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*Impact of Arab-Israeli Conflict on Eastern Europe*

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## IMPACT OF ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT ON EASTERN EUROPE

A deep emotional reaction among the populations of most Eastern European countries has developed because of their regimes and the USSR backing the Arabs against Israel. One effect has been to intensify within many Communist hierarchies long-existing strains deriving from the chronic antisemitism which persists in varying degrees in most of the countries. Popular reactions have been strongly pro-Israeli. This attitude, in the circumstances, also has an anti-Communist quality indicating increased alienation between the rulers and the ruled. Most of the regimes, except Rumania, have followed Moscow's vehement pro-Arab lead with more or less reluctance because of differing factors of national self-interest. Within some of the ruling Communist cliques, the strains between influential Jews and antisemites may have lasting effects on intraparty politics.

Pro-Israeli Sentiment  
Versus Antisemitism

The outbreak of Arab-Israeli hostilities came as a surprise and shock to Eastern European countries. The impact was perhaps the greater because there was no preparatory propaganda campaign to which the populations of these countries have long been accustomed. The most significant result has been the emergence of strong and widespread pro-Israeli sentiment, imbued with antiregime overtones.

This effect has been most marked in three countries with strong traditions of antisemitism, Poland, Hungary, and to a lesser extent, Czechoslovakia. This can be partially explained by the close personal ties which still exist between individuals in

these countries and the emigrant survivors of prewar Jewish populations who have gone to Israel and elsewhere in large numbers since World War II. This is especially true of Poland, and to a lesser extent of Hungary, where many of the remaining Jews hold influential positions within the party and state apparatus. In Czechoslovakia, where purges during the Stalinist period swept most Jews out of power, the population's predisposition for Israel as the "underdog" in the conflict was bolstered by an emotional reaction against the party's antisemitic and anti-Zionist past.

Until World II, the bulk of Eastern Europe's Jewish population resided in these three countries and Rumania. Poland had proportionately the largest Jewish minority of any country in the

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world--some 3.5 million representing about ten percent of its population. The socioeconomic competition between the Jews, most of whom belonged to the middle class and the professions, and all the ethnic populations except the Czechs, tended to strengthen antisemitism among the urban elements as well as among the peasantry where it had been prevalent for centuries. Generally, however, most Poles, Slovaks, Hungarians, and Rumanians were inclined to view antisemitism as a purely domestic issue, or at most a typical Eastern European one, and not as a feature of the world-wide Zionist question.

Antisemitism in these countries was successfully exploited by the Nazi regime during World War II. Most Eastern Europeans came to realize, however, that they ranked little higher than the Jews on the Nazi racial scale. This feeling was later augmented by sympathy developing for the Jewish victims of Nazi extermination policies, especially in Poland, where the role of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in 1944 drew admiration.

The virtual destruction of Jewish minorities in Eastern Europe during the war created something akin to neurosis among most of the non-Jewish populations there. One ingredient in the conflict of sentiment that persists is a sense of relief that the prewar social and economic strains arising from the existence of sizeable Jewish minorities had been eliminated. Along with this, however, there is a mixture of

guilt about the past and of respect for the survivors of European Jewry who are successfully developing a new homeland against great odds. On the other hand, the relatively high proportion of Jews within the Communist leaderships of Eastern Europe at one time or another during the postwar period has tended more than any other factor to perpetuate antisemitism, even though most of the Jews who survived the post-Stalin purges and who remain in the ruling cliques tend to be moderates.

Over most of Eastern Europe, however, the antisemitism directed at Jews who helped impose unpopular Communist policies at home does not extend to Israel itself. Strong popular admiration for Israel as a state has thus emerged. Many Eastern Europeans identify and sympathize with Israel's search for security, the nonrecognition of its borders by its neighbors, and its inclination to make territorial adjustments. These facets of Israel's history, as well as the presence within its frontiers of hostile populations are similar to, or reminiscent of, the post - World War II experience of many Eastern European countries, as for example Poland and Czechoslovakia. The resulting sense of understanding has tempered the antisemitic character of public attitudes.

Since the late 1950s these popular sympathies seem also to have been reinforced by the increasingly antisemitic and anti-Israeli policies of the Soviet Union, climaxed by what most

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Eastern Europeans viewed as Moscow's crude pro-Arab power play since May of this year. The Soviet propaganda offensive following the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the willingness of most Eastern European regimes to parrot such a line, appears to have engendered a strong feeling that "my enemy's enemy is my friend" among large segments of the Jewish and non-Jewish population.

In East Germany, where sensitivity to antisemitism is widespread, the population appears to have generally avoided the racial aspect of the Arab-Israeli conflict. There is some evidence, however, that the majority of East Germans--like other Eastern Europeans--rejected their regime's assertions that the Arab-Israeli confrontation was a class war of "progressives against imperialist reaction."

As in other countries of the area, such propaganda merely promoted the belief that the real issue was the onslaught of Communist-supported dictatorships against a small, democratic state. East Germany's propaganda has also tended to strengthen popular fears over the implications for Eastern Europe of Moscow's stand, including a possibility of direct military involvement. When the extent of the Israeli victory became clear, there was a general tendency to question the value of Soviet support for the Arabs and even the worth of Soviet commitments in general. There is no information on popular reaction to the crisis in Bulgaria,

where prior to World War II, antisemitism was not a serious problem.

Regime Reactions and Motivations

With the exception of Rumania, the Eastern European regimes allied with the USSR supported Moscow's strongly pro-Arab position, and by 12 June had broken diplomatic relations with Israel. The convictions behind this support varied in intensity, as did the motivations. Apart from Yugoslavia, most of the Eastern European regimes followed Moscow's lead because of their alliances with the Soviet Union. The reactions of the regimes most dependent on Soviet military and political guarantees, i.e., East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary were especially vehement. The leaders of these regimes appear to have been convinced that the Arab-Israeli conflict was merely part of a concerted political, military, and ideological offensive by the West against Soviet prestige, designed to exploit growing diversity within the Communist bloc.

Yugoslavia's Tito apparently shared this fear. His decision to associate himself with Moscow was probably also strongly motivated by concern over the future of his ties with Cairo. There is evidence, however, that the public and many high party and government leaders feared that Belgrade's signature on the 9 June bloc declaration in Moscow fore-shadowed closer relations with the USSR. Tito seems to have been sufficiently concerned by the prevalence of such ideas to

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think it wise to emphasize in a speech on 1 July that no return to the bloc was contemplated and that Yugoslavia would remain independent and nonaligned.

The degree of support most other Eastern European regimes gave Moscow's line has varied, depending generally on the level of pro-Israeli sentiment among the people and within the parties. In Poland, the official reaction has been vehement largely because of the sensitivity of Gomulka and others in the leadership (whose wives are Jewish) to domestic and foreign Communist criticism of the "excessive" numbers of Jews within the party and state apparatus. It must have been embarrassing to the regime that the majority of Poland's ambassadors to the Arab countries are of Jewish origin. Gomulka's warnings on 19 June to influential Jewish elements against "double loyalties" reflected this sensitivity, which was evidently enhanced by the private "victory" celebrations which many prominent Jews in Poland reportedly held following Israel's victory.

A topical joke circulating in Warsaw concerns a telegram allegedly sent by Israeli Premier Eshkol to Gomulka after Poland broke diplomatic relations, which read simply, "Unless you rescind your decision, we shall withdraw all our people from your party and government."

Differences over the regime's anti-Israeli measures were probably widespread within the Polish

party both before and after the "summit" meeting of Eastern European leaders in Moscow on 9-10 June. Although severance of diplomatic relations with Israel was probably decided at the meeting, Poland did not take this step until 12 June, and was the last Eastern European country to do so. Moreover, on Polish initiative, two Israeli and two Polish diplomats remained at their posts without diplomatic status until 4 July, when the continued presence of the Israeli officials in Warsaw became untenable.

As in other Eastern European countries, internal differences within the Polish party were probably strengthened by arguments of ranking foreign trade officials who feared the impact of the crisis on the regime's commercial relations with Jewish businessmen in Western countries, especially in the United States. A similar situation probably exists in most other countries of the area, all of which have quantitatively small but well-established trade relations with Israel which they do not want to jeopardize. Polish-Israeli trade, for example, has so far remained at near normal levels, and commercial representatives of both countries apparently have remained at their posts.

Similar indications of dissent beneath the surface have developed in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, where elements of some strength within the party were, if not in total sympathy with

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the Israeli cause, at least opposed to unquestioning support of Moscow's pro-Arab policy. A vehemently anti-Israeli editorial published in the 15 June issue of the main Czech party newspaper was said to have caused a heated central committee debate, and drew censure by the party and a warning to the editorial board. It is likely that the central committee was concerned lest the zeal of the press in vindicating Prague's anti-Israeli policy be construed by the public as signaling a return to the neurotically antisemitic line of the early 1950s.

In Hungary, similar evidence of intraparty dissension has appeared, although the reports are less specific. Differences between Jews and antisemites within the party and elsewhere in public life were sharpened, and special party meetings reportedly were held in many parts of the country to counter pro-Israeli sentiment. Probably as a response to this, various senior regime spokesmen, including First Secretary Janos Kadar, issued a series of warnings in late June against the excesses of either anti- or philo-semitism, designed to prevent racial overtones from overshadowing the "class nature" of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Differences of opinion also existed among East European officials attending the UN General Assembly session. Many of these were said to be piqued at the failure of the Soviet mission to supply adequate information and

coordination during the proceedings. In private, some officials showed relative moderation and realism, while others confined themselves to parroting the regime line. Similar ambivalent reactions have been noted among some Eastern European UN correspondents, several of whom courted regime sanctions by expressing their opposition to official policy by deliberately failing to file stories.

Albania has also reacted harshly, but the regime nevertheless appears to be cautious. Its people, although 70-percent Moslem, are indifferent. Tirana's alliance with Peking--whose pro-Arab but anti-Soviet position it shares--has predictably led it to charge US-Soviet collusion against the Arab world.

#### Rumania--A Special Case

Alone among Eastern European countries, the Rumanian regime formally declared its neutrality in the crisis, refused to sign the bloc statement on 9 June following the Moscow meeting which it attended, and failed to break diplomatic relations with Israel. These moves once again illustrated the confidence of the Bucharest leadership in its national Communist point of view, and the subordination of both foreign and domestic factors to a policy of self-interest.

The domestic factors which might have been expected to affect Bucharest's policy on the crisis are no less sensitive and

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paradoxical than those in most other Eastern European countries. Rumania traditionally has been among the most antisemitic nations in the area, and party chief Ceausescu reportedly shares the national prejudice. The pre-Ceausescu leadership in 1959 was the last in Eastern Europe to liberalize Jewish emigration to Israel. Nevertheless, the present regime's policy on this score has been among the most restrictive. Since 1955 Jewish membership on the party central committee has been whittled from over 15 percent to about six percent. The proportion of Jews in the total population is one percent.

Despite the prevalence of prejudice, however, the regime's policy has evolved from other sources and is consistent both with its drive for independence from Moscow and its recently augmented economic relations with Israel. Moreover, with its sense of national sovereignty, the Ceausescu leadership probably also noted the parallels between Israel's isolation among the Arabs and Rumania's already marked isolation within the Communist bloc.

Although Bucharest's declaration of 10 June called for the "withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied territories," it did not assign responsibility for the outbreak of hostilities. The Rumanian statement also sharply conflicted with that of its allies by calling for direct Arab-Israeli negotiations. Most other Eastern

European leaders are also on record in support of Israel's right to statehood, but Ceausescu's 17 June public statement to this effect was the most emphatic and unequivocal.

The economic motives underlying Rumania's neutral stand are underscored by its 1967-70 trade, technical, and scientific cooperation agreement with Israel signed on 14 April--the first such formal accord concluded with Israel by any Communist state. The agreement calls for further development of mutual trade, which had already more than doubled during the 1960-66 period. For example, commercial exchanges in 1967 are to be double those in 1966, according to a Bucharest radio Yiddish-language broadcast beamed to North America on 5 June--the opening day of Arab-Israeli hostilities.

Popular reaction in Rumania to the regime's Middle East policy probably is in broad accord with the official position. Past regime actions reflecting Rumanian nationalism and independence generally have had the effect of broadening the party's base of popular support.

Outlook

The Middle East policy Moscow has promoted with most of the regimes in Eastern Europe raises another major obstacle to contacts with the West and strengthens the hand of hard-line elements opposed

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to expansion of such ties. Further unspecified commitments by the Eastern Europeans, including supplying arms to the Arabs, apparently were made at the bloc meeting on 11-12 July in Budapest. Such aid to Arab countries could pose additional economic strains, especially on Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and probably East Germany.

The course of Rumanian policy will clearly increase its isolation in Eastern Europe, and add to existing strains in its relations with Moscow. Rumania did not attend the meeting in Budapest. Yugoslavia's Tito, now committed to joint bloc action, may find it increasingly difficult to reconcile this position with his nonaligned policy and to forestall opposition within his own leadership.

In terms of internal party repercussions, the Polish regime appears to be the most susceptible. There, the hard-line, antisemitic faction of the party may seek to use the current situation to intensify its long-standing efforts to diminish Jewish influence, especially in the Foreign Ministry where such influence is dominant. Whether this faction, whose strength had been waning in recent months, will now be more successful than in the past remains to be seen. In the absence of suitable replacements for Jews within the top and middle echelon of the leadership, it is unlikely that a sweeping purge is imminent. Some dismissals and reshuffling may occur, but Gomulka's propensity for maintaining a political balance within the regime suggests that such

changes would not automatically mean a rise in the power of the hard-line, antisemitic elements.

Similar problems may arise in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, although in view of the relatively small number of Jews in the Czech party, differences may hinge more on substantive policy issues than on the question of antisemitism. Probably least affected in the long run will be the regimes in Bulgaria and East Germany. Antisemitism is weak in Bulgaria whose tangible contributions to bloc pro-Arab policies are potentially small. In East Germany, the ability of the Ulbricht regime to smother domestic opposition has been demonstrated in the past.

The recent crisis may have a lasting impact of widening the gulf between the peoples of Eastern Europe and the ruling Communist cliques. In most of the countries whose regimes have supported Moscow's pro-Arab stand, the effort to demonstrate bloc "unity" could have effects counter to party interests and could promote popular nationalistic tendencies. This is likely to be mirrored within the respective parties themselves, where strains may increase between elements who had hoped for a further loosening of Moscow's influence and those who have sought to stem the trend toward diversity. Such differences may, in turn, have potential long-range effects on old controversies and party factional disputes over issues unrelated to the Middle East crisis. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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