

perative that contact between the contending forces be maintained through neutral quarters in order to exploit every chance for peace that might offer itself as the rival armies begin to appreciate the strength of their opponents.

THE WAR IN PALESTINE

Having failed to settle the problem of Palestine while it still had authority over the Holy Land as a mandated territory, the United Nations is now confronted with a new situation which begins to assume every aspect of international war. A new state, that of Israel, has proclaimed its independence and its provisional government has been recognized by the United States, and tacitly by others, as the de facto authority within its domain. But the birth of the new nation is accompanied by the thunder of guns and the crash of aerial bombs, which, by their impact on revered places, seem to roll history back to the primitive conflicts of Biblical times.

For the new conflict is no longer confined to the forces within Palestine itself but is rapidly engulfing the whole Middle East. Israel is being invaded on all sides by armies of the neighboring Arab states, and Israel's own armies are reaching out beyond their own frontiers. The conflict, which strengthens old ambitions and breeds new ones, is rapidly destroying whatever basis for a settlement may have been suggested in the long labors of the United Nations, including the partition boundaries that have been accepted as the limits of the new state.

It is now futile to cavil at the failure of the United Nations or the twists and turns of American policy that contributed to this result. In fact, looking back over the innumerable efforts made over the years by innumerable authorities to arrive at a settlement, it is perhaps not too much to say that this failure was foredoomed. For the Palestine problem involves a conflict of human purposes that transcends not only the legalities but also human wisdom, and presents us with one of those situations which an older diplomacy has often recognized as insoluble by reason alone. Every solution ever suggested had to envisage its implementation by force, and that is the kind of solution now being imposed.

That there would be intensified fighting in the vacuum created by the British withdrawal had to be expected, and there is still hope that if the conflict can be prevented from spreading too far it might yet establish a balance of power in Palestine which could encourage a peaceful settlement. That has happened in India, where the fighting that followed a similar British withdrawal is dying down in a truce which has every chance of becoming a genuine settlement of an equally insoluble problem. That opportunity must be kept open in Palestine.

But it can be kept open only if the United Nations is able to keep the conflict within bounds and terminate it before it goes too far. This consideration calls for an immediate repeal of the American embargo on arms to enable Israel to defend itself, and it is to be hoped that President Truman will see his way clear to take quick action before it is too late. The broader issue is now up to the Security Council, which has both formal notification of armed action by Egypt and other Arab states and an appeal by Israel against such action as aggression. Despite the involved legal aspects of the case, and the still limited recognition of Israel as a new sovereignty, the Security Council is and remains the agency primarily responsible for the preservation of international peace and security, and is therefore in duty bound to take action in what has obviously become an international war. It is to be hoped that the way for it will be cleared by the Big Five Power meeting called to select a United Nations mediator for Palestine. For even though the fighting must be expected to continue, it is im-