TIME is Running Out...

THIS is a fateful week for Palestine—and for the peace of the world. By March 16th we shall know whether the United Nations shall henceforth be regarded merely as an international debating society, whose decisions and considered judgments may be lightly shrugged aside, or whether it is to be an effective instrument for the settlement of disputes—and the hope of mankind.

By March 16th the Great Powers are scheduled to report to the Security Council on the results of their consultations regarding Palestine and to make recommendations “regarding the guidance and instructions which the Council might usefully give to the Palestine Commission with a view of implementing the (partition) resolution of the General Assembly.” It is our firm conviction that upon those recommendations, and upon the subsequent action to be taken by the Security Council, rests the future of international organization to preserve and maintain peace.

The issue is clear. On November 29, 1947—after many months of earnest investigation, deliberation and debate, and despite repeated Arab threats of war—the General Assembly of the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states with an economic union and with an international regime for Jerusalem. Since that time, Arab states, encouraged by the Mandatory Government’s failure to maintain law and order in Palestine, have committed acts of armed aggression against the Jewish community in the hope of intimidating the United Nations into reversing its judgment. Now the United Nations must choose one of two paths: it can carry out its own decision vigorously and forthrightly by using the enforcement machinery provided by the United Nations Charter—and thereby preserve its own prestige and effectiveness for the future; or it can permit the aggressive acts of a few Arab rulers to upset the results of combined world statesmanship—and thereby commit suicide.

These are the two paths and there is no other. All talk of renewing attempts to “reconcile” the Arabs and the Jews, after innumerable and fruitless efforts at reconciliation over a period of thirty years, is wholly unrealistic. The chief spokesman of our own Government underscored this fact at the General Assembly of the United Nations last November.

What do those who are again talking about “reconciliation” really mean? Certainly not an understanding between Jews and Arabs based upon historic rights and international guarantees. The Arabs have time and again refused even to discuss such a settlement. If the Arab spokesmen have convinced us of anything, it is that they are absolutely intransigent with regard to any Palestinian solution which in any way meets Jewish needs and rights. Obviously, those who now speak of “reconciliation” mean something quite different. They have in mind the whitening down of the United Nations partition decision—to the further detriment of the Jews. This unworthy objective is being advertised as “an attempt at compromise.”

In this connection it should be pointed out that the Jews do not base their claim to Palestine upon the UN’s partition decision, but upon a long series of international commitments originating with the Balfour Declaration and the Palestine Mandate, and upon thousands of years of history. The decision of November 29, 1947, fell far short of meeting what the Jews regard as their historic rights. They acceded to the UN’s compromise solution, which involved great sacrifices on the part of the Jewish people, but which they were prepared to accept as a way out of a dangerous international impasse.

To represent the UN’s decision as “the Jewish solution,” on the theory that the Jews should be expected to consent to a further curtailment of their rights, is not only unfair to a long-suffering people, but completely destructive of confidence in the United Nations.

It is with a sense of deep disappointment that we have observed the record that our own Government has played with respect to Palestine during the past weeks. We had hoped for the same clear-cut and energetic presentation of the traditional U. S. policy as was put forward in the final crucial meetings of the General Assembly. Instead, we have found himself, where clearness was called for, evasiveness where forthrightness was demanded, acquiescence in procedures which can only produce delay where speed was essential. Surely it cannot be the intention of our Government to destroy, by a series of diplomatic maneuvers, the very UN decision of which it was the chief architect.

We now look to our Government once again to assume leadership on this question and to ensure a just outcome. We respectfully urge that the following action be taken immediately:

1. that the United States Representative in the discussions of the permanent members of the Security Council take an unequivocal stand for the earliest implementation of the United Nations decision of November 29, 1947, and favor the dispatching of an international force to Palestine to help maintain the peace and to enable the UN Commission to carry on the work of implementation which was assigned to it;

2. that our Government urge the immediate organization and equipment of the Jewish militia, which is provided for in the United Nations decision; and

3. that our Government immediately revise its present embargo on arms, so that the defenders of the Jewish community—and of the United Nations decision—may be enabled to resist acts of aggression threatening their lives and their homes.

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