Why Stalin midwifed the birth of Israel:

It's generally forgotten today that the Soviet Union played a key role in the birth of the state of Israel, by supporting the partition of Palestine and lending the Jewish state military and political support during the War of Independence. This policy represented a startling reversal of the Soviet Union's previous hardline stand against Zionism (which had been based on the notion that Zionism was a form of Western imperialism), and, not unlike the Hitler-Stalin pact, caused considerable upheaval within the Communist world. Why did Stalin so dramatically change course? As explained in this fascinating excerpt from an article by an anti-Zionist Marxist, it had nothing to do with any belief in the Zionist cause, but with the Soviets' geopolitical aim to push Britain out of the Mideast while preventing the United States from replacing Britain as the dominant power there:


How Stalin Created Israel


Did Stalin create Israel? To the extent that any one individual can be held responsible for the creation of a state, it does seem, on the basis of the evidence presented by Mlechin, that Stalin has a better claim than any other individual to this particular honor. Why did he do it? Apparently it was a gamble in the context of the more assertive Soviet foreign policy that followed victory over Nazi Germany, made in the hope of establishing a lasting Soviet presence in the Middle East. It failed, but it can be seen as a precursor of similar and more successful efforts in the post-Stalin era, this time backing the other side in the Israel-Arab conflict. It does show that the standard view of Soviet penetration of the Third World as a post-Stalin development is not quite accurate.

The episode also helps us fill in a broad historical view of the nature of Zionism-Israel as an international phenomenon. What made possible the remarkable rise of the Zionist community from a small and vulnerable minority in Ottoman-ruled Palestine at the beginning of the 20th century to a nuclear-armed regional superpower in that century's last quarter? Many things, to be sure. The Holocaust had a decisive impact. But we should not underplay the significance of the Zionist movement's ideologically flexible and repeatedly successful search for great power patrons. As the relationship with one patron becomes less viable, a new patron is always found:
1. Britain with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, whose Mandate provided a roof for building an autonomous quasi-state (the Yishuv).

2. Stalin's Soviet Union played the crucial role in the creation and initial consolidation of an independent Zionist state.

3. France gave Israel nuclear weapons.

4. US support was crucial in creating a Greater Israel.

5. Next great power patron -- China, perhaps?

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