

DISUNITED ARAB STATES SEEK PALESTINE TRUCE

Only Trans-Jordan and Iraq Could Profit From Holy Land Campaign

By DANA ADAMS SCHMIDT
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JERUSALEM, May 8—Rarely if ever since ancient times have the Arab peoples been so united as they are today in support of the campaign against Zionism. It has become the focal point of the Young Arab nationalist movement. The intelligentsia and politicians of the towns are the most articulate but opposition to Zionism also has broad emotional support among the masses of Arab peasants.

Unity among the Governments of the Arab states is, however, a different and more complex affair.

In deference to public opinion all Arab states, of course, must accept the premise that Palestine is an Arab land and must become an independent state in the Arab League. But the majority of the Arab League states had hoped and believed that the volunteer Army of Liberation, of which Fawzi el-Kawukji is field commander, would serve the purpose of preventing the formation of a Jewish state and imposing the Arab will. The quick and far-reaching military successes of the Haganah and the flight of at least 15,000 refugees have, however, obliged them to turn to their regular armies and, in particular, to that of Trans-Jordan.

Syria in particular had considered King Abdullah of Trans-Jordan the black sheep of the Arab League, harboring dynastic ambitions of aggrandizement, and hoped to exclude him from the Palestine campaign. But now his Arab Legion with the only fully mechanized brigade in the Arab world has become the Arab Governments' main hope of satisfying public clamor.

The military center of gravity has shifted from Damascus to the

took place. In an effort to obtain an agreement between him and the King the Arab League arranged the meeting, but at the last minute the Mufti refused to go.

Britain is under no necessity to consider Abdullah's interests although Abdullah must consider Britain's. In this case it is thought, however, that equipping Trans-Jordan with a Mediterranean port fits in with Britain's plans. It was widely remarked at the time the new treaty between Britain and Trans-Jordan was signed that the reference therein was to ports which Britain would help develop, although the kingdom at present has only one port at Aqaba.

Abdullah is widely credited with the intention of coming to terms with the Jews. And the Jewish Agency or the Jewish Government which will come into existence a week from now is quite prepared to negotiate with him, although not on the terms he has hitherto stated.

Abdullah has offered the Jews equal rights and local autonomy in a decentralized Arab state. He evaded the question of immigration. Jews would accept only full sovereignty in their area and unrestricted immigration.

British Responsibility

What Trans-Jordan and Iraq eventually do depends less on them and the Arab League than on Britain. Britain created these states after the first World War. She entirely equipped and fully subsidizes the Arab Legion and, as someone remarked in the House of Commons the other day, it is scarcely imaginable that this does not carry with it control and responsibility.

The interest of other Arab states in Palestine is negative. It is true Syria would probably not refuse a portion of northern Galilee and a strip of the Mediterranean coast between the Lebanese frontier and Haifa. Lebanon does not want new territory because it would upset her present slight Christian majority. But Syria's army is not strong enough to risk a major operation to gain these ends.

Nor would Egypt be likely to refuse to take a part of the Negeb desert under her wing but she is occupied with the Sudan, Communists and other domestic troubles.

The main aim of these states and of Saudi Arabia—now that hopes of imposing an Arab unitary state in Palestine are fading—is to prevent partition, prevent formation of a Jewish state and if possible keep Abdullah in check.

A truce might admirably serve their purpose if it involved a political as well as a military standstill. They would gladly see the Palestinian situation thus suspended indefinitely. Without having risked their armies they could present this before public opinion as a victory in that it prevented or postponed formation of a Jewish state. It would also defer Abdullah's suspected claims.

Much as they dislike British and foreign intervention, there are signs that they would now welcome a British or international force dedicated to enforcement of such a truce.

Disadvantage of Truce

But all this seems somewhat forlorn, since the Jews are not interested in that kind of truce and chances of the British or an international force imposing it are dim.

Jews believe a general truce to be to their disadvantage under present circumstances. Haganah has the initiative. If Arab regular armies invade Palestine it is considered that the Jews will be under no further obligation to respect the frontiers laid down by the United Nations Assembly's Nov. 29 decision. They would then feel entitled to occupy and hold such territory as their force permitted.

In any event, it appears that rather than negotiate a truce the Jews would now prefer to take a chance on a fight with the Arab Legion and other regular armies and an eventual deal with Abdullah.

new general headquarters at Amman, where Abdullah has become commander in chief of the entire military effort.

Differences Remain

Differences none the less remain among various states over the effort they are prepared to make and what they expect out of it.

Only Trans-Jordan and Iraq stand to profit materially in any significant way from the campaign in Palestine. For Abdullah it is the opportunity of a lifetime, perhaps his last, to enlarge the rock and desert domain granted him by Great Britain in recognition of the Hashemite family's wartime services into a significant kingdom. The Arab portion of Palestine would be a partial substitute for "Greater Syria" and would probably give him a Mediterranean seaport at Gaza.

Iraq, ruled by a branch of the Hashemite family, would share in the advantages of access to the Mediterranean. Iraq's army is rated as the second most effective in the Arab world and mechanized Iriqi regulars are reported already in Trans-Jordan.

Rulers of these two states are therefore determined to move into the Arab positions of Palestine after May 15.

Fear of Abdullah

The concern of Syria and Saudi Arabia and probably also of Egypt and Lebanon is to prevent Abdullah from keeping permanently the territories he occupies. With the added resources of the enlarged kingdom Syrians fear he might attempt to complete his "Greater Syria" scheme by incorporating their republic. Ibn Saud remembers his claim to the Hejaz with the pilgrim centers of Mecca and Medina, an important source of revenue for Saudi Arabia, and has floated unofficial counterclaims to Aqaba, Trans-Jordan's port on the Red Sea.

To help keep Abdullah mindful of his obligation to create an independent Palestine, Syria has of late espoused the cause of the Grand Mufti, Haj Amin el-Husseini, chairman of the Arab Higher Committee. Partly because the Mufti, exiled by the British, considers himself the rightful chief of an Arab Palestinian state he is anathema to Abdullah. The reported meeting between him and the King at Amman several weeks ago never

AS MAY 15, PALESTINE'S CRUCIAL DAY, APPROACHES

