An enormous set of formerly top secret Cold War state, political, military, diplomatic and security documents (including Todor Zhivkov personal records) were made available in Bulgaria after 1990. Among them were many valuable documents on the conflict in the Middle East – the longest lasting regional confrontation in the course of contemporary international history. The documentary edition presented here comprises of two hundred and fifty five documents with a total volume of more than 1 500 pages, selected from various Bulgarian state and party archives. The principal aim was to compile a rich and representative documentary collection based on a great variety of political, diplomatic, military, and security information regarding the history and course of the Middle East conflict and the evolution of the Bulgarian attitudes and policy on the issue.

While researching the Bulgarian Communist Party records we found quite interesting pieces of information, both on the decision-making process inside the top level Politburo and Central Committee ruling circles and, simultaneously, some very sensitive and confidential evidences about the views, differences, and personal characteristics of several Arab leaders. For the first time, some confidential Council of Ministers Resolutions & Memos, declassified in June 2004 by a special inter-governmental commission that acted in accordance with Article 34 and § 9 of the Classified Information Protection Act (2002)\(^1\), are made public

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\(^1\) Article 34
(1) The following shall be the protection periods of classified information, to commence from the date of generation:
1. of information marked as "Top Secret", 30 years;
2. of information marked as "Secret", 15 years;
3. of information marked as "Confidential", five years;
4. of information classified as an official secret, two years.

§ 9. (1) Any materials and documents prepared before the entry into force of this Act, and marked as "Top Secret of Special Importance", "Top Secret", or "Secret", shall be deemed to be marked respectively as "Top Secret", "Secret", and "Confidential", and the respective durations of classification
here. Specially for this edition, many archival documents from the Archives of the Ministries of the Interior (e.g. exchanges of intelligence & counterintelligence information by the Bulgarian State Security Committee with the KGB in Moscow) and of Foreign Affairs (e.g. incoming and outgoing diplomatic cipher correspondence) were declassified in 2005 and 2006 as well.

Though an unified, internationally recognized model explaining the Middle East conflict have not been in existance so far\(^2\), we have divided the archival documents in five chronological groups that follow the sharp confrontation phases of the conflict during the Cold War years – the Suez Crisis (1956), the Six Day War (1967), the October War (1973) and the “Peace for Galilee” Israeli operation in Lebanon (1982). About a quarter of all documents have been translated into English, and twenty two other documents were originally written in English, French, or Russian. The rest of the documents in Bulgarian are accompanied, however, by a broader English “descriptor” of their contents and key topics. Very few of the archival documents were included in two of our previous CD documentary volumes, published respectively in 2002 and 2005 in cooperation with the Cold War International History Project in Washington D. C.\(^3\)

The Bulgarian historiography on the Middle East was established in the 1960s with two parallel trends – *Arabic and Islamic Studies* (with its most prominent representative Prof. Iordan Peev\(^4\)), and *Contemporary International History Studies* (its most prominent representative is Prof. Hristina Mircheva). While in the 1960s - 1980s almost all of the publications were logically devoted to the history and policy of the Arab nations, after the early 1990s the situation changed in favor of publications on the State of Israel and on *Hebrew & Jewish Studies*.

\(^2\) While the inter-state Arab-Israeli conflict usually has been divided in five or six separate wars, the intra-state Jewish-Palestinian confrontation had its own definition. Few authors even talk about a sole armed conflict with several escalation/de-escalation phases, similar to the one hundred years or thirty years European Wars.

\(^3\) *Bulgaria in the Cold War. Documents from Todor Zhivkov Personal Records* (Docs. No. 27, 40, 44, 94, 101, 180, 190, 209, 219, 222, 223); *Bulgarian Intelligence and Security Services in the Cold War years* (Docs. No. 39, 50, 167, 183, 191, 213, 215, 224, 227, 229, 230, 245).

The Middle East conflict had been analyzed in several monographs in the last two decades.\textsuperscript{5} The Bulgarian policy towards the Middle East conflict was examined rather incidentally in the Cold War years\textsuperscript{6}. Its actual perspectives were discussed more or less in some confidential research studies, prepared for use by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party. In the beginning of the 1990s Sofia University Press published the first original study on the Bulgarian Jews emigration to Palestine, based on new documentary sources\textsuperscript{7}. A valuable study on Bulgarian – Arab relations was written by one of the leading Bulgarian diplomats Kiriak Tsonev, who served during the last forty years in the Bulgarian embassies in Damascus, Cairo, Algiers, and was also a head of the Foreign Ministry’s Arab Countries Department.\textsuperscript{8} The author of this introduction also had the chance to contribute to the discussion on the Bulgarian Middle East policy in a book, based predominantly on new political and diplomatic archival sources\textsuperscript{9}.

I. 1944 – 1956

Immediately after the political changes in Bulgaria and the establishment of a pro-Communist government on 9 September 1944 the question of eventual Jewish State in Palestine became a subject for discussion among the ruling circles and inside the Jewish Community in the country. On 22 September 1944 Bulgarian Foreign Minister Petko Stajnov declared the right of free emigration of Bulgarian Jews to Palestine, and the Minister of Propaganda Dimo Kazasov announced a positive attitude toward the establishment of a Jewish state in the


\textsuperscript{8} Kiriak Tsonev, \textit{Bulgaro-arabskite otnoshenia: Fakti i analizi} [Bulgarian-Arab Relations: Facts & Analyses], (Sofia: Paradigma, 1999).

region. In October 1944 both Zionist and pro-Communist Jewish organizations held their conferences, and a Bulgarian Palestine Committee was re-established. In early December 1944 David Ben Gurion paid a visit to Bulgaria. He had talks with Prime Minister Kimon Georgiev and other members of the Bulgarian government.\(^{10}\)[Doc. No. 2]

In April 1947 a Bulgarian parliamentary delegation, led by Dr. Mincho Neichev and Stela Blagoëva, attended the annual conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Cairo. They received a memorandum on the situation in Palestine, signed by Prof. Chaim Weitzman and Ben Gurion. On 14 April 1947 a very detailed report (50 pages) about the political and ethnic situation in Palestine was prepared by the leaders of the delegation\(^{11}\). A Military Intelligence officer under cover was infiltrated inside the Bulgarian delegation. In a detailed intelligence report after his return back to Sofia, some new data about two clandestine Zionist organizations (\textit{Irgun Zvei Legumi} and \textit{Stern} group) was included. This information was obtained in Haifa through a Bulgarian-born member of the armed Zionist resistance. According to the report, the territory of Palestine was transformed in a “battle zone” in the struggle against the British domination in the area. Egypt became one of the most vulnerable places in the British strategic defense, considering their imperial naval positions and the richest oil field in the world, located in the Middle East region\(^{12}\).

In March 1948 after a Report by the Prime Minister Georgi Dimitrov\(^{13}\) a special CC BCP Secretariat Resolution in support to the establishment of the new state of Israel in Palestine and for a possible collaboration between the Communists and Zionists, was approved. The resolution declared: “We are obliged not to oppose and hold up these Jews who voluntary want to leave for Palestine”\(^{14}\)[Doc. No. 11]. Just for a half year, from 25 October 1948 till 16 May 1949 32 106

\(^{11}\) Central State Archive (\textit{CDA}), Sofia, Fond 141-B, Record 1, File 116.
\(^{12}\) \textit{Ibid}, Fond 146-B, Record 5, File 773, p. 48, 50, 70.
\(^{13}\) By the way, Dimitrov’s own wife, Rosa Fleishmann, was a Czech Jew.
Bulgarian Jews immigrated to the new state of Israel [Doc. No 17]. In the next three years more than 3 000 new Bulgarian Jews left for Israel, too\textsuperscript{15}.

The provisional Israeli government sent a request to Bulgaria in July 1948 for recognition of the new state in Palestine. On 29 November 1948 the Bulgarian government recognized officially Israel and declared its readiness to establish diplomatic relations with the Jewish state [Doc. No 14, 15]. The Bulgarian position toward Israel coincided with the official Soviet policy and the coordinated Soviet bloc position in those months.\textsuperscript{16} The official diplomatic missions were sent respectively to Sofia and Tel Aviv in 1952 – at the peak of the first Cold War bi-polar confrontation.

Until mid-1950s Soviet bloc countries did not pay any special attention to the Middle East conflict. Bulgaria, like other East European states, supported until 1952 the “struggle of the new Jewish state against British imperialism and reactionary Islamic empires”. It was not accidental that in 1951 Abdullah, the King of Transjordan, addressed a warning message against “the Russian-Jewish threat to the Arabic world”\textsuperscript{17}. A tension in Israeli-Bulgarian relations appeared only in the summer of 1955, when a Bulgarian Air Forces pilot shoted down an Israeli civil airplane, which crossed by error Bulgarian border with Yugoslavia. The followed investigation proved, however, that the accident was not a premeditated action but a pilot fault, caused mainly by the psychological bi-polar confrontation atmosphere of a “war of nerves” between the two blocks\textsuperscript{18}. A radical change came after the establishment of the nationalistic Nasser’s regime in Egypt, and aggravated immediately after the Suez crisis in 1956, when for the first time the East European countries backed strongly Egypt. On 14 August 1956 Bulgarian government announced a declaration in favor of the nationalization of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Boïka Vasileva, Op. Cit., p. 123. In mid-1950s between 6 000 – 7 000 Jews remain in Bulgaria, some of them with strong positions within the Communist Party, State Administration, and Intellectual elites in the country.
\item CDA, Fond 214-B, Record 1 , File 709, p. 14.
\item The Investigation results were summarized in two Governmental Reports: CDA, Fond 1-B, Record 6, File 2629, p. 14-21; Central Military Archive (CVA), Veliko Tarnovo, Fond 1, Record 3, File 6, p. 166-170; File 7, p. 380-385. See also: MAE, Paris, Archives Diplomatiques, Europe 1949-1955. Bulgarie, v. 44, Affaire de l’avion Israélien abattu.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the Suez Canal by the Nasserite regime in Egypt. A new declaration for the termination of the military action of Israel, Great Britain, and France was published on 2 November 1956, followed by many protest telegrams and notes of various public organizations. The Central Committee of the Bulgarian youth organization received few requests by university students and young reservists with proposals to be sent as “voluntaries in support of the Egyptian people”.

II. 1957 – 1967

In the created psychological atmosphere, in March 1957 the CC BCP Politburo discussed the proposal of the Minister of the Interior for closure of the Palestinian Committee in Bulgaria, whose main mission since 1944 was to assist the immigration of Bulgarian Jews to Israel. Although there were expressed expert recommendations against such act, finally the Communist Party leadership decided to stop the activity of the Palestinian Committee with the argument that its work “duplicated” the official activity of the Israeli legation in Sofia [Doc. No. 33]. Most probably, the decision was influenced by Counterintelligence Information of 8 January 1957, where it was reported that the President of the Palestinian Committee, Albert Graziani, was in close contacts with Nathan Baruch, a Second Secretary at the Israeli legation and a suspected Israeli Intelligence officer, and that he had “glorified” and propagated materials about the Israeli military action during the Suez Crisis [Doc. No. 30].

Immediately after the first multilateral intelligence & counterintelligence Soviet bloc meeting in Bucharest in March 1955, the Bulgarian communist leadership approved the proposals of the Minister of the Interior, Georgi Tzankov, regarding the Middle East area: “Our intelligence residents in Israel and Egypt have to orient their activity for availing the opportunities against the main adversary (i. e. USA and NATO) and for intelligence work in Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus.” The document recommended further closer contacts and mutual coordination.
between foreign political and military intelligence representatives abroad.\textsuperscript{22} In a report from 1960 about the future trends of cooperation between Bulgarian and other Soviet bloc Intelligence services against the “main adversary”, some basic directions of probable Intelligence collaboration were proposed. Among the prescriptions was a proposal to coordinate the actions against the “main adversary” on the territory of some Arab states (UAR, Iraq, and Lebanon).\textsuperscript{23}

Soon after the Suez crisis of 1956 the contacts between the Warsaw Pact countries and some Arab nationalist regimes became more intensive. The Middle East conflict was estimated by the Soviet bloc experts as a part of the global confrontation and in the light of a direct application of the Eisenhower Doctrine for securing the US strategic dominance in the region. Bulgarian Secret Services carefully observed US and British high rank officers’ visits to Greece and Turkey. Special attention was paid to the NATO exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean in the summer and fall of 1957 as well as of a dislocation of Turkish troops on the Syrian border. Even in February 1957 Bulgarian Military Intelligence reported about “an increasing US military activity in the Near and Middle East” and some indications of a possible further attack against Syria\textsuperscript{24}. A conclusion that each concentration of the Sixth US Fleet battleships near to the Turkish and Greek shores means a “complication of the situation in the area” was made in the report, too.

At a BCP Politburo discussion the NATO exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean in August – September 1957 were evaluated as “preparation for a provocative action against Syria by the USA, Turkey and Israel”. In the same time Moscow sent urgent recommendations to its smaller Balkan allies with a request for more active policy on this issue. As a result of the Soviet demand, the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs delivered protest verbal notes to the diplomatic representatives of Turkey and Israel in Sofia.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Ibid}, Fond 1, Record 10, File 210.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid}, File 1360.
\textsuperscript{24} CVA, Fond 1, Record 3, File 42, p. 21, 61, 63.
\textsuperscript{25} Diplomatic Archive (DA), Sofia, Record 3-Sh, Files 129, 149, 151, 212; Op. 13, Files 360, 418; CDA, Fond 1-B, Record 5, File 270, p. 5-6, 51; Record 6, File 3397, p. 62-64.
A mass anti-US campaign started in Eastern Europe after the landing of US and British marines and paratroopers in Lebanon and Jordan in the summer of 1958. During this campaign both the Bulgarian Ministry of Defense and the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party received many requests from reduced officers insisting to be send as “volunteers to support the struggle of the Arabic people”. Two special sessions of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party in July and October 1958 were dedicated to the Middle East and Far East (Taiwan Straits) situation. In his report on 19 July 1958 Bulgarian Communist leader, Todor Zhivkov stated, that the US intervention in Lebanon was a result of the political changes in Iraq, which seriously had affected the US strategic aims in the region. Zhivkov underlined that due to the proximity of the events to the “Socialist camp’ borders” it was necessary to discomfit the “imperialist aggression” in the area [Doc. No. 38].

As a response to the US action in Lebanon, long scale military exercise was carried out in Bulgaria, Romania and the Soviet Odessa Military District. In Bulgaria the exercise was conducted close to the Bulgarian-Turkish border with the participation of almost all of the Army, Air Forces and Navy in a position of full battle alert. Few Soviet airborne divisions were dislocate in Bulgaria during the exercise. In his report at the CC Plenary meeting in July Zhivkov noticed: “This exercise is a demonstration, but depending on the development of the situation, it could become a real power”. The following discussion disclosed few very interesting details, typical for the existing psychological circumstances at the moment. At the peak of the Lebanese crisis a Bulgarian armored division, sent to attend an exercise in Romania, was urgently returned back to its former disposition near to the Turkish border. Due to a technical error, the coordinates on the map showed pre-dislocation of a tank brigade near to Edirne, the biggest town on the European territory of Turkey. The only comment of the brigade commander while receiving the order was: “At last, time has come to start a real action”.

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28 Ibid., p.161.
On 2-4 October 1958, a week after Zhivkov’s meeting with Nikita Khrushchev in Crimea, another CC BCP Plenary session was held. Zhivkov’s statement at the Plenary expressed a strong enthusiasm and euphoria of the rising power of the Soviet war potential. The Bulgarian leader triumphantly announced that the Lebanese crisis settlement was the third subsequent Soviet bloc’ victory after the Suez crisis in 1956 and the Syrian crisis in 1957. As a result, urged Zhivkov, the US invasion in the Middle East was stopped without using a sole Soviet weapon. However, Zhivkov evaluated the “Eisenhower Doctrine” as a successful effort to exploit the nationalistic feelings of the Arab leaders [Doc. No. 40].

Quite interesting was the attitude toward Gamal Abdel Nasser, which had changed slowly and under the succeeding circumstances in the next few years. According to Zhivkov’s qualification: “Nasser is a nationalist, a military person, without a necessary political and life experience, and with the ambitions of a dictator. He perhaps believes that life is something of a military barracks and that he can command and lead the people in whatever direction he wishes…”

The conclusive remarks at Zhivkov’s report showed an eventual opportunity to “detach these countries from the US imperialism, or at least not to be committed so much to the US policy.” Such an “optimistic” estimate of the Bulgarian Communist leader was very soon denied by the Intelligence reports. Foreign Intelligence Information sent by the Bulgarian Minister of the Interior Gen. Tzankov to Zhivkov in July 1959 reported that at a meeting of NATO Secretary General Spaak with the Greek Defense Minister Averoff an agreement for activation of the Greek and Turkish policy “against the Soviet deep penetration in the Middle East” has been reached

The aggravation of the Middle East conflict in mid-1960s provoked the Warsaw Pact close attention to the Eastern Mediterranean area. Among the issues discussed inside the Pact’ Secret Services on the matter a particular concern caused the Israeli Intelligence services activities against Eastern Europe and their contacts with the NATO Secret Services. In two KGB Reports of November

30 AMVR, Fond 1, Record 10, File 62, p. 243-245.
1961 and April 1963, entirely included in the Top Secret Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior’s Informative Bulletins, some detailed data about the structure and tasks of various Israeli Security Agencies as well as about the secret Israeli operations against the USSR and the East European countries was given [Doc. No. 49, 54]. According to these reports, 21 of all 39 diplomatic officials of the Israeli Embassy in Moscow for the period 1948 - 1959 were discovered as Intelligence and Counterintelligence officers. A secret agreement between the US and Israeli governments for mutual investigation and use of the Information, taken by the Soviet and East European immigrants to Israel, had been concluded in late 1950s. At a NATO Intelligence Services’ meeting in 1959 a special decision (proposed by the British Intelligence Service) “for more active use of the Israeli Intelligence capabilities in favor of the Western countries”, had been taken. The KGB Reports argued that in the late 1950s – early 1960s the Israeli Security Services had maintained close contacts with their partners in Western Germany, France (at the time of the Algerian war), Italy and Turkey.\(^{31}\)

The exchange of Intelligence information between the Soviet bloc countries regarding the Middle East situation included as well newly obtained security information both from Israeli and Arabic sources. E. g. on 14 April 1965 Bulgarian Minister of the Interior Gen. Diko Dikov informed KGB Chairman Vladimir Semichastni about the results of a counterintelligence operation of penetration inside the embassy of UAR in Sofia. Few months later Semichastni expressed a gratitude for the received Arabic diplomatic documents. In addition he highly appreciated the acquired Israeli materials in Hebrew (\(\text{ivrit}\)). According to the KGB analysts, these materials “were of great operational interest and deserved a high assessment”.\(^{32}\)

Since the Suez Crisis the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies engaged themselves more and more actively with rendering of a direct military aid to the Egyptian and Syrian armies. During a visit of the Egyptian Defense Minister Gen. Abdel Hakim Amer in Moscow in November 1957 the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev himself increased the requested 600 million Rubles loan for military

\(^{31}\) *Ibid*, File 72, p. 188-194; File 83, p. 28-42.

\(^{32}\) *AMVR*, Fond 1, Record 10, File 335.
assistance with additional 100 million Rubles. When the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser visited Moscow in April 1958, a new agreement for Soviet arms delivery had been discussed\textsuperscript{33}. A new arms delivery to Egypt was agreed during the visit of Gen. Amer in Moscow in October 1958. On the draft of a special message to President Nasser, which confirmed the decision to deliver new Soviet weaponry to Egypt, Khrushchev personally changed the formal title “Mr. President” with a more amicable appellation “Dear friend”\textsuperscript{34}.

After the first visit of Admiral Gorshkov, Commander of the Soviet Navy, in Egypt in 1961, the presence of Soviet military vessels in the region significantly increased. That came not only as a result of the increase of the NATO maritime power in the Mediterranean but was also connected with the change of the political regimes of some Arab and African states and the sharpening of the Middle East crisis. In November 1962 three Soviet guided missile boats 183-R were delivered to the naval base in Alexandria which made possible the formation of the first guided missile boats battalion of the Egyptian Navy. As a commander of the group of the Soviet naval contingent in Alexandria Rear Admiral Vassiliev was sent next year\textsuperscript{35}. By the end of the 1960s other Soviet naval bases were created - in the Syrian ports of Latakia and Tartus and the Somali port of Berberra.

A new strong impulse for the development of Soviet – Egyptian relations gave Khrushchev’s visit to Cairo in May 1964 in regard with the triumphant opening of the Aswan dam. According to a report by the Bulgarian ambassador in Cairo Boris Popov from January 1965, only in 1964 the USSR had delivered to the United Arab Republic a 160 million Rubles loan, Poland – a 70 million USD loan, the GDR – a 30 million Egyptian pounds (EGP) loan, Czechoslovakia – a 19 million EGP loan. The Nasserite government received from the East European countries in 1964 about 674 millions EGP loans in total\textsuperscript{36}. A strong interest for establishment of intensive cooperation with Egypt displayed also Mao’s China, which was demonstrated during the visit of the Chinese Prime Minister Chou

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Mezdunarodnaya Zhizn}, Moscow, 1993, No. 9, p. 122-133.
\textsuperscript{34} Archiv Vneshei politiki Rossiiskoi federacii (AVP RF), Moscow, Fond 87, Record 21, File 10, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{DA}, Record 21, File 1073.
Enlai to Cairo in 1963. Since mid-1950s very close collaboration was established as well between Yugoslavia and Egypt, which was intensified after Gamal Abdel Nasser’s visit to Belgrade in 1961 for the Non-Alignment conference there, and a following visit of Josip Broz Tito to Cairo in 1962\textsuperscript{37}.

Since of all Warsaw Pact members Bulgaria was the country geographically closest to the Middle East region, it should obviously demonstrate an ever-growing interest toward the development of the crisis situation there. Special and, in some way, very complicated, relations had been established with the Arab countries. Despite the fact that the Bulgarian leadership was definitely suspicious about the real positions, intentions and goals of some Arab leaders like Gamal Abdel Nasser or later on of Hafiz al-Assad and Saddam Hussein, it provided military assistance and permitted establishment of official contacts with the state security services in these countries. The first ever CC BCP Politburo decision for arms delivery to some countries in the Middle East region was signed on 15 May 1959 [Doc. No. 41]. In a similar Politburo discussion in May 1960 it was argued that after the radical reduction of Bulgarian armed forces in the period 1956 – 1959 a lot of Soviet and Bulgarian made small arms arsenal could be sold in some Third World countries like Iraq, UAR, Indonesia, Ghana, etc. [Doc. No. 44]

At the same time, Bulgarian diplomatic and intelligence representatives in the Middle East carefully observed the foreign and military policy tendencies within the Arab ruling circles. In a report of 22 January 1962, for instance, Bulgarian ambassador in Cairo pointed out: “By strengthening of the Egyptian army President Nasser pursues three main aims: \textbf{First}, to consolidate his own positions inside the country; \textbf{Second}, to use the army as a tool for establishment of his influence and a leading role among the Arabic world; \textbf{Third}, in case of necessity to be able to confront the Israeli army. In the first half of the previous year a strong anti-Israeli campaign was launched in the Egyptian army with claims that Israel has to be exterminated until the end of 1961. Many anti-Israeli provocations were organized on a special plan, which was stopped due to the subsequent events in Syria.”\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Ibid}, Record 18, File 1231.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{DA}, Record 18, File 1217.
In January 1962 a Syrian military delegation visited Sofia. The head of the delegation Gen. Mukharabi raised the question for delivery of military equipment for strengthening the “defense capacity of the Syrian armed forces against the hostile neighboring countries Israel and Turkey”. The Syrian leadership' request was formulated in four main points: 1. The assistance for delivery of Soviet and Czech planes, tanks, missiles, artillery pieces, etc., which were not produced in Bulgaria; 2. Bulgarian made military equipment to be delivered to Syria (ammunitions for T-34 and T-54 tanks, parachutes, B-10 & B-11 heavy guns, land and ground mines, 120 mm, 107 mm, 82 mm mortars, etc.); 3. Training of pilots and paratroopers, and assistance for establishment of Air Forces school in Syria; 4. Bulgarian participation in the buildup of Syrian military airfields, command posts, depots, repairs bases, etc. [Doc. No. 51]

In 1963 a new agreement for delivery of military equipment to the UAR was signed [Doc. No. 55]. In June 1963 CC BCP Secretariat approved as well another resolution for arms delivery to Yemen Arab Republic. In February 1965 a Bulgarian ship delivered to Yemen port Hodeyda weapons and military equipment for about 800 000 BGLv (about 500 000 USD). Paradoxically, during the negotiations on Bulgarian made arms sales few problems appeared due to the fact that Syria and Egypt were almost totally rearmed with Soviet weaponry. When in 1964 a Bulgarian arms trade state company proposed a large amount of RPG-7 grenadiers’ sale to Egypt, the agreement failed because it was not coordinated with the USSR – the principal RPG-7 supplier to the Arab world.

Despite of some kind of misunderstanding and mutual suspicions in the beginning, the Bulgaria’s relations with Egypt, Syria and Iraq were growing up. In November 1965 a Bulgarian official delegation, led by Prime Minister Todor Zhivkov, visited Cairo and discussed with Nasser, Field Marshal Amer and other Egyptian leaders the perspectives for the enlargement of the bilateral relations. Few months later a Syrian delegation, led by Prime Minister Yusef Zuein, visited

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39 This request was immediately transferred to CC CPSU Presidium, and very soon Moscow informed Sofia that “the question had been resolved positively in principle”. 

Sofia. Amongst the members of the delegation was Gen. Hafiz-Al-Assad, then Syrian defense minister.

At the end of October 1966 a Bulgarian military delegation, headed by the Defense Minister Gen. Dobri Dzhurov, paid a visit to the UAR. Gen Dzhurov had talks with his colleague Samsi Badri, the Chief of the Egyptian General Staff Gen. Mohammad Fawzi, and with the Minister of Military Production Mohammad Bisri. The head of Bulgarian delegation was received also by Nasser and Field Marshal Amer. On 31 October a long term bilateral Agreement on military equipment shipment to UAR for the period 1967 – 1971 was signed in Cairo. However, the ratification of the Agreement (due to some bureaucratic reasons) was postponed until late May 1967 [Doc. No. 85] , and thus the agreed military small arms and ammunition did not arrived in the UAR before the war in June. On 31 October 1966 as well another Protocol for training Egyptian officers and exchange of observers during the military exercises carried out in both countries was signed[40]. Obviously, only the Protocol was made public, and the Agreement for arms delivery was kept in secret. Therefore, in a telegram from 2 November 1966 the US diplomatic representative in Sofia McSweeney informed Washington that “Dzhurov visit to UAR was only return for UAR defense minister visit last March”, and did not confirmed the rumors for “shipments of military equipment”[41].

The stronger commitment with the Arab countries inevitably predetermined the place and role of Bulgaria in the Middle East conflict on the eve of the Six Day War. It caused as well the aggravation of the official relations with Israel even before the war started. Although the economic and cultural cooperation continued in the mid-1960s, and the activity of the League for friendship between Bulgaria and Israel was not limited until June 1967[42], the Bulgarian government was seriously disturbed by few preventive sanctions of the “frontline” Arab countries against some Bulgarian foreign trade companies, national Airlines

[40] Ibid, Record 22, File 3653; CDA, Fond 1-B, Record 6, File 6610; Fond 136, Record 86, Files 674, 676..
Agency TABSO, and Bulgarian merchant fleet. In a Report to CC BCP Politburo of 31 May 1965 Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ivan Bashev suggested a “clarification of the Bulgarian policy toward Israel in the light of the Bulgarian-Arab relations”. The main conclusion in the Report was: “The political and economic interests of our country with the Arabic world demanded Bulgaria to determine its relations with Israel in frames that could not hamper its economic cooperation with the Arabic countries”. As an argument for such a conclusion the state of the trade exchange with the Arabic countries (39 million USD) in comparison of the trade exchange with Israel (5, 5 million USD) was quoted in the document. Another political clinch was the “sharp anti-imperialist policy” of the Arab leaders. On 6 July 1965 Bulgarian Communist leadership approved a resolution, which prescribed the trade with Israel to be managed by a separate organization avoiding “direct contacts with the Israeli companies”, and the cultural and sport contacts to be limited to a small number of individual visits43 [Doc. No. 62]. Bulgarian Communist Party leadership even broke contacts with the faction of Samuel Mikunis within the Israeli Communist Party, which categorically refused to support the proposed multilateral resolution against the Zionism. In August 1966 the Bulgarian Legation in Tel Aviv informed Sofia about the position of another Israeli CP faction, led by Meir Vilner, who strongly criticized the Israeli Air Forces attacks on Syrian territory44. In the next years the contacts of the Soviet bloc countries were maintained only with the Vilner group.

In 1966 – early 1967 Bulgarian diplomatic missions in Damascus, Cairo and Tel Aviv sent a large number of reports and cipher telegrams regarding the increasing tension in the Israeli-Arab relations and ceaseless border incidents as a result45 [Doc. No. 66, 70, 72, 74, 76]. While the legation in Tel Aviv paid more attention to some humanitarian cases of the Bulgarian Jews and their contacts with friends and relatives in Bulgaria, the reports from the Arab capitals discussed more and more the indicators of total “war psychosis” and the increase of arguments for Israeli “border provocations”. Many comments were devoted to the Israeli air raid against Damascus in April 1967. Quite indicative is the

44 CDA, Fond 1-B, Record 51, File 651, p. 1-5.
45 DA, Record 21, File 1160; Record 22, File 2053; Record 23, File 1090; CDA, Fond 1-B, Record 51, File 645, 649.
comparison of the amount of ciphered telegrams and reports (in pages), sent by Bulgarian representatives in Cairo and Damascus to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sofia for the period 1964 – 1968, as shown below⁴⁶:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>From Cairo</th>
<th>From Damascus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>433</td>
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<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Bulgarian position on the eve of the war was definitely in favor of the Arab actions. As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 1967, Bulgaria played an active role totally backed the Soviet policy. E. g. Bulgarian government supported Nasser’s request for termination of UNEF-I mission and the withdrawal of UN contingents from the border zone with Israel. When on 23 May 1967 the UAR government announced its decision to close the Straits of Tiran, the representatives of Denmark and Canada proposed a Security Council immediate meeting on the Middle East situation with the participation of the interested parties. The representatives of the USSR, Bulgaria, India and Mali, supported later on by the representatives of France, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, opposed the proposal with the argument that the necessary preliminary consultations among the delegations of the Security Council member states were not undertaken. The head of the Bulgarian mission to the United Nations Ambassador Milko Tarabanov qualified the proposal as “an attempt for artificially dramatization of the situation in the area”⁴⁷!

However, on 26 May 1967 the newly appointed KGB Chairman Yuriy Andropov informed CC CPSU Secretariat about a new urgent Intelligence “Review of the Middle East situation”, where it was indicated: “I. The measures of Israel. Minister of Propaganda Galili stated... on May 25 that the Israeli government had decided to begin military operation against the UAR within 2-3 days. This information... is

⁴⁶ DA, Record 5sh, Files 151, 188, 254, 288, 348b, 380, 447, 483, 550, 585.
⁴⁷ DA, Record 23, File 1090, p. 6-7
confirmed by the data acquired from the Israeli military circles. The Eshkol government has completed the preparation for war. 2. The Stand of the USA. It is believed in the governmental circles of Great Britain that the USA can interfere on the Middle East conflict. The US government is concerned about the UAR’s determination to block the Gulf of Aqaba... The USA will go on trying to use the Security Council to settle the conflict, though it is convinced in the futility of this end. A failure attempt to resolve the conflict with the UN help, according to the American plan, will give the USA an opportunity to refer to an “ineffectiveness of the UN” to justify its armed interference in the Middle East... 

A day later Soviet Prime Minister Alexey Kosygin shared the received Intelligence information about the Israeli intentions in a letter to US President Lyndon Johnson, adding that in case of Israeli military action the USSR “will render aid to those countries that are subjected to aggression”. Although on May 28th US Secretary of State Dean Rusk assured his Soviet colleague Gromyko: “I am encouraged to believe that there is no bases for your report that Israel will soon initiate hostilities”, two days before the State Department had received a telegram from US Military Attaché in Tel Aviv, where was definitely underlined: “Israel is approaching a decision in favor of a preemptive attack”. Actually, as it was stressed on several times in next US National Security Council and State Department discussions, both the Soviet Union and the United States were not able to influence decisively on their Middle East allies, which diplomatic, political, and military steps were not coordinated in advance with Moscow or Washington.

The Israeli air attack against Egypt on 5 June 1967 in the morning surprised a Bulgarian governmental delegation, headed by Todor Zhivkov, in preparation to fly to Belgrade [Doc. No. 88]. Ten days later Zhivkov testified at a CC BCP discussion: “Our visit to Yugoslavia was dedicated to this task. It was evident for us, that the visit of the delegation would not be realized due to the outbreak of the war. We decided to go in order to conduct talks precisely on the crisis in the Middle East. And our visit was successful in this regard. Actually, our talks were mainly in connection with the events in the Middle East. As you know from the reports in the press, a special meeting

48 The photocopy of the document was published in: Russian Foreign Intelligence, A CD ROM Volume, (Moscow 1996).
between Tito and me took place, where we talked openly about these events. I can report to you that we reached agreement with regard to the evaluations, views, and actions, which we should take in connection with the events in the Middle East." According to Zhivkov, from the beginning of the war he personally assessed an eventual Israeli victory. When he expressed his view to Tito, the latter "very nervously three times stated that he does not agree with such an estimate, and said that he was "an optimist in regard to the capabilities of the Arab armies". As a leader of the Nonaligned states movement Josip Broz Tito had maintained close relations with the other founder of the Movement – Gamal Abdel Nasser. The Yugoslav president had committed himself to render significant economic and military assistance to the Arab “front-line” countries. In the final communiqué on 6 June after the Yugoslav – Bulgarian talks in Belgrade it was expressed that the two Balkan governments had “identical positions” on the Middle East conflict and appealed for more “determined measures” of the United Nations.

A month later Todor Zhivkov reconstructed at a CC BCP Plenary meeting some facts of the first days of the war: “On 5 June at 6.00 AM Nasser informed via the Soviet ambassador in Cairo the Soviet comrades that the war was taking a favorable turn for the UAR and they looked optimistically on the development of the military actions. At 6.00 PM same day, and again on 6 June in the morning, Amer informed the Soviet comrades that the situation became exclusively dangerous… Later on they transmitted to Moscow that if the hostilities will not be suspended until 5.00 AM on 7 June, a total defeat of the UAR army will follow.” Another Zhivkov’s testimony reflected to the urgent everyday exchange of information and coordination between the Warsaw Pact leaders: “During the aggression the Politburo held sessions daily. We reviewed the latest events, exchanged opinions and took certain initiatives. We maintained a constant contact with the CPSU, with the Soviet High Command and the Warsaw Pact Allied Command, and talked on the phone to Comrade Brezhnev personally every day. Therefore, everything that we undertook on the international and domestic arenas was decided upon on the basis of consultation and coordination with the Soviet Union and the other Warsaw Pact country-

50 CDA, Fond 1-B, Record 34, File 59, p. 5, 11.
51 Most probably it was Zhivkov’s mistake – the Israeli military operation started at 7.45 AM (6.45 AM Moscow time), and it was not possible for Brezhnev to receive a call earlier.
52 CDA, Fond 378-B, Record 1, File 732, p. 3.
members. We also maintained contacts as well as coordinated a number of issues with Nasser."\(^53\)

On 6 June in the morning Zhivkov discussed with Brezhnev and Kosygin the coordinated diplomatic steps that should be undertaken immediately through the UN Security Council. The same day Bulgarian government distributed a declaration in regard to the Middle East war, where it appealed UN Security Council “immediate measures” to be undertaken.\(^54\) The USSR and Bulgaria were pressed as well by the UAR for such urgent steps. On 6 and 7 June 1967 the Security Council approved two resolutions for “immediate ceasefire” in the Middle East.\(^55\) Since the hostilities did not stopped, on 9 June Kremlin convoked a special Warsaw Pact high level meeting in Moscow on the Middle East crisis, where for the first time in the last twenty years Yugoslav President Tito was invited, too.

In his memoirs Zhivko Zhivkov, a CC BCP Politburo member and a First Deputy Prime Minister in those days, recollected that Leonid Brezhnev had no time to prepare a written report due to the dynamics of the events. So, during the discussions in Moscow he announced newly obtained information by simply quoting parts of some fresh telegrams from Cairo and Damascus, which stimulated further commentaries and statements from the East European leaders. The most dramatic moment aroused when Brezhnev presented a new telegram from Cairo regarding the Nasser’s declaration of resignation\(^56\). Another alarming message was that the Israeli troops were continuing offensive on Syrian territory and approaching Damascus, thus, ignoring the last Security Council resolutions. All East European leaders, excluding Romanians, agreed on a strong condemnation of the Israeli military operation. Nicolae Ceausescu and Ion Georghe Maurer, the Romanian representatives at the Moscow meeting, refused to sign the proposed common Declaration against Israel disagreed with the assessment that Israel was a sole aggressor. Instead, they proposed a formal

\(^{53}\) CDA, Fond 1-B, Record 34, File 59, p. 11.
\(^{55}\) UN. S/RES/233, 234.
communiqué regarding the exchange of views on the Middle East situation to be issued\textsuperscript{57}.

The key sentence of the Moscow declaration, signed by all participants except Romanians, who were not even mentioned in the document, appealed: “If Israeli government does not stop aggression and withdraw its troops behind truce line, socialist states which signed this statement will do everything necessary to help the peoples of Arab countries….” Since the Israeli advance on Syrian territory did not stop the same evening, the next morning Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin called on the “hot line”\textsuperscript{58} to US President Johnson with a more sharp warning: “We propose that you demand from Israel that it unconditionally cease military action in the next few hours. On our part, we will do the same. We purpose to warn Israel that, if this is not fulfilled, necessary actions will be taken, including military.”\textsuperscript{59} As a result of the Moscow meeting all participating countries (except Romania) broke on June 10\textsuperscript{th} 1967 their diplomatic relations with Israel\textsuperscript{60}.

The organization of an immediate Soviet military aid, according to the Bulgarian records, started on the second day of the June war. An airlift was established between the USSR and the UAR and Algeria via Hungary and Yugoslavia. On 9 June as well a sea lift to Syria and Egypt was established and on 10 June a Soviet Black Sea squadron got under way to the Mediterranean. According to the Western sources, 14 Soviet naval ships and submarines crossed the Bosphorus those days.\textsuperscript{61} On 13 June Bulgarian government also adopted a secret decision for immediate delivery of free military aid to Syria (Governmental Order S-263), and a week later CC BCP Secretariat approved a proposal for providing of


\textsuperscript{58} The “hot line” between Washington and Moscow was established soon after the Cuban missile crisis, however, it was used for the first time during the Six-Day war, when more than 120 messages were transmitted between the White House and Kremlin. It was very indicative that the first urgent message by President Johnson on 5 June 1967 erroneously was addressed to “Comrade Kosygin”!


\textsuperscript{60} One of the subsequent negative effects of this act had been the interruption of confidential Information on the Israeli policy, received through diplomatic and political channels. In May 1968 the KGB Chairman Andropov admitted to his Bulgarian colleague Gen. Solakov that after the break of the diplomatic relations with Israel KGB lost its contacts with the Soviet agents in this country - AMVR, Fond 1, Record 10, File 535, p. 118-126, 203-207.

\textsuperscript{61} DA, V/1/4, BTA-MINF Bulletin No. 207.
humanitarian aid (medical goods, food, dress, etc.) to the Arab nations for more than 1 million BGLv.\(^{62}\)

On 14 June 1967 a special CC BCP Plenary meeting was held with the only one topic on the Agenda – Zhivkov’s report regarding the Middle East situation [Doc. No. 94]. The Bulgarian leader presented a comparatively realistic estimate on the reasons for the complete defeat of the Arab armies. He acknowledged that the Egyptian military had not been prepared to use modern Soviet weaponry; they had acted with a great dose of self-reliance. A lack of coordination between the Armed Forces of the Arab countries was observed, too. The Arabic nationalism had played also a negative role with its slogans for a Jihad and extermination of the Israeli State as a final aim, “despite of our warning that such task was definitely in contradiction with the Socialist principles”. Zhivkov added in his report: “Almost all of the actions of the Arab leaders were not coordinated with the Soviet Union and with us.” At the end of his report the Bulgarian Communist leader summarized the conclusions: “How can we estimate the war? Obviously, we can not examine it as an occasional event, as a partial war between Israel and the Arab countries. It is clear for us, that it is a struggle between the Socialism and Imperialism, a struggle for getting the control over the region.”\(^{63}\) Zhivkov followed the “conspiracy theory” line of the Moscow meeting, with an argument for a hypothetical linkage between the military actions in Vietnam, Indonesia, Greece, and the Middle East, and pursuing as well the view of Israel as a “tool of the American imperialism”.

Responding to some questions during the Plenary discussion, Todor Zhivkov clarified more sharply the basic Soviet bloc views and assements on the Middle East situation. He stressed on the allegation that the Israeli action presumably was used as a coordinated strategic attempt to weaken and overthrow the most “progressive anti-imperialist” regimes in the Middle East (Egypt, Syria, Algeria) and to diminish the Soviet influence in the region. However, Zhivkov rejected the contentions for a “delayed” Soviet reaction and a “reluctance” to act more decisively (even by force) toward the Israeli military operation. He insisted that it

\(^{62}\) CDA, Fond 1-B, Record 8, File 7749, p. 2-3.

would be a madness to act in an adventurist way that could terminated with a probable nuclear war. In this sense, the Bulgarian Prime Minister strongly attacked the “nationalistic nonsenses” of some Arab circles to “eliminate a whole nation, the Jewish nation”\(^64\). Some of these thoughts were exposed by Todor Zhivkov again at a closed session of the Bulgarian parliament (Fifth National Assembly) on 14 June in the afternoon [Doc. No. 95].

Next coordinated step of the Warsaw Pact countries was to back the Soviet proposal for convocation of a UN General Assembly extraordinary session; a proposal supported by more than ninety countries. The Bulgarian delegation to the UN General Assembly session was headed by the Prime Minister Todor Zhivkov and the Foreign Minister Ivan Bashev. Zhivkov statement on 20 June 1967\(^65\) just repeated some arguments exposed by the Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin a day before. A month later Zhivkov himself expounded at a Government meeting: “We were aware of the fact that the correlation of forces inside the United Nations would not permit the acception of the proposed Soviet resolution… However, our main work was done not at the plenary meetings, but outside the sessions, during the talks with some other delegations, including a meeting with almost all Arab representatives…” E. g. on 19 June a consultative multilateral meeting was organized at the Soviet UN mission in New York with the Prime Ministers and foreign ministers of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia; on 23 June Zhivkov had another meeting with his Soviet colleague Kosygin; on 24 June after talks with the US President Johnson Alexei Kosygin organized a new consultative multilateral meeting with the East European delegations (without presence of the Romanian representatives), and on 1 July Bulgarian foreign minister Bashev had a new talk with Gromyko [Doc. No. 96, 97, 99]. According to Zhivkov, the failure of a compromise UN General Assembly resolution for the “withdrawal of the Israeli forces to the armistice lines” mainly due to the “wrong views of the Arab leaders and their representatives in the United Nations”. During the talks with the East European delegations the Arabs strongly opposed any compromise proposal that

\(^{64}\) *Ibid*, p. 27-30.

\(^{65}\) UN. A/PV.1528, 20 June 1967.
requested for giving necessary guarantees to Israeli State and for ensuring free navigation at the Suez zone.

A more precise view of the Bulgarian role in the UN General Assembly and Security Council discussions on the Middle East conflict can be seen while revealing the secret correspondence between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sofia and the Bulgarian UN mission in New York. A very indicative for the urgency of the received information was the fact that most of the deciphered cables were made in hurry in an illegible handwritten manner. Perhaps, the most significant value of these new archival sources is that they definitively confirm once more the very close coordination between the Soviet and Bulgarian delegations’ activity within the UN Security Council. Here below we are giving just few examples for such coordination efforts.

On 6 June 1967 the Bulgarian Deputy Foreign Minister Gero Grozev instructed the Bulgarian representative at United Nations headquarters Milko Tarabanov: “You have to act absolutely in common with the Soviet comrades… The Soviet leadership coordinates its own positions with our leadership.” [Doc. No. 89] On 7 June Tarabanov reported to Sofia: “… Immediately after talks with the Ambassador of the UAR Fedorenko informed us that he received instructions to do everything possible for the approval of a resolution for a cease-fire. He gave us a draft of a probable resolution and asked me to try to persuade the African delegates (Ethiopia, Mali, and Nigeria) to vote for our resolution. He will speak with the representative of India…” [Doc. No. 90] On 8 June the Foreign Minister Ivan Bashev again insisted: “The Soviet leadership discussed with our leadership a proposal of a UN Security Council resolution for the withdrawal of the Israeli forces at the initial lines. You have to act together with the Soviet comrades.” On 12 June Sofia informed its representative in New York: “The Soviet government considers as expedient to convocate an extraordinary General Assembly session to discuss the Middle East situation… The Soviet comrades asked us to support this proposal.” [Doc. No. 93]. On 16 June Ambassador Tarabanov reported: “I

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66 CDA, Fond 378-B, Record 1, File 732, p. 6-9.
notified the Secretary General U Than that we support the Soviet proposal for convocation of an extraordinary General Assembly session..."  

Immediately after the Sixth Day War in June 1967 the Soviet leadership decided to increase significantly its military presence in the Middle East region. Half a year later the Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko informed his East European colleagues: “In accordance with the bilateral agreements for arms delivery, signed in June, July and November 1967, we provided the UAR with hundred fighters, many hundred tanks – I would like to underline – many hundred tanks, cannons, heavy guns, ammunitions…” After an urgent message from Nasser to Brezhnev, in mid-June a Soviet military delegation, led by the Chief of the General Staff Marshal Matvei Zacharov, visited Cairo. The Commander of the Carpathian military district Col.-Gen. Pavel Lashchenko was appointed as a Chief Advisor to the Egyptian Armed Forces. Until the end of July Gen. Lashchenko delivered to President Nasser a detailed Operational Plan for defense of the Suez zone. At the beginning of November 1967 a second group of Soviet military advisors, led by Lt.-Gen. Ivan Katishkin, arrived in Egypt. Until the end of 1967 there were sent about 400 Soviet military advisers in all types of armed forces (down to the squadron level) in Egypt only. The Chief Soviet Air Forces advisor was Gen. Gorelov, the Chief Naval advisor – Vice-Admiral Sutyagin, the Chief Military Intelligence advisor – Gen. Strekalov, the Chief Air Defense advisor – Gen. Kondratov, the Chief Armored troops advisor – Gen. Dikii, and the Chief Artillery troops advisor – Gen. Chistyakov. According to some Israeli estimates, in the period 1967 – 1969 in Egypt were in total about 2 000 Soviet military advisors, instructors, and technicians. Here were not counted the independent Soviet Naval and Air Forces units. According to some Western sources, after the Six-day War Moscow had at its permanent disposal about 50 combat and auxiliary ships and 9-10 submarines in the Mediterranean basin.

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68 DA, Record 23, File 3722a, p. 9-12.
The Middle East situation after the Six-Day War was discussed further at an East European meeting in Budapest on 11 – 12 July 1967. The Soviet Leader Leonid Brezhnev informed his East European allies about the talks of Aleksey Kosygin with Lyndon Johnson and Charles de Gaulle, and about the visit of Nikolai Podgornyi in the UAR, Syria and Iraq. He indicated that some Arab leaders had expressed ambitions for a “military revenge” and hold an “unacceptable position for the liquidation of Israel”. Brezhnev underlined that the USSR “had no reason to encourage an attack against Israel, but to support the defensive capabilities of the Arab armies”. East European leaders Walter Ulbricht, Antonin Novotny, Wladislaw Gomulka, Janos Kadar, Todor Zhivkov, and Josip Broz Tito backed up the Soviet position for searching a political settlement of the Middle East conflict. Zhivkov appealed for intensification of the diplomatic efforts to reach a more favorable decision at the UN Security Council.\(^7\)

One of the main estimates, made at the Budapest meeting, was of the necessity to revise the leading Warsaw Pact strategic concept for the unavoidability of a “missile-nuclear global war”. For the first time Leonid Brezhnev raised the question on the probability of local conventional conflicts between the two blocks in the periphery world zones. This assertion was argumented with the situation in the Middle East and Indochina. The new concept required, obviously, the re-organization of the Warsaw Pact Armed Forces and Military Strategy. The Budapest meeting approved three principal aims for overcoming the crisis situation in the Middle East: 1. To increase the military and economic assistance to those Arab regimes that were going on a “non-capitalist way”; 2. To contain the adventurist nationalistic aspirations and statements of some Arab leaders; 3. To continue the efforts for a new UN Security Council resolution requesting of the “withdrawal of the Israeli forces from all occupied Arab territories”.

Soon after the Budapest meeting, on 18 July 1967 CC BCP Politburo discussed some proposals, made in a report by the ministers of foreign affairs and foreign trade Ivan Bashev and Ivan Budinov. CC BCP Politburo approved a secret resolution for “extending the contacts with the Arab countries”. The defense

\(^7\) Zhivko Zhivkov, op. cit., p. 135-138.
minister was entrusted with the task to elaborate a new program for “increasing the collaboration with the Defense ministries in the UAR, Syria, and Algeria”. Among the measures that were recommended were the enlargement of the arms delivery and the increase of admission of Arab officers in the Bulgarian military schools. 72 According to an additional suggestion, the Bulgarian military and economic aid and loans, which should be delivered to the Arab states after the June war, exceeded the sum of 22 million BGLv.

At a joint CC BCP and Government session on 31 July 1967 the Prime Minister Zhivkov again stressed on the dangerous nationalistic position of some Arab leaders, which impeded the acceptance of a consensual resolution on the Middle East conflict at the UN Security Council and General Assembly [Doc. No. 102]. He criticized the hard-liner statements of “race discrimination and adventures” of the Syrian leaders Aref and Atasi, and Algerian leader Boumedienne, who had propagated the concept for creation a “second Vietnam” in the Middle East 73. Zhivkov mentioned as well the terrorist actions of the Palestine Liberation Organization, led by a “pro-Chinese leader” Ahmad Shuqayri, which caused many “troubles” and complications to the efforts of Middle East peaceful political settlement. The Bulgarian Prime Minister categorically emphasized that the Warsaw Pact countries should step on a “sober analysis” and to display “flexibility and hardness at the same time”; and in no way they have to “fall under the hazardous pressure” of the Arab leaders, which could bring the world to a global nuclear catastrophe. 74

In two further CC BCP Politburo meetings in August and October 1967 some additional assessments of the Middle East conflict repercussion on the Warsaw Pact – NATO global confrontation were made. On 27 September the Council of Ministers approved a secret decision for additional arms sale to Syria. In the October Politburo meeting Gen. Dobri Dzhurov, Bulgarian minister of defense, delivered a detailed report “About the state of the Bulgarian Armed Forces in the

72 CDA, Fond 1-B, Record 6, File 6770, p. 61-65.
73 The concept for “second and third Vietnam” was declared for the first time by Ernesto “Che” Guevara in his “Message to the Tricontinental Conference” in January 1966, where the Latin American guerrilla commander exposed the “permanent revolution” theory and “Second and Third Vietnam” slogan, based on Maoist and Trotskyist views.
74 CDA, Fond 1-B, Record 34, File 66; Fond 378-B, Record 1, File 732.
light of the actual events in the Middle East”. Gen. Dzhurov distinguished two separate features, which should characterize (according to Bulgarian military experts) the Six-Day War: First, it was a war between non-equipollent adversaries; Second, the Israeli Armed Forces managed to apply skillfully few modern art of war principles accordingly to the concrete military and political situation and to the war theater peculiarities in the Middle East, thus establishing a favorable environment for their success. The Bulgarian defense minister underlined ten main factors for the success of the Israeli Defense Forces in the war: First, lack of political and military coordination and unity between the Arab countries, and a join plan and concept for leading the combat actions; Second, the erroneous assessment of the military and political situation in the eve of the war and a totally wrong determination of the principal political goal – the extermination of Israel as a state; Third, the domestic political instability of the “front-line” Arab regimes, particularly, the UAR with an anti-Nasserist opposition group, led by Field Marshal Amer and the Egyptian defense minister Badran; Fourth, very big mistakes of the Arab political and military leadership in the estimates of the real capabilities of the Israeli army and a serious overestimation of their own defense capabilities; Fifth, a low battle readiness of the Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordan armed forces; Sixth, the unsatisfactory organization of forces management and an incompetence of the Supreme Commands and the staffs at army, division, and brigade levels in the UAR, Syria, and Jordan, to lead their units in complicated battle circumstances (E. g. an Egyptian army group in Sinai was destroyed without using its large battle capacity of 900 tanks); Seven, a low moral spirit and discipline of the Arab soldiers and officers and many examples of betrayal and defections (E. g. only in Sinai the Israeli forces captured 5 Major-Generals, 16 Brigadiers, and more than 3 000 other Egyptian officers); Eight, the insufficient training of the military personnel to lead modern fights and to use the existing new weaponry and military equipment; Ninth, an underestimation of the war theater peculiarities and inadequate measures for its fortification; Tenth, an extraordinary weak Arab Intelligence activity.

In Dzhurov’s report a critical appraisal of the combat-readiness of the Bulgarian Armed Forces was given, too. A special critical remark was devoted to the Unified Command of the Warsaw Pact Armed Forces. According to Gen. Dzhurov, “the existing structure, command and rights of authority” did not allow to secure “an adequate management of the allied forces”. Bulgarian defense minister paid special attention to the question of the Bulgarian army’s preparedness to react to a possible enemy’s attack from the South. He recognized the concerns of the Bulgarian military experts that “in case of a surprising attack within the frames of a local conflict, the Bulgarian Army will not be in a position to counterattack effectively even in one of both possible directions (against Turkey or against Greece)”.

The largest operational and tactical exercise in the Balkans area in the 1960s was carried out in August 1967, with a code name “RODOPI” [Doc. No. 101]. The exercise was not planned in advance, and was intended by the Soviet political and military leadership as a “reaction” to the newly established Middle East situation and a “demonstration of force” at the South European war theater. This exercise covered nearly the whole territory of Bulgaria and the West Black Sea coast from Sevastopol to Sozopol. One of the main tasks set to the Bulgarian and Romanian Naval forces and the Soviet Black Sea Fleet was to off a coastal landing after enemy’s nuclear missile strike. All available naval forces of Bulgaria, 12 Romanian war ships, 139 ships and submarines and the whole combat aviation of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet took part. The following was explicitly stated in the “RODOPI” military exercise overview: “An air-dropping coastal landing and its deterrence is the most complicated of military actions not only on sea but in any case of military hostilities whatsoever” it is also “an unavoidable element” of a future war.

Among the exceptional features of the RODOPI exercise was the presence (for the first and only time) of Yugoslav military representatives in such a Warsaw Pact event. The Yugoslav leadership was invited by the Bulgarians to join the exercise even with troops, however, in Belgrade decided as a matter of principle

76 Ibidem.
77 CVA, Fond 1027, Record 12, File 101, p. 73-90.
for their “non-alignment” policy to send only military observers. Commenting this unexpected step, the US Embassy in Belgrade informed State Department in a memorandum of 21 September 1967: “According to Embassy some segments of Yugoslavia’s Communist Party leadership in the light of real or imagined concerns regarding the “reactionary conspiracy” consider the Soviet Camp, especially of buttressed by coordinated action by the “non-aligned”, as the most powerful grouping which might attempt to hold the “offensive” in check. The Embassy reasons that Tito did not hesitate to turn to the Soviet Camp during the Near East crisis to try to get active support for Nasser and other hard pressed friends in the Arab world. Similarly, Yugoslav presence at the “Rodopi” exercises may be regarded as reaction to an immediate alleged threat along Yugoslavia’s borders.”

In August 1967 the Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito visited three Arab “front-line” countries (Egypt, Syria, and Iraq) in an attempt to influence the Arab leaders to accept a moderate position, which could contribute for the acceptance of a joint compromise resolution for a long term Middle East conflict settlement within the United Nation. The basic points of the Yugoslav proposal (called a “Political platform”) were: “1. Withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the occupied territories; 2. Guaranties by the UN Security Council and the four Great Powers of the borders and security to all Middle East countries; 3. Free navigation of Israeli ships on the Gulf of Aqaba; 4. Closure of the Suez Canal for Israeli ships until the settlement of the Palestine issue and the problem with the Arab refugees.” The guaranties of the Great Powers should be valid until a mutual agreement in direct negotiations between Israel and the Arab states will be signed. After Tito’s visit in the Middle East, he sent his high level representatives to inform the Western and Soviet bloc governments about the results of his talks with the Arab leaders. The Yugoslav foreign minister Marko Nikezic met in Washington with the US President Lyndon Johnson79, and the Vice-President Gen. Koca Popovic met in Paris with the French President Gen. Charles de Gaulle.

78 NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1967-1969, DEF-WP, Box 1716
On 5 September 1967 Todor Zhivkov received in a Sofia state residence Tito’s first deputy Edward Kardelj, who informed Bulgarian Prime Minister in details regarding the talks with Nasser, Zuein, Arif, and other Arab leaders [Doc. No. 104]. According to Kardelj, the first reaction of Gamal Abdel Nasser to the Yugoslav proposals had been “one-sided”, but finally he was forced to accept Tito’s arguments. The Egyptian President explained his motives to be cautious and to avoid a quick radical change in his policy toward Israel with the existing opposition against him both in the country and abroad. He insisted “quite openly that the Arab monarchies had intended to overthrow him, however, in the same time he was very critical in regard to the attitude and behavior of Algeria and Syria toward Egypt”. Further Kardelj related to Zhivkov the dramatic domestic situation in Egypt in the last few years: “We had a private meeting – just Tito, Nasser, and me. Nasser wanted no one of his own collaborators to present at the meeting… He explained that since 1962-1963 he had been in a constant conflict with Amer and the military elite… From 1964 on Nasser was practically isolated not only from the military, but as well from few other governmental sectors… Amer had held in his hands the army, defense industry, and sport and youth organizations, and Mohieddin had held the police and the security services. There was not any collective leadership… Nasser had tried to change the situation… but Amer sent to him a large group of military, who gave him an ultimatum… In the beginning of the war Amer insisted that he had to command the armed forces, and Nasser was forced to agree… However, when became clear that the army does not exist yet… Nasser and Amer had to resign. When Nasser recalled his resignation, about 700 officers asked him to call back again Amer. He refused… and succeeded to regain the control with the support of few generals. Than Amer with some of his followers made a barricade in his house, having at his possession machine guns, mortars, and other weaponry… Finally, Nasser invited Amer to his residence for negotiations, where the latter was arrested…”

The most radical irreconcilable position had been held by the Syrian leadership, pretending to accuse the Soviet bloc for the Arab defeat in the Six-Day war. Kardelj informed Zhivkov: “… The Soviet Union and the socialist countries were sharply criticized in Syria. The Prime Minister Zuein even exasperated me. He
said that the Soviet Union had restored only 50 – 60 percents of the lost during the war weaponry. As though the Soviet Union was obliged to restore the whole lost weaponry! We underlined that the main problem was not exactly the weaponry, but the training of the Syrian military. They insisted that do not want anything else but weapons since they have well trained personnel … and they are ready to fight and to smash Israel…”

A week after Tito’s visit to the three Arab countries, a multilateral meeting on the Middle East situation was held in Belgrade. Two basic issues were discussed there – the delivery of more military and economic aid to the “front-line” Arab regimes, and to coordinate the political and diplomatic efforts to work out a compromise UN Security Council resolution. In the next few weeks the Soviet bloc countries tried as well to influence and press on their Arab allies to adopt a more moderate line toward Israel and to establish between themselves a more coordinated and united position. In September – November 1967 Moscow visited Egyptian, Syrian, and Yemen foreign ministers, and in early December Syrian Prime Minister Zuein, and the King of Jordan Hussein. Meanwhile, new multilateral Soviet bloc consultations were carried out during the celebration of the 50-th anniversary of the Russian October revolution in Moscow. Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko had new talks as well with several his colleagues at the XXII UN General Assembly annual session in September and on 28 September the East European foreign ministers had a multilateral meeting at the Soviet UN mission in New York. During the UN General Assembly session (18 September – 4 October) Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ivan Bashev discussed the Middle East situation with the US Secretary of State Dean Rusk, British Foreign Secretary George Brown, Belgian and Norwegian foreign ministers Pierre Harmel and Jon Luing, UN Secretary General U Thant, etc.81 On 7 October Bashev had a prolonged discussion on the matter with his Yugoslav colleague Nikezic82.

82 DA, Record 5sh, File 401, p. 348.
The main focus, however, was on the UN Security Council. As Andrei Gromyko explained at the Soviet bloc foreign ministers meeting in Warsaw in December 1967, the Soviet representatives in the Security Council had many consultations with the Arab delegations at UN headquarters in New York in order to achieve a more acceptable resolution. The only goal for suggesting a Soviet draft of a Security Council resolution on 20 November had been the intention to influence the USA and Great Britain to agree with more decisive and clear request for the “withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the occupied territories”. Gromyko admitted to his East European colleagues in Warsaw that the final British draft, which was approved unanimously as US Security Council Resolution 242 on 22 November 1967, was very “weak” for the Soviet view, however, the Soviet representative voted positively following an urgent personal request by the Egyptian President Nasser to support it.\(^{83}\)

During the intensive consultations at the UN Security Council in the mid-November 1967 the Bulgarian delegation regularly coordinated its actions with the Soviet representatives. E.g. following a request by the Soviet representative Kuznetsov, on 17 November Ambassador Tarabanov proposed a postponing of the next Security Council meeting for 21 November. This tactical move was undertaken in order to have time for submitting of a new Soviet draft of the Security Council resolution, what was done on 20 November. On 21 November Tarabanov informed Sofia: “Kuznetsov and Fedorenko today expressed several times their gratitude to Bulgaria for our support with the postponement of the Security Council meeting.” [Doc. No. 107, 108]

The state of the Middle East situation and the immediate coordinated steps which the Soviet bloc countries had to undertake after the approval of the UN SC 242 Resolution were discussed at a foreign ministers conference in Warsaw on 19-21 December 1967 [Doc. No. 109]. The meeting was convoked by the initiative of Andrei Gromyko. The foreign ministers of Bulgaria, the GDR, Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia, and deputy foreign ministers of Czechoslovakia and Romania attended the meeting. The Soviet Foreign Minister informed his colleagues about

\(^{83}\) DA, Record 23, File 3722a, p. 17-19.
the hard efforts of his country to promote a favorable for the Arab regimes UN SC resolution, and stressed on the military and economic aid that was provided by the USSR to the “front-line” Arab countries. He continued to urge that the Six-Day War was a part of a “broad conspiracy of the American imperialism against the progressive anti-imperialist Arab countries”, which principal aim was to “transform the region into its strategic military base”. According to Gromyko, among the main tasks for the implementation of the Security Council Res. No. 242, should be to influence on the position of the UN Secretary General U Thant and his Special Representative for the Middle East, Swedish diplomat Gunnar Yarring. The representatives of the other East European communist countries, except Romania, supported in their statements the basic conclusions and proposals of the Soviet Foreign Minister. Regarding the Romanian position, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ivan Bashev informed CC BCP Politburo after returning from Warsaw: “Romania shares the view of the other socialist countries about the aggressive policy of the US imperialism in the Middle East region, however, does not consider that Israel was a US tool and that Israel committed an aggression against the Arab countries”. Due to the strong Romanian insistence, the proposed definition of “aggression” had been removed from the final text of the joint communiqué about the Warsaw meeting.\footnote{Ibid, p. 69-79.}

In a US State Department “Intelligence & Research Memorandum” of 11 January 1968, the character and results of the Warsaw conference was assessed as follows: “The meeting of foreign ministers of East European states and the USSR resulted in the issuance of a moderately worded joint statement which took into account the special views of Romania on Arab-Israeli relations. It omitted any reference to bloc aid to the Arabs, failed to label Israel as the aggressor state; and was the first bloc communiqué to call upon all UN member states in the area to recognize that “each of them has the right to exist as an independent national state and live in peace and security”. Nevertheless, the communiqué endorsed a program of political action by the Arabs reflecting Soviet positions of long standing, including the demand for the withdrawal of Israeli troops to pre-June 5 positions…”\footnote{NARA, RG 59, Central Files 1967-1969, DEF-WP, Box 1716.}
The Six Day War definitely and radically changed the Soviet bloc positions toward the Middle East conflict in favor of a stronger and categorical support to the Arabic causa and a long term break of the bilateral relations with Israel. The main reasons for such a sharp turn were caused by the domination of a general schematic Communist vision of the local conflicts throughout the world just as acts or outcomes of the global bipolar Cold War confrontation. The world arena was viewed in the light of only two "anti-imperialist" and "pro-imperialist" alternatives; almost all outbreaks of hostilities that affected any alleged "anti-imperialist" or "non-capitalist" countries were expounded with a "US Imperialism reactionary conspiracy" theory. Thus, Israel was simply qualified as a US "tool" or, at least, as a steady ally of the "main adversary" (i.e. USA and NATO).

Logically, after the Six Day War Bulgaria took third place amongst the Warsaw Pact countries in their relationships with the Arab countries. However, unlike some other East European nations (like Hungary in the early 1950s, Poland in the 1960s, and Czechoslovakia after the “Prague Spring”) there were not any anti-Jewish official or public feelings in Bulgaria during the Communist rule. This can be explained mainly by some historical reasons (like the full integration of the Sephardic Jewish community within the Bulgarian society since the Ottoman Empire times and a relatively religious tolerance between the different cults) and also with the relatively influential positions of some party functionaries and intellectuals of Jewish origin into the Communist elite. The following propaganda and ideological struggle against the Zionism, inspired by some joint Soviet bloc directives, was described most often not as an ethnic or national trend, but rather as a substantial part of the fight with the “Imperialist reactionary ideology”. However, the rupture of the diplomatic relations with Israel on 10 June 1967 terminated any official contacts between the two states for about twenty years.

After Gamal Abdel Nasser’s death in September 1970 and the follow-up cleansing of his supporters by new President Anwar Sadat, in 1972 Soviet-Egyptian relations sharply deteriorated in spite of the alliance treaty, signed the
year before. Surprisingly for many people, on 18 July 1972, President Sadat issued a resolution for expulsion from the country of all Soviet military advisors and supporting military personnel (according to western sources nearly 20,000 people). Soviet military assets and bases on the territory of the UAR went under the exclusive Egyptian control. Despite the disagreements, in the period August 1972 - July 1973, in the eve of the October War against Israel, the Soviet Union sent for the needs of the Egyptian armed forces 100 fighters MiG-21, 10 bombers Tu-16, 60 missile launchers SAM-6, 150 tanks T-54/55, 90 tanks T-62, and other armament.

The government changes after Nasser’s death were carefully observed in Sofia. A report for the Bulgarian senior leadership, dated 2 December 1970, entitled “The Situation in the UAR after Nasser’s Death”, says “Centrifugal forces in the leadership of UAR will not delay their acts and will impose government reorganizations… The current authorities in UAR are composed in a way to use their opportunities to make contact with the West, and particularly with the USA. It could be expected that with some activities, related to the resolution of the Middle East crisis, the USA will try to simulate an impression of a certain change in the US policy, and to attract the new Egyptian leadership.”

Another piece of information, sent by the embassy in Cairo in May 1971, presents the new government changes. A conclusion was drawn that “a right turn” could be expected, after President Sadat had accumulated the total power in his hands and some of Nasser’s supporters had been ousted. The document, among other things, points out the idea that “Sadat agreed with Rogers to make these changes, and as a next step he will try to remove the so-called “Soviet presence”. Parallel to this, however, the embassy in Cairo proposed “Multilateral cooperation and contacts with Egypt in all possible aspects should proceed and strengthen as much as possible. In this way, we will be able to contribute to the opposition to the right trends, we will be able to penetrate deeper, and consolidate our presence and status here.”

The attitude towards the new Egyptian government was reflected by Todor Zhivkov in a special report on the international situation, delivered at a
Communist Party Plenum in October 1971. The report pointed out that Egyptian leaders speak about a war against Israel, while experts underline the unpreparedness of the armed forces of “front” Arab countries. Zhivkov shared information on the state of the Egyptian army “Soviet comrades, who are very well aware of the real situation, informed us that Arabs have not yet overcome the fear of tanks and aircraft” and “they could be defeated” in eventual hostilities in near future. Therefore, the Soviet position was “to withhold the Arabs from fighting”.

In July 1972, few months after Zhivkov’s visit to Syria and Egypt [Doc. No. 147, 148, 149], the Bulgarian government leadership approved „Program for further enhancement of the relations between PR Bulgaria and the Arab countries”. [Doc. No. 153]. The document paid special attention to „strengthening and expanding the relations between the Ministry of People’s Defense and the Ministry of War of the Arab Republic of Egypt, seeking ways for influence and consolidation of the positions of the progressive forces in the Egyptian army”. The Program outlined steps to expand relations with the Syrian defense ministry, increasing the quantity of delivered „special equipment”, as well as to activate military cooperation with Algeria, Libya, Lebanon, Tunis, Morocco and Sudan. Particular attention was paid to enhancing military relations with Iraq and PDR Yemen: „Taking into consideration the important role, played by the armies in Arab countries, the Ministry of People’s Defense shall consolidate and expand their relations with their counterparts in Iraq, in order to strengthen the positions of progressive forces in the Iraqi army... The Ministry of People’s Defense shall expand their relations with the Ministry of Defense of PDR Yemen and deliver support to strengthen their armed forces...” The main task, related to the Middle East conflict, was “to liquidate with political means the consequences of Israeli aggression, which precisely reflects the current Soviet position”.

Despite the warnings on behalf of the Soviet military advisors, on 6 October 1973 the armed forces of Syria and Egypt attacked Israeli positions in the occupied during the “Blitz Krieg” in June 1967 Arab territories. Iraqi army got involved in the war with three divisions. Later, during a discussion with Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov, Iraqi President Ahmed Hassan al Bakr said that it was Anwar
Sadat himself who made the decision to start hostilities, without bringing this to the Iraqi leaders’ notice. According to some authors, Soviet leaders were aware of the preparation of an Egyptian-Syrian attack two days prior to the beginning of hostilities.\textsuperscript{86}

In the first days of the war (according to later information by Anwar Sadat, the influential publicist Mohammed Heikal and Soviet ambassador in Cairo Vladimir Vinogradov), Soviet leaders insisted on a cease-fire and diplomatic settlement of the conflict through the UN Security Council. Following the first Arab victory, Kremlin continued these efforts, building simultaneously air and sea bridges to transfer a huge quantity of modern armament. It was for the first time that a Third World country received combat aircraft MiG-25 and operational-tactical missiles, which were not used till the end of hostilities but had an important deterring psychological effect. According to western sources, between 10-22 October 1973, Soviet transport aircraft took off from airports near Kiev and Budapest and carried armament with a total weight 12 500 t. Apart from this, 30 transport aircraft delivered in the Syrian port of Latakia and the Egyptian port of Alexandria military equipment with the total weight 85 000 t. Egypt, for example, received 250 tanks T-62 from USSR, and 150 tanks from Yugoslavia. Syria received nearly 700 tanks T-62.

On 16 October 1973, Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin secretly arrived in Cairo to convince Sadat that a cease-fire and immediate peace talks would serve the interests of the Arab cause. With the decisive involvement of representatives of the two super powers, on 22 October the UN Security Council adopted Resolution № 338. It demanded an immediate cease-fire and implementation of the previous Resolution № 242. On 25 October, the Security Council adopted a new Resolution № 340 to send UN peacekeeping force.

During the October 1973 war between Israel and the “frontline” Arab countries, Bulgaria organized an urgent sea and air bridge to the Middle East with the code

\textsuperscript{86} Materials from the General Staff of the BA, dated 1974, entitled „Some conclusions from the Middle East war in October 1973“ state „According to our information, Syria and Egypt made a decision to fight a war against Israel 14 days prior to the beginning of hostilities.“
name “Operation Danube”. From 11 to 30 October 1973, according to a Gen. Dzhurov’s report, Bulgaria delivered to the Arab states 3 799 tons of armaments, ammunition and military equipment amounting to 20 019 885 leva. Out of them, armaments, ammunition and equipment at a cost of 5 145 860 leva were delivered to Syria by the Ministry of Defense. Besides, more than 5 000 tons of armaments, ammunition and equipment on behalf of Poland were transferred via Bulgarian Black Sea ports [Doc. No. 179].

Bulgaria was involved in the diplomatic campaign to reach a cease-fire in the spirit of the UN Security Council resolutions. On 27 October 1973, the Bulgarian authorities decided to respond positively to „an eventual proposal to Bulgaria to participate with troops in the UN contingent to control a cease-fire in the Middle East”. This was the second decision of the Bulgarian government for participation in a UN “Blue helmets” contingent after the transitive consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense in July 1970 [Doc. No. 132, 178].

A report of the Bulgarian embassy in Cairo from December 1973 analyzed some lessons learned from the October War and its impact on the status of the Egyptian armed forces [Doc. No. 182]. The document underlined: „According to the experts, only officers ranking from brigadier and below possess modern military thinking. This is due both to the work of Soviet military specialists and to the fact that along with Soviet weapons, the majority of the army adopted the Soviet tactics. On the other hand, the senior command is old and unwilling to change. Specialization of general officers in various military schools has not brought positive results. The war in October proved that senior military leadership refused to adopt the Soviet military doctrine and is still a slave to the old ideas from the English schools during World War II. This was the reason for some gross errors of strategic nature during the fighting in October. In this respect, Egyptian generals are far behind compared to the younger, more flexible and modern Israeli generals.”

The first contacts of the Warsaw Pact countries with Yasir Arafat’s Palestine Liberation Organization /PLO/ and its formations were established at a comparatively later date. The reason for that was a certain restraint from official
connections till the end of the 1960s, caused by the PLO strong extremist line with its objective to liquidate the state of Israel and its rejection of UN Security Council Resolution No. 242 of 22\textsuperscript{nd} November 1967. That is most probably the reason, which made the Bulgarian leadership abandon a request to supply with arms “the military wing of the PLO” in 1968 [Doc. No. 110]. At the same time, however, Moscow commented with concern on the intensification of the Chinese activities in the Middle East through the extension of China’s contacts with the PLO, providing considerable military assistance and admitting for training large groups of Palestinian fighters. The 1970 Black September events in Jordan focused the Soviet attention even strongly on the PLO, which resulted in Arafat’s secret visit for the first time in the USSR in 1970 [Doc. No. 125].

A CC BCP Politburo document of July 1972 underlined especially the changes of previous Soviet Bloc attitude toward the PLO: “The ways to establish contacts with PLO are to be studied and our own approach to the Palestinian Liberation Movement elaborated.”\textsuperscript{87} In February 1973 Yasir Arafat visited Bulgaria for the first time [Doc. No. 157, 159].

IV. 1974 – 1982

During the 1970-ies it became a routine for Todor Zhivkov and other Bulgarian leaders to periodically seek consultations with the CC of Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Foreign Ministry senior experts related to the development of relations with Arab countries and the Middle East conflict settlement. These consultations were proposed to Zhivkov by Leonid Brezhnev during one of their informal meetings in Crimea, and they usually preceded discussions between the Bulgarian head of state with his Arab counterparts [Doc. No. 147, 188, 221, 235]. Apart from this, during this period the exchange of analytical information between KGB and KDS became very intensive. Thus, during the October War in 1973, Moscow provided almost daily summarized intelligence information on the development of hostilities and the correlation between Israeli and Arab forces [Doc. No. 172, 176, 177].

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid, Record 35 [CC BCP Politburo files], File 3304.
Differently from Syria, where following the government changes in 1970 and General Hafez Assad coming into power, relations with the Warsaw Pact continued to develop dynamically [Doc. No. 186, 190, 208, 220, 226, 243], after the October War Anwar Sadat’s regime sharply changed their foreign policy position. At first, this did not have effect over the military cooperation with “Soviet bloc” states. Information from Bulgarian Foreign Minister Petar Mladenov following a meeting with his Soviet counterpart in February 1975 states “Comrade Gromyko touched the issue of procuring weapons to Egypt. Sadat is taking advantage of this. All armament available to Egypt is Soviet and its value is billions of dollars. Moreover, there is no agreement demanding that the USSR is bound to replace weapon losses during the October War. Even at present, the USSR continues delivering weapons to Egypt.”

Relations with Egypt deteriorated following the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, signed in the US President’s residence in Camp David in September 1978. Soon after the „deal from Camp David“, following an insignificant incident, the Bulgarian embassy in Cairo was searched, which was evaluated by the Bulgarian side as a planned provocation by the Egyptian special services [Doc. No. 213]. This resulted in the recall of diplomatic personnel and freezing of bilateral relations. Information on the political situation in Egypt, written several months before Anwar Sadat’s assassination by members of the religious extremist organization “Muslim brothers”, says: „With the signing of Camp David’s agreements and the separatist peace treaty with Israel one could think that “denasserization” in Egypt has come to an end. Sadat’s course of action defines Egypt’s place in contemporary world as a part of the imperialistic and reactionary forces.” It was only after the complete resumption of the Bulgarian-Egyptian diplomatic relations when favorable conditions were created for new armament deliveries from Bulgaria and joint economic projects.

Military, political and economic contacts with Iraq became more intensive after General Hassan al Bakr came into power in 1968. Cables, sent from the Bulgarian embassy in Baghdad in 1969, for the first time informed about the increasing influence of Saddam Hussein who gradually and quietly replaced in the following years the sick President al Bakr in order to concentrate the overall
power in his hands ten years later [Doc. No. 119, 121]. A five-year agreement was signed in the beginning of 1971 for sales of armament and technical assistance from Bulgaria to Iraq [Doc. No. 140]. In 1972, a Bulgarian military delegation, headed by Defense minister General Dobri Dzhurov, visited Iraq. The following year his Iraqi counterpart returned the visit [Doc. No. 145, 146, 152]. During the implementation period of the signed military agreement, the Bulgarian side received Iraqi officers for „exchange of experience“. After Todor Zhivkov’s visit to Iraq in April 1974, the Bulgarian leadership approved a special Resolution № 331 dated 25 July 1974 for „joint participation with the USSR in the planning, construction and procurement of equipment for the defense industry in Iraq“. According to the resolution, Bulgaria was involved in the build-up of the Iraqi “military-industrial complex” with arms and military equipment sales for 80 million USD [Doc. No. 187]. As many other countries, during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s Bulgaria provided arms delivery for both countries.

Following the break off with Egypt, Libya became for a short time the main Soviet military base in the Mediterranean. Some confidential reports, however, gave quite critical assessments of the Libyan leader Colonel Muamar Qaddafi. He was characterized as a unique product of the specific conditions in which he evolved from a Nomad-Bedouin into a national leader. Diplomatic studies present in detail Qaddafi’s „third world theory“ and „green revolution“. Relations with Libya, particularly in the economic sphere, continued to develop intensively till the end of the 1980-ies [Doc. No. 150, 209, 210, 216, 218, 219, 241].

After the visit of PLO Political Department Chairman Faruk Kadumi in 1974 in Bulgaria, an agreement was reached to open a PLO representation in Sofia. This change in the Bulgarian position was partially due to the change in the course of action of Arab countries and the Movement of the Non-Aligned states regarding the statute of the Palestine liberation organization. In 1977 Bulgarian CC BCP Politburo with a secret resolution approved a new request to deliver weapons (via Syria and Libya) to the PLO [Doc. No. 192, 202, 207, 211].

Until 1981, materiel support (including military), provided by Bulgaria to the PLO did not exceed 5 million leva. After the visit of PLO armed forces deputy
commander-in-chief Halil Uazir (Abu Djihad) in the beginning of 1982, additional military support was rendered at the amount of 671 000 leva. At the same time, many Palestinian fighters came to Bulgaria for medical treatment and military training. After the Israeli operation Peace for Galilee in Lebanon in June 1982, the Bulgarian government sent humanitarian and military aids to the PLO, amounting to over 1 million dollars. At the same time the Bulgarian special services carefully observed the terrorist activity of some Palestinian organizations, the contacts of their functionaries with Islamic fundamentalist groups like Muslim Brothers.

In spite of the “jealousy” and discontent of Arafat, who claimed monopoly over relations with East European countries, contacts with leaders from the People’s front and the Democratic front for liberation of Palestine continued [Doc. No. 233]. The main political goals, set by the Bulgarian leadership in the development of relations with PLO, were directed towards „restraint” of the extremist and terrorist views among the functionaries of the Palestinian armed resistance, and consolidation of „progressive” (i.e. procommunist) trends in different organizations. These goals were hard to achieve and by supporting the PLO, actually, and its hard-line course of action, the Bulgarian government created an unfavorable image for the country among the Western public opinion as an active supporter of „terrorism”.

The Bulgarian State Security archival documentation indicates clearly that the activity of the International terrorist leaders on Bulgarian and other Warsaw Pact countries territory significantly intensified in the late 70s. Their presence was carefully monitored by the Counterintelligence services, and, obviously, in certain cases KDS maintained personal contacts with some terrorists, mainly with the purpose to obtain new sensitive Information. However, there were no serious concerns about such illegal activity on Bulgarian territory until the early 80s since the Bulgarian authorities believed that “International terrorism threat” was directed only against their principal adversary – the Western world. The situation drastically changed in the mid-80s.

V. 1983 – 1989

During the 1980-ies, there was a new impetus in Bulgarian-Iraqi economic relations encouraged by regular meetings between government leaders of both countries. Despite the delay of paying back the financial debts from Iraqi side, the Bulgarian government made a number of decisions to postpone payment and give new considerable in amount credits for purchase of weapons and joint economic projects on Iraqi territory. In this way, in the end of Todor Zhivkov’s government the Iraqi debt to Bulgaria reached a billion and a half US dollars, an incredibly large sum for the small Balkan state [Doc. No. 228, 231, 237, 239, 251].

However, soon after the real seizure of the power in Iraq by Saddam Hussein in 1979, Bulgarian counterintelligence services revealed many evidences of Iraqi Intelligence service (IGUR) activity on Bulgarian territory. According to a report by Gen. Georgi Anachkov, KDS VGU chief, of 4 August 1983, some new facts of Iraqi and Libyan security services covert operations and attempts to recruit their agents in Bulgaria were disclosed. On the other hand, the Syrian Intelligence officers tried to organize actions against the Iraqi embassy in Sofia. The VGU report concluded: “The special services of the Arab countries (mainly of Iraq) send to Bulgaria intelligence groups for the implementation of concrete tasks on their citizens. Intelligence agents under diplomatic disguise from the respective embassies render them full assistance on Bulgarian territory. It is characteristic for the Arab intelligence that in Bulgaria they actively work against one another, employing agents from different Arab countries.” [Doc. No. 229].

A first serious discussion regarding the “International terrorism phenomenon” was held at a MVR Collegiums meeting in May 1983. KDS VGU chief and a MVR Deputy-Minister, Lt.-Gen. Georgi Anachkov gave detailed data on the “colorful multitude of terrorist groups and organizations of different ideology”. In the Middle East groups were pointed out like “The Hand of the Black September”, “Arab Avant-garde”, “Muslims Brothers” and the Lebanon Muslim organization “Amal”. The chief of the Bulgarian foreign counterintelligence service dwelled especially
on three main terrorist organizations that increased their activity on Bulgarian territory since 1978 – the groups of “Carlos”, Abu Nidal, and Abu Ayad.

The activity of a pro-Iraqi Abu Ayad’s group representative in Bulgaria Tarik Shakir Mahdi – Abu Daud was carefully monitored by KDS services. In a Security report it was underlined: “We have enough information available to suspect Abu Daud in drug trafficking, involving Arabic students and post-graduate students in our country. Arabic citizens, living in Bulgaria, are involved in drug distribution in Western Europe…In July 1983 Abu Ayad himself arrived in Sofia by an official invitation. On 24 July 1983, he had a meeting in the PLO office with the representatives and leaders of the student organizations within PLO. Abu Ayad raised the question of who will join the Palestinians, living in Bulgaria, – Yassir Arafat, or the separatists Abu Mussa and Abu Salyah.”

Another terrorist organization with positions in Bulgaria was “Abu Nidal” group. This was a left extremist group that was separated from PLO. A KDS VGU report of August 1983 informed: “Latest available data shows that this group is under the influence of Israeli secret services. In the past years their activities were directed against PLO representations in Europe and prominent Palestinian figures. The group carried out acts against the representatives of PLO in Belgrade in 1980, against the above-mentioned Abu Daud in Warsaw in 1981, and Isam Sartauyi in Portugal in 1983, as well as 4 other attacks…”

On 30 – 31 October 1985 new national State Security meeting on the “struggle against the terrorism” was held in Sofia. The Deputy Chief of Bulgarian Foreign Intelligence (PGU-KDS) Vladimir Todorov informed his colleagues regarding some new “tendencies in the development of the international terrorism” in the field of the organization of new brutal acts of terrorism in Lebanon and few other West European and Middle East countries. Todorov underlined, in particular, the new measures for “coordination of the antiterrorist activity” undertaken by the US government and its special agencies. One of the representatives of the security services presented new data on six counterintelligence operations against suspected terrorist groups in the country [Doc. No. 230, 232, 244].
The resumption of diplomatic relations with Israel occurred a few months after ousting Todor Zhivkov from power, even though conditions had been prepared for several years in advance. The first real attempts to resume political, economic and cultural contacts with Israel started in 1987. A number of unofficial visits of influential Israeli figures were organized, among whom former Israeli foreign minister Aba Evan, the spouse of the leader of LIKUD political bloc and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir\(^89\), the Minister of Industry and Commerce Ariel Sharon and others [Doc. No. 242, 246, 248, 249, 250]. In May 1989, a bureau of the Bulgarian commercial industrial chamber was opened in Tel Aviv. The restoration of Bulgarian-Israeli diplomatic relations in April 1990 was not an isolated Bulgarian act. It reflected the common position of East European countries. Hungary was the first country (except Romania, naturally) to resume its relations with Israel in September 1989. The conclusion of a Warsaw Pact working expert group on „current foreign policy information“ in February 1990 unambiguously admitted the failure of the previous policy regarding Israel: „Breaking off diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv in 1967 did not achieve the goal to isolate Israel effectively on the international arena, and deprived us of the opportunity to establish important contacts to influence the Middle East balance.” [Doc. No. 255] Among all East European states, the most cautious was the Soviet Union, whose government resumed their diplomatic relations with Israel in October 1991, shortly before the disintegration of the multinational state.

\(^89\) Shulamit Shamir was born in Bulgaria.