

THE PALESTINE PROBLEM

FAR FROM BEING SOLVED BY A U.N. DECISION, IT CALLS FOR RESPONSIBLE U.S. STATESMANSHIP

During last Thanksgiving week Americans felt they had something to be thankful for which now turns out to be illusory. It was the news that the U.N. had "solved" the Palestine problem. The U.N. had decided that all Palestine should be divided into three parts—a Jewish state, an Arab state and an internationalized Jerusalem. But now we have to think about the problem harder than ever. For the "solution" is shaky.

The decision was the most important one in U.N. history. It was adopted by a two-thirds vote after long study and debate, and it had the backing of both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Will this unequivocal decision work? If not, the U.N. may become a more pathetic basket case than the old League of Nations after the Japanese nullified the decision on Manchuria. The setback to world peace might be equally profound.

This awesomely taken decision has very few real friends. The Arabs, aflame with nationalism, have declared effective war on its every clause. The Zionists' Jewish Agency was disappointed with some clauses, and some Zionists seem to nurture hopes beyond their legal share of the award. The British do nothing to help implement the decision. The U.N. stands back of the decision, but so far back that from the Mount of Olives, around which is being spilled the blood of Arabs and Jews, its blue banner is almost invisible. Even farther back is the U.S. government, which fathered the decision and must take responsibility for it.

"So Much with So Little"

The U.N. commission which is supposed to "implement" the partition ought to be in Palestine right now, preparing to take over when the British get out in May. But it is still at Lake Success, where it is the subject of a witticism, "Never have so few been asked to do so much with so little." Its job, when it gets to Palestine, will officially be to keep surrounding Arab states from getting too tough; to prevent Arab guerrillas from invading Palestine, and to suppress local violence. It must separate the two projected states politically while holding them together economically and set up a U.N. trusteeship in Jerusalem.

It cannot do all this without at least a token force of international troops. And the Security Council must decide whether to provide such a force or not. Now it is easy to say—and no doubt true—that the U.N. decision is law and that law must be enforced or the infection of anarchy will begin, to end Lord knows where. But what kind of force shall be used? Individual volunteers would need months of screening and training, and then might be ineffective. Contingents provided by some small powers *might* do the trick, although it would look funny if the men sent the boys to do the job. The Russians, no doubt, would be glad to send a force in and distribute more forces across Turkey and Iran "to maintain lines of communication." But who wants the Russians in there? As for the U.S., even if we were acceptable to everybody concerned, which we are not, Congress would not authorize a unilateral American force.

In this situation the Zionists have offered

to provide the force themselves—the Haganah, maybe after merging with the fanatical Irgun. All they ask is that American Jews provide the money and that the U.S. lift its arms embargo. Now it is true that, with English arms filtering through to Arabs in Palestine, the Zionists are bloodily penalized by the embargo. But equalizing the embargo will not enforce partition. Without effective U.N. policing the Zionists may be decimated, their state die in infancy and all the Jews of Palestine be put on the spot.

Repeal: An Alternative?

If partition is so hard to enforce, is there an alternative? Yes, theoretically. The U.N. Assembly could try to figure out some more workable solution. But only if the U.S. revises its own Palestine policy, for it was the U.S. that organized the two-thirds majority for partition.

Any move to revise would, of course, be a serious blow to U.N. prestige—a climb-down in the face of force. Moreover it would probably increase the fighting. Stalin could then maneuver over to the side of the fanatical ex-Grand Mufti and try to stir up the whole Arab world. This could be disastrous to the U.S., the U.N. and the 800,000 Jews in Arab lands.

These results of revision could be averted only by putting plenty of U.N. forces into Palestine in advance. So we have completed the circle: responsible enforcement takes force, and so does responsible revision. Either entails bloodshed.

When the whole question comes up in the Security Council shortly, the U.S. must fish or cut bait. We have exhausted the possibilities of a policy which wills an end but not the means. This irresponsible habit of ours is what drove the British into their present unhelpful frame of mind about Palestine. To help us make a sound decision, let us see how we got into such a mess.

U.S. policy has been influenced by two desires. One is to remain on good terms with the Arabs, particularly since our oil reserves in Ibn Saud's kingdom are essential to our military strength, the Marshall Plan and indirectly to the cause of peace. This desire is nurtured by the State Department. Then there is the desire of all our presidential candidates to do something for the so-called "Jewish vote." The something is to assist the Zionist agency. One candidate, in the White House, has prevented the State Department from adopting a responsible policy, and he has been abetted by pro-Zionist statements from Candidates Dewey, Taft and Stassen.

These two desires would really conflict if there were a Jewish vote. But is there? There never used to be. Only in the past two or three years have the Zionists been able to claim almost exclusive Jewish spokesmanship. Many Jews and Christians have long had sentimental and philanthropic interests in Palestine, but U.S. Zionism was always limited and before Hitler took power it showed signs of drying up. How much conversion has there since been to basic Zionism and the agency's special interests? Very little, we think.

What makes the Zionist cause *seem* politically important is legitimate Jewish despair—Hitler's Christian conquerors did nothing se-

rious about the pitiful Jewish survivors in Europe, 175,000 of whom are still behind barbed wire as DPs. Congress should long since have passed the Stratton Bill to let some of them into the U.S. The Zionists (who have not given support of that bill a high priority) seized on Congress' failure as propaganda material. Many non-Zionists were made to feel that the only way to help the DPs was to let the Zionists carry the ball.

But our politicians would be really stupid to conclude that U.S. Jews want them to gamble with our national interest, peace and the fate of Middle Eastern and world Jewry to please the agency. Certainly American Jews will not support those pathetically desperate Zionists who, like Mr. Sneh of Palestine, try to play the same game between Moscow and Washington that has worked so well between Republicans and Democrats.

A Bipartisan Policy

It is time for an end to the poker game in which Republicans raise, Democrats re-raise and Zionists ride along. It is time for a bipartisan policy in the interests of the U.S., of the U.N. and of world peace. To get it, the first thing is to pass the Stratton Bill. Then Zionism and the DPs can be kept as separate politically as they are in fact. The next thing is to show that the U.S. is ready to do its share in policing the Holy Land, whether to bolster the U.N. by enforcing partition or to get U.N. off the hook by revision. So we had better be prepared to use force.

Beyond that the whole Palestine question should be returned from the political arena to the State Department, where it belongs. The department can work out details of policy from its full knowledge of the Middle East. It should look at the U.N. formula closely: not just partition but "partition with economic union." The idea is novel and difficult, but the economic union angle might prove helpful—especially in view of the proved desert-transforming talents of the Jewish immigrants. Moreover there are Arabs who, if they dared come out in the open, would make a deal with the Jews of Palestine. They should be encouraged. So should the handful of moderate Jews of Palestine, who would meet them halfway and say so bravely every day under the leadership of California-born President Magnes of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Blood will still be shed. It is impossible to see now with just what degree of partition or union Palestine should wind up. In the words of our delegate who voted for partition, "This thing is just beginning." But if we now pull ourselves together we may carry it through, bringing peace to a Middle East which is, after all, large enough for Moslems, Christians and Jews and tempering the U.N. in the fire of a struggle with a real task.

There is no more important question before the State Department, but they can't solve it until it is first faced up to by our presidential candidates, in the White House and out. Our politicians may be surprised by the readiness with which the Jews of America, like other Americans, will support a true bipartisan national policy. They have never failed to.