sep; 131/7, 2 Oct; BGA, BGD, 3 Oct; 128/30 (ii) CM 70, 9 Oct; ISA, 329/9, 14 Oct; 329/2, 19 Oct; T 236/4189, 9 Nov; CM 85; T 236/4189, 12, 13, 20 Nov; T 236/4190, 22 Nov; PREM 11/1106; CM 89, 27 Nov, CM 90, 28 Nov; CM 91, 29 Nov, 1 Dec; CM 96, 3; CM 97; 120816, 3 Dec 1956; CM 33, 11 Apr 1957.
84. CAB 128/30 (ii) CM 53, 26 Jul; FO 371/121730 1073/266, 9 Aug 1956.
85. FO 371/121718 1072/156, 20 Sep; 1072/158, 24 Sep; 1072/163, 27 Sep; 121486, 29 Sep, 1 Oct; ISA, 2409/18, 3 Oct; 121488 10393, 11 Oct; 121489 10393, 6, 11 Oct; 121780 1091/298; 1091/303, 1091/317, 11 Oct; 121781 1091/315, 1091/326, 14, 15 Oct; A.Eden, *The Eden Memoirs*, 150; M.Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, 213; U.Dann and A.Vered, 'Six Hours at Kalkilya', *Bamahaneh*, 15 Oct 1956; M.Dayan, *Diary*, 45–54. S.Lucas, *Divided We Stand* (London, 1991), 233–4; *FRUS*, 1956, XVI, 675–6; K.Kyle, *Suez*, 292.
86. FO 371/121780 1091/303; ISA, 2595/9, 11 Oct; 121781 1091/317, 12 Oct; 1956; Z.Raad, 'A Nightmare Avoided; Jordan and Suez 1956', *Israel Affairs*, 1.2, 1994, 288–308.
87. FO 371/121781 1091/315, 13, 14 Oct; 121535 1192/119, 25 Oct 1956.
88. *The Times*, 15 Oct 1956.
89. PREM 11/1650, 13 Oct; FO 371/121535 1192/118; 121706 1052/33, 18 Oct; CAB 128/30 (ii) CM (56) 72, 22 Oct; PREM 11/1508, 23 Oct 1956.
90. S.I.Troen, 'The Protocol of Sèvres: The British/French/Israeli Collusion Against Egypt, 1956', *Israel Studies*, 1.2, 1996, 122–36; M.Bar-On, 'David Ben-Gurion and the Sèvres Collusion', *Suez 1956*, 145–7; A.Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 169–78; N.Lorch, 'Ben-Gurion, the Powers and the 'Kadesh Operation'', *Skira Hodshit*, 3, 1987, 10, 34–45.
91. FO 371/121488 10393, 14 October 1956; P.Ely, *Memoirs Suez* (Paris, 1969), 137–8; K.Kyle, (Paris, 1969), 295–8.
92. BGA, BGD, 16, 17, 18 Oct; CAB 128 (56) CM, 71; FO 800/728, 18 Oct 1956; A. Nutting, *No End of a Lesson*, 98–9.
93. FO 371/121782 1091/363, 17, 26 Oct 1956.
94. ADM 205/137, 18 Oct; AIR 8/2111, 18 Oct; 8/2077, 26 Oct; E.Grove and S.Rowan, 'The Limits of Opposition: Admiral Earl Mountbatten of Burma', *Whitehall*.
95. BGA, BGD, 22 Oct; SELO 6/202, 22–25 Oct 1956; S.Lloyd, *Suez 1956*, 181–4; M. Bar-On, 'David Ben-Gurion and the Sèvres Collusion', 157; M.Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, 233–47; *Challenge and Quarrel* (Sede-Boker, 1991); M.Dayan, *Diary*, 180; M.Golani, *Israel in Search of a War*, 118–37. Lt. Col. Bar-On, Dayan's adjutant, took detailed minutes, *Challenge and Quarrel*.
96. BGA, BGD, 25 Oct 1956. At the end of the meeting, the French produced a record of the week's discussions, which Dean signed *ad referendum*, i.e., to be further considered. S.Lucas, 'The Missing Link? Patrick Dean', *Whitehall*; *Financial Times*, 8 Jan; BBC, Sir Donald Logan interview, 14 Nov 1986; S.I.Troen and M.Shemesh, *The Suez-Sinai Crisis*, 131–8; M.Bar-On, 'How did the Sèvres Document Disappear?', *Iyunim Btkumat Israel*, 7, 1997, 86–95; 'In the Maze of Lies: Anthony Eden's Collusion', *Iyunim Btkumat Israel*, 2, 1992, 166–196.
97. SELO 6/202, 24 Oct; BGA, BGD, 26 Oct 1956; Troen and Shemesh, *The Suez-Sinai Crisis*, 135.
98. A copy is located at the BGA at Sede-Boker. E.Heath, *The Course of My Life* (London, 1988). Interview with Sir Edward Heath. Dooley claims that Thomas, 'misplaced' the French copy, H.Dooley, 'Great Britain's "Last Battle" in the Middle East; Notes on Cabinet Planning during the Suez Crisis of 1956', *International History Review*, 11.3, 1989, 511;

- R.Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden*, 532; R.Lamb, *The Failure of the Eden Government* (London, 1987), 241–2.
- 99 BGA, BGD, 24 Oct 1956.
100. AIR 20/9677; ADM 205/19, 30 Oct 1956.
101. CAB 128/30 (ii) CM 72; Confidential Annex (11.00); SELO 6/602, 23 Oct 1956.
102. CAB 128/30 (ii) CM 73; Confidential Annex, 73, 24 Oct, 10.00 1956.
103. CAB 128/30 (ii) CM 74, 25 Oct.
104. R.Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden*, 435–8.
105. BGA, BGD, 27 Oct 1956. M.Brecher, *Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy* (Oxford, 1974), 225–317; P.Calvocoressi, *Suez Ten Years After* (New York, 1967), 59–82. Sharett left for a tour of Asia on 19 Oct for eighty days, M. Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 1804–10; N.Caplan, 'The 1956 Sinai Campaign Viewed from Asia: Selections from Moshe Sharett's Diaries', *Israel Studies*, 7.1, 2002, 81–103. 'I have returned home, but my country has drifted away from me', M.Sharett, *Personal Diary*, 9 Dec, 1911; Sheffer, *Sharett*, 899–908.
106. M.Dayan, *The Story of My Life*, 62–71.
107. ISA, Cabinet minute, 28 Oct; 2401/13, 1076/123, 28–29 Oct 1956.
108. His conversation was reported to the Cabinet on 28 October. Ben-Gurion noted that 'for some reason, he reminds of a "little Eden", immaculately dressed'. FO 371/121706 1052/34, 800/741, 29 Oct; 2409/9, 3 Nov 1956.
109. Dayan, *The Story of My Life*, 162–7. The 1st phase was *Kadesh*, 29–31 Oct; the 2nd phase, from the night of the 31 to the ceasefire of 6–7 Nov; the 3rd phase, 8 Nov–Dec 22, Anglo-French occupation of the Canal Zone and subsequent evacuation; and the 4th phase, 22 Dec 56–Apr 57, Israel's occupation of Sinai and Gaza Strip and evacuation. J.Sellers, 'Military Lessons: The British Perspective', in Troen and Shemesh, *The Suez-Sinai Crisis*, 17–53; H.Thomas, *The Suez Affair* (London, 1966), 177–94; Golani, *Israel in Search of War*, 138–65; *The Times*, 30 Oct 1956.
110. The ultimatum expired at 4:30 the next day Israel, a long way from the canal played out the charade by accepting. Egypt, as expected, rejected it. FO 371 121783/1091 398, 30 Oct; PREM 11/1105, 31 Oct; M.Dayan, *The Story of My Life*, 77–116; M.Golani, *Israel in Search of a War: The Sinai Campaign, 1955–1956* (Brighton, 1998), 152–5; A.Beaufre, *The Suez Expedition* (New York, 1969), 83–107; A.Eden, *The Eden Memoirs*, 525–8; Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 178–85.
111. He called Britain and France 'those bastards' because they gave no warning of the postponement of the bombardment. M.Dayan, *The Story of My Life*, 166–7; M.Bar-On, *Challenge and Quarrel*, 298, 307; K.Kyle, *Suez*, 372; AIR 20/9677; ADM 205/19, 30 Oct 1956.
112. Interview with Gershon Avner; FO 371/121783 1091/403, 31 Jul; 1091/492, 5 Nov; 121802 1091/992, 21 Nov 1956; R.Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden*, 563.
113. A.Martin, 'The Military and Political Contradictions of the Suez Affair; A French Perspective', in Troen and Shemesh, *The Suez-Sinai Crisis*, 54–9.
114. AIR 20/9436, 14 Dec, 1956; M.Bar-On, *Challenge and Quarrel*, 320.
115. FO 800/680, 1 Nov 1956.
116. FO 371/121799 1091/910, 1 Nov; 121786 1091/511, 3 Nov 1956.
117. *Hansard*, 558, 31 Oct 1956, 1441–572; S.Lloyd, *Suez 1956*, 248.
118. FO 371/121793 1091/747, 31 Oct; 121794 1091/451, 1 Nov 1956.
119. *Jerusalem Post*, 5 Nov; 121788 1091/574, 4, 5 Nov 1956.
120. ADM 205/141, 6 Nov; FO 371/121804 1091/1045, 5, 13, 27 Dec 1956; M. Dayan, *The Story of My Life*, 166–9; M.Golani, *Israel in Search of a War*, 177–9.
121. BGA, BGD, 8 Nov. The US spread a rumour that there were 125 Mig's stationed in Syrian airfields, FO 371/121804 1091/1044, 13 Dec 1956.
122. On 7 Nov, Eisenhower wrote to Ben-Gurion advising Israel to abide by the UN resolutions and withdraw from Egyptian territory. Owing to communication delays, the message was



- received in Israel on 8 Nov. On that day, Ben-Gurion informed him that the IDF would withdraw when the appropriate arrangements were made with the UN regarding the entry of the international force into Canal Zone. FO 371/121800, 8 Nov; 121794 1091/794, 9 Nov 1956; J.Campbell, *The Soviet Union, the United States, and the Twin Crises of Hungary and Suez*, in R. Louis, and R.Owen, *Suez 1956*; K.Kyle, *Suez* 376–80.
123. There were three plans; *Musketeer, Revise and Winter*. R.Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden*, 469; P.Hennessy, *Whitehall* (London, 2001), 166; A.Gorst, 'Suez 1956: Strategy and the Diplomatic Process', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 1987, 391–436.
124. J.Sellers, 'Military Lessons: The British Perspective', 17, in S.I.Troen and M. Shemesh, *The Suez-Sinai Crisis, 1956*.
125. W.Clark, *From Three Worlds*, 197.
126. CAB 128/30ii, CM (56) 75, 30 Oct; CM 76, 31 Oct; PREM 11/1105, 30 Oct (arrived only after the Cabinet meeting), 31 Oct; FO 371/121792 1091/713, PREM 11/1177, 11/1105, 5 Nov; *FRUS*, 6 Nov, 1025–7; 14 Nov 1956, 1123–5.
127. C.Cogan, 'From the Politics of Lying to the Farce at Suez: What the US Knew', *Intelligence and National Security*, 13.2, 1998, 100–22; R.Aldrich, *Intelligence and National Security*, 9.3, 1994, 544–54; R.Cohen, 'Israeli Military Intelligence before the 1956 Sinai Campaign', *Intelligence and National Security*, 3, Jan 1988, 100–40; A.Atherton, *The US & the Suez Crisis: The Uses and Limits of Diplomacy*, in Troen and Shemesh, *The Suez-Sinai Crisis, 1956*.
128. FO 371/121794 1091/484, 31 Oct; 1091/451, 1 Nov; UNSC 3710, 30 Oct; *FRUS XVI*, 6 Nov 1956, 1025–7; R.Bowie, *Suez 1956*, 61–6.
129. CAB 128/30ii CM (56) 81, 7 Nov; CM 82, 8 Nov. Eden did disclose the rest of Nicholls' telegram, expressing Israel's peaceful intentions, FO 371/121792 1091/726 7 Nov; 121793 1091/756, 8 Nov 1956.
130. Egypt, 1,650 dead, 4,900 wounded, and 6,185 captured or missing; Israel, 189 dead, 899 wounded, and four captured; Britain and France, 33 dead and 129 wounded. AIR 20/9890, KEYCOS 54, 7 Nov 1956; A.Beaufre, *The Suez Expedition*, 108–22; K.Kyle, *Suez*, 461–4.
131. FO 371/121788 1091/580, 6 Nov 1956.
132. CAB 128/30ii CM (56) 80, 6 Nov; K.Kyle, *Suez*, 510–4, 520–2; 581–97; R. Lamb, *The Failure of the Eden Government*, 264–79; D.Carlton, *Britain and the Suez Crisis* (Oxford, 1988), 78–80.
133. Further Cabinet meetings see, CAB 128/30 (ii) CM (56) CM 83, 13 Nov; CM 84, 16 Nov; CM 85, 20 Nov (Cabinet chaired by Butler); CM 86, 21 Nov; CM 87, 22 Nov; CM 94, 30 Nov; CM 95, 1 Dec; CM 96, 3 Dec; CM 97, 7 Dec; CM 98, 11 Dec; CM 99, 12 Dec; CM 100, 13 Dec; CM 101, (Eden returned from Bermuda and chaired the subsequent meetings) 17 Dec; CM 102, 17 Dec; CM 103, 19 Dec; CM 104, 20 Dec 1956; CM (57) 1, 3 Jan; CM 4, 9 Jan; (Macmillan PM) CC 4, 29 Jan; CC 6, 1 Feb; CC 7, 5 Feb; CC 10, 11 Feb; CC 18, 12 Mar; CC 19, 22 Mar; CC 24, 26 Mar; 127756 1075/15; OME 14, 29 Mar; CC 28, 2 Apr; CC 29, 3 Apr; CC 30, 8 Apr; CC 32, 9 Apr; CC 34, 15 Apr; CC 35, 17 Apr; CC 36, 30 Apr; CC 38, 6 May; CC 40, 10 May; CC 41, 14 May; CC 42, 18 May; CC 45, 25 May 1957.
134. WO 288/1, 8 Nov; AIR 20/9890, KEYCOS 54, 7 Nov; 57, 8 Nov 1956; ADM 116/6209, 73; Kyle, *Suez*, 482.
135. BGA, BGD, 4 Dec; FO 371/124431 1022/63, 17 Nov 1956. France looked to the US as the only dependable ally because Britain was unreliable, hesitant in action, maladroit in execution and infirm when it counted. K.Kyle, *Suez*, 495.
136. FO 371/121802 1091/993, 20 Nov; 1091/992, 21 Nov; 121804 1091/1044, 13 Dec 1956; 128093 10317/3, 4 Feb 1957.
137. *Hansard*, 20 Dec 1956.
138. *Hansard*, 6 Dec 1956, 1267–87.
139. ISA, Cabinet minute, 3 Nov; FO 371/121792 1091/728, 6 Nov; 1091/738, 7 Nov. He was intoxicated with the fruits of victory and his messianic fervour worried his supporters. He

- told the *Knesset* that the armistice agreements were dead and that Sinai was not ‘Egyptian soil’, *Dvrei Haknesset*, 7 Nov 1956; M.Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza*, 271–88.
140. BGA, BGD, 8 Nov, 1, 13 Dec; ISA, 2595/5, 22 Nov 1956.
141. BGA, BGD, 10, 25 Nov; ISA, 2595/5, 15 Nov; 2401/15, 30 Nov 1956; FO 371/121803 1091/905, 26 Nov; 128126 1981/6, 7 Jan 1957.
142. FO 371/121795 1091/812, 4 Nov; ISA, 329/8, 4 Dec; 121706 1052/39, 18 Dec 1956. Eliahu Elath.
143. P.Hennessy, *Whitehall*, 168.
144. A.Adamthwaite, ‘Suez Revisited’, 234.
145. J.Fforde, *The Bank of England and Public Policy, 1941–1958* (Cambridge, 1992), 558.
146. BoE (Bank of England), G1/124, 1 Aug, 2 Nov, 19, 22, 27 Nov; 1, 2 Dec; NARA, 56, 70A6232, Box 78, 25 Sep; T 236/4188, 26, 30 Oct, 2 Nov; T236/4189, 7, 9, 1, 19 Nov; CAB 128/30ii CM 80, 6 Nov; *The Times*, 13 Nov; CM 85, 20 Nov; T 236/4190, 22, 28, 29 Nov 1956; D.Kunz, *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1991); H.Macmillan, *Riding the Storm, 1956–1959* (London, 1971), 163–4; A.Horne, *Macmillan*, ii, 1988 442–7; R.Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden, 573*; S.Lucas, *Britain and Suez: The Lion’s Last Roar* (Manchester, 1996).
147. H.Dooley, ‘Cabinet Planning during the Suez Crisis’, 517.
148. Kunz’s assumption that: ‘One of the constraints of British twentieth century history has been the disparity between Great Britain’s financial means and its strategic and imperial ends’ is analogous to British Foreign Policy *per se*. K.Kyle, 465.
149. A.Klug and G.Smith, ‘Suez and Sterling, 1956’, *Explorations in Economic History*, 36, 1999, 181–203. I am indebted to my friend, the late Adam Klug of the Economics Department, Ben-Gurion University for showing me the draft for comments, before he tragically passed away.
150. T 236/4188, 7 Sep; BoE, E1D 3.114, Nov; C8/9; *Economist*, 5 May, 16 Jun; 1, 15 Sep; 15 Nov 1956.
151. T 236/4188, 8, 11, 13, 15 Aug 1956; J.Boughton, ‘Northwest of Suez: The 1956 Crisis and the IMF’, *IMF*, 00/192, 2000.
152. There was a devaluation in 1949. T 236/4188, 7, 10 Sep, 10, 24 Oct 1956; H. Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, 135.
153. *Daily Telegraph*, 30, 31 Oct; 2, 3, 5 Nov 1956.
154. Keith Kyle was the reporter. *The Economist*, 31 Oct; K.Kyle, *Suez*, 405; *Daily Express*, 30, 31 Oct, 1, 2 Nov, 4 Dec; *Daily Mail*, 31 Oct, 1, 2, 7 Nov 1956.
155. *Daily Herald*, *Daily Sketch*, 1 Nov 1956; T.Shaw, *Eden, Suez and the Mass Media*, 14–95; Rawnsley, ‘Overt and Covert: The Voice of Britain and Black Radio Broadcasting in the Suez Crisis, 1956’, 497–522; R.Negrino, *The Press and the Suez Crisis: A Myth Re-examined*, *Historical Journal*, 25.4, 1982.
156. *Observer*, 4 Nov 1956.
157. *The Times*, 31 Oct; 1–3, 5, 9, 13 Nov, 18 Dec 1956; P.Calvocoressi, *Suez Ten Years After*, 83–107.
158. Bodleian Library. CRD 2/34/1, Conservative Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, 2, 23 Nov, 132/306, 8 Dec; 11 Sep; 29 Nov; 4 Apr; 14 Nov 1955; 2/34/2, 22 Mar, 23 Apr, 5 Nov 1956.
159. PREM 11/1100, 27 Sep; *Hansard*, 558, 31 Oct; 1 Nov, 20 Dec, 1276, 1564–5, 1956; Epstein, 41–51, 74–93; S.Onslow, *Backbench Debate Within the Conservative Party and its Influence on British Foreign Policy, 1948–1957* (New York, 1997), 199–208; Interviews with Sir Julian Amery, Lords Joseph, Healey and Shinwell.
160. *The Gallup International Opinion Polls*, Great Britain, 1937–75, 1, 1937–64, 390–5.
161. J.Owen, ‘The Polls and the Newspaper Appraisal of the Suez Crisis’, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 21.3, 350–4; L.Epstein, *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, 97–128; 141–5; *Revue Française de l’Opinion Publique*, 1956, 4, 18.

162. ISA, 2459/7; *FRUS*, XVI, 1955–57, 30 Dec 1956; G.Meir, *My Life* (London, 1957), 222–3.
163. CAB 129/84, CP 2, 2 Jan; CAB 128/31 (i) CC 1, 5 Jan; CC 9, 7 Feb; CC 40, 14 May; *The Times*, 4, 26 Jan, 1, 7, Feb 1957.
164. FO 371/128114, 1071/1, 27 Dec 1956; 127748 1051/66, 3 May 1957.
165. Ben-Gurion explained to the *Knesset* on 23 Jan that: ‘No loyal friend of the United Nations can or should ignore the faults in its leadership or its decisions, but the State of Israel, perhaps more than any other country, is interested in strengthening the authority of the UN to safeguard peace and international justice’. ISA, Cabinet minutes, 23 Dec 1956, 13 Jan 1957. On 21 Feb, he told the *Knesset* that ‘fate has decreed that our small and young state should become involved in a grave controversy with two world factors which perhaps no state in the world appreciates more than Israel, namely, the UN and the US’.
166. BGA, BGD, 20 Feb; FO 371/128135 1081/221, 21 Feb 1957.
167. FO 371/128128 1081/46, 20 Dec 1956; FO 371/125090 1022/1, 12 Jan; 128130 1081/108, 3 Feb; 21 Jan; CAB 128/31i CC 10, 11 Feb, CC 12, 19 Feb; 128132 1081/163, 12 Feb; 128134 1081/203; 1081/201, 19 Feb. The mood in the US was opposed to imposing sanctions against Israel. Lyndon Johnson, Senate majority leader was doubtful whether they could be imposed. He led the deputations to Dulles, *New York Times*, 20 Feb 1957.
168. *The Times*, 22 Feb, 14 Mar; CAB 128/31 (i) CC (57) 13, 22, 28 Feb; PREM 11/1787, 6, 10, 11 May; 11/1850, 15 Jun; PREM 11/1946, 11 Jul; ISA, 2448/8, 26 Feb 1957; *FRUS*, XVI, 1955–57, 254–376; 1957; M.Gazit, The 1956 Sinai Campaign; David Ben-Gurion’s Policy on Gaza, the Armistice Agreement & French Mediation’, *Israel Affairs*, 6.3, 2000, 43–67; C.Pineau, *Suez*, 209–32; H. Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, 236–7.
169. CAB 128/31 (i) CC (57) 22 Feb; FO 371 128126/1081/7, 5 Jan; 128107 1052/8, 20 Feb 1957.
170. O.Almog, *Britain, Israel and the United States, 1955–1958* (London, 2003), 110.
171. Golda Meir Address to the UNGA, 1 Mar; BGA, BGD, 10 Mar 1957.
172. R.Bowie, *Suez 1956*, 78–97; *The Times*; FO 371/128137 1081/300, 1 Mar; CAB 128/31(i) CC 17, 12 Mar; 1957.
173. CAB 128/31(i) CC (57) 15, 4 Mar; FO 371/128139 1081/366, 8 Mar; *Department of State Bulletin*, XXXVI, 917, 21 Jan, 1957, 83–7; 1957. Interview with Sir Harold Beeley.
174. *The Times*, 6 Mar 1957.
175. BGA, BGD, 7 Jan; ISA, 329/9; *Ha’aretz*, 11 Jan; 2459/12, 22 Feb 1957.
176. CAB 128/31(i) CC (57) 52, May; 70, 29 Sep 1957.
177. *Maariv*, 2 Jan; FO 371/128107 1052/4, 12 Jan; 128205 1631/13, 9 May; 128107 1052/14, 11 Jun; 1052/6, 18 Jun; 128093 10317/10, 24 Jun; 128107 1052/19, 12 Aug 1957; 134267 1011/1, 6 Jan 1958.
178. K.Thomas, *The Suez Affair*, 161.
179. Lloyd George took documents pertaining to relations with the generals and proceeded to write his version of the war. He then destroyed the originals or suppressed them. R.Lamb, *The Failure of the Eden Government*, 305–10; CAB 128/31 (ii) CC (57) 60, Oct 1957.
180. PREM 11/1138, 28 Dec 1956.
181. FO 800/28, 21 Oct 1957.
182. Before nationalization, Ben-Gurion expected Israel could gain no more than Nasser’s overthrow in a war with Egypt. BGA, weekly meetings, 5 Apr 1956.
183. M.Dayan, *Diary*, 203–7; *Dvrei Haknesset*, 5 Mar 1957; Ben-Gurion, ‘On What We Fought for, Why We Evacuated and On What We Achieved,’ at the *Knesset* Foreign and Security Committee, *Ma’arachot*, 296, 1984, 2–5; M.Pa’il, ‘Operation *Kadesh* as a Cornerstone in the Development of the IDF’, *Skira Hodshit*, 33, 10–11, 1986, 62–73; M.Bar-On, The Sinai Campaign 1956, Aims and Expectations’, *Skira Hodshit*, 33, 10–11, 1986, 4–16; M.Carmel, The Sinai Campaign-Aspects of Policy’, *Ma’arachot*, December 1984, 6–9.
184. ISA, 331/8, 27 Mar 1957.
185. FO 371/134267 1011/1, 6 Jan 1958.

186. FO 371/127728 10317/3, 4 Feb 1957. Bourguès-Maunoury stated that ‘the close association with Israel has not harmed the French, so much as we appear to imagine’. Interviews, anonymity promised. British Jews were among the leading contributors to the British atomic programme who shared their research with the French. A.Cohen, ‘Before the Beginning: the Early History of Israel’s Nuclear Project (1948–1954)’, *Israel Studies*, 3.1, 1998, 112–39.

## Defining the relationship: Anglo-Jewry and Israel

### THE COMMUNITY

In 1962, a conference was held in Jerusalem under the auspices of the Board of Deputies of British Jews to discuss trends in Anglo-Jewry. Among the participants was Leonard Stein, a prominent figure who had recently published his acclaimed, *The Balfour Declaration*. He called for a detailed study on the 'effect of the establishment of the state of Israel on the internal life and social structure of the Anglo-Jewish community itself' in addition to 'an enquiry into the effect of the establishment of the State on the whole world of ideas in which the Anglo-Jewish community is moving today.'<sup>1</sup> More than forty years later, there still awaits an independent analysis on these issues.<sup>2</sup>

Sociologist Ernest Kraucz was the first scholar to research the sociological composition of the post-War community.<sup>3</sup> Anglo-Jewry did not perceive itself in racial terms; it was 'an acculturation continuum inside a pluralistic setting'. He suggested that 'peoplehood' operated in parallel with the community's attachment to Israel.<sup>4</sup> Political scientist and scholar of the Diaspora, Gabriel Sheffer, offers an appraisal applicable to Anglo-Jewry's relationship with Israel, 'many Jews do not regard Israel as their homeland' and 'Israel is not regarded as the only center in the nation, but actually, again like many diasporas, the Jewish people has become a trans-state coalitional entity'.<sup>5</sup>

The *Jewish Year Book* of 1949 listed the Jewish population of Britain at 400,000 and the *Zionist Year Book* at 460,000. These were unofficial estimates because British census forms did not request 'religious affiliation'. The discrepancies may be explained by the fact that over 15 per cent of Jews were not actually British citizens but rather residents who had yet to acquire naturalization. Many were reluctant to tell their children for fear it would hamper their integration in British society.<sup>6</sup>

An important element in discussing the community's attitude to the establishment of the State of Israel was its complex involvement in British policy towards Zionism and the Jewish National Home. The *JC (Jewish Chronicle)* was the first to publish Herzl's *The Jewish State* in 1896.<sup>7</sup> In 1903, Britain raised the possibility of Jewish settlement in Uganda and in 1917, granted the Zionists their long awaited 'charter' with the Balfour Declaration. Its Mandate over Palestine, and the presence in Britain of the Jewish Agency Executive and the WZO, enhanced Anglo-Jewry's significance. However, Britain's ambivalence towards the Jewish National Home caused much anguish to Anglo-Jewry whose influence declined.<sup>8</sup>

Following the Nazi occupation of Europe, rumours were rife of an imminent Nazi invasion of Britain. The fate of Anglo-Jewry and the Yishuv lay in an outright victory and the total eradication of Hitler's Nazi war machine.<sup>9</sup> Anglo-Jewry enrolled for the war

effort and many fell in the line of duty, among them Weizmann's son. The Blitz profoundly shaped Jewish attitudes towards Zionism and more subsequently, the exigency for a Jewish State.<sup>10</sup>

With the exception of neutral Switzerland, the Jews of Britain were the only community in Europe to have escaped Nazi occupation. They had miraculously escaped occupation and inevitable extermination at the hands of the Nazis and their cohorts, which was the fate of their relatives in Europe.<sup>11</sup> The Jewish leadership was not faced with the agonizing dilemmas of the *Judenrat* and was spared accusations of collaboration, which beset post-war European Jewish communities. Furthermore, Anglo-Jewry's hard won emancipation and the tolerance of their fellow Britons were not tested under a Nazi-occupied Britain.<sup>12</sup>

In the General Election of July 1945, Labour won an unprecedented overall majority of 146. An unprecedented 28 Jewish MPs were returned to parliament, of which 26 were Labour, one a Communist and the other an Independent Conservative. Of the 34 Jewish prospective Labour candidates, only eight had failed to secure election whereas all five Jewish official Conservative Party candidates were defeated, as had all 16 Jewish Liberal candidates. Many Conservative and Liberal Party constituencies were ill disposed to select Jewish candidates because of the electoral 'consequences'. With a few exceptions, constituencies with larger Jewish communities tended to return Labour MPs.<sup>13</sup>

Out of office, Labour had adopted a pro-Zionist policy but the Government's intention to implement the 1939 White Paper, which it had opposed in opposition, caused deep resentment in the community.<sup>14</sup> Anti-Jewish feeling in Britain manifested itself in 1947 following the killing of the two sergeants by *Etzel*, (one of whom, Martin, was Jewish). Although community leaders condemned the 'murderous' act, it did not stop the looting of Jewish shops, property, and the vandalizing of synagogues and graves.<sup>15</sup> Britain's decision to place the future of Palestine before the UN, and the consequent 1947 partition resolution, was received by Anglo-Jewry with a sense of mixed relief because the community no longer had to walk a tightrope on the contentious issue of Palestine. In 1947 Edwin Samuel observed that:

Many Jews found themselves involved in a Jewish rebellion in Palestine against Britain the country of which they were citizens... They were asked to participate in or finance such illegal activities as the purchase and smuggling arms into Palestine or the smuggling of immigrants. Some were even asked to finance Palestine Jewish terrorist organisations engaged in a life and death struggle with the British army and police in Palestine.<sup>16</sup>

The tercentenary of the resettlement of Jews in Britain in 1956 promised to be 'a year which will be of outstanding significance in the annals of Jewish history'.<sup>17</sup> To mark the occasion, the *JC* published a supplement on Anglo-Jewish life. In his introduction to the supplement, the editor, Shaftesley, noted that, 'Zionism? In most people's minds, Zionism is now politically realised. The very success of Zionism removes another reproach to Jews, and most of them in free countries feel subconsciously that they can now sit back at ease'.<sup>18</sup> However, eight years after the establishment of the State of Israel, not one article was devoted to Israel's impact on Anglo-Jewry While psalms and prayers

were recited during Sabbath services in every synagogue, there was no mention of Israel or of the Holocaust. It was 'probably the last time an editorial in a Jewish newspaper could be written in this form, lacking any element of the contemporary Jewish problematic'.<sup>19</sup>

#### ANGLO-JEWRY FACES ACCUSATIONS OF 'DUAL LOYALTIES'

In 1951, Edwin Samuel noted that:

Few Jewish families in England do not have a relative or friend resident in Israel... In fact for many British Jews life would be very dull were Israel not to exist. British Jews can now allow their pride in Israel to supplement and not detract from their pride in Great Britain. They have begun to find a healthy synthesis of the British loyalty and their devotion to Israel.<sup>20</sup>

Sheffer writes that 'the relations between all diasporas and their homelands are inherently problematic and marred by tensions and controversies'.<sup>21</sup> Anglo-Jewry was even more complex. They were neither Israeli citizens, nor had they lived in Palestine or could claim citizenship from relatives who had lived there. They did not speak 'the mother tongue', Hebrew, except for prayers, which in the main were in the Ashkenazi accent and remote from Hebrew as spoken in Israel. The overwhelming majority neither visited Palestine nor intended to visit Israel, and yet many considered their ties to Israel as 'spiritual' and 'emotional'.

Israel's Declaration of Independence called upon the Diaspora to rally to Israel's side. Ben-Gurion believed that Jews should 'help explain Israel's foreign policy in the countries in which they dwell' reasoning that Jews were a world people and 'Israel is a state of and for a world people... beyond citizenship and sovereignty'.<sup>22</sup> The Declaration also called for the 'ingathering of the exiles,' Zionists and non-Zionists alike were deeply concerned that their precarious emancipated status would be adversely affected by accusations of 'dual loyalties', which would unleash a wave of anti-Semitism with calls for the Jews to uproot themselves and return to their ancient homeland.

The dual loyalties issue was the most debated topic in the columns of the *JC*. Labour MP Maurice Edelman cited Macaulay's essay on the 'Civil Disabilities of the Jews' in arguing that there was no contradiction in Jews wishing to help their fellow Jews in Palestine. He noted that 'English Jews', in common with other Englishmen, wish to help them is not evidence of divided loyalties, but of their attachment to the fundamental decencies for which their country stands'.

Norman Bentwich, who served as Attorney General for the British Mandate, differentiated between 'dual' and 'divided' loyalties. The word 'nation' had, in his opinion, ambiguous connotations:

To the Jewish people or nationality, we Jews owe moral loyalty to preserve its principles and to contribute to the progress and the development of the national home and its cultural life. ... Our loyalty to

the Jewish people does not reduce our loyalty to this country but may strengthen it.<sup>23</sup>

In his opinion, Jews were loyal subjects of the British Crown whose emotional attachments to the cries of their people in danger should not be confused with allegiance to another country. Jews who fought during the War of Independence were in their rights to do so, as had those Britons during the Spanish Civil War, who were not accused of dual loyalty.<sup>24</sup>

Incriminations and counter-incriminations were exchanged between the ZF (Zionist Federation) and the AJA (Anglo-Jewish Association), triggered by Stein's accusations that the ZF encouraged dual loyalties.<sup>25</sup> In February 1948, he wrote:

There can be no room for any dual allegiance or dual loyalty The Jewish State will not possess...any jurisdiction of any kind over Jews other than those who lawfully become its citizens. The allegiance and loyalty of British Jews is and will remain an undivided allegiance and loyalty to Britain.<sup>26</sup>

The accusation provoked an angry response from Bakstansky Chairman of the ZF, who accused the AJA of 'being haunted by their fear of dual allegiance who were creating their own problem and fear'.<sup>27</sup> Stein's argument that Zionism had achieved its goals in 1948 was a view ironically shared by Ben-Gurion.<sup>28</sup>

It took time for the Anglo-Jewry to understand that there was a fundamental difference between political allegiances and spiritual loyalties. Israeli diplomat, Zev Sufott, succinctly notes that 'questions of dual loyalty could be freely discussed in Western countries. It was argued that man had multiple loyalties, not necessarily inconsistent, and that Zionism requires not political allegiance to Israel but support of kinds afforded in free societies to a variety of causes and groups abroad'.<sup>29</sup>

## BRITISH JEWS IN THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

While Anglo-Jewry debated the finer issues of Zionist dialectics, between 1947 and 1948, 600 British *Machal* (volunteers from abroad) fought alongside the *Palmach* and *Haganah*. *Machal* also operated ten illegal immigration ships, which brought 31,000 holocaust survivors to Palestine. After the State was declared, *Machal* fought in the ranks of the IDF. Their military skills included among others, fighter pilots, flight engineers, logistic and communication specialists. British pilots, air and ground crews helped to create the Air Transport Command, which ferried weapons from an air base near Prague to Israel. Shlomo Temkin, head of the British Settlers Society, supervised the project in Israel.<sup>30</sup> Over half of the officers and crew of Israel's Navy consisted of British *Machal*, which included, Allan Burke, a former Royal Navy Commander, who contributed to the development of the Israeli Navy, and Ashe Lincoln, a naval commander whom Ben-Gurion asked to form the Israeli Navy. He invented a secret weapon, which was responsible for the sinking of an Egyptian flagship during the War of Independence.<sup>31</sup> George Trenter played an important role in the constructing of the 'Burma Road' and



Monty Green, a British ex-brigade major, became IDF's first quartermaster general. Of the 119 *Machal* killed in action, 25 were British.

*Machal's* operations in Britain were clouded in secrecy because it was illegal for British reservists to fight for another country. For many Zionism had not featured in their lives. Some were motivated by Zionism, support for the underdog, restlessness, excitement for a good fight, self-respect, for Jews everywhere, and for Israel. Jason Fenton's story is characteristic. After his Zionist parents died, he lied about his age and signed up on the top floor of a Marks and Spencer store in London, where *Haganah* recruiters had secretly set up shop, and was smuggled into Israel.<sup>32</sup>

Ben-Gurion trusted and confided in Colonel Marcus Sieff, the son of Lord Israel Sieff, proprietor of Marks and Spencer and President of the JPA, which raised over £1.6m in June 1948. Sieff had served in transportation and supplies in Italy during World War II. He personally invited him to help the IDF but as a reserve officer in the British Army, he was unable to take the oath of allegiance. A loophole was found whereby he was appointed 'adviser for transportation and supplies to the Ministry of Defence'. He provided vital information on British military and political developments. On one occasion, he invited British officers to a party at his Tel Mond house, a ruse to distract them from uncovering an arms smuggling operation that night.<sup>33</sup>

#### THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES

The Board of Deputies of British Jews was founded in 1760 as a joint committee of the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities to represent English Jewry at the Court of George III in London. The Board was a distinctive feature of the community and considered itself the official voice of Anglo-Jewry. The basis of representation was primarily synagogal. Originally, the agency of the older Jewish community, it long remained under the guidance of the established community leadership even as it absorbed the new Jewish population in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>34</sup>

The Board had no legal status as the French *Consistoire* had, but HMG recognized it as the representative voice of Anglo-Jewry. It participated in all developments affecting the political and civil rights of Anglo-Jewry, in times of crisis overseas it conveyed the community's views to government and public bodies on policy and legislative matters, which affected Anglo-Jewry, and it provided information about the community to non-Jews. It was the only Jewish body where affiliates from all denominations (except the ultra-orthodox) were represented.

In 1917, the Board opposed the Balfour Declaration because of a genuine fear that all that had been gained since the emancipation would be lost. Edwin Montagu, Minister for India and one of the most prominent members, believed that the, 'Government has dealt an irreparable blow to Jewish Britons and they have endeavoured to set up a people which does not exist'. He told the Zionists, 'all my life I have been trying to get out of the ghetto...you want to force me back there.'<sup>35</sup> Sir Robert Waley Cohen, a leading member of the United Synagogue and director of Shell Oil opposed Zionism on practical and political grounds.<sup>36</sup>

During World War II, it took an unequivocally pro-Zionist stand calling for the establishment of a Jewish State. This was influenced by the disclosure of the full horrors

of the *Shoah* in Europe.<sup>37</sup> Brodetsky, an avid Zionist, was elected unopposed as president while the vice-president, Waley Cohen, a non-Zionist, but nevertheless a supporter of the *Yishuv*, was defeated. Non-Zionist elements led by Neville Laski made a last ditch attempt in 1948 to restrict the Board's Zionist activities. He proposed to remove Brodetsky citing his conflict of duties, as a member of the executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. This motion failed in part, because Brodetsky and other functionaries were now redundant since the ex-Mandatory power, Britain, no longer recognized the Jewish Agency as the representative of the Jewish-Zionist bodies in or outside of Palestine.<sup>38</sup>



Figure 7.1 Selig Brodetsky, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1939–1953

*Source:* Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office

The Board convened a special meeting to commemorate the emergence of the Jewish state when the singing of *Hatikva* was unprecedented.<sup>39</sup> Brodetsky expressed the Board's position on Israel in August and refuted AJA accusations:

The Board does not, and cannot express its views to the Government of Israel, but it has a right to express what it thinks to the British Government and to British public opinion... British Jewry though small compared with the Jewry of the USA, has still a high influential status owing to its tradition of working through the British Foreign Office. And

this tradition must be maintained undiminished by the efforts of any other body and by any changes in public life.<sup>40</sup>

The last acrimonious debate between the Zionists and non-Zionists was fought in 1949 when the *Zionist Review*, the mouthpiece of the ZF, urged the Board to affiliate to the World Jewish Congress under which it would play a subservient role. The non-Zionists feared that the Board's independence would be compromised and avowed to prevent further 'Zionification'. AJA member and editor of the *JC*, Kessler, threw the paper's full weight against the proposal:

It was earlier supposed that the fulfilment of the Zionist aim would lead to a normalization of Jewish life also in the Diaspora, and such a steadying and regulating influence may later eventuate. For the moment however, the struggle of the new Jewish State introduces a certain emotional tension beyond its borders. In such an atmosphere of nervous excitement, clear thinking is more necessary by those who are concerned to preserve the fabric of Jewish life.<sup>41</sup>

Beatrice Barwell maintained that 'the impact of the Board of Deputies as the representative body on the mass of the Jewish community in this country is very peripheral. The majority of Jews are unmoved by its work although they benefit from it'.<sup>42</sup>

#### THE AJA

The AJA was established in London in July 1871 on the principles of the *Alliance Israelite*.<sup>43</sup> While the Board was comprised of synagogal delegates, the AJA was a self-elected council of Jewish notables operated almost entirely by the older families, 'the cousinhood', which was rooted before the influx of Jews from Eastern Europe.<sup>44</sup> Although membership was open 'to all British Jews whose aims were to aid in promoting the social, moral and intellectual progress of Jews to obtain protection for those who may suffer in consequence of being Jews', immigrants were not encouraged to join.<sup>45</sup>

The AJA resented the political and ideological changes taking place in Anglo-Jewry and it backed a specific attempt to 'iron out the ghetto bend' deterring working class Jewish youth from joining the Zionist organizations. It supported the Jewish Lads Brigade, founded in 1895, in an attempt to counteract Zionist inroads in the immigrant community.<sup>46</sup> Ardent anti-Zionist diehards, Basil Henriques, and former Conservative Jewish MP, Sir Jack Brunel Cohen, formed the Jewish Fellowship whose aim was to 'uphold the principle that the Jews are a religious community and not a national group'. Henriques found 'Zionism well entrenched in the East End with flourishing Zionist youth groups and he feared that they must somehow undermine British loyalties of the Jewish youngster'.<sup>47</sup>

The AJA vehemently rejected the Balfour Declaration and the premise that a Jewish homeland was the solution to the Jewish problem. Its foreign affairs activities, which were coordinated with the Board ceased in 1944 when it supported establishing a Jewish

State.<sup>48</sup> Following World War II, the AJA could not ignore the fact that over 100,000 DPs were stagnating in camps in Europe and urged the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in 1946 to transfer DPs who ‘elected’ to go to Palestine. In 1947, it welcomed the UNSCOP report that Palestine should be neither Arab nor British and opposed any solution to the Palestine problem, which left the Jews as a minority. By December, it accepted the UN partition decision on Palestine as ‘irreversible’.

President Laski had preferred the US trusteeship suggestion but with its demise and in the light of Israel’s declaration, he agreed on 25 May that the AJA meet to ‘give members an opportunity of knowing what was in the minds of the honorary officers’.<sup>49</sup> Laski told his members that the AJA was maligned by the Board and the ZF, which ‘deliberately, continuously and falsely indoctrinated about the AJA’s attitude to Palestine’. He argued that in the absence of law and order ‘it is difficult to see what other course was open to the Jewish authorities than to set up a provisional government in the area under their control’. Reluctant greetings of support and sympathy were sent to Israel. Laski was concerned that:

The establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine raised problems for the Jews in this and other countries. There was no room for dual allegiance. The Jewish State would not possess any jurisdiction over any Jews other than those who were citizens. British Jews would remain loyal to Britain not merely in name but in thought and deed.<sup>50</sup>

Stein wrote to *The Times* affirming the loyalty of Jewish citizens to Britain.<sup>51</sup> In December 1948, Ewen Montagu, in his first address as president told members that:

With the proclamation of the State of Israel, I believe that the old distinctions, the shibboleths, should have lost their edge. All of us wish the new State well, all of us share the pride which the courage of its leaders and citizens have evoked, all of us share the hope that it will prove a credit to Jewry and a blessing to mankind.<sup>52</sup>

Although the AJA had previously opposed Zionism, individual members’ contributions to the practical development of the *Yishuv* such as Waley-Cohen’s were unmatched by their Zionist detractors. It welcomed Britain’s recognition of Israel in January 1949 and declared it would ‘use its education, cultural and political experience for the promotion of goodwill towards Israel’.<sup>53</sup>

## THE ZF

Founded in 1899, and affiliating a year later to the WZO, the ZF was a major institution in Anglo-Jewry. On the eve of World War I, it had over fifty branches and by 1915 had collected a petition in favour of a ‘publicly recognised, legally secured home for the Jewish people in Palestine signed by 50,000 members of the Anglo-Jewish community’.<sup>54</sup>

As long as the prospect of a Jewish state remained a pipe dream and Britain ruled Palestine, the ZF distanced itself from the WZO, which attacked Britain’s policies.<sup>55</sup> ZF

functionaries saw themselves as the link to the British political and social establishment. Although it facilitated and promoted important developments, its influence waned, as Jewish Agency and WZO representatives in London preferred to deal directly with British officials.<sup>56</sup>

It is thought that some 3,000 British Jews had emigrated to Palestine during the Mandate.<sup>57</sup> Apart from Moshe Rosette who was appointed Secretary to the Knesset and a handful of activists, the leadership made no commitment to emigrate to Israel.<sup>58</sup> Lavi Bakstansky, Chairman of the ZF, had emigrated to Palestine from Russia and was educated there. Having permanently settled in Britain, he defined Zionism as the 'Jewish national philosophy of life' and the new task of Zionists was to deal with practical issues such as teaching Hebrew, pioneering and fund raising. *Aliya* was not mentioned.<sup>59</sup>

At first glance, the establishment of the State of Israel appears to have led to a direct expansion in the ZF and its activities. Zionist societies sprouted up all over Britain, especially in the provinces and on the university campuses, and membership of Zionist youth organizations rose.<sup>60</sup> The 1949 *Jewish Year Book* listed more Zionist affiliated organizations than any other political, religious or cultural organization. Many non-Zionist organizations were also connected to Israel in some manner or other, such as the Economic Board for Palestine, British ORT, and *B'nai Brith*.

After the ZF's goal of setting up a Jewish state was realized it feared it would become redundant. It was therefore forced to redefine its role by ensuring that it would speak on behalf of Anglo-Jewry on all matters relating to Zionism, Israel and the Middle East. The ZF was misguided in thinking that it could continue as the main link between Britain and Israel. This manifested itself in the tense relationship with the Legation.

The creation of Israel acted as a catalyst for social, religious, charitable and Zionist activities and the ZF brought together Jews of different outlooks, which was unparalleled in Anglo-Jewish history.

#### THE *JEWISH CHRONICLE*: 'THE VOICE OF ANGLO-JEWRY'

Established in 1841, its motto was 'the voice of Anglo-Jewry'. An institution in itself, 'the paper provided an indispensable medium between British Jews and the wider society, interpreting matters of Jewish interest (as understood by the paper), and offering a response that amounted, virtually, to the view of Anglo-Jewry'.<sup>61</sup>

The Kesslers established two trusts to institutionalize the *JC's* editorial independence from individual proprietors, or from outside business interests who might have sought to take it over. Kimche asked 'how can they project themselves in all honesty to speak for Anglo-Jewry which has no voice in its conduct?'.<sup>62</sup> Its editor David Kessler, a liberal-minded Jew and an active member of the AJA, was determined that the paper should reflect the widest possible range of Jewish opinions and traditions.<sup>63</sup>

The paper published Herzl's *Jewish State*, alongside editor Myers' vitriolic attack on Zionism but by 1917, its attitude to Zionism had mellowed. The publication of Balfour's letter to Lord Rothschild was planned to coincide with its weekly publication on Friday so that it could print the letter and cover the story. It also became an intermediary between Jewish public opinion and the Mandatory government.<sup>64</sup>

Between the years 1946 and 1948, the editorial tone was set by writers who included Jewish Agency official Eban, Bentwich and Hodess. Reports on terrorism and repression in Palestine were buried in the inside pages while Jewish-British cooperation, and moves toward a positive settlement were placed on the front page. The King David Hotel bombing was ‘an abominable and universally condemned crime’. The paper’s stance on the Jewish underground was completely revamped. Ambivalence was replaced by the assertion that terrorism was inimical to the ideals of Zionism. During the ‘Exodus affair’ in July 1947, exclusive graphic accounts were supplied to Kessler from an ex-army colleague, Moshe Pearlman, the *Haganah* spokesperson.<sup>65</sup> Kessler opposed Partition as impracticable because no fewer than 42 per cent of Jews would find themselves citizens of the Arab state.<sup>66</sup>

The *JC*’s Friday edition coincided with the anticipated historic declaration of the Jewish state later that day. Kessler’s editorial, ‘May 15’ noted that ‘profound mistakes have been committed during the period of thirty years’ rule, but the overall picture is one on which time will look back with gratitude’. It noted that while a ‘proclamation of a wholly sovereign State may be held temporarily in abeyance. There can be no doubt that the Jewish State will emerge and in anticipation of that historic event, we salute its advent and wish it well’.<sup>67</sup>

Following international recognition, the *JC* lambasted the Government’s position, as ‘the most anomalous and the least creditable of all’. It reminded Minister of Defence Shinwell that Britain had failed to prevent British officers serving in the Arab Legion, from fighting Jews in Jerusalem. It was rare to cite the name of a minister, the fact that he was Jewish had some bearing on its inclusion. It urged closer ties with Israel and condemned Bevin’s policy, which was detrimental to Britain’s interests: ‘As British Jews conscious of our ties with Israel and jealous of the good name of Great Britain, we endorse this protest at the Government’s travesty of its historic role in the realm of foreign affairs’.<sup>68</sup>

## RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Anglo-Jewish denominations referred to ‘Zion’ or to ‘the return to Zion’ in their liturgies. The emergence of Israel affected Jewish law and practices, not only in Israel but also in the Diaspora. In Britain, there was no umbrella organization representing all Jewish denominations, but the ‘Chief Rabbi of the British Empire’ who represented only the United Synagogue considered himself the spiritual head of Anglo-Jewry, and was regarded as such by the British establishment.

In 1946, Joseph Hertz the Chief Rabbi since 1913, who had been sympathetic to Zionism, died. Anglo-Jewry displayed a cautious defensiveness towards general society, which was reflected in the choice of a new Chief Rabbi in 1948’. The most impressive candidate was Alexander Altman, a Hungarian by birth and educated in Germany, but lay leaders whose votes would decide the election were concerned that the appointment of a ‘foreigner’ would call into question the community’s patriotism. Dr Israel Brodie was elected despite Altman’s superior credentials and remained in office until 1965. The fact that he was British born, educated at Oxford and accepted by the Anglo-Jewish establishment was the deciding factor in his successful election.<sup>69</sup>



Figure 7.2 Dr. Israel Brodie, Chief Rabbi of Britain and the British Commonwealth

Source: The Zionist Federation Year Book

Six weeks separated Brodie's inauguration and declaration of the State of Israel. Although he noted the importance of Israel in his book, *A Word in Season* in 1959, he did not refer once to the emergence of a Jewish state after 2,000 years in his inaugural address on 28 June 1948.<sup>70</sup> When he met Elath in 1950, he assured him of his full support and assistance: 'English Jewry was almost without exception, staunch in its support for Israel, but very concerned about the religious aspect of the new State'.<sup>71</sup> He had no qualms in telling Elath that 'Laxity in religious observance in the life of the State would have deplorable results by antagonising the bulk of world Jewry, especially within the U.K. and the Commonwealth'.

Although Brodie sanctioned the 'Prayer for the State of Israel' in 1949, it was not fully integrated in all *Authorized Prayer Books* until 1962. It was not until 1955 that the United Synagogue finally sanctioned Israel's Independence Day celebrations. Brodie explained that:

Nevertheless, this year official hesitation about the desirability or manner of the celebration of Independence Day in this country has given way to the overwhelming desire of masses of our people throughout the country to celebrate the day in a fitting and proper manner.<sup>72</sup>

*The Independence Day Order of Service Book* appeared in 1964. He refused to sanction the Modern Hebrew pronunciation in synagogues.<sup>73</sup> Hampstead Synagogue's decision to introduce the Modern Sephardi pronunciation to its services was deemed 'contrary to the

by-laws of the United Synagogue'. He recommended that Ministers make a JPA appeal during the sermons on the eve of the Day of Atonement and recited a prayer he composed when the Israeli Legation was raised to Embassy in October 1952. He called the event a 'glorious occasion'.<sup>74</sup>

Elath was critical of Brodie's decision not to visit Israel, which indicated that the Chief Rabbinate did not regard Israel as a priority. He had visited the US and Australia on extensive tours. After much discussion about the itinerary Brodie finally decided to make his belated pilgrimage to Israel in March 1953. Although he was overwhelmed at Israel's accomplishments he wrote that, 'one has to be prepared for cold douche of reality and disillusionment' at the extent of the secularization of Israel. He later wrote, 'we had great hopes for Israel at first. We thought it might be better than other nations, but it is no better'.<sup>75</sup>

Brodie inherited office at a time when the United Synagogue was embroiled in controversy concerning the affiliation of synagogues to the ZF. The Central Synagogue Committee of the ZF announced in June 1948 that 110 synagogues had affiliated to the ZF including congregations from the United Synagogue. Montagu, rejected the ZF's attempt 'to form a press gang' to achieve its ends.<sup>76</sup> Even if it was agreed upon by 99 per cent of the congregation, this was in direct contradiction of the principles of the constitution of the United Synagogue, since members had joined according to their religious service preferences and for no other reason.

He attracted angry reactions in the *JC*, which was deluged with letters in favour of affiliation. One reader noted sardonically that perhaps there would now be objections to the prayer, 'gather us together from the four corners of the earth, and lead us upright to our land' because there were members who did not believe in it. He asked why the binding religious duty of building up the Jewish state did not come within the scope of the United Synagogue. Redolent of Herzl's appeal to the masses in the East End, Israel's creation brought 'a new-found dignity and status which the creation of the State of Israel has conferred upon our people'.<sup>77</sup>

The creation of the Jewish state seems to have had little impact on the executive of the United Synagogue as illustrated in the histories of the institution, which made no reference to Israel or its impact on the Synagogue.<sup>78</sup> In June 1948, Montagu threw out a proposal to welcome the State of Israel because 'the resolution did not fall within the purposes of the United Synagogue'. A congregant questioned the establishment's anachronistic approach to Judaism:

The *Amida* [prayer longing for the return to Zion], will have to be severely cut to conform to this new law as enunciated by Mr. Montagu... For an institution to allow the prayer, and, indeed, encourage this prayer, and yet to forbid the welcoming of the first step towards the fulfilment of this prayer, is an institution without its feet on the ground.<sup>79</sup>

With the advent of a Jewish state after 2,000 years, the question was how the restoration of a Jewish state would affect future Anglo-Jewish life. The major achievement of the religious Zionist movement, *Mizrachi*, was in bringing members of the United Synagogue into the mainstream of Zionist politics. Its status was enhanced in January



1949 when *Mizrachi*, represented by the National Religious Party, joined the first government in Israel.

General Secretary, Barry Mindel argued that the Land of Israel was the home of Judaism and it would now once again become the spiritual centre of world Jewry: 'Judaism would recapture the thread severed at the close of the Talmud, and become organically alive again'. He warned against the false doctrine promoted by ZF leaders that, having established Israel, Anglo-Jewry's task was complete. The Jewish state was never an end in itself but 'the means of cementing the scattered Jewish communities all over the world giving Jewry a new lease of life'. They feared that Israel, divorced from its ancient tradition would adversely affect the religious and spiritual life of the Diaspora: 'What is meant by Zionism is not just partnership, but that Jewish education, Jewish religion, everything connected with Jewish life, should be connected with Israel. This has not yet been achieved'.<sup>80</sup>

Rabbi Yehezkel Abramsky wrote on 'Orthodox Jewry and Israel' in the *Jewish Chronicle*. As a senior judge at the *Beth Din* (Court of the Chief Rabbi), he was seen to reflect Brodie's position. He did not deny that 'the land of Israel is the one place that is wholly fit for the Torah' however, 'if the Jews of Israel forsook the Torah way of life and abandoned Jewish tradition, a situation would arise fraught with danger, as the example would be followed by Jews in the Diaspora'. As long as the situation in Israel remained unclear, Jews should remain in the Diaspora.<sup>81</sup>

The response of the Progressive movement, which accounted for less than 10 per cent of synagogue membership, was more complex.<sup>82</sup> Although it greeted Israel, it was deeply concerned that a centralized Orthodox rabbinate would issue religious edicts, which would adversely affect its congregants. The Liberal Synagogue's stance reflected that of the AJA whose leaders were active congregants.

Dr Maybaum, Rabbi of the Edgware Reform Synagogue, articulated a non-Zionist, non-orthodox stance on Anglo-Jewry's relationship with Israel:

Whether the Jewish State is what we wanted or not, it is now a fact. It concerns the lives of our brothers and sisters in Palestine, it concerns the future of a part of the Jewish people, and thus we must share the burden and the responsibility and must cooperate with the leaders of this Jewish State.<sup>83</sup>

He rebuked non-Zionists for refusing to accept that the Diaspora was incapable of replacing Israel as the Jewish centre and accepting that Anglo-Jewry was on the periphery of the Jewish world.<sup>84</sup> A reader of the *JC* condemned his stance: 'Of one thing we may be perfectly assured, that the grandchildren of contemporary Israel will still be reading the Bible and post biblical literature, with edification and inspiration. What will the grandchildren of Progressive Jews in Edgware be reading?'<sup>85</sup> (Jewish schools later won awards for excellence!).

The creation of Israel presented Anglo-Jewry with a *fait accompli* and the debate on the desirability of a Jewish state became extraneous. The majority of Anglo-Jewry looked at Israel's birth as sympathetic spectators and few declared their intention of emigrating. Brodetsky embodied the consensus view that the aim of Zionism was no longer the

securing of a Jewish State, but ensuring ‘the interest and support of those Jews who remained outside Israel’.<sup>86</sup>

#### WORKING OUT THE RELATIONSHIP: THE ISRAELI EMBASSY AND ANGLO-JEWRY

Britain granted Israel *de facto* recognition on Saturday, 29 December 1949. Linton and Yapou, in deference to the auspicious occasion, and without reference to instructions from the MFA, went on foot to meet Bevin at the Foreign Office. He told them that he wanted to deal directly with Israel and wished to avoid ‘the intermediary of other Jewish bodies, Members of Parliament, and other individuals’.<sup>87</sup>

Before establishing formal relations, Linton, former political secretary of the Jewish Agency, was appointed Acting Representative and Consul-General in London.<sup>88</sup> The MFA possessed an excellent knowledge of Britain and Anglo-Jewry. Director-General, Eytan was educated in Britain, Sharett studied at the LSE, and Eban and Avner were presidents of the prestigious Cambridge and Oxford Unions respectively, who worked for the Jewish Agency. Linton, Morris, Rosenne, Yaakov Herzog, Harman and Kimche hailed from Britain. Ben-Gurion himself had sojourned in Britain for periods including the blitz.<sup>89</sup>

The appointment of the religious Mordechai Eliash as Israel’s Minister was a sensitive gesture.<sup>90</sup> He was an Oxford graduate, served in the Jewish Agency’s Legal Department, and was Legal Adviser to the National Council.<sup>91</sup> His wife, who had passed away, was British. Jewish Agency officials had neglected contacts with synagogues but Eliash’s regular appearances at St John’s Wood United Synagogue, an influential centre of Jewish public opinion where he led prayers, was a salient factor in improving ties with the community.

The Legation’s premises in Manchester Square were in the heart of the fashionable and expensive part of the West End. The building was officially inaugurated at a celebration on 31 January 1949 where a crowd, reported to be ‘several thousands’, watched the affixing of the *mezuzah* and the traditional blessing. A girl who had escaped from Germany in 1935, and was now an Israeli citizen, unfurled the Israeli flag. The crowd stood in silence to the memory of those had fallen so ‘that the State of Israel may live’.<sup>92</sup>

The Chief Rabbinate’s absence was conspicuous. Prayers were recited for the safety and security of the State of Israel and ‘for divine wisdom to guide its leaders and Government’. A torah scroll was carried into the Legation with the words, ‘Out of Zion shall go forth the Torah’. Linton described the scene:

Standing there as we waited for three o’clock, we saw the Sefer Torah being carried through the crowd, and inconsequentially my mind conjured up the picture of the Olympic bearer entering the arena at the opening of the Olympic games. Here too, was a torch of a different kind, one that had lit the night of the ghettos for centuries.<sup>93</sup>

Eliahu Elath, Ambassador to the US, was appointed to replace Eliash upon his sudden death in March 1950.<sup>94</sup> The *JC* welcomed the decision to send a high-ranking senior diplomat to Britain.<sup>95</sup> Elath officially took up his duties on 7 July, but with no one to whom he could present his credentials, the King was on holiday, he found himself in a state of limbo, with neither accreditation nor official diplomatic status. In the interim, he met with Anglo-Jewish personalities, Marks, Sieff and Sacher with whom he met in the US. He regarded the latter as ‘the most important and accurate source and knowledge of Anglo-Jewry’.<sup>96</sup> Marks purchased the 58, Avenue Road for the Legation in the fashionable area of St John’s Wood, which became the Ambassador’s official residence. It was the birthplace of Herbert Bentwich and Herzl was hosted there during his visits to London.<sup>97</sup>



Figure 7.3 The Israeli flag being hoisted during the inauguration ceremony at the Israeli Legation, 18 Manchester Square, London, 29 January 1949 [note the torah scroll on the balcony]

*Source:* Hulton Archive Picture Collection

Elath had a dual function, Israel's Minister and 'Minister Plenipotentiary Envoy Extraordinary to its Jews'. George VI once startled Brodie by mentioning to him that he had the day before received 'your ambassador', (Elath). In February 1951, Edwin Samuel, noted that Anglo-Jewry regarded 'the Minister of Israel in London as a symbol of normality after centuries of being different'.<sup>98</sup>

Elath inherited an important asset in Doris May, a gentile Zionist, whom he appointed as his personal secretary. She had worked for Stein and later for Weizmann. She had a deep understanding of the Jewish Agency and enjoyed an intimate relationship with Ben-Gurion during the War. Another significant appointment was that of Lord Nathan as Legal Adviser to the Legation. A non-Zionist and member of the AJA, he offered his services *ex gratis*.

### THE AJA

The *modus operandi* regarding the relationship between the State of Israel and the non-Zionist American Jewish Committee had a rippling affect on the AJA's attitude to Israel.<sup>99</sup>

Eliash dedicated his energies to cultivating the support of non-Zionist personalities. In May 1949, he spent an evening with Stein, which 'did a good deal to dispel the complex of estrangement from which he is suffering, and he promised full assistance.'<sup>100</sup> After presenting his credentials, Eliash was a dinner guest at the home of Neville Laski who formally invited him to speak at the forthcoming AJA dinner. He also received a 'courtesy visit' from AJA President Montagu and two senior honorary officers who expressed close interest in Israeli institutions connected with Anglo-Jewry.

Elath continued Eliash's work of cultivating ties with the non-Zionists but was 'careful not to be running after them, after all, I was Israel's representative and they would in time after noticing that other dignitaries had met with me, not want to be left out'.<sup>101</sup> He was aware of the importance of 'neutral territory' to meet with those who did not wish to meet at the Legation. He used two venues, the Travellers Club where he was a member and the home of James de Rothschild in London.<sup>102</sup>

There was a general thaw among the 'cousinhood' after British recognition of Israel. Kessler offered 'every assistance in his power' including an invitation to meet with leaders of the AJA who 'entertained friendly feelings with Israel...while disagreeing with local Zionists, were willing to cooperate with the representatives of the State'. Two weeks later, Kessler hosted a lunch for Elath together with Montagu, Montefiore, and Stein who 'placed himself at the Minister's disposal whenever his help might be required'. Not to be outdone, Lord Samuel, leader of the Liberals in the House of Lords, invited Elath to his home where he suggested that he could help Elath to enlarge his 'acquaintance with the Jewish community'. Samuel appreciated that Elath did not discuss his tenure as High Commissioner.<sup>103</sup>

Elath had a close relationship with the Rothschilds who pledged to build Israel's major institutions and had a warm regard for Waley Cohen whose impressive responsibilities included, Director of the Shell Transport and Trading Company President of the United Synagogue, and Chairman of the Economic Board of Palestine Corporation. Waley Cohen had set his heart on the establishment of a stock exchange in Israel as a means of

facilitating closer economic and financial relations. He became such a major investor in Israel's economy that 'one almost suspects that he was a Zionist in spite of himself'.<sup>104</sup>

In December 1950, Elath attended the 80th Anniversary Dinner of the United Synagogue. Waley Cohen Chairman of the Dinner, made laudatory remarks about Israel followed by a speech in his honour by Montagu, who proposed a toast to Israel in the warmest terms. An astonished Elath reported that:

It was a spectacle of considerable historical significance that it should be he, the son of Lord Swaythling, brother of Edwin Montagu, and President of the Anglo-Jewish Association, who delivered the outstanding Zionist speech on such an occasion. The few Zionists present at the celebration couldn't believe their ears and several told me afterwards that the evening marked a highly significant turningpoint in the attitude of the 'assimilationist' Jews in England... I hope that my American experience in this respect will be of some help, in attempting to maintain the required balance in relations with both Zionists and non-Zionists, and to demonstrate my intention, as the representative of Israel, to unite all our friends around us without distinction as to community or party.<sup>105</sup>

Brodetsky told Elath that Montagu and the AJA were 'more anti-Zionist than Bevin himself'.<sup>106</sup> Elath noted: 'To anyone brought up as I was, to regard the A.J.A. as identified with an anti-Zionist, or at best a "neutral"', point of view, it was a pleasant surprise to find not only politeness, but a real understanding of the importance for World Jewry including Anglo-Jewry of the existence of a strong and prosperous Israel'.<sup>107</sup>

The 1951 AJA's Annual General Meeting discussed the question of public criticism of Israel:

We must never forget that to Jews it could never be a foreign state like any other foreign state. It would be hypocrisy to pretend that for a Jew what happened in Israel was neither more nor less important than what happened in, say, Ethiopia. If anything went seriously wrong with Israel, there is no Jew for whom that would not be a real personal grief.

The AJA drew an exception on the matter of religious legislation in Israel, which affected Anglo-Jewry's religious conscience.

## THE ZF

The Legation had a comparatively easier time cultivating the non-Zionists than the ZF. Elath described relations with the ZF as 'the very best' but its officers were dispirited with their weakened role. The founding of the State undoubtedly contributed to its lack of direction and difficulty to come to terms with the rapid decline of its political work.

Comay understood there were many Jews who were deeply moved by Israel and anxious to play their part in building it up, however:

They want to deal directly with Israel and its representatives and they do not want to accept the Zionist bodies as their middleman... The Israel missions have become precisely what the Jewish Agency was supposed to become twenty-five years ago, the focus of all Jewish effort for Israel regardless of whether such effort is produced from official Zionist circles or not...it would be absurd to tell people... That they cannot talk to us directly but must apply to...77 Great Russell Street.<sup>108</sup>

The ZF had the misguided notion that it alone represented the community on matters relating to Zionism and Israel, which derived from a vague understanding in 1948 whereby Israel would take care of its internal affairs and official representatives abroad, while the Jewish Agency would represent the Jewish people in relation to Israel.

The ZF's Political Committee was replaced in 1949 by the Public Relations and Information Committee because 'Zionist political work as hitherto understood had become the prerogative of the State of Israel, leaving the ZF certain duties in the field of public relations'.<sup>109</sup> Despite good relations between the ZF and the Legation, Eliash appealed to Bakstansky to withdraw a motion at the Annual Conference calling on Britain to grant *de jure* recognition because:

The thing was done without previous consultation and evidently without realising that the normal reaction in British circles would be that the demand was instigated by us, we making use of the Conference to press for the fulfilment of a dire need of our own...I feel very strongly against any suggestion that we are begging for *de jure* recognition.<sup>110</sup>

The establishment of Israel appears to have led to a direct expansion in ZF activity. The years, 1948–55 show an increase in the number of registered affiliates from 389 to 470 and the number of delegates attending the ZF Annual Conferences rose from 899, to 1,124. There was a rise in annual JPA (Joint Palestine Appeal) contributions from £500,000 to £1.5m, and a three-fold increase in the yearly number of individual JPA contributors from 10,000 to 29,000. In 1948, direct annual subscribers to the ZF numbered over one thousand, contributing between them £9,200, almost £4,000 more than in 1947.

In 1949, the number dropped to 900 whose contributions totalled no more than £5,750. This was due in part, to economic reasons but also to the notion that the ZF was now redundant.<sup>111</sup> The ZF was in dire need of a total overhaul. The JPA's contributors fell steadily after 1948 and remained well below 20,000 for several years, never rising above 31,000. Visits of Israeli personalities did little to stem the decline. The moribund state of Zionist activity and the absurd situation whereby Israel was expected to invigorate Zionism and *Aliya* was discussed by the Jewish Agency Executive and by Israel's Cabinet.<sup>112</sup>

The 1951 Jubilee Conference reported decreasing subscriptions to the ZF-sponsored *Zionist Review*. The ZF was the largest UK Jewish organization, but had less than 10,000 subscribers. J.K.Goldbloom succeeded in launching a massive campaign on behalf of the Central Zionist Synagogue Council to enlist the congregations to the *Shekel* Campaign hoping it would 'create a living link between Israel's Houses of Prayer and Israel'.<sup>113</sup>

It was no consolation to the delegates at the 1951 ZF Annual Conference to hear guest speaker Nahum Goldmann, Chairman of the US section of the Jewish Agency, tell them that 'the emergence of Israel had complicated rather than facilitated the problem of world Jewish unity'. Elath reported that, 'one could not escape the feeling of a decline in leadership, of a general pall, a general dullness that now seems to envelop British Zionism'. He considered appeals to help re-build the ZF but was apprehensive of the potential pitfalls of interfering in the internal affairs of the Jewish community.<sup>114</sup> In January 1952, he placated ZF leaders by initiating a joint plan to overcome the danger of the growing apathy in the Zionist movement whereby members were encouraged to be more active in local and national politics and to increase activities where Jews were already active.<sup>115</sup>

The 1952 ZF Annual Conference convened in the shadow of plans to reconstitute the Jewish Agency, which would increase the number of non-Zionists. Delegates felt they were being shunted aside for the sake of those who had done little in the struggle for the creation of a Jewish state and attempts to co-opt non-Zionist groups into the Jewish Agency were opposed.<sup>116</sup> Among the prominent speakers was Brodetsky, who had recently returned to Britain a bitter man after his disastrous term as Chancellor of the Hebrew University.<sup>117</sup> He asserted that there was nothing more dangerous for the Jewish people than 'the present party system in Israel' and that 'parties within the Zionist Organization were meaningless and absurd'. Alluding to the AJA, he believed that 'a Zionist today was a Jew who understood the meaning of the Jewish State and was prepared to sacrifice himself for it', but among those applauding that 'only Jews who could be relied upon to stand and die for the Zionists', very few were prepared to do so. After making a plea for unity, Guest of Honour Elath, was heckled by Rightwing Executive Chairman, Ashe Lincoln who bellowed that 'Israel was developing along the lines most distasteful for Jews who had Judaism in their hearts'.<sup>118</sup>

The pall continued at the 1953 ZF Conference, which was curtailed to one day. The apathy of the delegates was characterized by an absence of contributions from the body of the hall where there was little discussion. All fifty resolutions, including the annual report, and the accounts were passed in a matter of a few minutes. At the 1954 Conference marking the 50th anniversary of Herzl's death, only 157 of the total 623 delegates took part in the crucial debate on the emergence of a General Zionist group, aligned with *Herut* in Israel. In 1955, sessions were sparsely attended with only 92 of the 600 delegates bothering to vote on radical proposals to restructure the ZF.<sup>119</sup>

Chaim Bermant wrote, 'since 1948 the Zionist Federation has been like a board of a company, which has been nationalised, which has much goodwill, an immense pool of experience, some capital, and no clear idea what to do with itself'.<sup>120</sup>

## PRO-ISRAEL PRESSURE GROUPS

With an overwhelming government majority in 1945, Zionist lobbyists required more sophisticated tactics of influencing party and government decisions, which did not restrict itself to the confines of parliament.<sup>121</sup> Max Beloff noted that:

While it is true that British Jewry is hampered in acting as a pressure group by the rigid party discipline, which notably affected Jewish Labour M.P.s during the late Ernest Bevin's unfortunate tenure of the Foreign Office, its actions within the scope allowed by party politics has been recognised as perfectly legitimate.<sup>122</sup>

It would be misleading however, to use the term 'pressure group' to describe Zionist activity in Britain, as in the US.

Throughout the Mandate, the Jewish Agency solicited Jews and gentiles and lobbied MPs without facing accusations of dual allegiances. The first effective lobbying group was *PZ (Poale Zion)*, which was one of only four organizations to be affiliated to the Labour Party in 1920. In 1945, it had sixteen branches and a membership of 1,300, although officially, it was listed at 2,000.<sup>123</sup> It sponsored pro-Zionist parliamentary candidates, one of whom, Denis Healey became MP for Leeds SE, a constituency with a sizeable Jewish community. He was later Secretary of the International Bureau and Deputy Prime Minister.

The paradox of *PZ's* lobbying was that the parliamentary leaders who objected most strongly to its tactics responded most favourably to the contacts offered to them by the Embassy. Commenting on its Annual Report, Lourie observed that, 'at a superficial glance the report makes quite impressive reading but your [Avner] rather poor opinion of their effectiveness in fact is fully borne out by my own recollections, out of date though they may be'. *PZ* Chairman Levenberg, 'considered himself the representative' of the Jewish Agency, the *Histadrut* and *Mapai*, which hampered the work of Labour Attaché, Ben-Tal.<sup>125</sup>

In 1946, the ZF and the Board launched a constituency campaign against the Government's Palestine policy but only six Jewish MPs could be persuaded, after desperate lobbying to speak out.<sup>126</sup> After the passing of the pro-Zionist 'transfer' resolution at the 1944 Labour Party Annual Conference, Bevin succeeded in persuading *PZ* to withdraw a resolution at the 1946 Conference calling on the Government to fulfil its election promises to the Jews.<sup>127</sup>

Elath approached potential lobbyists with caution, the AIA Anglo-Israel Association (AIA) was a case in point. He requested permission to accept an AIA invitation to become its first president. He noted that ambassadors often accepted honorary positions in organizations promoting bilateral ties. It could circumvent the ZF's monopoly as the only pro-Israel pressure group. Eytan requested that he decline because of the complexities in the relationship between Israel's diplomats and the local Jewish communities. Furthermore, a pro-Israel group should not be connected to the Legation, the ZF, or to the Jewish community, and that the AIA's success would be best served by appointing a gentile.

Formed in 1949, the AIA asserted that it 'would be able to undertake the cultural and educational work, which the Legation is not in a position to do'. Sir Wyndham Deedes, First Secretary to the Mandate, served as its first president.<sup>128</sup> It numbered 38 members, 20 of whom were MPs, rising to 222 members in September 1950. Kidron was damning of the AIA. He disagreed with Eytan's stance and asked how the 'Anglo-Israel Association which is not officially connected with either the State of Israel or the Zionist movement, and whose members are largely non-Jewish, can perform a very important



function'. Bentwich was described as 'dead wood and seldom there', and Gollancz who was 'active in getting the organisation started, is now active in trying to close it... An assessment therefore, of its present value is that its disappearance would hardly be noticed'.<sup>129</sup>

Labour MP Janner, president of the ZF and later of the Board, was persistent in his questioning of Foreign Office policy towards Israel and regarded himself as the parliamentary spokesperson for Israel. Elath reported that he was 'an old and devoted friend of ours, always ready to go through fire and water to help us. Indeed our main trouble is not to secure his help but to restrain him on occasions when his enthusiasm outruns his judgement'. Elath rebuked him for asking a Parliamentary Question on arms: 'HMG will never believe that the President of the English Zionist Federation would put down a question without consulting the Israel Embassy, they can only conclude that we are trying to exert pressure on them in advance, and even before we have opened official negotiations'. Janner was devastated.<sup>130</sup>

Avner noted that, 'basically Janner, is, I am afraid, regarded as a good deal of a fool'. He complained that:

We have recently been trying to influence the English Zionist Federation in the desirable direction so far as concerns their so-called 'political work'. They want to continue doing 'political work' because they like it, because they somehow believe it to be of real importance, and because they see in it one of the remedies for the moribund state of English Zionism. In their zeal, they have recently got their people to talk to various MP.s on subjects which we had not authorised, they have submitted to MPs resolutions which we would certainly have drafted rather differently, and generally they tend to do the kind of running after friendly MP.s which is apt to be resented by these latter as unnecessary and irksome (*'nudnikitzerei'*), since it is just these MP.s who are almost in week to week contact with the Ambassador himself.<sup>131</sup>

He argued that Zionist pressure groups had the adverse affect of alienating those MPs who were sympathetic to Zionism and Israel and recommended that the future lay in associations and inter-parliamentary visits, not in party pressure groups. The Embassy should avoid leaving lobbying to one specific group.<sup>132</sup>

In December 1954, the Embassy evaluated its relations with the Jewish community. Consul Rehavam Amir expressed considerable concern at the apparent decline of the ZF's influence on the life of the Jewish community:

Despite the many-sided activity, serious concern has arisen that in practical terms we have not managed to penetrate the life of the Jewish Community. Nor do we occupy a recognised position within it, and our influence, both direct and latent, despite all our efforts does not exceed that of the circle of local Zionists or of groups who think they are Zionist.<sup>133</sup>



Figure 7.4 Barnett Janner MP,  
Chairman of the ZF of Great Britain  
and Ireland and President of the Board  
of Deputies of British Jews

*Source:* Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office



Figure 7.5 Rehavam Amir, Israeli  
Consul

*Source:* Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office

The British General Election of 1955 proved to be a turning point. Elath requested the ZF to lobby MPs and prospective candidates. He explained that: 'Though the Jewish vote is of course less important than in the States, nevertheless, the individual appeals to MPs do count, especially in closely contested constituencies where a few votes may turn the scale one way or the other'. It produced a flurry of activity, which gave Bakstansky the 'chance of doing something to help'.<sup>134</sup>

#### ULTRA-ORTHODOX ANTI-ZIONISM

In May 1949, Eliash was the guest of honour at a reception organized by the *Agudah*, which was a direct consequence of the party's decision to join the government in Israel. Eliash was convinced that 'they wanted to anticipate Mizrachi' and saw 'no objection whatever to compensate their haste'.<sup>135</sup>

The extreme orthodox view was enunciated by Harry Goodman, self-appointed representative of *Agudah* and a vehement critic of Zionism and the Jewish State. He was also at a loss to explain why *Agudah* leader, Rabbi Levin, had affixed his signature to Israel's Declaration of Independence. He alleged that 'the Board of Deputies was controlled by Gt Russell Street' (HQ of the ZF) and dismissed the idea that the land of Palestine was dearer than the people were. Six million Jews had been massacred 'but where had the Zionists been to create a place for them? What other people, than the British had ever offered anything to the Jews?'<sup>136</sup> An active member of the AJA, he caused much embarrassment to the Anglo-Jewish establishment and the Legation, which often attracted media attention.

In January 1950, he petitioned Sherringham at the Foreign Office to intercede on behalf of 'his persecuted ultra-Orthodox colleagues in Palestine' and to implement the internationalization of Jerusalem, claiming that *Agudah* leader, Rabbi Levin, had told him it 'would be a good thing'. Levin had not mentioned this to Sherringham when they met and Chargé d'Affaires, David Balfour, concluded that: 'Goodman does not seem to be in line on all points with present day Agudist opinion in Israel. Here they regard him to be unsound'. His colleagues thought that he visited the Foreign Office too often.

In October 1952, Elath reported that: 'I am very concerned at the reinforcing of anti-Israel propaganda among religious Jewish groups here,' which 'attempts to depict Israel as a destroyer of religion, as undermining [Jewish] values and as a creature that must be fraught rather than assisted'. Goodman was cited as the main protagonist, whose visits to synagogues and other antics had a disturbing influence on religious Jews.

Goodman refused an invitation to attend a synagogue service in honour of Israeli *Mizrachi* leader, Rabbi Maimon because he supported what he considered, anti-Jewish legislation. He quoted out of context Israeli Chief Rabbi Herzog that 'our task is serving the God of Israel, not the State of Israel'.<sup>138</sup>

Legislation passed in the *Knesset*, which required religious women to perform non-military National Service brought protests from Brodie who sent a telegram to Israel. Elath was deeply concerned by Goodman's vitriolic attack on the Embassy's 'interference' and his cooperation with anti-Zionist *Neturei-Karta*:

Even the Chief Rabbi, who is a sincere and devoted friend of Israel has, not only under the pressure of the Agudah, but also of the Mizrachi and their supporters in many communities and synagogues all over the country, produced a critical statement condemning in cautious terms, the Government's religious policies.<sup>139</sup>

Goodman protested the Zionist discrimination of orthodox Jews. Hundreds protested outside the Embassy while a delegation from the European Rabbinical Council of *Agudah*, led by him, was inside meeting with Elath. Fearing for the safety of his staff, Elath called in the police. It ensured widespread coverage. The Embassy was deluged with allegations of discrimination against Jews in Israel. The *JC* opposed ultra-Orthodox demonstrations because, 'much of the present opposition comes from elements which, in Israel still have as their background habits and conditions of medieval or ghetto life, in which women are kept very much at home'. The *ZF* condemned the 'Campaign of vilification and misrepresentation initiated by extremist *Agudah* Leaders which seek to discredit the State of Israel and its Leaders in the name of religion'.<sup>140</sup>

#### THE CONTROVERSY OVER JEWISH-ZIONIST EDUCATION

An on going divisive issue in Anglo-Jewry, Diaspora communities and in Israel was the question of education.<sup>141</sup> Anglo-Jewish educators made significant contributions to education in the *Yishuv* including, Joseph Bentwich who had served on the London County Council and upon emigrating to Palestine, became an influential administrator and later in the Israel Ministry of Education.<sup>142</sup>

The post-war baby boom necessitated an appropriate framework, which could provide children with a sound secular education and Jewish educational values, which went beyond the *heder* (Sunday school) system. Although the *ZF* showed interest in education and encouraged Hebrew seminars, the creation of Jewish day schools was not considered a priority because the *ZF* considered itself a 'political and not an educational movement'. The *ZF* was not a pioneer. It was preceded by the Jewish Free School, whose curriculum was supervised by the Chief Rabbi, and by the Jewish Secondary Schools Movement founded in 1929 by Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld.<sup>143</sup> Bermant explained the change in priorities:

The Zionists, again like a company with liquid assets looking for a new field of investment, branched into a new line of business-Jewish day schools...the change in attitude when the organisation...found that it was slipping towards extinction. They were faced with the prospect of a Jewish State without a Jewish world, and they turned to the oldest panacea of all, education.<sup>144</sup>

At a meeting with Anglo-Jewish educators in Israel in June 1953, Ben-Gurion emphasized that every Jewish child should receive Jewish education, with a stress on Bible study and Hebrew literature. The British delegation informed him that the Ministry of Education in Britain was prepared to recognize Hebrew day schools 'provided the

Jewish community facilitate the building premises'. He pondered that it was beholden on the Zionists to pass on Zionism but they were incapable of doing so on their own. He instructed the Embassy to help them set up Jewish day schools with an emphasis on Zionist education.<sup>145</sup>

The Embassy proved a willing partner and under the auspices of the Diaspora Education Department of the Jewish Agency, it provided pro-Zionist Modern Hebrew educators, the dearth of which hampered the ZF to win the initiative from the non-Zionists.<sup>146</sup> Gertner insisted that the ZF work with Synagogue classes, which had an estimated enrolment of 13,000 pupils. Among those who initiated the schools were; Dr Levi Gertner, Head of the Jewish-Zionist Education Department; Rabbi Schonfeld, and Rehavam Amir, Consul at the Embassy.<sup>147</sup>

An important breakthrough came when the Governors of Hillel House Primary School requested the ZF to join them in running the school proposing that a third of the Board be comprised of ZF representatives. The school became a role model for future schools: 'Hillel House schools have earned a reputation for providing the sort of education, which will create good Jews who are also good citizens, and that, after all, should be the aim of all Jewish schools'.<sup>148</sup>

In August 1953, the ZF agreed to establish kindergarten and elementary schools and potential parents were acquainted with ZF policy that 'Jewish education must be run on traditional lines'.<sup>149</sup> Notwithstanding Montagu's opposition, the controversy focused on who controlled Jewish education. Brodie was under pressure from the ultra-orthodox, which feared that 'outside' support would adversely affect their educational institutions. It was inconceivable to them that non-orthodox teachers would be accountable for Jewish education. Despite Jewish Agency and ZF assurances that Jewish education would be based on 'traditional Judaism', Brodie attacked plans to establish schools under the auspices of the ZF:

It is unnecessary and it may even be harmful for the Jewish Agency to come to assistance of our community. I am referring to the education of our children. Not a single penny of Jewish Agency funds should be spent on Jewish education whether in Hebrew classes, Talmud Toras, day-schools, secondary schools, public schools or kindergartens. I therefore most strongly advise the Zionist organizations and groups who have begun to make approaches...to desist. I make this special request to Mizrahi of this country.<sup>150</sup>

The ZF believed its duty to be either establishing Jewish day schools or supporting the inclusion of Modern Hebrew in existing Jewish day schools:

This policy is based upon the conviction that, unless a proper Jewish religious and Modern Hebrew education is given to the children, the present shift from Judaism may result in the growth of a generation which 'did not know Joseph', which will be alien to Judaism, to Jewish principles, to the Jewish religion, to Zionism, to Israel, which will hold aloof from supporting the great work which is proceeding in Israel and

which will, still less, be ready to provide Israel with manpower, so sorely needed particularly from the Western countries.<sup>151</sup>

Willesden's *Ohel Shem* became the first ZF elementary Jewish day school. Before the ZF's association, it numbered 46 pupils. Within two years, the number more than doubled to 115. Standards were sufficiently high to receive praise from the Ministry of Education when all the children won free grammar school places.

Funding was the key issue. The Embassy channelled funds to the schools from anonymous donors and set aside financial resources to bring qualified Israeli Hebrew teachers to acquaint the pupils with Israel through the curriculum.<sup>152</sup>

In 1956, over 30 per cent of Jewish elementary-aged children were enrolled in full-time Jewish elementary day schools. Modern Hebrew and Israel were taught at the Leeds *Talmud Torah* School where ZF members were on the school board. Schools were later established in Glasgow, Manchester and Liverpool and two ZF members sat on the Board of Governors of the Carmel College public school. The ZF's success was due in part to Brodie's failure to present a viable alternative.<sup>153</sup>

The agreement to set up a Zionist day school on the premises of the Edgware United Synagogue paved the way for observant pupils to attend. Anticipating parents' fears of low standards and an insufficient curriculum, the ZF appointed directors from the London Board of Education and the Education Ministry to advise on standards. The school was run by the ZF alone, all Hebraic subjects were taught with the Israeli-Sephardic pronunciation, Israel's achievements formed an integral part of the schools' syllabus, and teachers of secular subjects were not allowed to propagate or spread anti-religion.

The *Aguda* assailed 'Zionist influence' in setting up the *Rosh Pina* elementary school in Edgware. Parents were warned not to enrol their children because the:

Sponsors and governors of the new school are the Gentlemen of Great Russell Street, The Zionist Organization... It is therefore quite clear that the children, who will receive their 'religious tuition' in modern Hebrew, will imbibe a wholesome dose of Herzlism and Weizmanism... Yes, the parents in Edgware who think of sending their children to the "new" school, can rest assured that they will be brought up to be faithful Jews as was Herzl's son or to be as good a 'Yiddishe Mamme' as is Mrs. Golda Myerson. *Keep your Children away!*<sup>154</sup>

The warning had little impact. In the middle of the school year, 40 children enrolled, and in the autumn term, the number doubled. The letter writer to the *JC* in 1949 who asked what their grandchildren would be learning in Edgware, the answer was Torah, Hebrew, Jewish studies and the Land of Israel. The school won awards for excellence.

It is poignant that very few of the children and grandchildren of the Executive Officers of the ZF attended a Jewish day school. Their lack of leadership by example was also manifested in their non-commitment to emigrate to Israel.<sup>155</sup> Despite the valiant attempts to inculcate Jewish education, it was estimated that only 12 per cent of Jewish children attended Jewish schools compared with 70 per cent Roman Catholics.<sup>156</sup>



Figure 7.6 Rosh Pina Jewish elementary day school in Edgware

*Source:* The Zionist Federation Year Book

The ZF-Embassy cooperation on Jewish-Zionist education was significant in preserving the community by presenting an opportunity for children whose parents had given little thought to the matter, to attend Jewish schools. The ZF resurrected and redefined itself by creating a nationwide system of Jewish-Zionist education, which became its most significant achievement during the period.<sup>157</sup> Avner described the Embassy's involvement in Jewish education as 'its finest hour'. Amir had helped sow the seeds for future generations of acculturated British Jews to learn Modern Hebrew, to feel a part of their community, and to the Jewish people and Israel.

#### YOUTH AND STUDENTS

Amir invested much of his energies in cultivating Jewish youth, the majority of whom did not belong to Zionist organizations. The problem was how to bond Israel to the lives of Anglo-Jewish youth. The Embassy and the Jewish Agency's *Youth and Hechalutz* Department facilitated speakers, sports events and communal activities during festivals. They facilitated visits and extended studies to Israel as well helping emigrants to Israel.<sup>158</sup> Their major achievement was the celebration of Israel's Independence Day in youth clubs where Zionism and Israel had previously played little part. It was difficult to believe that there had once been such antagonism by Jewish youth workers towards the first Zionist youth movements.

With the Jewish Agency's and ZF's inertia, Amir provided the direct link for those seeking to emigrate and arranged preparatory courses for potential pioneering youth.<sup>159</sup> British Jews were encouraged to participate in the volunteer *Shacham* programme

(Emergency Service) in the IDF specifically designed for Diaspora young adults who wished to contribute to non-combatant roles or to volunteer in various organizations.<sup>160</sup>

The early 1950s witnessed a rapid increase of Jewish students studying away from their communities. Like its US counterpart, the Hillel Foundation, identified with *Bnai Brith*, was motivated by its recognition of the potential value to the Jewish community of facilitating Jewish Study and instilling commitment in Jewish Students on the campuses. The first Hillel House was founded in London in 1954.<sup>161</sup>

Amir argued that since the ZF had shown little initiative to reach them, suitable Israeli students should be sent to help with activities on the campuses, which would provide a vital link between the campuses and home, and would strengthen their awareness of Jewish culture and affiliation with Israel.<sup>162</sup> University campuses became a Jewish melting pot of diverse Jewish backgrounds and the Embassy was the catalyst in bringing them together.

### THE *JEWISH OBSERVER* AND THE EMBASSY

In 1910, there were 24 Anglo-Jewish weekly newspapers, most in the Yiddish language. By 1956, this number had dropped to five, of which the *Jewish Chronicle* owned three.<sup>163</sup>

Elath noted the lamentable state of the *Jewish Observer and Middle East Review*, which was financed by ZF: ‘It is not in the best of shape; it is a poor runner-up to the *Jewish Chronicle* and looks, from week to week, as if it appears out of sheer inertia... I thought it incumbent upon us to try and see what we can do to help put the whole thing on its feet’.<sup>164</sup>

Jon Kimche, its editor was a former editor of the successful Labour journal, *Tribune*, and wrote several books on Palestine. Not averse to criticizing Israel’s policies, he was considered too independent by the Embassy, which supplied him titbits in anticipation that he would use his ‘discretion’.<sup>165</sup> His brother David, a *Mossad* operative, supplied him information, which was more accurate.

Following his disclosures of Ralph Bunche’s visits to Cairo and Tel-Aviv in March 1953, Arnon the Press Attaché reproached Kimche:

This is not the first time that your weekly...has taken it upon itself to splash news, which the Israeli Government considered it essential to keep secret... A single irresponsible disclosure in print may thus have killed, or at the least seriously injured, one of the few statesmanlike and hopeful attempts to promote peace in the Middle East.

Such an exchange between an editor and a government official was commonplace; however, in this case, an Israeli diplomat castigated a British journalist who had not broken any censorship laws for not imposing self-censorship.

Kimche replied that the information could be found in other sources:

I cannot conceive that any Zionist journal with self-respect or a desire to be treated seriously could accept your pre-emptory definition: the *Jewish Observer*, in your estimate, is not a Zionist paper because it does not



submit to a pre-censorship of its material by officials of the Israel Government.

The Embassy urged the ZF to take direct responsibility for editorial policy 'that must be directed, first and foremost at furthering Israel's interests' in order to ensure it would not occur again. Elath decided he was 'going to give Kimche a last chance', but had little confidence that he would keep gentlemen's agreements. Kimche, the standard-bearer for an independent Jewish press, paid the price. The Embassy's ostracism had the desired effect as the *Jewish Observer's* circulation plummeted.<sup>166</sup>

#### WHO IS A ZIONIST?

Ben-Gurion's statement in the *Jewish Observer* that only a person who went to live in Israel or intended to do so was a Zionist, sparked resentment from Anglo-Zionist leaders.<sup>167</sup> ZF leaders had little to counter since their financial contribution was negligible and only a trickle of British Jews emigrated.

The ZF opposed proposed changes in the Jewish Agency, which would increase non-Zionist representation. The ZF argued that Ben-Gurion 'did not realise that with the advent of Israel the division and the differences between Zionists and non-Zionists in the Diaspora had not disappeared'.<sup>168</sup> Levenberg rejected the belittling of the ZF's efforts:

If Mr Ben-Gurion posed the question what was the difference between a Zionist and a non-Zionist, our answer was that a Zionist believed in the unity of the Jewish people and in the importance of spreading the knowledge of the Hebrew language. The non-Zionist accepts the fragmentation of our people in various religious communities.<sup>169</sup>

The *JC* noted that the Jewish Agency was formed on the proviso that its constituent directorship should be comprised of equal Zionists, and non-Zionists. It reminded its readers that:

The label 'Zionist' is no longer adequate now that the aim of modern Zionism, the re-establishment of the Jewish State, has been accomplished. If the members of the Zionist Organization would only realise it, it scored a further victory: that of attracting at once the genuinely sympathetic interest of many whom before at best had only been lukewarm to Zionist aspirations. It would be foolish especially in light of Israel's economic needs to throw away the advantages of such attraction.<sup>170</sup>

Ben-Gurion's article had the desired effect. Ideological differences between Zionists and non-Zionists were reduced, and their efforts concentrated on practical efforts to help Israel. The non-Zionists contributed more than their Zionist detractors did.

## THE QIBYA REPRISAL RAID OF OCTOBER 1953

Israel's reprisal raid on the Jordanian village of Qibya in 1953 caused a serious rift in Anglo-Jewry, which, hitherto, had solidly defended Israel's policies.

The *JC* often consulted with the Embassy prior to publication. Sometimes a letter was rejected, cut or by 'coincidence', an article or an official reply from the Embassy would accompany it. However, when it saw fit it did not hesitate to criticize Israel.<sup>171</sup> It was critical of Israel's reprisals, which it considered counter-productive and inhuman. Kessler penned the editorial 'Right is Might' in the wake of Ben-Gurion's denial of IDF involvement. He cited the MAC's scathing report: 'By what standard is there any possible moral justification for this cruel attack on Jordanian villagers... This was not self-defence against armed attack, it was a reprisal of the same kind that was perpetrated by our enemies in the last war'.<sup>172</sup>

Kessler insisted that Diaspora Jews had the right to comment on such matters and to judge them according to the ethical precepts in Judaism. Taking the moral high ground he scolded Anglo-Jewish leaders who had 'tagged along', and demanded they condemn the raid. This was perhaps, the *JC's* greatest hour as an independent Anglo-Jewish newspaper, which questioned Israel's policies without being accused of anti-Zionist bias. The editorial attracted many letters of support including Ernest Simon, a prominent Israeli academic who commended the 'admirable and courageous editorial', and Brodetsky who called the raid 'a terrible and unjustified revenge' and 'Leo Baeck congratulated Kessler personally'.<sup>173</sup>

Jewish organizations refrained from criticizing Israel because of their aversion to giving ammunition to Israel's enemies no matter how deplorable its actions were. Montagu's initial reaction was one of caution, but three weeks later, he issued a statement condemning the raid. Stein criticized the delay. Montagu argued that Britain's condemnation made no mention of the events leading up to the raid:

I feel that we have to be very careful about making public statements condemning actions by the Government and the people of Israel of which we disapprove unless there are good reasons for doing so. We are not responsible in any way for what goes on in Israel and the making of statements in commenting upon these actions, in normal circumstances may lead to confusion in the public mind as to that position.<sup>174</sup>

Neville Laski, who had been reluctant to criticize Israel, did so with full vigour, arguing that it was wrong to suggest that there was an overriding Jewish loyalty to Israel. British citizenship was not 'an umbrella you can open and close at will'.<sup>175</sup>

The Board did not condemn the raid but Brodetsky, as a 'private individual' was scathing of Israel's official silence, on which he as a Jew and an academic could no longer remain silent. Diaspora Jewry was not a rubber stamp and could not automatically be counted on to support Israel when it was clearly wrong.<sup>176</sup> Elath's excruciating reply cited the lack of information from Israel: 'I only wish I were able to answer the many thoughtful, reasonable, and fully justified questions you raise...thinking aloud on such

matters often makes confusion worse confounded rather than contributes to any practical solution'. Elath informed him that he was 'reporting home, carefully and fully, on the general as well as the specific aspects of reactions here to the Quibya incident and I trust that our people will be learning some useful lessons from them'. Sharett circulated the correspondence to the Cabinet. Elath was severely reprimanded by Ben-Gurion.<sup>177</sup>

### ANGLO-JEWRY'S SUEZ CRISIS

The Suez Crisis was a watershed in British politics and provoked controversy in the Anglo-Jewish community over the behaviour and loyalties of Jewish Labour MPs. The *J.C* on 2 November, Balfour Day, reflected on the 'irony of a situation where after all these years it should happen that a Conservative Government has come out with a pro-Israeli and anti-Egyptian policy and that the Labour Party, which has so strongly supported Israel, should find itself, in effect, the defender of Egypt'. It had called for the Government to adopt precisely the policy, which was now being put into practice, of cooperation with Israel. The *J.C* openly supported Eden's moves, which directly and indirectly strengthened Israel's security.<sup>178</sup>

The Board and the AJA had urged for a bilateral treaty with Israel.<sup>179</sup> The AJA supported Israel's legitimate claims to free navigation under international law: The time will come when the West will realise that Israel can be a greater force for peace and progress in the area than all the traditional allies.<sup>180</sup> The nationalization of the Canal caused alarm among leading AJA members who were major shareholders in the Suez Canal Company.<sup>181</sup> In August 1956, Montagu called for special prayers to be recited for the success of the Suez Conference.

The 1955 General Election returned 17 Jewish Labour MPs and 1 independent Conservative.<sup>182</sup> The Labour MPs were not a homogenous group. Some had sizable Jewish constituents, as did Orbach in Willesden East, while Janner in Leicester NW had few.<sup>183</sup> That the Jewish MPs toed the party line was not surprising given the parliamentary and party system. The Jewish community expected nothing less from Jews whose allegiance to their country and their party was paramount. However, the degree to which Labour MPs excruciatingly attempted to justify their actions during the Suez Crisis, exposed Anglo-Jewry's ambivalence and insecurity. The situation was different in France, which supplied arms to Israel and cooperated against Nasser's support for the Algerian rebels.<sup>184</sup>

The Suez parliamentary debate on 30 October showed that seven of the seventeen Labour MPs' votes were unrecorded during the unexpected division. They feared that their votes would be misconstrued. In later debates, under no pressure as to how to vote, without exception, all seventeen voted to censure the government on a resolution, which did not explicitly mention Israel:

This house deplores the action of Her Majesty's Government in resorting to armed force against Egypt as a clear violation of the United Nations Charter, thereby affronting the convictions of a large section of the British people, dividing the Commonwealth, straining the Atlantic alliance, and gravely damaging the foundations of international order.

Labour leader Gaitskell's comparison of Eden 'to a policeman whose policy has been to go in and help the burglar shoot the householder' did not go down well with the Jewish community. Jewish Labour MPs were at pains to explain their respective positions. Harold Lever was prepared to support Britain's position 'if it could be properly supported as being within our obligations to the United Nations'. Even though this led him to oppose military intervention, he appreciated the need for the action and was glad that 'the identity of British interest with the State of Israel has at last belatedly been recognised'. His loyalty to the party and his country was called into question by a fellow MP who asked him whether he was 'speaking as an Israeli nationalist first, foremost and all the time?'

Silverman was convinced that Elath had prior knowledge of the operation and felt betrayed. Mikardo ingeniously explained that he was so pro-Israel that he could not accept Eden's call for a cease-fire, which clearly served Britain's interests to the detriment of Israel.<sup>185</sup> The remaining fifteen MPs justified their actions in the *JC*. Shinwell who had abstained on the first vote was conveniently visiting Australia when the two later censure votes were debated. Taking the high ground, he had:

The utmost contempt for those Jews, including British MPs who, though professional Zionists, claim to see in Israel's action an offence against international law. They ought to be ashamed. Jews defending themselves against persecution and aggression have my full support ... I was reluctant to defy party decisions but I preferred upholding my country's interests.<sup>187</sup>

A rabbi reminded the MPs that 'the Jewish representatives in the Houses of Parliament should not allow themselves to forget their racial origins, irrespective of their political affiliations'.<sup>188</sup> This view was countered by the AJA: 'No Jew and no Jewish organization in this country is entitled to expect Jewish MPs to put their Jewish origins before their duty to their constituents, their party, and their country' ... Jewish MPs in their capacity as Members of Parliament do not represent Jewish interests'. Goodman argued that, '*Jannerally* the Jewish Socialist M.Ps could not have it both ways. If Israel was not guilty of aggression, then England and France were not guilty either'.<sup>189</sup>

The *Sunday Express* discussed the controversy. Orbach was the focus of criticism: 'this is the fellow who relies on the Jewish vote to keep him in his shaky Willesden seat... When the election comes in the New Year, let the Jews of Willesden recall the present performance of Mr Orbach'.<sup>190</sup> In the ensuing General Election, he lost his seat. The large swing against him might suggest that Jewish electors punished him for his voting record during the crisis.

Janner, President of the ZF and the Board, was conspicuously silent. He thought that 'it was unfortunate that the Israeli action had been 'mixed up in the Anglo-French movement to the Canal'. He later explained that while the Anglo-French action was not undertaken purely in the interests of Israel, he could hardly deny that, 'in the result the position was that there was not some help to Israel... No one would be foolish enough to say that the circumstances, wrong as they were in which this action was taken, did not give some kind of assistance'. His excruciating explanations made his position untenable. Conservative MP, Waterhouse from the Suez group, berated him: 'It was a very cruel thing that the Israelis in this hour of the tribulation, in this hour when every hand is

turned against them, should find that many of the voices to which they have been used to listen have been silent'.<sup>191</sup>

Janner's connection to the Labour Party was precarious. A former Liberal, he presented himself as a Labour candidate in the 1945 Election in a safe seat offering to cover all his expenses. Janner's behaviour caused great distress because not only was he an MP but he was also the self-declared spokesman for Anglo-Jewry. *The Times* commented that he 'had found himself apparently bound to vote for motions and resolutions by implication condemnatory of Israel's actions' and quoted AJA attacks on his conduct. There is no reference to the affair in his published correspondence and diaries.<sup>192</sup>

Matters came to a head on 18 November when the Board acrimoniously debated his conduct during the Crisis.<sup>193</sup> Attempts to silence Janner were rebuffed only after repeated requests for order. Not since 1943, had the Board witnessed such scenes. Janner defended his actions by distinguishing between Israel's action and those of and Britain's, which many deputies found unacceptable. He told them that: 'Looking back on the forty years of my public life, I have a clear conscience that I have done my duty to my country and to Jewry. During this period, I have had difficulties in reconciling both these responsibilities'.

The *JC* commented:

It is not a matter of questioning an MP's right to vote as he thought fit. That would be a breach of law, if nothing else. But there was no law or rule of law in the universe, which prevented a body or an individual considering how the vote of an MP affected that body or individual—whether it was harmful or beneficial, and if it did harm, what remedy was there open to them.<sup>194</sup>

The ultimate predicament of Janner's opponents reflected the precarious disposition of Anglo-Jewry. If they were to succeed in passing a no-confidence motion on his leadership, it would be interpreted as dismissing him because he had been loyal to his party. This was precisely what the non-Zionists wished to avoid. After angry exchanges, motions of censure were considered 'prejudicial to the best interests of the community'.

The *Eretz Israel* Committee unanimously adopted a resolution expressing 'full confidence' in him but an amendment was added 'that this should not be taken as an expression of opinion either supporting or opposing the British Government policy in the Middle East'. By framing the Board's discussion in terms of a motion of confidence, Janner had merely evaded the fundamental issue. His wife explained that: 'As a Labour backbencher that leads a non-socialist wing of the General Zionists, in November 1956 he was hoisted on the horns of a dilemma that has become a classic'.<sup>195</sup> The Executive of the European Confederation of General Zionists proposed a motion of censure on his conduct. Janner's incongruent explanation was that while he approved of *Kadesh*, launched in self-defence, he opposed British military action, which also threatened to bomb Israeli cities if it refused to accept the ultimatum or found itself at war with Jordan. A motion of confidence was narrowly passed.

Never again were Jewish MPs called upon to justify their voting record as they had during the Suez crisis. As Alderman notes that, 'at Suez in fact, the special relationship

between the Labour party and Anglo Jewry, so carefully built up on both sides in the 1930s and 1949s, was finally buried'.<sup>196</sup>

An interesting corollary was Anglo-Jewry's response to the JPA's emergency campaign, which raised £946,000 towards a target figure of £2.5m within two weeks. Other charities also noted marked increases. The crisis was a catharsis. Despite the rancour, the Jewish community took stock of what had occurred and lessons were learned.

## THE JEWISH INTELLECTUALS

Most Jewish intellectuals were not native born, which made them hesitant to criticise government policy.<sup>198</sup>

Professor Isaiah Berlin was an exception. An avid Zionist and the leading public intellectual of the day, he never professed to speak on behalf of Anglo-Jewry. He believed that the creation of the State of Israel 'transformed the situation of the Jews beyond recognition'. Israel had rendered the 'greatest service that any human institution can perform for individuals' and had:

Restored to Jews not merely their personal dignity and status as human beings, but what is vastly more important, their right to choose as individuals how they shall live—the basic freedom of choice, the right to live or perish, go to the good or bad in one's own way, without which life is a form of slavery, as it has been, indeed for the Jewish community for almost two thousand years.<sup>199</sup>

At the outset of the crisis, he offered Eden his support but:

As the invasion continued, however, it dawned on him that even if the invasion succeeded the British and the French would have to occupy Egypt, or at least the Canal Zone, in the teeth of aroused Arab nationalist opposition, and such colonial policing operations were doomed to failure.<sup>200</sup>

His biographer notes that 'he allowed his pro-Israeli convictions to pull him in one direction and his anti-colonialist inclinations to pull in the other'.<sup>201</sup> Unlike his contemporary Jewish Universalists, which included George Steiner, he did not feel obliged to discard his pride in his Jewish heritage and his support for Zionism.

Cecil Roth, the most prolific Jewish intellectual who published more than 600 books and articles and served as editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* knew the leadership of the *Yishuv* and Israel well but he was not active in Anglo-Jewish politics and rarely spoke out on issues relating to Israel.<sup>202</sup> The retired Oxford don, Professor Lewis Namier, was isolated from Zionist politics and his involvement in the Suez debate was minimal. Professor Samuel Alexander of Manchester University was a Zionist sympathizer but his sympathies did not extend to taking an active role within the

movement. He was more comfortable in supporting Jewish efforts to build an educational base in Palestine.<sup>203</sup>

The marketing of Israel was complete. The Embassy successfully bypassed the 'retailers' of 77 Gt Russell St, once the bastion of the Jewish Agency, where such personages as Weizmann, Ben-Gurion and Sharett sealed the destiny of the Jewish people. The decision to appeal directly to the 'wholesalers' of St Michael House, Baker St, only a few minutes away from Gt Russell St., was a sign of the times. The company's slogan in its early days was 'don't ask the price,' The Embassy did not have to. Substantial offers of assistance came from Jewish businessmen and philanthropists who were eager to invest in Israel's economy including Waley-Cohen, Sieff, and Wolfson.<sup>204</sup>

In 1958, the venue of Israel's 10th Independence Day celebrations epitomized the transformation, which had occurred in Anglo-Jewry. In the first years, it was difficult to fill the Albert Tuck Hall at Woburn House or the suites at the Dorchester and Savoy hotels. It was all the more remarkable that despite the divisions in Anglo-Jewry during the Suez Crisis, the Royal Albert Hall was filled to capacity, a tribute to the efforts of the Anglo-Jewish community and the Embassy, which overcame complex issues that faced them in the early years of the State of Israel.<sup>205</sup>

#### NOTES

1. J.Gould and S.Esh, *Jewish Life in Modern Britain* (London, 1994), 23–4.
2. It is partly discussed in: W.Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews in the English Speaking World: Great Britain*; (London, 1976) T.Endelman, *The Jews of Modern Britain, 1656–2000* (California, 2000); D.Cesarani, *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Oxford, 1990); C.Bermant, *Troubled Eden* (London, 1969); B.Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diasporas: The Jews in Europe Since 1945* (London, 1996); S.I.Troen, *Jewish Centers and Peripheries* (New Jersey, 1999); S.Brook, *The Club: The Jews of Modern Britain* (London, 1989); V.Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain Since 1958* (Leicester, 1990); N.Bentwich, 'The Social Transformation of Anglo-Jewry, 1883–1960', *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 2, 1960, 16–24; L.Gartner, 'The Character of Anglo-Jewish History', *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*, 6.2, 1992, 53–68; M.Ginsberg, 'A Review of the European Jewish Communities of Today and Some Questions for Tomorrow', *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 6.1, 1964, 121; R.Lehmann, *Anglo-Jewish Bibliography, 1937–1970* (London, 1973); N.Aridan, 'The Labour Governments' Palestine Policy, 1948–1951', (M.A.) Beer-Sheva, 1985.
3. E.Kraucz, 'Concepts and Theoretical Models for Anglo-Jewish Sociology', in S. and V.Lipman (eds), *Jewish Life in Britain, 1962–1977* (London, 1981), 17–25.
4. Other terms, *host minority, ethnocentrism, acculturation, national minority and religious minority* are also discussed in S.Lipset, 'The Study of Jewish Communities in a Comparative Context', *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 5.2, 1963.
5. G.Sheffer, 'From Israeli Hegemony to Diaspora Full Autonomy', in S.I.Troen, *Jewish Centers and Peripheries*, 56.
6. PRO, HO 45, 213. Interviews with 'kindertransport' children.
7. Herzl's article, 'A Solution of the Jewish Question' was published in the *JC* on 17 Jan 1896, four weeks before his 'Judenstaat', which appeared in Vienna. J. Frankel, 'The *Jewish Chronicle* and the Launching of Political Zionism', *Herzl Year Book* (New York, 1959), 221–4; B.Jaffe, 'The British Press and Zionism in Herzl's Time', *Jewish Historical Society of England Transactions*, xxiv, 1975; D. Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle* (London, 1998); 'Jewish Chronicle Noblesse Oblige' in A.Crown, *Essays in Honour of David Kessler and Anglo-Jewry, 1841–1991* (Cambridge, 1994), 60–80.

8. G. Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics* (Oxford, 1983); G. Shimoni, 'Poale Zion: a Zionist Transplant in Britain (1905–1945)', *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 2, 1986, 227–69; N. Rose, *The Diaries of Baffy Dugdale* (London, 1973); *Lewis Namier and Zionism* (Oxford, 1979); *The Gentile Zionists* (London, 1973); S. Brodetsky, *Memoirs*; S. Levenberg, *Poale Zion: 100 Years of the Jewish Labour Movement in Britain* (London, 1972); K. Martin, *Harold Laski* (London, 1953).
9. BoD, ACC/3121/B, Presidents & Secretaries Papers, 1940–1941. B. Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939–1945* (Oxford, 1979); R. Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 1993); T. Kushner, 'the Impact of the Holocaust on British Society and Culture', *Contemporary Record* 5, 2, 1991 349–75; 'Different Worlds; British Perceptions of the Final Solution During the Second World War', D. Cesarani, *The Final Solution; Origins and Implementation*, 246–67; *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry; The Final Solution; Origins and Implementation* (Cambridge, 1994), 246–67.
10. *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*; 'Tercentenary of The Resettlement of the Jews in the British Isles, 1656–1956', Special Supplement, *JC*, 27 Jan 1956; BGA, BGD, 8, 24 Sep 1940.
11. The Channel Islands were part of the UK. Most Jews managed to flee the island in advance of the German occupation but those, which remained, were handed over to the Germans by the local authorities and deported to their deaths in Auschwitz.
12. T. Kushner, 'Different Worlds', 246–67; 'Horns and Dilemmas; Jewish Evacuees in Britain during the Second World War', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 7.3, 1988, 273–91; *Contemporary Record*, 5.2, 1991, 349–75.
13. Jews, who had joined the Communist Party for idealistic and intellectual considerations, did so, in spite of, and not because of its anti-Zionist and antireligious stance. Members came from notable Jewish families, including Ivor Montagu and four members of his family and Jack Gaster, grandson of Moses Gaster. In 1945, the Party's National Jewish Committee launched the monthly *Jewish Clarion*, which enthusiastically promoted Moscow's recognition of Israel and ended British imperialist presence in Palestine. T. Kushner, 'Jewish Communists in Twentieth-Century Britain', *Labour History Review*, 55.2, 1990, 66–75. The Party supported Moscow's anti-Zionist stance after May 1948 but its Jewish members expressed opposition to Israel's policies rather than Zionism itself. It ceased publication in 1956 after the Suez debacle and the Hungarian uprising. *JC*, 3 Aug 1945; H. Srebnik, *London Jews and British Communism, 1935–1945* (London, 1995), 156–64, P. Pratin, 'Anti-Semitism and Anti-Sovietism', *Zionist Review*, 14 Oct 1949; H. Levy, 'Blot on the History of Socialism', *Jewish Clarion*, Jul-Aug. 1956, 2–4.
14. Y. Gorny, *The British Labour Movement and Zionism: 1917–1948* (London, 1983); *JC*, 26, 28 May 1939, 8 Mar 1940; The 1944 Annual Conference went far beyond the Zionists' expectations, 'let the Arabs be encouraged to move out... as the Jews move in'. Professor Harold Laski, who had previously advocated assimilation, believed that Labour could be a vehicle for facilitating the creation of a Jewish state. *PZ*, Jewish socialist-Zionists did not hesitate to urge Jews to vote Labour. *J.C.*, 15 Dec 1944, 8 May 1945. *PZ* was founded in 1906 and in 1920 affiliated to the British Labour Party. Levenberg regarded the 'McDonald letter as the direct result of *PZ*'s activities in the Labour Party'. Interview with Levenberg. S. Levenberg, *The Jews and Palestine* (London, 1945); *JC*, 15, 29 June, 1, 27 Jul 1945.
15. *JC*, 1 Aug 1947.
16. *JC*, 2 Feb 1951.
17. *JC*, 6 Jan 1956.
18. *JC*, Tercentenary of the Resettlement of the Jews in the British Isles, 1656–1956', 'Zionism before Herzl'; 'Zionism in Anglo-Jewry,' 27 Jan 1956.
19. W. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews in the English Speaking World: Great Britain* (London, 1976), 373.



20. *JC*, 2 Feb 1951. His father was Lord Samuel the first High Commissioner. He had the rare distinction of being both pro-Zionist and a civil servant in the Palestine Mandate where he had the unenviable position as Chief Censor during the war. Samuel later taught at the Hebrew University. Bentwich was Attorney General.
21. G.Sheffer, 'From Israeli Hegemony to Diaspora Full Autonomy,' 56; 'Jews and Jewry in Israeli Foreign Policy: A Critical Analysis', in D.Constas and A. Platias (eds), *The Greek Diaspora in a Comparative Perspective* (London, 1993).
22. *Israel Government Year Book*, 1961–1962, iv.
23. *JC*, 2 Jul 1948.
24. Of the 250 Jewish volunteers from Palestine, 70 were killed in action. Morris, 'The Jews who fought Franco', *Jerusalem Post*, 31 Mar 1989; H.Srebnik, *London Jews and British Communism*, 104–9.
25. *JC*, 24 Dec 1948.
26. *Jewish Monthly*, 1, 11 Feb 1948.
27. *JC*, 31 Dec 1948.
28. BGA, *Mapai* Secretariat, 12 Jan; CZA, S5/326, 5 May 1949; *Davar*, 8 Jan 1954; Ben-Gurion, 'Israel and the Diaspora'; Z.Tzahor, 'David Ben Gurion's Attitude Towards the Diaspora,' *Judaism*, 32, 1, 1983, 9–21; Z.Ganin, 'The Blaustein-BenGurion Understanding of 1950', *Michael*, 15, 2000, 29–57; D.Ben-Gurion's *Mamlachtiyut, Israel, the First Decade*, 171–92; Z.Zameret, 'Judaism in Israel; Ben-Gurion's Private Beliefs and Public Policy', *Israel Studies*, 4.2, 1999, 64–89.
29. Z.Sufott, 'Israel and the Diaspora: Roles and Responsibilities', in Troen, *Jewish Centers and Peripheries*, 403.
30. From a total, 3,500–4,000. BGA, BGD, 26 June, 23 Dec 1948; J.Fenton, *Volunteers in the War of Independence* (New York, 1998); G.Levett, *Flying Under Two Flags* (London, 1994); J.Hochstein and M.Greenfield, *The Jews' Secret Fleet* (Jerusalem, 1987); B.Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance* (New Year, 1976).
31. BGA, BGD, 9 Feb, 15, 21 May 1948. Gentile ex-British major, Thomas Bowden, better known under his *nom de guerre*, David Appel, volunteered his services. After fighting at the battle for Latrun, he was asked to form Israel's 1st Parachute Regiment. He then secretly made his way back to Britain and purchased used army surplus parachutes from an army-navy surplus store in London and brought them back to Israel where they were quickly copied and used to good effect. Jack Freedman (Freddy Ish-Shalom) covertly gave assistance to *Sherut Avir* while he was still in the RAF. In Feb 1948, he provided essential expertise in airplane engineering, maintenance and overhauling. He restored most of the 20 ex-RAF Auster planes, which had been bought as scrap, and initiated and supervised a team, which built the IDF's first Spitfire from scrap left behind by the British.
32. Fenton was interviewed, and certified fit to fight by Jewish doctors. He was given a one-way ticket to Paris, and was interrogated by both British and French officials suspicious that he might be trying to sneak into Israel. He went next to a DP camp in France, where concentration camp survivors were waiting for a country to let them in. He talked his way into a pilot training unit, telling officers he had flown before, (he had only piloted a sport plane recreationally a few times in England). He spent nearly two years in an anti-tank unit, which had no anti-tank weapons until it captured some from the Egyptian army. He noted that doctors were not very selective. In his military unit, there was a one-eyed truck driver with no peripheral vision and an American with an artificial leg. When he asked how he was accepted he was told that no one asked and nobody checked, T.Tugend, *JTA*, 30 Mar 1998.
33. Upon his return to Britain, he wrote a long memorandum on relations with Britain, urging full diplomatic relations with Israel. It was circulated among high-ranking officials in the MFA and the Foreign Office. ISA, 2412/26a, Sep; BGA, BGD, 30 May, 2, 6, 13, 15, 24, 26, June; 22 Jul; 6 Aug, 6, 14, 20 Oct; 14 Nov 1948; M.Sieff, *Don't Ask the Price* (London, 1987), 146–99. Sieff told Nicholls that: 'The Jews regarded themselves as Westerners, not as

- Oriental, hence of course their dream of coming into the British Commonwealth. This they know is hopeless', FO 371/115886 1076/501, 8 December 1955.
34. Past presidents included distinguished personages in Anglo-Jewish life such as Professor Selig Brodetsky, 1940–49, Dr Abraham Cohen, 1949–55 and Barnett Janner MP, 1955–64. A. Newman, *The Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1760–1985* (London, 1987); S. Levenberg, *The Board of Deputies and Zion*.
  35. C. Bermant, *The Cousinhood: The Anglo-Jewish Gentry* (London, 1971), 258–61; G. Shimoni, 'From anti-Zionism to non-Zionism in Anglo-Jewry, 1917–37,' *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 28.1, 1986, 19–47; V. Lipman, 'Anglo-Jewish Leaders and the Balfour Declaration', 153–80; Y. Reinharz, 'The Balfour Declaration and its Maker', 455–99.
  36. R. Henriques, *Sir Robert Waley-Cohen, 1877–1952, A Biography* (London, 1966).
  37. G. Shimoni, 'The Non-Zionists in Anglo-Jewry, 1937–1948', *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 28.2, 1986, 89–115; R. Miller, 'A Most Uncivil Civil War; the Jewish Fellowship and the Battle Over Zionism in Anglo-Jewry, 1944–1948', *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 42.1–2, 2000, 36–72; A. Newman, *The Board of Deputies*, 29–30; S. Levenberg, *The Board of Deputies and Zion*, 73–89, 123–47; *J.C.*, Jul 1943.
  38. AJA Archives, MS 134, Neville Laski Papers; MS 119, Brodetsky Papers; CZA, A82, Brodetsky Papers; Levenberg, *The Board of Deputies and Zion*, 93–8; *J.C.*, 16, 28 May 1948.
  39. BoD, ACC/3121 28 May 1948.
  40. *J.C.*, 20 Aug 1948.
  41. *J.C.*, 21 Jan 1948.
  42. J. Gould and S. Esh, *Jewish Life in Modern Britain*, (London, 1964), 22.
  43. J. Shaftesley, 'Dr Abraham Benisch', *Jewish Historical Society*, 1968, 214–31.
  44. These families achieved wealth and worldly success in the previous two centuries. These included the Samuels, the Mocattas, the Montefiores, the Goldsmids, the Franklins and the Montagus who founded and dominated all Anglo-Jewish institutions until the early twentieth century and were still influential during this period. Inter-marriage was common among the families.
  45. 1948 *Jewish Year Book*, 59; S. Cohen, *English Zionists and British Jews* (Princeton, NJ, 1982); CZA, AJA AGM, 2, 22 Nov 1944.
  46. R. Miller, *Divided Against Zion: Anti-Zionist Opposition in Britain to a Jewish State in Palestine, 1945–1948* (London, 2000); S. Kadish, 'A Good Jew and a Good Englishman' *The Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade 1895–1955*' (London, 1995) (London, 1975); S. Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work in Britain: Past, Present, Future*; R. Voeltz, "A Good Jew and a Good Englishman" *The Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade 1894–1922*', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23, 1988, 119–227.
  47. The Fellowship sprang to life in reaction to Lord Moyne's murder in Nov 1944. Zionism threatened their identity as 'Jewish Britons' as opposed to 'British Jews'. It ceased to exist in Nov 1948. S. Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work in Britain*, 102–10. He wholeheartedly agreed with Schoenfield's hostility to Zionist youth organisations. Schoenfield told a youth conference: 'Let me say that I am wholeheartedly opposed to permitting persons holding strong Jewish nationalistic views taking part in the administration, management or conduct of our organizations'. Loewe noted that: 'There could no longer be any opposition to it [the State of Israel], and, what was a determining factor, the funds, energy and enthusiasm, which might have helped the Fellowship were now devoted to the new State of Israel'; L. Loewe, *Basil Henriques*, 119.
  48. AJA Archives, AJA, 2 Nov 1944; MS 170; CZA, A185.
  49. *J.C.*, 28 May 1948.
  50. AJA Archives, AJA, 25 May 1948.
  51. *The Times*, 8 June 1948.
  52. AJA Archives, AJA, 18 Dec 1948.
  53. ISA, 2585/3, June 1950.

54. W.Laquer, *A History of Zionism* (London, 1976), 158.
55. CZA, ZF Reports, 1900–48; P.Goodman, *Zionism in England, 1899–1949* (London, 1949).
56. N.Rose, *Weizmann, A Biography* (New York, 1977); B.Litvinoff, *The Essential Chaim Weizmann* (New York, 1982); M.Bar Zohar, *Ben-Gurion* (Tel-Aviv, 1976); A.Eban, *An Autobiography* (New York, 1982); G.Sheffer, *Moshe Sharett: Biography of a Political Moderate* (Oxford 1996); Z.Goren, *Dov Hos* (Tel-Aviv, 1999).
57. L.Harris, 'The Story of British Aliya', *The Zionist Year Book*, 1965, 29–32. Between the years 1948–1951, 1,907 Jews immigrated to Israel. No more than 30,000 immigrated to Israel between 1948 and 2003.
58. M.Shragai, 'Aliya From the West', *The Zionist Year Book*, 1961–1962, 290–4.
59. He was known as the 'kingmaker' by Israeli diplomats in London who regarded him as the lynchpin of the ZF. He appeared on television in his capacity as a ballroom dance champion.
60. *Zionist Year Book*, 1949; *Jewish Year Book*, 1949–1951.
61. The circulation doubled from the 1946 level of 22,000 reaching a peak of 55,000 in 1951. D.Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle*, ix.
62. J.Gould and S.Esh, *Jewish Life in Modern Britain*, 22.
63. David became actively involved in the paper after returning from Palestine where he had worked for Novomeysky, who owned the concession to exploit the Dead Sea mineral deposits. The Kesslers had substantial interests in the company. Commenting on the Israeli 1950 elections he informed his readers that: 'It is not to be forgotten that half the present population of Israel has come from backward lands of Asia and North Africa and the vote of a Jew from San'a is worth just as much as the vote of a Jew who had lived all his life in a London or New York constituency', 29 Jul 1955, 16.
64. *JC*, 9, 16 Nov 1945; 1 Feb, 1 Mar, 1, 12 Apr, 28 June, 5, 26 Jul 1946; 17 Jan, 14 Feb, 7 Mar, 25 Jul, 1, 8, 15 Aug; 5 Dec 1947.
65. *JC*, 26 Jul 1946; 25 Jul 1947; D.Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle*, 193.
66. *JC*, 5 Dec 1947.
67. *JC*, 14 May 1948.
68. *JC*, 21 May 1948.
69. CZA, A251; I.Jakobovits, *If Only My People* (London, 1984), 222–6; B.Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diasporas*, 73.
70. I.Brodie, *A Word in Season: Addresses and Sermons* (London, 1959), 56, 76.
71. ISA, 2583/10, 30 Sep 1950.
72. I.Brodie, *A Word in Season*, 105.
73. *JC*, 21 Nov 1952. This drew criticism from the *JC*, which strained relations between the Chief Rabbinate and the paper.
74. *JC*, Oct 24 1952.
75. I.Brodie, *A Word in Season*, 163.
76. *JC*, 4, 11 June 1948.
77. *JC*, 11, 18, 25 June 1948.
78. S.Levin, *A Century of Anglo-Jewish Life 1870–1970* (London, 1984); A. Newman, *The United Synagogue* (London, 1977); ACC/2712, United Synagogue Archives. G.Alderman, *The History of Hendon Synagogue*.
79. *JC*, 18 June 1948.
80. *JC*, 30 Jul 1948. Interview with Arie Handler, *Mizrachi* leader, S.Brook, *The Club*, 357.
81. *JC*, 7 Jan 1948.
82. E.Umansky, 'The Origins of Liberal Judaism in England; the Contribution of Lilly H.Montagu', *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 55, 1984, 309–22; M. Jacobi, 'Lilly Montagu, a Pioneer in Religious Leadership', in S.Sheridan (ed) *Women in the British Rabbinate* (Columbia, SC, 1998); E.Black, 'Edwin Montagu', *Jewish Historical Studies*, 30, 1989, 199–218; *Liberal Jewish Monthly*, 1949–57. Her father left his children generous bequests subject to the provision 'that they shall respectively at my death be professing the Jewish

- religion and not be married to a person not professing the Jewish religion'. He strongly disapproved of her practising Liberal Judaism and added to the will that if she did not desist she would forfeit 75 per cent of her share. C.Bermant, *Troubled Eden* (London, 1969), 207.
83. *JC*, 30 Jul 1948.
  84. See I.Maybawn, *The Faith in the Jewish Diaspora* (London, 1965); A.Kershen and J.Romain, *Tradition and Change: A History of British Reform Judaism 1840–1994* (London, 1995).
  85. *JC*, 29 Oct 1948.
  86. *JC*, 20 Aug 1948.
  87. ISA, 2583/4, 29 Jan 1949. Interview with Yapou.
  88. CZA, A373, Joseph Linton Papers.
  89. CZA, AK641; J.Reinharz, 'The Transition from Yishuv to State; Social and Ideological Changes', in L.Silberstein, *New Perspectives on Israeli History* (New York, 1971), 27–41; W.Eytan, *Israel the First Ten Years* (New York, 1958), 206–28. Interview with Eytan. I am indebted to Walter Eytan for his assistance and insights. During the Ben-Gurion Centenary in 1986, I was approached by the House of Commons Committee to confirm an address where he had resided in London. His home address was rarely stated in his correspondence. I searched his personal letters to Blackwell's bookshop in Oxford, which confirmed the length of his stay. That year a Blue Plaque (commemorating famous personages), was erected in Warrington Crescent, Maida Vale, close to the underground station where he spent many nights during the Blitz. BGA, BGD, 8, 24 Sep 1940.
  90. CZA, A417, Eliash Papers.
  91. *JC*, 18 Feb 1949.
  92. *JC*, 4 Feb 1949.
  93. ISA, 36/2, 31 Jan 1949.
  94. I spent considerable time with Eliahu Elath at his home and at his hospital bedside. He gave me access to his private archive, the contents of which I later learned was classified. There were portraits and sculptures by his wife Zehava, of Anglo-Jewish leaders in every room of his house. He was Ambassador to the US, 1948–50 and Minister and Ambassador to Britain, 1950–59. Towards the end of his long and illustrious life, he conveyed to me humility and self-reflection. I showed him criticisms of his reports to which he responded with fairness. I encouraged him to write his memoirs but he only succeeded in re-publishing articles in a book. *The Times* wrote a rare obituary for someone of his rank. There awaits a biography to be written on him.
  95. *JC*, 17 Mar 1950.
  96. Simon Marks was president of the JPA. He came from the 'Manchester School'. His 'religion wasn't Judaism...it was Zionism', S.Brook, *The Club*, 356; H. Sacher, *Zionist Portraits and Essays* (London, 1959). Interview with Eliahu Elath.
  97. H.Raviv, *A House of Memories, 58 Avenue Road* (London, 1998).
  98. *JC*, 2 Feb 1951; W.Eytan, *Israel the First Ten Years*, 192–3; P.Eliav, 'The Jewish Factor in Israeli Foreign Policy' in M.Yagar, Y.Guvrin and A.Oded (eds) *The Israel Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the First Fifty Years* (Jerusalem, 2002), 909–15; M.Yagar, 'The Israeli Diplomat as a Jew', in Yagar et al., *MFA, the First Fifty Years*, 916–21.
  99. In August 1950, a tacit understanding was reached between Ben-Gurion and AJC President, Blaustein, concerning the nature of the relationship between the Diaspora and Israel. Z.Ganin, *Michael*, 15, 2000, 29–57; C.Liebman, 'Diaspora Influence on Israel; The Ben-Gurion-Blaustein "Exchange" and its Aftermath', *Jewish Social Studies*, 36, 1974, 271–80.
  100. ISA, 2583/10, 18 May 1950.
  101. ISA, 2583/10, 9 May; 2 Feb 1950. Interview with Eliahu Elath.
  102. Elath was introduced to influential politicians and financiers. It amazed him that Rothschild's house was the only one on his street, which was miraculously unscathed during the blitz.

103. ISA, 2583/10, 5, 24 Oct 1950. Interview with Eliahu Elath.
104. ISA, 2583/10; 2387/21 2 Nov 1950; C.Bermant, *The Cousinhood*, 373. He and his cousin, Walter, established the Palestine Corporation whose concerns included *Nesher* Cement Company, Palestine Brewing Company, Union Bank, *Ihud* Insurance, Palestine Salt Company, Agricultural Mortgage Company, and the King David Hotel.
105. ISA, 2387/21, 19 Nov 1950; 3098/23, 6 May 1958.
106. Interview with Eliahu Elath.
107. ISA, 36/16, 5 June 1951. Reporting on the AJA's activities, Elath observed: 'One can safely say that, with the trifling exceptions of a few individuals like Gluckstein and Lipson, the whole of British Jewry is united in support of Israel: leaving ideological differences aside, its various sectors differ only on the measure of their support, and not in the question of principle'.
108. ISA, 37/1, 29 Jul 1951; interviews with Eliahu Elath, Gershon Avner, Rehavam Amir and Michael Comay.
109. ISA, 2585/12, 28 Mar 1951; CZA, *ZF Annual Reports*, 1949–1950.
110. ISA, 2586/4, 9 Mar 1950. Interviews with Walter Eytan and Mordechai Kidron.
111. CZA, *ZF Annual Reports*, 1948–1956.
112. ISA, Cabinet minute, 1 Feb; CZA, Berl Locker Papers, A263, 6, 20 Mar 1950. The number of affiliates fell from 389 to 379 the following year. Of the 96 new societies registered between 1949 and 1956, no less than 63 were new Federation of Women Zionists branches, which along with the 120 affiliated synagogue bodies, constituted about 90% of the total membership of the ZF.
113. CZA, F13/1008 (i), Goldbloom and Fox, 10 Feb 1950.
114. ISA, 2585/12, 28 Mar; *JC*, 30 Mar 1951, 8.
115. ISA, 2585/12, 23 Jan 1952.
116. CZA F13/1008i, 29 June 1953.
117. Avner suggested that apart from the fact that German-educated professors regarded him as an outsider and refused to cooperate with him, his tactlessness was the main reason for his failure.
118. CZA, ZF Annual Conference; *JC*, 4 Apr 1952; ISA, 2412/27, 25 Jan 1954. Lincoln opposed the presence of a socialist government in Israel.
119. CZA, ZF Annual Conference; *JC*, 17 Apr 1953; 9 Apr 1954; *JC*, 1 Apr, 29 Jul 1955.
120. C.Bermant, *Troubled Eden*, 113.
121. C.Mayhew and M.Adams, *Publish it Not: The Middle East Cover-Up* (London, 1975); Bevin's deputy, believed there was an element of truth in Bevin's claim that all he saw were the Zionist lobbyists. Interview with Lord Mayhew. M.Adams and C.Mayhew, *The Middle East Cover-Up* (London, 1975); W.Grant, *Pressure Groups, Politics and Democracy in Britain* (New York, 1995); G.Roberts, *Political Parties and Pressure Groups in Britain* (London, 1970); G.Wootton, *Pressure Groups in Britain 1720–1970* (London, 1975) 1720–1970.
122. *JC*, 'Tercentenary', 27 Jan 1956.
123. *Labour Party Handbook*, 1945. Rosette confirmed the effective lobbying before 1948 and the writing of pro-Zionist speeches given to MPs in debates. CZA, F13/332, 30 May 1945.
124. ISA, 2585/3, 29 Mar; *PZ Annual Report*, 13 Mar 1954.
125. ISA, 43/14b, 1 Mar; 2582/7b; 2 Mar 1954.
126. CZA, F13/292, Jul; *JC*, 26 Apr 1946.
127. *JC*, 14 June 1946.
128. ISA, 37/6, 1, 11, 13, 19 Apr 1949; 30 Sep 1950; 2586/9, 19 Dec 1951.
129. ISA, 37/6, 11 Jan 1950. Elath requested a Cultural Attaché, which would be more beneficial, 2389/29, 3 June 1954.
130. ISA, 2400/13, 11 Dec 1953; CZA, K11/312, Lourie Papers; 2595/5, 2, 6 July 1956; E.Janner, *Barnett Janner: A Personal Portrait* (London, 1984), 94.

131. ISA, 43/14, 11 Feb 1954.
132. ISA 2582/7, 5, 31 Jan 1954.
133. ISA, 2583/3, 29 Dec 1954.
134. ISA, 2585/12, 12 Apr; 13 May; 1, 30 Nov; 8, 12 Dec 1955.
135. ISA, 2583/10, 9 May 1949.
136. *JC*, 28 May 1948; H.Rabinowicz, *The Story of the Chasidim in Britain* (London, 1997).
137. FO 371/82627, 1781/1, 12 Jan, 24 Feb 1950.
138. ISA, 2387/21, 14 Nov 1952; 2585/3, 18 Apr 1955; 2585/7, 14 Oct 1956.
139. ISA, 2585/12, 21 Sep 1956. They opposed the existence of a Jewish state, refused any official contact with its representatives, and supported moves to dismantle the ‘Zionist government’, *Jewish Post*, 3 June 1955.
140. *JC*, 24 Jul, 1, 24; *The Times*, 23 Jul 1953; ISA, 2585/7, 25 Sep 1956.
141. Ben-Gurion’s government fell in 1951 over the question of education, at the same period as Anglo-Jewry confronted educational issues of its own. I. Finestein, ‘Anglo-Jewish attitudes to Jewish day-school education 1850–1950’, in I. Finestein (ed) *Scenes and Personalities in Anglo-Jewry* (London, 2002), 52–95; C. Bermant, *Troubled Eden*, 123–36; U. Engelman, *Jewish Education in Europe, 1914–1962: Annotated Bibliography* (Jerusalem, 1965); I. Fishman and H. Levy, ‘Jewish Education in Britain’, 67–92; S. Schonfeld, ‘Jewish Secondary School Movement in England’, *Megilot*, 1.2, 1950, 33–4; A. Cohen, ‘Jewish Education in Britain’, *Zionist Review*, 9–10, 13–14, 1950; L. Gertner and B. Steinberg, ‘A Survey of Jewish Education in Britain’, *Jewish Education*, 38.1, 1968, 34–44; B. Steinberg, ‘Anglo-Jewry and the 1944 Education Act’, *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 31.2, 1989, 81–108; J. Stolki, ‘Hebrew Education in Leeds’, *Netivot*, 4, 1955, 43–5; J. Braude, ‘Jewish Day Schools’, *JC*, 4, 331, 1952, 8; 4, 442, 1954; S. Levin, ‘The Anglo-Jewish Day School’, *JC*, 4, 552, 1956, 15, 17.
142. R. Elboim-Dror, ‘British Educational Policies in Palestine’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36.2, 2000, 28–47.
143. The starting point for Jewish day schooling was the establishment of the Jews’ Free School (JFS, later known as the Jewish Free School). In 1900, it had become the largest elementary school in England with 4,300 pupils. Headmaster, Moses Angel described it as an institution designed for the anglicisation of immigrant children. G. Black, *The History of the Jews’ Free School London Since 1732* (London, 1999).
144. C. Bermant, *Troubled Eden*, 116.
145. BGA, BGD 28 June 1953.
146. CZA, F13/1008 (i), 31 Aug 1953. Goldbloom asked that Hebrew be reintroduced at meetings. Those who did not speak Hebrew should learn it. His request was not fulfilled. H. Skirball, ‘The “Mizrachi” Entrance into the WZO Educational Enterprise in the Diaspora’, *World Congress of Jewish Studies*, 10.2, 1990, 451–8.
147. The segregated stigma of Jewish schools was associated with immigrant status. Communal divisions in the community’s leadership hampered efforts to construct new schools. Chief Rabbi, Hertz vetoed formal cooperation with the Progressive community and the Jewish Secondary Schools Movement (JSSM), headed by Dr Solomon Schonfeld refused to work with the ZF, which was embarking on an ambitious school-building programme. Such public disagreements prevented the Ministry of Education from allocating funds to Jewish voluntary schools. In 1954 the issue resolved, when Schonfeld agreed to withdraw his objection to the rebuilding of JFS. G. Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (London, 1992), 368; AJA Archives, MS 183, Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld Papers.
148. *Zionist Year Book*, 1957–1958, 344.
149. CZA, F13/1008 (i), 31 Aug 1953.
150. I. Brodie, *A Word in Season*, 373; JTA, Proceedings of the *Mizrachi* Conference, 24 Nov 1953.
151. CZA, F13/32, 8 Dec 1953.

152. CZA, F13/32, 25 Nov; 1008 (i) 3 Dec 1953. CZA, 'Jewish Education in the Diaspora', newsletter, *Jewish Agency* 1957; 'Fundamental Principles for Diaspora Education', *Proceedings of the Institute on Diaspora Education Jewish Education in the Diaspora, Jewish Agency*, 1958.
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178. *JC*, 2, 9 Nov 1956.
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## Conclusion

Israel's downing of five RAF planes in January 1949 could have escalated into further hostilities, however, the incident was a catharsis, which illustrated the precariousness of the absence of diplomatic relations between Israel and Britain. For its part, Israel was anxious to avoid further confrontation, which would provide an excuse for further deployment of British troops in the region.

A contributing factor in Britain's decision to withhold *de facto* and *de jure* recognition of Israel was her determination to ensure US *quid pro quo* recognition of Jordan's annexation of the West Bank. Notwithstanding the rancour between the 'former proprietor' and 'foster mother', Britain, and the 'successor state' and 'foster child', Israel, Britain's commitments to Jordan, its natural child, provided an indispensable link between Israel and Jordan, which belied their bellicose status.

Britain regarded Israel as an irritant and despite its grudging acceptance of Israel as a permanent feature in the Middle East it did not detract from its negation of the finality of Israel's 1949 armistice borders, which separated the landmasses of Egypt from Jordan. Despite the Foreign Office's failure to implement Alpha, it continued to seek a way of cajoling Israel to make territorial concessions in the Negev.

The CIGS positive assessments of Israel's readiness to assist against Soviet aggression in the region during wartime was offset by the price, which Israel was expected to exact and the negative ramifications on Britain's relations with the Arab states. Aside from Israel undertaking not to aid the Soviets, there was little it could offer Britain, however, Israel's military potential was called upon to serve British interests when, in October 1956, Britain overcame its repugnance of cooperation with it because it was Britain's only viable option to reoccupy the Suez Canal.

The state of health of the *dramatis personae* had an important impact on relations. Israeli Minister, Eliash died suddenly in London; Churchill suffered a major heart attack, which left him incapacitated and was bedridden for six months during the crucial Anglo-Egyptian negotiations; Deputy Prime Minister, Eden was in ill-health and often absent from Cabinet meetings throughout Churchill's administration; US Secretary of State, Dulles underwent cancer surgery in early November 1956, and Ben-Gurion was confined to bed during the first days of *Kadesh*. Contrary to contemporary reports, although Eden suffered from a long-term illness, his health had little bearing on his leadership and decision making during the Suez crisis.

Britain's precondition for bilateral ties was the successful conclusion to negotiations on the sterling balances and remaining unresolved financial questions, which arose from the termination of the Mandate. Britain was anxious to recover her rapidly declining sterling assets while Israel, in dire need of sterling, was also eager to conclude an early agreement. Upon concluding the financial agreements, Britain consented to establishing full diplomatic relations, and remained Israel's largest export market throughout the period.

The calibre of Eliash and Elath, previously Israel's first Ambassador to Washington who represented Israel for nine years in London, was an indication of the importance Israel placed on its relations with Britain. A decisive turning point came when Britain finally established its Legation in Tel-Aviv four months after Israel had inaugurated its in London. The unsung success during the period was the Israeli Legation and Embassy's contribution in ensuring the flow of desperately needed oil supplies and financial loans. This, and not the pursuit of a solution to the Middle East conflict, remained its priority throughout.

Britain was averse to brokering a peace settlement. Contrary to Pappé's assertion that, 'London hoped that, like similar disputes in southern Europe, the hostilities in the early 1950s would be concluded by a peace treaty', Britain deliberately sabotaged Israeli-Jordanian peace negotiations. Furthermore, throughout the planning of Alpha, Britain was adamant that a comprehensive peace settlement was not an objective.

Ben-Gurion's attitude towards Britain fluctuated between 'Anglophilia' and 'Anglophobia'. He accurately assessed Britain's policies in the region, which were manifested by its arms embargo on Israel, its rejection of Israeli overtures to participate in the MEC, and its vigorous promotion of Alpha, which called for the truncation of Israel's internationally recognized border. He failed however, to appreciate the degree of Anglo-US cooperation and his vitriol, aimed exclusively towards Britain, infuriated Eden who pressed the US to enlighten Israel on Anglo-American agreement on Middle East policy.

There was little discernible difference in Ben-Gurion's policy towards Britain, and Sharett's, albeit Sharett was the more tactful. and that as Prime Minister he was seen as more amenable to territorial concessions. Notwithstanding Churchill's personal sympathy for Israel, there was little fundamental difference in Britain's policy and action towards Israel between the Labour and Conservative governments.

British diplomats in Tel-Aviv did not enjoy the same cordial relations. Israel was still on a war footing and rancour against British policy towards the *Yishuv* and later its policy towards Israel remained like a festering wound.

Anglo-Jewry was the most acculturated of all Diaspora communities and it succeeded, as did Israeli diplomats, in clearly defining the boundaries of their respective influence and functions. Zionism, which achieved a dramatic ascendancy in the Jewish community by the time Israel was established, became a mass movement among British Jews and arguably, the most powerful single force within Anglo-Jewry. During the Suez Crisis Anglo-Jewry was embroiled in the contentious issue of dual loyalty but it succeeded in extricating itself from this agonizing episode because of its tolerance for free discussion and self-confidence.

Israel's sensitivity towards the Jewish community paid important dividends. The Israeli Embassy became an important catalyst in harnessing support for Israel from non-Zionists and Zionists alike. One of its major contributions was in facilitating the teaching of Modern Hebrew and the establishment of Jewish day schools, which resuscitated the redundant ZF and gave it a renewed purpose.

From rancour to reluctant reconciliation, Anglo-Israeli relations had progressed

considerably which was due to Israel's military success during *Kadesh*, the replacement of *pax Britannica* with *pax Americana*, Macmillan's desire to establish cordial relations, and in no small measure, to the Jewish community's contribution in furthering Anglo-Israeli understanding.

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Eliahu Elath	Minister and Ambassador to Britain
Walter Eytan	Director General, Israel MFA
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Pinchas Ginossar	<i>Lehi</i> activist
Percy Goughy	<i>Poale Zion</i> activist, Britain
Arieh Handler	<i>Mizrahi</i> , leader
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Sir Edward Heath	Conservative Chief Whip, later PM
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Mordechai Kidron	Counsellor, Israel Embassy
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Fred Lowens	Purchasing Mission, Israel Embassy

Lord (Christopher) Mayhew	Bevin's deputy Minister of State, Foreign Office
Ian Mikado	Labour backbench MP and <i>Poale Zion</i> activist
Yitzhak Modai	Military Attaché, Israel Embassy
Yuval Ne'eman	Military Attaché, Israel Embassy
Gideon Rafael	Permanent Rep. UN, later Ambassador to Britain
Sir Robert Rhodes James	Biographer of Eden
Moshe Rosette	First Secretary of the Knesset and <i>Poale Zion</i> activist
Lord (Emanuel) Shinwell	Labour Minister of War and Defence
Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh	Eden's Personal Sec. and Head of ME Div., FO
Lord (Marcus) Sieff	President, Marks and Spencer, Zionist activist
Earl of Stockton (H.Macmillan)	Foreign and Def. Minister, Chancellor, later PM
Lord (George) Weidenfeld	Publisher and Zionist
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# Index

- Abadan Crisis 81, 114  
Abdullah, Ibn Hussein 20–22, 57, 81, 125–8  
Abramsky, Yehezkel 217  
accusations of dual loyalties 206–8  
Acheson, Dean 56  
Aden 70, 162  
'aggression' by Israel 5, 7, 9, 166  
*Agudah* 228–9, 232  
AIA *see* Anglo-Israel Association  
AJA *see* Anglo-Jewish Association  
Alderman, G. 240  
Alexander, Samuel 241  
Alexander, Sir Harold 6, 8, 11  
*Aliya* 213, 223  
Allen, No name 102  
Alliance Française 50  
*Alliance Israelite* 211  
Allon, Yigal 8, 20  
Alpha 129, 137–48, 162, 164;  
    'Alpha momentum' 145;  
    attempt to rescue 147;  
    collapse 148;  
    components of 129;  
    deemed a failure 147–8;  
    defining moment in Anglo-Israeli relations 145;  
    delay in announcing 144;  
    demise of 140;  
    failure to implement 253;  
    future of 141;  
    Israel's reaction 141–8;  
    leaks 141–2, 144, 162;  
    Nasser's interest in 141;  
    possible implementation of 172;  
    postponement of 162;  
    secrecy of 140–41;  
    solution to refugee problem 137;  
    spirit of 188;  
    'spoke in the wheels' 141;  
    successful implementation of 139  
Altman, Alexander 215  
Amery, Julian 97, 113, 168–9, 186  
*Amida* 217  
Amir, Rehavam 227–8, 230, 233

- Amory, Derick 182  
 Anderson Mission 147  
 Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry 211  
 Anglo-American coordination 7, 124, 138  
 Anglo-American relations 42, 147  
 Anglo-Egyptian agreement 103, 112–13, 115  
 Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, 1951–1954 76, 92–123, 131, 254;  
   Anglo-Egyptian negotiations 111–15;  
   attitudes of Churchill and the Foreign Office towards Israel 92–6;  
   Britain's response to Israel's quest for US alliance 104–6;  
   establishing Anglo-US policy on arms to Israel 106–8;  
   French and Canadian arms sales to Israel 110–111;  
   Israel and the MEC following the military mission 101–4;  
   Israel's role in Middle East Command 96–101;  
   sales of aircraft and tanks 108–110  
 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 5–6, 22, 81, 186  
 Anglo-French invasion of Egypt 172  
 Anglo-French mistrust 110  
 Anglo-French-Israeli collaboration 177  
 Anglo-Iranian Petroleum Company 29  
 Anglo-Israel Association 226  
 Anglo-Israel Chamber of Commerce 40, 43  
 Anglo-Israel commercial treaty 43  
 Anglo-Israel Parliamentary Association 48–9  
 Anglo-Israel parliamentary delegations, 1949–51 44–5  
 Anglo-Israeli Air Services Agreement 49–50  
 Anglo-Israeli commercial relations 40–44  
 Anglo-Israeli negotiations on sterling balances 30–37  
 Anglo-Jewish Association 207, 211–12, 221–2, 228, 239  
 Anglo-Jewish community 204–6, 242  
 Anglo-Jewish religious organizations 215–18  
   Anglo-Jewry faces accusations of 'dual loyalties' 206–8  
   Anglo-Jewry and Israel 204–252;  
   AJA 211–12, 221–2;  
   Anglo-Jewry faces accusations of 'dual loyalties' 206–8;  
   Anglo-Jewry's Suez Crisis 237–40;  
   Board of Deputies 209–211;  
   British Jews in the War of Independence 208–9;  
   the community 204–6;  
   controversy over Jewish-Zionist education 229–33;  
   Israeli Embassy and Anglo-Jewry 218–20;  
   *Jewish Chronicle* 213–14;  
   Jewish intellectuals 240–42;  
   *Jewish Observer* and the Embassy 234–5;  
   pro- Israel pressure groups 225–8;  
   Qibya reprisal raid of October 1953 236–7;  
   religious organizations 215–18;  
   ultra-orthodox anti-Zionism 228–9;  
   who is a Zionist? 235;  
   ZF 212–13, 222–5  
 Anglo-Jewry and the Israeli Embassy 218–20  
 Anglo-Jewry's ambivalence 237



- Anglo-Jewry's religious conscience 222  
 Anglo-Jewry's Suez Crisis 237–40  
 Anglo-Jordanian Treaty of Alliance, 1948 21, 23, 168, 190;  
   *see also Cordage*  
 Anglo-Palestine Bank 31  
 Anglo-Transjordanian treaty 71, 128, 167  
 Anglo-US policy on arms to Israel 106–8  
 Anglophilia 61, 254  
 Anglophobia 50, 61, 254  
 anti-British demonstrations 73, 134  
 anti-Israel propaganda 136  
 anti-Jewish feeling in Britain 205  
 anti-Semitism 1, 59  
 anti-Westernism 46, 92, 137, 168, 170  
 anti-Zionism 57, 101, 212, 228–9  
 ANZUS Pact 113  
 apathy 224  
 Aqaba 6–8, 71, 75, 125, 188–9  
 Arab boycott against Israel 49  
 Arab League 23, 94, 136, 162–3, 189  
 Arab Legion 3, 20–23, 36, 70, 125, 131;  
   British officers serving in 214;  
   creation of independent Arab state on West Bank 129;  
   interventions 140;  
   invasion of Israel 3  
 Arab nationalism 163  
 Arab Palestine 21–2, 39, 127;  
   proclamation of union of 22;  
   settlement 39;  
   *see also Palestine*  
 Arab-Israeli borders 66  
 Arab-Israeli settlement 124–60;  
   Britain's policy towards Israelic-Jordanian negotiations 124–30;  
   Israeli and British compromises regarding Jerusalem, 1949–1953 130–31;  
   Israel's reaction to Alpha 141–8;  
   Israel's reprisal raid on Qibya, October 1953 131–6;  
   search for a permanent solution 136–41  
 Arabism 163, 190  
 Arava 4  
 armistice 17, 66, 112, 124–6, 162–3, 253  
 Armistice Agreement 113, 182  
 arms balance 107  
 arms procurement, 1949–1951 63–70;  
   Anglo-US policy on arms to Israel 106–8;  
   Czech-Egyptian arms deal 163–7;  
   embargo 66;  
   French and Canadian arms sales to Israel 110–111;  
   Israeli pessimism 66;  
   sales of aircraft and tanks 108–110  
 arms to Israel policy 106–8  
 Arnon, Michael 234  
 arson 131

- Arthur, G 145  
 Ashkenazi 206, 209  
 Aswan Dam 170  
 attitudes of Churchill and Foreign Office towards Israel 92–6  
 Attlee, Clement 6, 9, 46–9, 58, 61, 114;  
     criticism of invasion of Egypt 186;  
     precedent 114;  
     and relationship with Bevin 61  
 Australia 11, 81, 238  
*Authorized Prayer Books* 216  
 Avner, Gershon 95, 106–7, 114–15, 134, 136, 179, 226–7
- Bacon, Alice 447  
 Baeck, Leo 236  
 Baghdad 11, 39, 147, 162–3, 166, 168, 173  
 Baghdad Pact 140, 161–3  
 Bakstansky, Lavi 208, 213, 223, 228  
 Balfour, Arthur 214  
 Balfour, David 228  
 Balfour Day 237  
 Balfour Declaration 59, 93, 204–5, 209, 211  
 Balkan Pact 103, 106  
 Bank of England 31, 35, 185  
 Banks, Cyril 138, 147  
 Bar-On, Mordechai 177  
 Barwell, Beatrice 211  
 Basra 4  
 Beeley, Harold 57, 138, 171  
 Beersheba 4, 21, 47, 71, 139, 144  
 Begin, Menachem 2, 95  
 Beloff, Max 225  
 Ben-Gurion, David 5–8, 16, 18–19, 41–8, 60–61;  
     acceptance of UN's role in international affairs 191;  
     achievement of Zionism's goals 208;  
     annexation of Gaza Strip 26;  
     arms sales to Israel 108;  
     attack on Egypt 184;  
     autocratic powers 61;  
     becomes Minister of Defence 162;  
     botched invasion 184;  
     Britain's refusal to accept armistice lines 141;  
     British arms without payment 68–9;  
     British and US Middle East policy 77;  
     call for Elath's dismissal 135;  
     communication in Hebrew 60;  
     decision to cooperate with Britain 97;  
     and Declaration of Independence 207;  
     defence arrangements 74;  
     denial of IDF involvement in Qibya raid 236;  
     Egyptian armistice 124;  
     Egypt's campaign of hatred and revenge 165;

- entertainment 79;
  - establishment of British bases 75, 101;
  - French support 178;
  - and General Robertson's visit to Israel 74–80;
  - on invasion of Egypt 182;
  - and Israel as saviours of Britain 172;
  - Israeli security 132;
  - Israeli-Jordanian armistice 125;
  - letters between Morrison and 99;
  - litmus test 70;
  - Lloyd's refusal to meet with 168;
  - meeting with Admiral Edelston 73;
  - military alliance 63;
  - mutual defence treaty between Israel, Britain and the US 106;
  - negotiations with Crossman 138;
  - and New Zealand 78;
  - and Operation *Musketeer* 176–9;
  - opinion of Bevin 59;
  - opinion of Churchill 102;
  - and the plain clothes delegation 97–9;
  - plans for Gaza raid 165;
  - policy of utilitarian non-alignment 62;
  - reaction to Tripartite Declaration 67;
  - 'real power in the land' 19;
  - refugee problem 125;
  - regret 44;
  - and relationship with Sharett 61;
  - replacing Sharett as Prime Minister 145;
  - response to Alpha 146;
  - and scandal 63;
  - sealing destiny of Jews 241;
  - secret conference with Lloyd 176–7;
  - shrewdness 78;
  - sojourn in Britain 219;
  - and speculation 76;
  - strategic understanding with US 104;
  - and the Suez Crisis 112;
  - telegram from the Superpowers 181;
  - undisputed leader of Israel 187;
  - views on education 230;
  - withdrawal of Anglo-French forces from Canal Zone 188;
  - and Zionism 46, 235
- Ben-Tal 225
- Bentwich, Joseph 229
- Bentwich, Norman 207, 214, 219, 226
- Berlin, Isaiah 61, 241
- Bermant, Chaim 225, 230
- Bernadotte, Count Folke 3–4, 10, 38, 70;
- assassination 3, 70;
  - plan 4, 10, 129, 146
- Beth Din* 217
- Bevan, Aneurin 10, 48, 183

- Bevin, Ernest 2–12, 18–20, 22–3, 31, 38, 48–9, 60–71;  
 death of 45, 60, 93;  
 failing health 45, 127;  
 foreign policy 58;  
*Jewish Chronicle* condemnation of policies of 214;  
 legacy 57–60;  
 and the matter of the Negev 126, 146;  
 on the Negev 71;  
 Palestine as failure 56–7;  
 payments and loans to Israel 31;  
 peace settlement proposals 127;  
 position in Foreign Office structure 82;  
 pragmatism 20;  
 precedent 114;  
 refusal to recognize Israel 2;  
 and relationship with Attlee 61;  
 sales of arms and Egypt 66;  
 ultimatum 5–7;  
 vindictiveness 4
- Bialer, Uri 30, 78, 130
- bilateral ties, 1949–1954 30–55, 168;  
 Anglo-Israel parliamentary delegations, 1949–1951 44–5;  
 Anglo-Israeli commercial relations 40–44;  
 Anglo-Israeli negotiations on sterling balances 30–37;  
 Haifa refineries 37–9;  
 improvement of 13;  
 Israel's requests for loans 40–44;  
 nurturing political parties 46–50
- Blaustein, Jacob 138
- blockade 140
- B'nai Brith* 213, 233
- Board of Deputies of British Jews 209–211
- border tensions 124–60;  
 Britain's policy towards Israeli-Jordanian negotiations 124–30;  
 Israeli and British compromises regarding Jerusalem, 1949–1953 130–31;  
 Israel's reaction to Alpha 141–8;  
 Israel's reprisal raid on Qibya, October 1953 131–6;  
 search for a permanent solution 136–41
- Boyle, Edward 185
- Bradley, General Omar 64
- Brin, Jacob 42–3
- Brinson, No name 41
- Britain delays Israel's application to UN 16–17
- Britain and the Sinai-Suez War 190–91
- Britain's approach to Israel on defence arrangements 74
- Britain's assessment of Israel's foreign-policy orientation 18–21
- Britain's dilemma of whether to stay in Israel or to go 167–9
- Britain's Gold Reserves 185
- Britain's 'one-night stand' with Israel at Sèvres 175–8
- Britain's policy on Israel's application for admission to UN 16–17
- Britain's policy on Israel's search for guarantees 187–90
- Britain's policy of non-recognition of Israel, May 1948–January 1949 1–5

- Britain's policy towards Israeli-Jordanian negotiations 124–30  
 Britain's response to Israel's quest for US alliance 104–6  
 British citizenship 236  
 British Commonwealth 113, 190  
 British compromises regarding Jerusalem, 1949–1953 130–31  
 British Council 50  
 British defence arrangements after 'King's Highway', 1950–1951 70–72  
 British defence planning and Israel's role, March–October 1951 80–82  
 British defence policy 74, 92–123  
 British domestic constraints 184–7  
 British empire in India 56  
 British hegemony 4, 110, 125  
 British Institute of Public Opinion 187  
 British Intelligence 4  
 British Jews in War of Independence 208–9  
 British labour movement press 46  
 British Labour Party 10, 18  
 British nationality laws 13  
 British Petroleum Company 189  
 British plan for Greater Transjordan 126  
 British Settlers Society 208  
 British strategic planning, 1949–1951 56–91;  
     Admiral Edelston's timely 'surprise', June 1950 73;  
     Bevin's legacy 57–60;  
     Britain's approach to Israel in defence arrangements 74;  
     British defence arrangements after 'King's Highway', 1950–1951 70–72;  
     formulating Israel's policy towards Britain 60–63;  
     General Robertson's visit to Israel, February 1951 74–80;  
     Israel's place in 56–91;  
     Israel's role in British defence planning, March–October 1951 80–82;  
     in search of arms, 1949–1951 63–70  
 British ultimatum to Israel, 31 December 1948 5–7  
 British Zionism 224  
 Brodetsky, Selig 209–210, 218, 222–4, 230–31, 236–7  
 Brodie, Israel 215–17, 220, 229  
 Brunel Cohen, Sir Jack 211  
 Bunche, Ralph 234  
 Burgess, Guy 18  
 Burke, Allan 208  
 Burma Road 208  
 Burrows, Bernard 3, 23, 65  
 Byroade, Henry 108
- Cadogan, Sir Alexander, 16, 62  
 Callaghan, James 48  
 Campbell, Sir Ronald 6  
 Canada 11, 110–111, 167  
 Canadian arms sales to Israel 110–111  
 Caplan, Neil 140  
 Carmel College 231  
 Cash Reimbursable Military Assistance Agreement 108

- casus belli* 161–3, 170–72, 175–8;  
 parallel search for 161–3;  
 producing scenario for 175–8;  
 providing scenario for 170–72
- ceasefire 6–9, 125, 179, 183, 185, 238
- Cecil, Robert 103
- censorship 76
- Central Synagogue Committee 216
- Central Zionist Synagogue Council 224
- Centurion tank sales 108–110, 165
- Ceylon 78
- Chadwick, John 17, 98
- Challe, Maurice 175–6, 178
- Chamberlain, Joseph 40
- Chief Rabbi of the British Empire 215
- Chief Rabbinate 216
- Chiefs of the Imperial General Staff 4–5, 64–5, 68, 70–71, 80–81;  
 allocation of arms to Israel 100;  
 contingency plan ‘Clatter’ 6;  
 cooperation with Israel 102;  
 defence of Jordan 136;  
 definition of enemy in the battle plan 167;  
 importance of Middle East 77;  
 Israel:  
 from pariah to collaborator 172–5;  
 Israeli defence arrangements 74;  
 Israeli purchasing powers 98;  
 and Israeli-Jordanian diplomacy 126, 136;  
 and Israel’s strategic position 74;  
 lack of capacity for second round 165;  
 launch of Operation *Musketeer* 175;  
 launch of ‘second round’ by Israel 136;  
 opposition to arms sales 65;  
 options regarding Israel, Egypt and Turkey 103;  
 and provision of military equipment to Israel 97
- Churchill, Winston 3, 11, 17, 42, 49, 81, 92–4;  
 agreement with Egypt 113;  
 attempt to stop retaliation 135;  
 bewilderment at government policy 186;  
 in communication with Ben-Gurion 97;  
 cooperation with Israel 102;  
 criticism of invasion of Egypt 186;  
 Eden as poor successor 189;  
 health 92, 103, 253–254;  
 involvement in isolation of Nasser 173;  
 Israel’s reaction to return to office 93;  
 natural rapport with US 190;  
 opinion of Israelis 93;  
 overtures to Israel 103;  
 positioning of British troops on West Bank 101;  
 as Prime Minister 92;  
 pro-Israel speeches 45;

- relationship with Eden 93;
- response to Israeli reprisal raids 133;
- sales of jet aircraft to Israel 109;
- on Suez Crisis 112
- CIA 105, 170
- CIGS *see* Chiefs of the Imperial General Staff
- 'Civil Disabilities of the Jews' 207
- Clark, William 185
- Co-op Union 47
- Co-operative Party 46
- Codd, No name 47
- coercive diplomacy 136–41
- Cohen, Michael 78
- Cohen, Stuart 168
- Coldrick, A.P. 47
- Colonial Office's Palestine Desk 94
- Comay, Michael 13–14, 34, 42–5, 48, 60;
  - on British arms sales 65, 69–70;
  - on creation of Israel 222;
  - direct military strengthening of Israel 101;
  - and Israel's orientation 61;
  - opinion on Britain's claim to objectivity 65;
  - on the plain clothes delegation 99;
  - and Robertson's visit to Israel 74–80
- communism 2, 18, 47, 58
- Communist China 22
- compensation 42, 140
- comprehensive Middle East settlement 124
- compromises regarding Jerusalem, 1949–1953 130–31
- Conservative Party 9–10, 46, 49
- Consistoire* 209
- Consolidated Oil Refineries 38
- Constantinople Convention 112
- contingency plans;
  - 'Binnacle' 71;
  - 'Clatter' 6;
  - 'Doublequick' 71;
  - 'Speedway' 71
- contribution to Allied war effort 64
- controversy over Jewish-Zionist education 229–33
- Cordage* 168, 175, 178;
  - see also* Anglo-Jordanian Treaty of Alliance 1948
- corpus separatum* 130
- Court of the Chief Rabbi 217
- Court of George III 209
- cousinhood 211, 221
- Cripps, Sir Richard Stafford 33, 35–6, 39
- Crombie, Sir James 36
- Crossman, Richard 15, 63, 71, 75, 138
- Crowe, Colin 32, 34–5
- Cyprus 4, 11–12, 33, 38, 70, 103, 162, 166
- Czech-Egyptian arms deal 163–7, 180

- Daily Express* 186–7  
*Daily Herald* 171  
*Daily Telegraph* 186  
*Daily Worker* 60  
 Dalton, Hugh 11  
*Davar* 37, 60  
 Davies, Clement 49  
 Davies, Ernest 82  
 Davis, Monnett 104  
 Day of Atonement 216  
 Dayan, Moshe 174, 176, 179  
*de facto* recognition 9–12  
*de jure* recognition of Israel 21–3, 253  
 de Rothschild, James 221  
 de-militarization of the Sinai 189  
 Dead Sea 4, 40  
 Dead Sea Works 40  
 Dean, Patrick 176–8  
 Declaration of Independence 207  
 Deedes, Sir Wyndham, 226  
 defining relationship between Anglo-Jewry and Israel 204–252;  
     AJA 211–12, 221–2;  
     Anglo-Jewry faces accusations of ‘dual loyalties’ 206–8;  
     Anglo-Jewry’s Suez Crisis 237–40;  
     Board of Deputies 209–211;  
     British Jews in the War of Independence 208–9;  
     the community 204–6;  
     controversy over Jewish-Zionist education 229–33;  
     Israeli Embassy and Anglo-Jewry 218–20;  
     *Jewish Chronicle* 213–14;  
     Jewish intellectuals 240–42;  
     *Jewish Observer* and the Embassy 234–5;  
     pro-Israel pressure groups 225–8;  
     Qibya reprisal raid of October 1953 236–7;  
     religious organizations 215–18;  
     ultra-orthodox anti-Zionism 228–9;  
     who is a Zionist? 235;  
     youth and students 233–4;  
     ZF 212–13, 222–5  
 definition of a Zionist 235  
 demarcation 57  
 demilitarized zone 4  
 detachment of ‘King’s Highway’, 1950–1951 70–72  
 detainees 4  
 Diaspora Jews 63, 204, 206–7, 215, 217–18;  
     acculturation 255;  
     differences between Zionists and non-Zionists in 235;  
     divisive issue of education 229;  
     right to comment on affairs 236;  
     support for Israel 237;



- young adults 233
  - dilemma of whether Britain should stay in Israel or go 167–9
  - displaced persons 58
  - Disraeli, Benjamin 170
  - dogfights 8
  - domestic constraints in Britain 184–7
  - Dow, Sir Hugh 14–15, 71
  - DPs *see* displaced persons
  - dual loyalties accusation faced by Anglo-Jewry 206–8
  - Duke, Charles 138, 174–5
  - Dulles, Allen, 182
  - Dulles, John 104–6, 108, 139–40, 143–6, 163, 254
- 
- East End 216
  - Eban, Abba 9, 105, 112, 142, 147, 178, 183, 214
  - Economic Board for Palestine 213, 221
  - Economic Policy Committee 36
  - economic sanctions 140
  - Economist* 9, 185
  - Eddy, Sir Wilfred 32–3
  - Edelman, Maurice 207
  - Edelston, Admiral Sir John 72–4
  - Eden, Anthony 61, 81–2, 92–3, 102–3, 109–113;
    - address to Lord Mayor’s Banquet 145;
    - agreement with Egypt 113;
    - alienation of key aides 190;
    - attempt to stop retaliation 135;
    - attendance of dignitaries at Independence Day reception 131;
    - attitude towards US 93;
    - and Britain’s ‘good offices’ 139;
    - covering up cooperation with Israel 179;
    - departure as Prime Minister 189;
    - direct offer to Nasser 140;
    - discussion of Arab-Israeli impasse 139;
    - establishing mutual relations 97;
    - failure to follow precedent 114;
    - fluent Arab and Farsi speaker 94;
    - and free navigation through Suez Canal 115;
    - on the French in the Middle East 166–7;
    - government’s failure to achieve what he’d intended 189;
    - health 254;
    - as heir apparent to Churchill 93–4;
    - ignoring Arab nationalism 163;
    - Israel’s welcome of departure as Prime Minister 189;
    - justification of invasion of Egypt 182;
    - lack of prevention of border tensions 174;
    - lies 180, 182–3;
    - and Macmillan 183;
    - majority in favour of continuing military action 187;
    - meeting with Lloyd, Mollet and Pineau 176;
    - negotiating with Iraq 162;

- ‘not a man of action’ 172;
  - obsession with downfall of Nasser 171;
  - one and only meeting in Cairo 162;
  - ‘prize for aggression’ 145;
  - public support for policies 185;
  - reaction to Israeli reprisal raids 133;
  - relationship with Churchill 93;
  - secrecy of the Alpha plan 140–41;
  - Suez not a tactical defeat 187;
  - threat of military action against Nasser 170–71;
  - unknowing revelations about Alpha 142–3
- Edgware Reform Synagogue 218
- Edgware United Synagogue 232
- education 229–33
- Egypt 4–9, 63, 67, 72, 81, 98;
- aggressive aspirations 102;
  - aim of Alpha in 147;
  - Anglo-French invasion of 172;
  - approach by US 147;
  - armistice 124–6;
  - arms deal with Czechoslovakia 163–7;
  - belligerent rights 112, 189;
  - blockade in Straits of Tiran 112;
  - Britain and Israel as collaborators in war against 161;
  - Britain prepared to supply arms 163;
  - campaign of hatred and revenge towards Israel 165;
  - contribution to Allied war effort 64;
  - cooperation 136;
  - defence negotiations 103, 105;
  - downing British plane 181;
  - giving up Gaza Strip 139;
  - Israel defender of 237;
  - Israel’s attack on 180;
  - jet power 107–9;
  - Jordanian landmass corridor 136–7, 140, 147;
  - obduracy 72;
  - and Operation *Musketeer* 179;
  - part of security network 71;
  - peace settlement 139, 145;
  - pivotal role in Middle East policy 163;
  - reprisal raids 135;
  - sales of jet aircraft 107–9, 111;
  - taking the Gaza Strip by force 189;
  - US arms purchase 108;
  - violation of international law 115
- Egypt Committee 172, 177
- Egyptian-Jordanian landmass corridor 136–7
- Egyptian-Soviet arms deal 144–5, 166
- Eisenhower, Dwight 105, 108, 138, 170–71, 178–80, 182
- El Al 48–9
- El-Arish 5
- Elath, Eliahu 20–22, 42–5, 48–9, 59–60, 96–7;

- on Anglo-Egyptian negotiations 112;
- attack on British policy 146;
- attempts to woo the Conservative Party 49;
- and Britain's 'good offices' 139;
- Britain's horror at reprisal raids 133–4;
- Britain's interest in establishing bases 75–6;
- citing classified information 109;
- communication in Hebrew 60;
- contribution 135;
- final report on Qibya 134–5;
- ignorance of existence of Alpha 142;
- and Israel's orientation 61;
- Jordan's acquiescence 132;
- policy towards Britain 63;
- and position of USSR 101;
- relations with other countries 110;
- and religious organizations 215;
- reprimand by Ben-Gurion 237;
- request for arms 173;
- resumption of military talks 100;
- sales of arms to Israel 68–70;
- and the Suez Crisis 112;
- and the Suez Group 114;
- synopsis of Anglo-Israeli relations 176;
- Tripartite signatories' non-aggression pact 107;
- warning against using modern weapons against Jordan 174–5
- Eliash, Mordechai 12–14, 19–22, 64, 219–21, 253
- emancipation 205
- embargo 66, 68, 141
- Embassy 218–20, 234–5
- Encyclopaedia Judaica* 241
- Eretz Israel* Committee 240
- establishment of legations 12–16
- Etzel* 2, 95, 205
- European Confederation of General Zionists 240
- European Rabbinical Council of *Agudah* 229
- Evans, Sir Francis 94–5, 100–101, 105–6, 112, 129–31;
- approach to anti-Western regimes 137;
- Britain's horror at reprisal raids 133;
- cooperative approach to Israel 138;
- scepticism at Israel's invasion of Jordan 136;
- terrorist attacks 135
- Eveland, W. 170
- Exodus affair 214
- Eytan, Walter 2, 14, 20, 47, 76, 98, 145, 178
  
- factors underlying British policy 93
- Falla, P.S. 105, 136
- Farouk, king of Egypt 111
- Fawzi, Salu 168
- fedayeen* activities 178, 187

- Federation of British Industries 36  
 Feisal II, king of Iraq 170  
 Fenton, Jason 208  
 final report on Qibya 134–5  
 Fitzmaurice, Sir Gerald 171  
 Food and Agricultural Organisation 18  
 Foot, Michael 49  
 Foreign Office attitude towards Israel 92–6  
 Foreign Office departmental structure, 1949–1957 82  
 formulation of Israel's policy towards Britain 60–63  
 France 110–111, 166–7, 172–9, 183, 190–91, 238  
 Franco-Israeli Vermars conference 166  
 Franks, Sir Oliver 5, 8–9, 75  
 French arms sales to Israel 110–111  
 from ad hoc policies to coercive diplomacy 136–41  
 full diplomatic recognition of Israel 30  
 Furlonge, Geoffrey 75, 127–8, 135
- Gaitskell, Hugh 48–9, 238  
 Galilee 3–4, 48, 139  
 Gaza 4, 21–2, 74–6, 126, 135, 139–41, 147, 188–9  
 Gaza raid 140–41, 161–5  
 Gazier, Albert 175  
 General Armistice Agreement 134  
 Gertner, Levi 230  
 ghetto life 229  
 Gilbert, Martin 172, 176  
 Glenconner, Lord 40  
 Gloster Aircraft Company 108–9  
 Glubb Pasha 169;  
   *see also* Glubb, Sir John  
 Glubb, Sir John 131, 133, 135, 140, 168–9  
 Goldbloom, J.K. 224  
 Goldman, Nahum 224  
 Gollancz, Sir Victor 226  
 Goodman, Harry 228–9, 239  
 Gore-Booth, Paul 181  
 Gorny, Yosef 59  
*Government Year Book* 63  
 Greater Transjordan 126  
 Green, Monty 208  
 Greenwood, Anthony 46  
*Guardian* 171
- Ha'aretz* 15  
*Haganah* 2, 40, 208, 214  
 Haifa oil refineries 13, 20, 37–9  
 Haley, Sir William 45  
 Hall, Glenvil 45  
 Hampstead Synagogue 216  
*Hapoel* Tel-Aviv football team 50

- Harman, No name 219  
 Hart, Liddell 75, 102  
 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan 16, 18, 126  
*Hatikva* 210  
 Healey, Dennis 46, 48, 225  
 Heath, Edward 177  
 Hebrew 50, 60, 139, 206–7, 213, 230–31;  
     modern pronunciation 216, 231, 233, 255;  
     study of literature 230  
 Hebrew day schools 230, 255  
 Hebrew University 224  
 Hebron 21  
*heder* system 229  
 Heikel, Mohamed 161  
 Hejaz 128  
 Helm, Sir Alexander Knox 14–18, 20–21, 34–5, 41, 47–8, 74–81;  
     Anglo-American disagreements 105;  
     annual report, 1950 20–21;  
     explanation of peace settlement proposals 127;  
     and Israeli policies 95;  
     Israeli-Jordanian settlement 127;  
     and Middle East Command 97;  
     military attaches 96;  
     misjudgement of situation 68, 74–5;  
     sales of arms to Israel 68  
 Henderson, Arthur 9, 74  
 Hennessy, Peter 184  
 Henriques, Basil 211  
 Hertz, Joseph 215, 229  
 Hertz, Joseph (Chief Rabbi) 215, 229  
*Herut* party 95, 224  
 Herzl, Theodor 205, 214, 216, 219, 224  
 Herzog, Yaakov 219  
 Hillel Foundation 233  
 Hillel House 230  
 Hirshman, Ira 138  
*Histadrut* 2, 37, 45, 47–8, 225  
 HMS *Surprise* 73  
 holocaust survivors 58, 206, 208  
 Horowitz, David 32–43  
 Horrocks, General Brian 102  
 hostilities between Soviet bloc and the West 92  
 House of Lords 49  
 Houstoun-Boswall, William 15  
 Hungarian revolution 181  
 Hussein, Ibn Talal 174  
  
 illegal detention 33  
 illegal immigrant camps 33  
 improvement of bilateral ties 13  
 in search of arms, 1949–1951 63–70

- in the wake of detachment of 'King's Highway', 1950–1951 70–72
- Independence Day 131, 216, 233, 242
- Independence Day Order of Service Book* 216
- India 11, 93, 97;  
     British empire in 56;  
     last viceroy to 170
- India Office 38
- ingathering of exiles 207
- Inner Ring 74
- integration in British society 204
- intellectuals 240–42
- inter-parliamentary visits 227
- interim Arab-Israeli settlement 124–60
- International Monetary Fund 43, 185
- International Telecommunications Union 18
- internment camps 57
- invasion of Israel by Arab Legion 3
- Iraq 37–9, 64, 67, 174
- Iraqi-Turkey treaty 140, 162
- Iron Curtain 18, 62
- 'iron out the ghetto bend' 211
- Israel and Anglo-Jewry 204–252
- Israel Defence Forces 4
- Israel, from pariah to collaborator 172–5
- Israel shoots down aircraft, 7 January 1949 7–9, 64, 253
- Israel and the Sinai-Suez War 191
- Israeli 'aggression' 5, 7, 9
- Israeli compromises regarding Jerusalem, 1949–1953 130–31
- Israeli Embassy and Anglo-Jewry 218–20
- Israeli encroachment 187
- Israeli flag 12
- Israeli-Egyptian negotiations 124–5
- Israeli-Jordanian negotiations 124–30
- Israeli-Sephardic pronunciation 232
- Israel's application for admission to UN 16–17
- Israel's detachment of 'King's Highway', 1950–1951 70–72
- Israel's foreign-policy orientation 13, 18–21, 61–2
- Israel's impact on Anglo-Jewry 206
- Israel's Operations:  
     *Horev* 4;  
     *Kadesh* 148, 178–9, 254–255;  
     *Yoav* 4
- Israel's place in British defence policy, 1951–1954 92–123;  
     Anglo-Egyptian negotiations 111–15;  
     attitudes of Churchill and the Foreign Office towards Israel 92–6;  
     Britain's response to Israel's quest for US alliance 104–6;  
     establishing Anglo-US policy on arms to Israel 106–8;  
     French and Canadian  
     arms sales to Israel 110–111;  
     Israel and the MEC following the military mission 101–4;  
     Israel and proposed Middle East Command 96–101;  
     sales of aircraft and tanks 108–110

- Israel's place in British strategic planning, 1949–1951 56–91;  
 Admiral Edelston's timely 'surprise', June 1950 73;  
 Bevin's legacy 57–60;  
 Britain's approach to Israel on defence arrangements 74;  
 British defence arrangements after 'King's Highway', 1950–1951 70–72;  
 formulating Israel's policy towards Britain 60–63;  
 General Robertson's visit to Israel, February 1951 74–80;  
 role in British defence planning, March–October 1951 80–82;  
 in search of arms, 1949–1951 63–70
- Israel's plans for a second round 163–7
- Israel's policy towards Britain 60–63
- Israel's pro-Western policy 63
- Israel's quest for US alliance 104–6
- Israel's reaction to Alpha 141–8
- Israel's reprisal raid on Qibya, October 1953 131–6
- Israel's request for loans 40–44
- Israel's role in British defence planning, March–October 1951 80–82
- Israel's role in Middle East Command 96–101;  
 following the military mission 101–4
- Israel's search for guarantees and British policy 187–90
- Jackson, Elmore 138
- Jackson, Nathan 50
- James, Rhodes 170, 181
- Janner, Barnett 49, 226, 237, 239–40
- Jebb, Hubert 171, 183
- Jerusalem compromises, 1949–1953 130–31
- Jerusalem Post* 60, 135
- jet aircraft sales 68, 77, 107–110, 166
- Jewish Agency 2, 12, 30–32, 46;  
 77 Gt Russell St 241;  
 Diaspora Education Department 230;  
 Executive 205, 210, 223;  
 founding of the ZF 213;  
 Legal Department 219;  
 Political Department of 60;  
 Youth and *Hechalutz* Department 233;  
 ZF opposition to changes in 234
- Jewish charter 205
- Jewish Chronicle* 40, 50, 205–7, 210, 213–17, 229
- Jewish Free School 230
- Jewish intellectuals 240–42
- Jewish Lads Brigade 211
- Jewish National Home 205
- Jewish Observer* 234–5
- Jewish population of Britain 204
- Jewish Secondary Schools Movement 230
- Jewish settlement in Uganda 205
- Jewish underground 214
- Jewish Universalists 241
- Jewish vote 143

- Jewish Year Book* 204, 213  
 Jewish-British cooperation 214  
 Jewish-Muslim tension 59  
 Jewish-Zionist education 229–33  
 Johnston, Eric 138  
 Joint Palestine Appeal 208, 223  
 Jordan 1, 4–8, 11, 16–23, 38, 57, 67;  
     annexation of Negev 146;  
     annexation of West Bank 125–6, 129, 253;  
     Arab Legion in 70;  
     Britain's humiliation in 176;  
     British positions in 132;  
     ceasefire with Israel 125–6;  
     confirmation of British commitment to 174;  
     defence of 133, 135;  
     direct military assistance 167;  
     Egyptian landmass corridor 136–7, 140, 147;  
     friendly relations with 168;  
     Gaza corridor 76;  
     General Armistice Agreement 134;  
     HMG treaty obligations 136;  
     infiltration into Israel 131;  
     Israeli-Jordanian negotiations 124–30;  
     Israel's ceding south Negev 139;  
     kept at bay from Nasser's influence 187;  
     occupation by Iraq 176;  
     occupation of Jerusalem 45, 188;  
     part of security network 71;  
     proclamation of union of Arab Palestine 22;  
     protection of 127;  
     self-assurance 136;  
     Sir John Glubb in 169;  
     sovereignty 21, 101, 130;  
     as strategic centre 57;  
     terrorism 135;  
     tracking down perpetrators of violence 132;  
     transfer of MELF HQ 136;  
     *see also* Transjordan  
 Jordan River dispute 138  
 Jubilee Conference 224  
*Judenrat* 205  
  
*Kadesh* 148, 178–81, 188, 190, 240, 254–255;  
     *see also* Israel's Operations  
 Kaplan, Mordechai 33–4, 40  
 Keightley, Charles 182, 190  
 Kennedy, John 89  
 Kessler, David 213–14, 221, 236  
 Kessler, Leopold 40, 210, 213  
*kibbutzim* 47  
 Kidron, Mordechai 15, 22, 48, 68, 128, 226



- Kimche, David 234  
 Kimche, Jon 141–2, 213–14, 219, 234–5  
 King David Hotel bombing 214  
 King's Highway 70–72  
*Kinneret* 165  
 Kirkbride, Sir Alec 6, 20–21, 125–8, 131  
 Kirkpatrick, Sir Ivone 82, 136, 164, 171, 174–5  
 kissing triangles 140, 144  
*Knesset* 32, 36, 44–5, 50, 61, 184;  
     foreign debate 76;  
     Foreign Relations Committee 104;  
     legislation requiring religious women to perform National Service 229  
 Korean War 62, 66  
 Kraucz, Ernest 204
- Labour Party 10, 18, 44, 46  
 Laski, Harold 58  
 Laski, Neville 209, 212, 221, 236  
 Lavon Affair 114  
 Lavon, Pinchas 45, 132  
 Lawson, Edward 144–5  
 legacy of Bevin 57–60  
 legations set up 12–16  
 Legge-Bourke, Harry 23  
 legislation requiring religious women to perform National Service 229  
 Leigh-Jones, No name 39  
 Lend-Lease 30  
 Lennox-Boyd, Alan 171  
 Levenberg, Schneir 46, 225  
 Lever, Harold 3, 238  
 Levin, Rabbi No name 228  
 Liberal Party 49  
 Liberal Synagogue 218  
 Lincoln, Ashe 208, 224  
 Linton, Joseph 2, 12, 31, 218–19  
 Lloyd George, David 190  
 Lloyd, Selwyn 83, 114, 133–4, 139, 164;  
     Egypt's belligerent rights 189;  
     evacuation from Egypt 183;  
     meeting with Eden, Mollet and Pineau 176;  
     secret conference with Ben-Gurion 176–7;  
     statement on Israel's plan to attack Egypt 180;  
     talks with Israel 172;  
     updating Cabinet 178;  
     visit to Israel 168–9  
 Locker, Berl 47  
 Locust tanks 7  
 Logan, Donald 176–8  
 London Board of Education 232  
 London Maritime Conferences 173  
 London Olympics 18

- Lourie, Arthur 225  
 Lovett, Robert 5–6  
 Lyne, General L. 65
- MAC *see* Mixed Armistice Commission
- McDonald, James 5, 103  
 McGeagh, No name 34–5  
*Machal* 208  
 MacLean, Donald 18  
 Macmillan, Harold 82, 110, 143–7, 164–6, 171–2;  
   on British losses due to botched invasion of Egypt 185;  
   Chancellor of the Exchequer 185;  
   Eden's staunchest supporter 183;  
   expectations from 189;  
   natural rapport with US 190;  
   nerve 185;  
   Prime Minister 189
- McNeil, Hector 7, 10, 82, 138  
 Maimon, Rabbi No name 229  
 Maitland, Patrick 114  
 Makins, Roger 107  
 Makleff, Mordechai 68, 99  
 Malta 173  
*Manchester Guardian* 9, 60, 186  
 Mandate 30–31, 34, 40, 56–9, 73;  
   Attorney General for 207;  
   emigration of Jews during 213;  
   lack of free Arab connection across Negev 144;  
   and the past 61;  
   pro-Israeli pressure groups 225–8;  
   *see also* Balfour Declaration
- Mapai* 48, 62–3, 178, 225  
*Mapam* 18, 47, 62–3, 73  
 Margalit, Haim 43  
 Marks & Spencer 69, 208  
 Marks, Simon 40, 219  
 Marquis of Salisbury *see* Cecil, Robert  
 Marriott, Cyril 1–2, 6, 13, 15  
 Marshall, George 104  
 Martin, Andre 179, 205  
 May, Doris 220  
 Maybaum, I. 218  
 Mayhew, Christopher 82  
 MEC *see* Middle East Command  
 mediation 141  
 MEDO *see* Middle East Defense Organization  
 Meir, Golda 172–4, 179  
 MELF *see* Middle East Land Forces  
 Menderes, Adnan 45  
 merchandise trade between Israel and Britain, 1949–1957 41  
 Middle East Command 81, 96–104, 106;

- Israel and MEC following the military mission 101–4;
  - Israeli exclusion from 103;
  - Israel's perceived role in 96–101
- Middle East Defense Organization 99, 101, 105–6, 166
- Middle East Land Forces 102
- Middle East Review* 234
- Middleton, James 46
- Mikardo, Ian 48, 50, 238
- military mission 101–4
- Mindel, Barry 217
- Minister Plenipotentiary Envoy Extraordinary to Israel's Jews 220
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2
- Miss World competition 50
- Mixed Armistice Commission 132
- Mizrachi* 217, 229
- Mollet, Guy 173–4, 176–7, 179, 186–7
- Monckton, Walter 171, 178
- Monroe, Elizabeth 37, 59
- Montagu, Edwin 209
- Montagu, Ewen 212, 216–17, 221, 230, 236–7
- Montefiore, Claude 221
- Moore, Antony 105
- Morris, Benny 131, 135, 141, 219
- Morrison, Herbert 47–8, 59, 80–82, 93, 98–9;
  - letters between Ben-Gurion and 99
- Mossad* 20, 114, 234
- Mountbatten, Louis 94, 130, 170, 173, 176, 182
- Moyne, Lord 93, 133
- mutual mistrust 48
- Myers, Asher 214
  
- Namier, Lewis 241
- Nasser, Gamal 110–114, 138–44, 148, 164;
  - arms deal with the Czechs 161–7;
  - Britain and France wanting decisive action against 172–3;
  - Britain prepared to supply arms 163;
  - closing Suez Canal 170;
  - described as second Mussolini 161;
  - Eden's obsession with downfall of 171;
  - as enemy of Israel 184;
  - likelihood of military action against 170;
  - Macmillan out to defeat 172;
  - Soviet weaponry 163–4;
  - support for Algerian rebels 238;
  - vilification of Nuri Said 163;
  - Western attempts to isolate 170, 173
- Nathan, Lord 220
- National Religious Party 217
- National Service by religious women 229
- nationalization of the Suez Canal 167, 185, 237
- NATO agreement on arms 66

- Nazi invasion of Britain 205  
 Nazi occupation of Europe 205  
 Nazi war machine 95, 205  
 NEACC *see* Near East Arms Coordinating Committee  
 Near East Arms Coordinating Committee 106, 111, 166  
 Negev 3–9, 12, 20, 23, 47, 57, 142–7;  
     establishment of British bases in 75, 146–7;  
     extension of Israeli control 125;  
     hopes of recovery of 61;  
     importance to Israel 143;  
     inclusion in a future Jewish state 70;  
     incorporation of 125;  
     Israeli ceding of the south 139, 147;  
     kissing triangles 140;  
     loss of 71;  
     lynchpin in negotiations 148;  
     non-resolution of matter 125;  
     occupation of 168;  
     protection of hinterland 179;  
     security guarantees 144;  
     settlement plan 138, 145;  
     territorial concessions 253  
 Neguib, Mohammed 102  
*Neturei-Karta* 229  
*New Statesman* 9, 33, 38  
*New York Times* 112  
 New Zealand 11, 78, 81, 146  
*News Chronicle* 171  
 Nicholls, John 95, 138, 140–47, 162–8, 176–81, 184, 188  
 Noble, Anthony 82  
 non-belligerency 124  
 non-identification 62  
 non-recognition of Israel by Britain, May 1948–January 1949 1–5  
 nurturing bilateral ties *see* bilateral ties, 1949–1954  
 nurturing political parties 46–50  
 Nutting, Anthony 82, 115, 143, 162, 185, 190
- oath of allegiance 209  
*Observer* 43, 186  
 Official Secrets Act 190  
*Ohel Shem* Jewish day school 231  
 Operations:  
     *Black Arrow* 161–2;  
     *Gamma* 147, 168;  
     *Horev* 4, 124;  
     *Kadesh* 148, 178–81, 188, 190, 240, 254–255;  
     *Musketeer* 175–8, 181–2, 185;  
     *Uvda* 125;  
     *Yoav* 4 4  
 Orbach, Maurice 138, 237, 239  
 orthodoxy 218

- Ottoman Empire 144  
 Overseas Negotiations Committee 42
- Pakistan 11, 97
- Palestine 1–5, 8–11, 15–22, 30–33, 44;  
   Bevin's failure 56–7;  
   British deaths in 95;  
   British policy on 145;  
   burial ground for British hopes 94;  
   and the diaspora 206–7;  
   disappearance from map 126;  
   dominion in the British Empire 78;  
   emigration from Russia 213;  
   extension of Anglo-Transjordanian treaty 128;  
   final settlement on 65;  
   founding of the ZF 212;  
   future of 205–6;  
   and Israeli- Jordanian armistice 126;  
   Jewish efforts to build educational base 241;  
   position as regards Great Britain 93;  
   settlement with the Arabs 39;  
   US standpoint on 107;  
   war in 112;  
   *see also* Arab Palestine;  
   Balfour Declaration
- Palestine Conciliation Commission 4, 124, 126–9
- Palestine Post* 15, 32
- Palestine Potash Company 40
- Palestinization 126
- Palmach* 208
- parallel search for a *casus belli* 161–3;  
   the Gaza raid and the Baghdad Pact 161–3
- partition 3, 37, 205, 211, 214
- Partition Plan 1947 180
- pax Americana* 56, 93, 255
- pax Britannica* 93, 255
- PCC *see* Palestine Conciliation Commission
- peace solution not peaceful solution 143
- Pearlman, Moshe 214
- Pearson, Lester 167
- peoplehood 204
- Peres, Shimon 109, 164
- 'perfidious Albion' 179–84
- Persian Gulf sheikdoms 70
- Persian oil 39
- Phillips, Morgan 48
- Pineau, Christian 166, 170, 174, 176
- Poale Zion* 44, 225
- Poland 2
- political parties 46–50
- Portsmouth Treaty 11;

- riots 11
- Prayer for the State of Israel 216
- pressure groups 225–8
- pro-Arabism 190
- pro-Israel pressure groups 225–8
- proclamation of union of Arab Palestine 22
- procurement of arms, 1949–1951 63–70
- producing the scenario for *casus belli* 175–8
- Progressive movement 217–18
- providing scenario for *casus belli* 170–72
- public criticism of Israel 222
- Public Relations and Information Committee 223
- Public Service College 60
  
- Qalqilya raid by Israel, October 1956 7, 174–5
- Qibya raid by Israel, October 1953 109, 111, 131–6, 236–7
- Quai d'Orsay 166, 183
  
- Ramallah Line 74
- rampant militarism 95
- Rapp, Thomas 6, 95, 113, 129
- re-evaluation of Israel's role in British defence planning 80–82
- recognition of Israel, January 1949–April 1950 1–29;
  - Britain delays Israel's application to UN 16–17;
  - Britain's policy of non-recognition, May 1948–January 1949 1–5;
  - British assessment of Israel's foreign-policy orientation 18–21;
  - British ultimatum to Israel, 31 December 1948 5–7;
  - de facto* recognition, 29 January 1949 9–12;
  - establishment of legations 12–16;
  - Israel shoots down RAF aircraft, 7 January 1949 7–9, 64, 253;
- recognition of the union for *de jure* recognition of Israel 21–3
- recognition of the union for *de jure* recognition of Israel 21–3
- Red Sea 71, 125–6
- refineries of Haifa 37–9
- refugees 11, 33, 44, 126, 137–40, 143, 147
- religious affiliation 104
- religious organizations 215–18
- reparations agreement 39
- repatriation 129
- reprisal raid on Qalqilya by Israel, October 1956 7, 174–5
- reprisal raid on Qibya by Israel, October 1953 109, 111, 131–6, 236–7
- Republic of Korea 16, 62
- res nullius* 1
- resumption of military talks 100
- Reuters 45
- Revolutionary Council 111
- Riad, Mahmud 138
- Robertson, General Sir Brian 41, 74–80, 97–8
- Rolls-Royce 108–9
- Rosenne, Shabatai 219
- Rosette, Moshe 44–5, 50, 213

- Rosh Pina* elementary school 232–3  
 Roth, Cecil 241  
 Rothschild, Lord 44, 214  
 Royal Albert Hall 242  
 Russell, Francis 137–8, 140, 143, 146  
 Rutenberg, Pinhas 173
- Sacher, H. 219  
 SACME *see* Supreme Allied Command of the Middle East  
 Said, Nuri 18, 39, 163, 170  
 St Germain 173  
 St John's Hospital 130  
 St John's Wood United Synagogue 219  
 sales of jet aircraft and Centurion tanks 108–110  
 Salisbury, Lord 113  
 Salmon, Katriel 68–9, 96  
 Samaria 125, 132  
 Samuel, Edwin 206, 220  
 Samuel, Lord 45, 221  
 Sargent, Sir Orme 82  
 Sasson, Eliahu 125  
 Schonfeld, Rabbi Solomon 230  
*Scotsman* 60  
 Scott, Richard 186  
 search for guarantees 187–90  
 search for a permanent solution 136–41  
 'second round' plans by Israel 136, 161, 163–7  
 secular education 229  
 secularization of Israel 216  
 Security Council 134  
 Sephardis 209, 216, 232  
 Sèvres 175–8, 180  
*Shacham* programme (emergency service) 233  
 Sharett, Moshe 6, 17–19, 21–3, 34–9, 45–7, 60–65, 74–81;  
   arms sales to Israel 108;  
   becomes Prime Minister 135;  
   best bet at arriving at solution 142–3;  
   Britain's refusal to accept armistice lines 141;  
   and British foreign-policy decisions 93–4;  
   charges to US 108;  
   commenting on Tripartite Declaration 167;  
   comments on Alpha plan 145;  
   compromise for legations 131;  
   demise of 148;  
   education at LSE 218;  
   free navigation protest 115;  
   goodwill mission to Asia 178;  
   ignorance of existence of Alpha 142;  
   imperialist generals 76;  
   inaugural speech to UNGA 62;  
   indefatigable diplomatic efforts 191;

- intricate nature of Israeli politics 77;
- and the Lavon Affair 114;
- Lloyd's refusal to meet with 168;
- and Middle East Command 97;
- moderation of 103, 137;
- on the Negev 147;
- Operation *Black Arrow* as greatest failure 16;
- on the plain clothes delegation 100;
- reaction to Abdullah's secret talks 128;
- reaction to peace settlement 127;
- and relationship with Ben-Gurion 61;
- reprisals 132–5;
- sealing destiny of Jews 241;
- secret messages from Dulles 140;
- security guarantees 144;
- some elements of Alpha revealed 146;
- visit to US 105
- Sharm-el-Sheikh 189
- Sheffer, Gabriel 165, 204, 206
- Shekel* Campaign 224
- Shell Oil Company 37, 39, 189, 209
- Shell Transport and Trading Company 221
- Sherringham, John 15, 19, 47, 65, 228
- Shiloah, Reuven 20, 76, 79, 138, 146
- Shinwell, Emmanuel 59, 68–9, 74, 80, 96, 214, 238
- Shlaim, Avi 58, 127, 172
- Shoah* 209
- shooting down of RAF aircraft, 7 January 1949 7–9, 64, 253
- Shuckburgh, Evelyn 94, 136–48, 161–4, 171, 176
- Shukeiry, Ahmed 129
- Sieff, Israel 147, 208–9
- Sieff, Marcus 40, 43, 208, 219, 242
- Silverman, Sydney 49, 238
- Simon, Ernest 236
- Sinai Peninsula 4, 6, 165, 174, 179–81, 189
- Sinai-Suez Crisis, 1956–57 161–203, 237;
  - Britain's policy on Israel's search for guarantees 187–90;
  - Britain's 'one-night stand' with Israel at Sèvres 175–8;
  - British domestic constraints 184–7;
  - Czech-Egyptian arms deal 163–7;
  - dilemma of whether to go or to stay 167–9;
  - Israel, from pariah to collaborator 172–5;
  - Israel's operation *Kadesh* 178–9;
  - Israel's plans for a 'second round' 163–7;
  - parallel search for a *casus belli* 161–3;
  - 'perfidious Albion' 179–84;
  - producing the scenario 175–8;
  - providing the scenario for a *casus belli* 170–72;
- Sinai-Suez War: Britain 190–91;
- Sinai-Suez War: Israel 191;
- SNAFU 179–84
- Sinai-Suez War and Britain 190–91



- Sinai-Suez War and Israel 191  
 Slim, William 6  
 Smith, Bedell 105  
 Smith, Norman 11–12  
 SNAFU 179–84  
 Sneh, Moshe 63  
 sociological composition of post-War community 204  
 solution to refugee problem 137  
 sovereignty;  
     Israeli 23;  
     Jordanian 21  
 Soviet influence in Israel 10  
 Soviet penetration 2, 71  
 Soviet weaponry 163  
 Spanish Civil War 207  
*Spectator* 162  
 Spitfires 8, 65  
 Sprinzak, 45  
*SSTransylvania* 48  
 Stalin, Josef 101  
 State of Israel 2  
 Stein, Leonard 204, 207–8, 212, 220–21, 236  
 Steiner, George 241  
 sterling balances 30–55, 254;  
     Anglo-Israel parliamentary delegations, 1949–51;  
     Anglo-Israeli commercial relations 40–44;  
     Anglo-Israeli negotiations on sterling balances 30–37;  
     Haifa refineries 37–9;  
     Israel's request for loans 40–44;  
     nurturing political parties 46–50  
 sterling zone 30, 38  
 Stockwell, H. 183  
 Strang, Sir William 6, 18–19, 75–6, 82, 126  
 students and youth 233–4  
 Suez Canal Company 170, 237  
 Suez Canal Convention 112  
 Suez Canal nationalization 167, 185, 237  
 Suez Conference 237  
 Suez Group 113–14, 168, 186, 239  
 Suez Zone 6, 66, 70–71, 75, 81, 92, 103  
 Sufott, Zev 208  
*Sunday Express* 239  
*Sunday Times* 143  
 Supreme Allied Command of the Middle East 81  
 Switzerland 205  
  
 Talmud 217  
*Talmud Torah* School 231  
*Technion* Society of Great Britain 50  
 Tel Mond 209  
 Temkin, Shlomo 208

- Templer, Sir Gerald 168  
 Tenenbaum, Yoav 130 130  
 tercentenary of resettlement of Jews in Britain 206  
 territorial internationalization of Jerusalem 130  
 terrorism 214  
 Tewson, Harold 46  
 textiles 98  
 Thomas, Abel 170  
 timely 'surprise' of Admiral Edelston, June 1950 73  
*Times* 7, 9, 12, 35, 45, 125, 127;  
   affirmation of Jewish loyalty to Britain 212;  
   anti-British report 134;  
   attack on British policy 146;  
   Baghdad Pact and Jordan 168;  
   on Ben-Gurion's decision to withdraw 189;  
   Ben-Gurion talks of a preventive war 165;  
   British disaster in Middle East 168–9;  
   commenting on retaliatory attack Operation *Black Arrow* 162;  
   on Janner 239;  
   letter from Elath 132;  
   obituary of Bevin 60;  
   opposition to transfer of power 130;  
   quoting Churchill 186;  
   on threat of sanctions on Israel 188–9;  
   urging continuance of peace process 144  
 torah 217, 219–20  
 traditional Judaism 231  
 Transjordan 11, 30, 32, 40, 64;  
   British influence 70;  
   British plan for Greater Transjordan 126;  
   communist influence 70;  
   contribution to Allied war effort 64;  
   Israeli-Jordanian armistice 125–6;  
   membership of UN 17;  
   *see also* Jordan  
 Travellers Club 221  
 trends in Anglo-Jewry 204  
 Trenter, George 208  
*Trial and Error* 78  
*Tribune* 234  
 Tripartite Declaration 67, 70, 107, 111, 131, 166–7  
 Tripartite signatories' non-aggression pact 107  
 Tripp, Peter 107, 136  
 Troutbeck, Sir John 15, 18, 95, 128–9  
 truce 64  
 Trudo, No name 106  
 Truman, President Harry 5, 8, 126  
 Turco-Iraqi Pact 104, 163  
 Turco-Pakistani agreement 104  
 Tuton, R. 82

- Ulster 95
- ultra-orthodox anti-Zionism 228–9
- Umm Reshresh 71
- UN *see* United Nations
- UN Article 51 191
- unilateral action 23
- United Nations: Israel's application for admission 16–17
- United Nations Security Council 4
- United Synagogue 22, 209, 215–17
- Universal Postal Union 18
- upwardly mobile Jews 49
- US alliance with Israel 104–6
- US Export-Import Bank 183
- US recognition of Jordan's union with West Bank 1 1
- USSR 2, 21, 58, 81, 105;
  - agents to Palestine 58;
  - anti-Zionist line 101;
  - arms sales 66;
  - assertion control over neighbours 58;
  - defence of borders against 98;
  - objection to Transjordan's membership of UN 17;
  - Soviet aggression 81;
  - Soviet influence in Israel 10;
  - unsolicited participation 129
- utilitarian non-alignment 62
  
- Va'ad Hapoel* 50
- Vickers-Armstrong 68
- visit to Israel by General Robertson, February 1951 74–80
- 'voice of Anglo-Jewry' 213–14
  
- Wailing Wall 45
- Waley-Cohen, Sir Robert 209, 212, 221, 242
- War of Independence 63, 207–9
- Washington Embassy 67
- Waterhouse, Charles 113, 168, 239
- Watson, Sam 46–8
- Wedgwood, Josiah 78
- Weidenfeld, George 130
- Weizmann, Chaim 6, 19, 42, 47, 78, 93, 133, 241
- West Bank 1, 19–21, 101, 124–6, 129, 136
- West Germany 39
- White Paper 1939 56, 205
- Wigg, George 69
- Wilson, Harold 49, 58
- Wilson-Smith, Henry 33
- Wolfson, Issac 44, 242
- working out relationship between Anglo-Jewry and Israel 218–20
- World Bank 43
- World Inter-Parliamentary Union 44–5
- World Jewish Congress 210

- World Jewry 114, 143, 222  
World Liberal Union 49  
World War I 212  
World War II 7, 30, 65–6, 209, 211  
World Zionist Organization 205, 212–13  
wreckage 8  
WZO *see* World Zionist Organization
- Yadin, Yigal 47, 74, 77  
Yapou, Eliezer 22, 218  
Yassin, Deir 133  
Yemen 9  
Yiddish 234  
*Yishuv* 40, 46, 205, 209, 212, 229, 241, 255  
*Yorkshire Post* 60  
Younger, Kenneth 82  
youth and students 233–4
- ZF *see* Zionist Federation  
Zionification 210  
Zionism 18, 105, 163, 205–8, 213–14, 217–18, 230  
Zionist denigration 106  
Zionist diplomacy 62  
Zionist Federation 207, 212–13, 222–5, 255  
*Zionist Review* 210, 224  
*Zionist Year Book* 204  
Zohar, Bar 78