

DESIRE FOR ARAB AMITY KEY TO BRITISH POLICY

Resentful Over Events in Palestine, London Holds to Mid-East Stakes

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Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

LONDON, May 22—The thorn of Palestine has been extracted from the British lion's paw, but after one week there is no relief from the pain. Being a stubborn animal he is not likely to perform tamely at the circus at Lake Success until he feels better.

As long ago as Feb. 21, The Manchester Guardian wrote: "One cannot quite avoid the suspicion that [Foreign Secretary, Bevin has a certain pleasure in making things as awkward as possible for the United Nations."

Mr. Bevin never concealed his dislike of partitioning Palestine, nor his sympathy with the Arab case, nor has he concealed his resentment against President Truman and American Jewry, whom he blames for failure to achieve a compromise in Palestine.

Legalistic Attitude

When the U. N. decided on partition last Nov. 29, Britain's representatives warned that it could not be implemented without force. At the same time this country has laid itself open to the accusation that it would not permit the Zionists to build up a proper defense with immigrants and arms.

Today, the British Government denies that partition has taken place, since neither boundaries nor administrative steps contemplated by the U. N.'s resolution have become realities. So far as the State of Israel is concerned, the Foreign Office takes a strictly legalistic attitude and says that no such state exists, since it does not fulfill hitherto accepted criteria for the creation of new states.

In theory, this is legality and neutrality. The policy has aroused criticism because, in effect, like non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War, it helps one side.

Treaty Obligations

Britain says she has no further interest in Palestine except as a member of the U. N. Actually, this country is still deeply involved not only in Palestine, but in the whole Middle East.

For one thing, there are Britain's treaties with Trans-Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, and her close connections with the rest of the Moslem world, stretching through Saudi Arabia and Iran to Pakistan. Involved in some of these connections and notably with Trans-Jordan are the loan of British officers,

monetary subsidies and provision of arms.

Behind the scenes, of course, and exercising a dominant role is Middle Eastern oil. There are, too, the Imperial bases, starting with Gibraltar and ending with Aden, and the necessity of keeping the Mediterranean, Suez Canal and Red Sea open to the British Empire and to Western democracy.

Needs Arab Friendship

All these add up to a very simple although unacknowledged conclusion in the eyes of British Foreign Office officials—the necessity of keeping Arab friendship. When forced to a choice in 1939 as war approached, Britain swung to the Arab side and, whether consciously or not, that is what is happening now.

However, since 1939, there has been a profound shift of power in the Middle East. Britain is no longer the single dominant power there. She cannot crack the whip

any more and get things done.

Trans-Jordan, for instance, is more than nominally independent. The Arab Legion could go on fighting even if the British withdrew their officers and subsidy and ceased selling arms.

The British Government says it will not do any of these things unless the U. N. condemns Trans-Jordan and other Arab countries for their actions. At the same time it is indignantly denied here that Britain is in any sense encouraging the Arab Legion and other Arab forces to act.