

Jewish State Faces the Future

By Joseph Starobin

IT WAS a great day, and a good one, when the United Nations General Assembly made its decision on Palestine. It was the Thanksgiving Day week-end for Americans, an appropriate holiday setting. It was the Jewish Sabbath, this time a day for rejoicing—and it was followed by the Christian Sabbath, a day for meditation and reflection. It was a time to re-read the words of Jeremiah, that prophet of the ancient Hebrews who combined the most bitter visions of the dispersal of his people with the brightest pictures of their ultimate return from captivity.

"He that scattered Israel will gather and keep him," the prophet predicted. And he imagined, in the words of the Lord's revelation, what the home-coming would look like: "Therefore shall they come and sing in the heights of Zion, and shall flow together for the goodness of the Lord, for wheat and for wine and for oil and for the young of the flock and the herd . . . and then shall the virgin

rejoice in the dance, both young men and old men together; for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice for their sorrow."

That is how Jeremiah saw it. Two thousand years later, the reconstruction of Jewish national life in Palestine had achieved such a strength and power that the nations of the world had to recognize it. What the prophet credited to his God has come about through the will of the prophet's people.

ELEMENTS OF DANGER

But after rejoicing comes reflection. Like everything in our time, elements of danger are present even in triumph. The formation of independent Jewish and Arab states in Palestine is a defeat for British imperialism, but these states will remain immersed in the vortex of imperialist relations.

The reason why Jewish aspirations have won out is because they reached the point of national struggle simultaneous with a great war of national liberation. But consolidating this victory will not be easy.

Britain has confessed defeat in Palestine; but she is only shifting

her positions very slightly—to the Suez Canal, to the supposedly-independent states of Transjordan and Iraq.

Moreover, the United States did not support the partition of Palestine for purely idealistic reasons, or even for reasons of internal politics. The whole fight in the General Assembly revealed the dilemma of the State Department: on the one hand, it feared a progressive, democratic Jewish state in the heart of the Middle East, where the United States would have preferred Britain to carry on its classical policies, based on keeping the Arab masses in subjection and ignorance, on the other hand, the State Department appreciated the possibility of dominating this one spot of the Middle East where industry and agriculture are highly developed.

Thus, the new Jewish state inevitably faces danger from the intrigues of the imperial powers, playing on the relative backwardness of the Arabs and distorting their own desires for liberation. It also faces the economic penetration, especially from United States capital, anxious to

share in Palestine's economic prospects in order to dominate them.

UN'S POWERS

But there are other problems, too, immediate and longer-range. The UN commission, consisting of Bolivia, Panama, Denmark, Czechoslovakia and the Philippines, does not have police powers in Palestine even though it is supposed to function under the guidance of the Security Council.

Britain will withdraw from the Holy Land in such a way as to increase strife between Arabs and Jews that could become a veritable bloodbath. Britain refuses to place her own administration at the disposal of the UN. As the 80,000 British troops are withdrawn, it will be easy to inflame reactionary Arab groupings and give them arms; it will be difficult, even for a Jewish militia functioning under the UN, to defend the new state.

The prospects for the Arab state are obscure. The main leadership of the Palestinian Arabs remains the Grand Mufti, a collaborator with fascism; there are other forces, but they have not yet

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the Arab area shaded in black will be the new Jewish state. Jaffa will be an Arab enclave, and Jerusalem is under the UN Trusteeship Council for 10 years. Area in white is the Arab state. Britain must withdraw by August 1, 1948, and by February clear a port for increased Jewish immigration. By October 1, 1948, both states are scheduled to be independent.

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emerged independently. Then there is the pressure of Emir Abdullah of Transjordan, who wants to occupy Arab Palestine and form a powerful counterweight to Syria, his traditional rival.

It is possible that an independent Arab state will not emerge for some time; but it will be a shame if the democratic forces, within Arab Palestine and in the other Arab states, miss their great opportunity. For the UN plan is not simply a plan for a Jewish state: it offers a lever to the Arab masses against their own misleaders, and that is one reason why the Arab delegations at the UN opposed it to the end.

The Arab states have the responsibility of cooperating with the United Nations, even if an Assembly decision is technically just a recommendation. But more than that, the democratic forces among the Arabs, instead of becoming pawns of a policy of revenge and hostility toward the Jews, have the chance of strike out with an independent, democratic line.

Thus, we have a vital paradox: it did not prove possible to form a bi-national state in Palestine, but now more than ever a Jewish state will have to seek cooperation with the Arab world for the sake of its own survival. All tendencies to chauvinism on the part of the Jews toward the Arabs will now be even more dangerous than before. For the Jewish state will have to live, and sell its goods in the Arab world, and the real problem becomes: how quickly can the wheels of history move in the Arab world to produce a progressive, democratic revolution there, a change of land relationships and the emergence of a workingclass movement?

In the last analysis, that will be an element of safety for the Jewish state, just as, if such a movement had arisen earlier, it might have been the factor which could have made a bi-national state successful.

Many trends in the Jewish community may not understand this, although it is gratifying that the first words of responsible Jewish leaders, after the partition vote on Saturday, were couched in friendship for the Arabs. This must take on practical forms from now on, for the sake of the Jews themselves.

American Communists may have hesitated, in my opinion, too long in recognizing that a Jewish nation in Palestine was a fact, and therefore self-determination of the Jews, in the form of a separate state, was the only link in the historical chain. But the classic Communist position of Arab-Jewish cooperation now gains greater force, as the Jewish state stands at the threshold of history.

U. S.-SOVIET AMITY

One final point. American-Soviet cooperation in the UN General Assembly was a reality on the Palestine issue, even if the outlines of different aims and considerations are very plain beneath the surface.

The American delegation was hesitant; all through the American proposals, there ran a thread of hope that Britain, the imperial bulwark, would remain and "control" the situation.

The Soviet leadership on this issue was clear, and the Soviet diplomats ably bent over backwards to remove any excuse from their side for a breakdown of the negotiations.

But the truth remains that the Soviet and American interest co-

incided. This was a major factor in bringing about the final decision.

Such a coincidence of interest exists in many parts of the world. In the case of Palestine, the United States recognized the realities, and accepted them — even though reluctantly. If the United States were prepared to recognize the realities in China, in Greece, in France, in Germany—an equally fruitful and even more tremendous basis for cooperation with the Soviet Union would result, and bring the world to some kind of stabilization.

This—not chaos—is what we are fighting for. The Palestine decision increases our hope and struggle for a world-wide American-Soviet settlement on the basis of the same realities that were present in Palestine: that peoples want to determine their own forms of economic and political life without dictation and interference from those who fear the advance of progress.

The ancient Chinese used to ripen hard pears by putting them in a closed room with burning incense. Ethylene gas in the incense smoke caused the ripening, and today that gas is used to de-green fruits.

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