

ABDULLAH IS QUESTION MARK IN PALESTINE CRISIS

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JERUSALEM, May 1—Shocked by a series of Jewish military successes and under great pressure from militant nationalists in their countries, the rulers of the Arab states are taking action to send regular troops into Palestine, according to reports from the north and also judging from fiery declarations in Amman, Damascus, Cairo and Baghdad.

The end of the British mandate two weeks from today appears destined to coincide with the beginning of a new phase in the war between Zionism and the Arab world. Hitherto, it has been mainly a war of small arms, characterized by its ubiquity in every town and village where Jews and Arabs live side by side or seek to force their way, and by its murderousness. Whatever the explanations on both sides, neither women, children nor the aged have been spared.

In the new phase, the murderousness of snipers and ambushes will increase, for the occasional pacifying intervention of British arms will presumably disappear. Instead of rifles, Sten guns, mortars and an occasional piece of artillery and an armored car, Arabs will be armed with batteries, artillery, scores of armored cars and probably aircraft.

Factors Favoring Jews

The villagers, who as members of the Arab National Guard now seize the family rifle and rush to the scene of battle under the leadership of a local notable and then knock off for lunch or to attend a funeral, will be pulled together by experienced officers. Fawzi el-Kawukji's "Liberation Army" will be reorganized and stiffened by regulars.

The prospect alarms Jewish military leaders rather less than might be expected, for two major reasons:

(1) For them the new phase means the end of the British blockade and an influx of Jewish manpower and arms. The Jewish Agency has at least fifty ships at its disposal under various guises. Men are waiting in Central European DP camps, in the Balkans and on Cyprus. Arms, including artillery, armored cars, light tanks and combat aircraft, have been bought and are ready to be shipped from a dozen Mediterranean ports, according to informed Jewish sources.

In the absence of the British Navy there would be only the Egyptian Navy to interfere and the Jews do not think that will be a serious problem.

The Jews plan to form several mechanized brigades and an air force, using, for the most part,

Jews, Girding to Meet Attack, See His Army as the Major Threat

officers and non-coms who served with the British Army during the war. The topmost ranks of the Haganah are led by such officers. The Haganah itself is trained and organized along British Army lines.

(2) Jewish military leaders do not hold the military strength of the Arab states in high esteem. Among the Arab armies, they take seriously only Trans-Jordan's Arab Legion and the Iraqi Army.

Egypt's forces, they believe, are too occupied with internal troubles to venture far afield. Syria's

in the advance on Habaniyah during the Rashindali revolt of 1941. Some units accompanied the British in the advance into Syria against the Vichy French.

The formula for intervention in Palestine of the regular armies of the Arab states that are members of the United Nations is understood to be for them to join the Arab Legion of Trans-Jordan, which is not a member.

The other Arab states have apparently overcome their fears of King Abdullah's "Greater Syria" ambitions and accepted him as the

groups of Iraqis and Syrians whom it has scattered through the country, this army has been almost inactive as an army before and since the Battle of Mishmar Haemek. While Fawzi Bey has been waiting for the end of the mandate to launch his operations it would seem that the Jews have been overrunning the country.

The Army of Liberation now numbers 10,000 to 12,000, composed 50 per cent of Syrians, 25 per cent Iraqis and 25 per cent of others. It is unlikely now to grow to anything like the proportions once predicted. It has still not won the sensational victory the Arab strategists counted on to start the avalanche of volunteers and contributions of arms and money from the Arab world.

Instead it was badly mauled in the futile attack upon Mishmar Haemek and as a consequence had to stand by helplessly soon thereafter when the Jews took over Haila.

Faulty Ammunition

The Haganah says that of 300 shells from French 75's fired into Mishmar Haemek by the Arabs 170 failed to explode. The Army of Liberation possesses several batteries of 75's from Syria and Lebanon, a few British 25-pounders (the British Army is still wondering how it got them) and at least one 105mm. Schneider howitzer which has been seen at Hebron. It is believed, however, that for this howitzer there is no ammunition.

The Arab Legion is expected to provide new and more competent officers for the Army of Liberation and divide it into a northern and southern command.

According to the psychological warfare of the Arabs, Abdullah will then launch a battle unto death against Jewish settlements and the heart of the Jewish state. Officers of the Jewish high command doubt it. They expect an aggravated fight, but they do not believe Abdullah will risk shattering the legend of the Arab Legion, on which his state is founded, in a final all-out battle with the Haganah. They recall his past statements indicating that he was willing to come to terms with the Jews and even with a Jewish state, and point out that his recent belligerent pronouncements always have been accompanied by a statement of possible terms.

Although Jewish Agency spokesmen see fit at the moment to inveigh furiously against the aggression of the Arab Legion and Abdullah's ambitions for conquest and territorial aggrandizement, on balance the Jewish leaders are inclined to see in his intervention more of a glimmer of hope for peace than impending disaster.

army is still poorly trained, organized and equipped, although it has been making big efforts at improvement. Lebanon's little army is much better trained. Saudi Arabia's and Yemen's Bedouin tribesmen need not be considered.

Arab Legion's Strength

The Iraqi Army, believed to number around 30,000, includes warriors toughened by campaigns against the Kurds, but almost none who have had any experience of the last war. Jews do not believe that this army is capable of operating over the 700 miles that separate it from Palestine.

There remains King Abdullah's Arab Legion of 15,000 men, wholly equipped and trained by Britain, with about fifty British officers and non-coms in key positions and Glubb Pasha in command. It is composed of a mechanized brigade (equivalent to a United States regiment) and garrison companies. The brigade is made up of three regiments (each equivalent to a United States battalion), each under command of a British colonel, with a mixed British and Arab personnel down to the squadron level.

Each regiment has a quota of British Staghound armored scout cars, somewhat aged South African Marmon-Herrington armored cars and Bren gun carriers. There are 3.2-inch pack howitzers, some seventeen-pound and some twenty-five-pound guns. It has been reported that Britain will also equip the legion with an independent air force.

The garrison companies which have been used by the British for guard duties would presumably be useful for occupation duties.

The might of this army, according to the Jews, is a legend and only a legend. They contest the usually accepted strength of 15,000, placing it at 10,000. It has never been seriously battle-tested, they point out. One regiment took part

champion of the Arab cause in the hope that he will be able to redress the balance in Palestine.

This puts Britain, which is responsible for the existence of Abdullah's kingdom and army, in a peculiar position. No satisfactory explanation of Britain's intentions has been forthcoming. Indications are that Britain would like to see Abdullah's kingdom extended to the sea at Gaza, from which a line of communications to British bases in Trans-Jordan and Iraq could be developed.

Britain's Position

So far Abdullah's intervention has been rhetorical—his "declaration of war against Zionism," his "invasion" and "occupation" of Jericho, most of which were invented by Arab assistants to American and British correspondents.

At most there are 2,000 Arab Legion troops in Palestine, and no reinforcements have arrived recently. There is nothing new about the presence of the Arab Legion post in the exclusively Arab town of Jericho. All are still under command of the British Army in Palestine.

It is improbable that the British will force the Arab Legion from Palestine by May 15. According to a British Government spokesman, legion units will at that time be "released for return to Trans-Jordan." Presumably they will fail to return, and Abdullah's occupying and invading may then begin.

It is thought that Arab Legion units, with or without reinforcement from other regular armies, will strike out through Hebron and Beersheba to Gaza and into the Nablus-Jenin-Tulkarm triangle to reinforce Fawzi Bey's faltering "Liberation Army."

Apart from the activities of