

War in Fog

THE STRUGGLE IN PALESTINE TURNS INTO A LARGE-SCALE WAR

Eight Days in Palestine

Eight days have passed since the State of Israel was proclaimed as an "independent republic"—a tiny country of 5,500 square miles (a little more than the area of Connecticut) in a hostile Arab world of 1,300,900 square miles. Eight days have passed since the nations of the Arab League sent their armies into Palestine to wage a "holy war" against Israel. Out of those eight days an over-all picture of the Palestine situation has begun to take form. These were the broad outlines last week:

In Palestine two major military operations were under way. One was the "Battle of Jerusalem"—in "no-man's land" miles outside of Israel's borders. In the Holy City the large Jewish population and major units of the Israeli army were under all-out attack. The attackers were soldiers of King Abdullah's Trans-Jordan Legion, best of the Arab armies. The second military operation was the "Battle of Israel." The fight was in its preliminary stages. The Arabs were closing in—there were skirmishes and forays along Israel's borders—but the new state was still virtually intact.

Long Meetings

In the United Nations the Security Council, the agency charged with "maintenance of international peace and security," met in daily sessions. The United States—with Russian support—pressed for strong Council action to halt the Palestine war.

Up to yesterday, the majority would not go along with the proposals of the Big Two.

In world capitals developments were closely watched. A feeling grew that many factors—besides the present fighting in the Holy Land and the debates in the U. N.—would shape Palestine's future. There was much talk of negotiations between powers, of impending "deals" and decisions. Speculation turned on three major questions. They were: Will the United States lift its embargo on arms shipments to the Middle East? How will Britain use its power and influence in the Arab world? What are Abdullah's long-range intentions in Palestine?

At the Front

The phrase "fog of war" applied to the fighting in Palestine last week. Often battle dispatches were skimpy. Both Israel and the Arab countries kept a strict censorship.

From Tel Aviv THE NEW YORK TIMES correspondent sent this description of the Israeli censorship: "We must rely on handouts. There are restrictions on information like this: composition, activities and position of the Israeli army, future movements of VIP's (very important persons), air raids and casualty figures. Spot news like air raid damage is hardly worth covering because of the restrictions."

From Amman THE NEW YORK TIMES correspondent sent this description of the Trans-Jordan censorship: "There is a dual censorship: military and civil. The military censor confines himself to security matters. The civil censor must pass on any questions touching policy. In general there is a ban on any news which might raise Israeli morale or create sympathy for Jews or which might react unfavorably for Arab countries in American public opinion. This sometimes eliminates items which Americans would consider simple factual elements in the picture."

Battle Reports

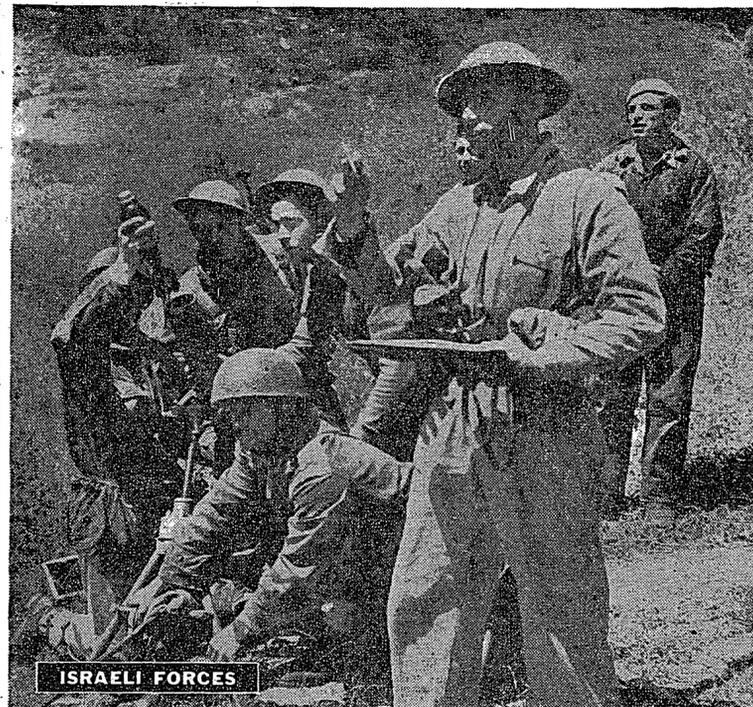
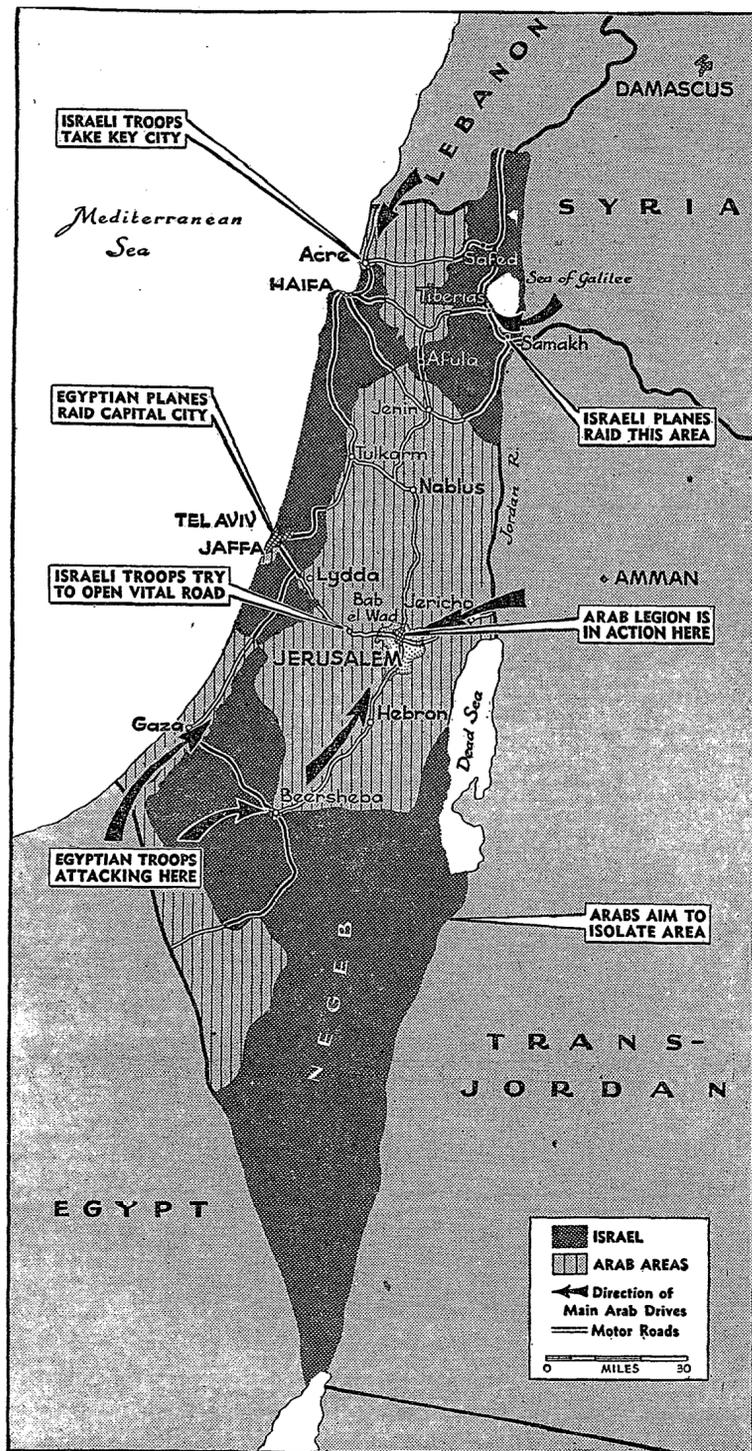
Last week the correspondents' dispatches, pieced together with background information, added up to this: The Battle of Jerusalem saw the fiercest fighting by far. It was a great battle for a city that was supposed to be an international zone under the U. N. partition plan of last Nov. 29.

Jerusalem (once known as the "City of Peace") lies in the mountainous central region of Palestine. Actually there are two Jerusalems. There is the Old City, its walls pierced by eight gates. Behind the walls, along narrow and crooked streets, are religious places sacred to Jew, Arab and Christian. The normal population is 27,500, including 2,500 Jews. Outside the ancient walls is the new Jerusalem—a Jerusalem of broad avenues, offices, apartments, a "white way" of cafes and theatres. In the city live 103,000 Jews and 105,000 Arabs.

The position of the Jews in Jerusalem has been tactically shaky. The Jerusalem area is surrounded by Arabs, and the Jews in their section of the Old City have been under siege for weeks. Jerusalem as a whole has been approximately split in half by the opposing forces. Strong concentrations of the Israeli army in Jerusalem held the western sections of the new city—but the Israeli centers of supply on the Palestine seacoast are forty miles away. Arab troops have fought bitterly to blockade the road to Tel Aviv and cut off Jerusalem.

Big Stakes

Jerusalem is of great importance for both Israel and for the Arabs. The Israeli Army is fighting for Jerusalem—despite the strategic difficulties—because it does not want to abandon a great segment of the Jewish population in Palestine and to surrender troops and arms in the city. The Arabs are fighting to take



Jerusalem because it would give them a stronghold in central Palestine—and lift Arab morale throughout the entire Middle East.

On last Tuesday the Battle of Jerusalem began in full force. From the Arab-held portions of Jerusalem in the east, units of the Trans-Jordan Legion moved to attack positions in the Old City through St. Stephen's Gate and along the Via Dolorosa (Way of Sorrows). The Arabs began a violent shelling of the Jewish quarters. From the new sections of Jerusalem Israeli forces broke through into the Walled City to link up with the besieged Jews—people deprived of almost entirely of water and food. Day and night the battle went on in the Walled City; there was hand to hand combat. Yesterday there were reports that Egyptian units, driving up from the South, were nearing Jerusalem.

Arab Invasion

The Battle of Israel seemed to be slowly shaping up. Arab columns knifed deeply into Palestine, but penetrated only a few sections of Israel itself. In the south, Egyptian forces occupied much of that section of the Negev (the word means dry or parched land) allotted to the Arabs under the United Nations partition plan. The main Arab attack on Israel came from the air. Arab planes made daily bombing runs over Tel Aviv, killing scores of people and wrecking some buildings.

The Israeli forces, for their part, sought to "straighten out" their military lines. In the north, Haganah, the Israeli army, stormed and took from the Arabs the ancient fortress city of Acre—giving the Israeli forces virtual control of the Palestine coast from Lebanon south. On Thursday, for the first time, Israel's air force went into action, struck at Arab concentrations in northern Palestine.

The main forces of the Arab and Israeli armies—still to clash in frontal combat—seemed to be "digging in" and maneuvering for position. These are the military forces:

The Arabs' crack striking force is the Trans-Jordan Legion of King Abdullah. Trained, equipped and led by the British, it has 8,000 to 10,000

disciplined soldiers in armored units, infantry and a camel corps. The high officers of the Legion were "seconded" (loaned) by the British Army to Abdullah. The Legion commander, Brigadier John Bagot Glubb Pasha (his desert patrols are known in the Middle East as "Glubb's Girls") directed operations at the front in Palestine last week.

The man who is supposed to have over-all command of all the invading Arab League Armies is King Abdullah. The regular trained forces of the seven Arab League States total around 115,000 to 120,000; most of these troops are not in action in the Palestine war.

The Israeli regular forces number more than 40,000. There is, in addition, a "second-line" force of around 50,000 used for "static defense" and police work. These troops are well equipped with automatic weapons and mortars. The Haganah has a small air force. There are reports that the Haganah expects American B-25 bombers and fighter planes—probably from Europe.

Last week, behind the Haganah lines, the leaders of Israel went ahead with the job of organizing a new state. On Monday, in a bungalow in Sarona, a suburb of Tel Aviv, the Cabinet of Israel held its first official meeting. It elected to the Presidency Dr. Chaim Weizmann, 73, Zionist leader and scientist who at present is in New York.

Seven members of the United Nations had recognized the new Jewish state. They were: the United States, the Soviet Union, Guatemala, Uruguay, Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

At the U. N.

ACTION WITH RESPECT TO THREATS TO THE PEACE, BREACHES OF THE PEACE, AND ACTS OF AGGRESSION.

This is the heading of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter—perhaps the most critical chapter in the constitution of the organization that is supposed to keep the world peace.

Chapter VII gives the Security Council broad powers to stop aggression. The Council can order member nations to impose economic and political sanctions. If that doesn't stop the

aggression the Council can order U. N. nations to make war with their "air, sea or land forces."

Twice, before last week, there were formal proposals in the Security Council to invoke Chapter VII to stop fighting. One proposal, by Australia, dealt with the Indonesian war. The other, also by Australia, dealt with the Greek civil war. Neither got anywhere. Last week, for the third time in the U. N.'s history, a member of the Security Council called for action under Chapter VII. The United States proposed a resolution to halt the war in Palestine. The resolution led to an unusual situation in the U. N.: the U. S. and Russia were in close agreement—and the United States and Britain were far apart. The resolution did not pass.

'Threat to the Peace'

These were the highlights of the Security Council's week: At Lake Success on Monday Warren R. Austin, the United States representative, made a statement before the Council. He said: "There is a threat to the peace and breach of the peace" in Palestine. He called on the Council to act under Chapter VII and order "all governments and authorities to cease and desist from any hostile military action and to that end issue a cease-fire and stand-fast order, effective within thirty-six hours after the adoption of this resolution."

The Russian delegate, Andrei A. Gromyko, called for an immediate vote, to take quick action to "stop the fighting in Palestine." But other delegates—including the Syrian representative—asked for time for thought.

All week long there were delays and attempts to water down the American resolution.

On Wednesday Great Britain led efforts in the Council to weaken the Austin resolution. Sir Alexander Cadogan, the United Kingdom's delegate, said he had "grave doubts" about the American proposal. He said he was not convinced there was a "threat to international peace" in Palestine, and that, besides, an effort to decide who were the aggressors in the Holy Land would lead to "interminable and probably unprofitable

wranglers." He said that "there would be nothing legally to choose between" the claims of Jews and Arabs in Palestine. He suggested a resolution that, in effect, was a simple appeal for a truce. The delegates of Belgium and China supported the British position.

On Thursday there came an acid denunciation of Britain by a Soviet spokesman. The Ukrainian delegate, Vassili Tarassenko, in a forty-minute speech, said: "The United Kingdom is one of the belligerents. It is a party to the dispute. I think we should put an end to this situation \* \* \* The armed forces of Trans-Jordan are in reality armed forces of the United Kingdom."

On Friday the Council received a message from its Truce Commission in Jerusalem—a commission made up of the consuls of the United States, France and Belgium. The cable was signed by the American consul, Thomas C. Wasson. The message said that "the only effective measure which can be taken to bring about an immediate cessation of hostilities in the Holy City is the employment of a neutral force sufficiently large and powerful to enforce its will" and urged the Council to take action under Chapter VII.

Yesterday, before the Council, Mr. Austin announced that Mr. Wasson had been seriously injured in the Jerusalem fighting. The Council chairman, Alexandre Parodi of France, said that the wounding of Wasson showed that the "situation is becoming more and more serious every second." Late yesterday afternoon the Council continued its meetings.

What Next?

Whatever action the U. N. might take, last week the armies of the Arab League and the army of Israel seemed prepared to fight to the bitter end. But hope was not completely lost for some sort of future settlement outside the U. N. and the field of battle—perhaps a kind of "peace by pressure." Speculation turned on the intentions of three countries that could exert pressure: the United States, Great Britain and Trans-Jordan.

The United States. The immediate problem before the Administration is

the embargo—in effect since last Dec. 5—on arms shipments to the Middle East. All last week, the White House said, President Truman "studied" the question. Members of Congress urged an end to the embargo. Their argument ran along these lines: The Arab countries are being armed by Great Britain, under treaty arrangements. Shouldn't the United States, which was the first nation to recognize Israel, give the new State the chance of buying the arms it needs to fight the Arabs?

If the Embargo Ends

There were some strategists who thought the lifting of the embargo might have the effect of dampening the enthusiasm of the Arabs for the war. For example, Israel could then build a respectable air force—with bombers that could carry the war home to the Arab countries.

Great Britain. The official British position runs along these lines: The new State of Israel, so far as Britain is concerned, does not legally exist. The Arab League States, however, are proved members of the family of nations and Britain will continue to keep up her friendly relations with those States.

Last week the London Foreign Office disclaimed any responsibility for the activities of King Abdullah's Trans-Jordan Legion. It said that Britain was bound by treaties to continue its subsidy to the Legion and to sell arms to Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Yet the general assumption is that Britain wants stability, not a war that could last for years, in the Middle East. Britain still has an empire and British strategists want safe Mediterranean bases—some say in the parts of Palestine that may come under King Abdullah's rule. There seems a possibility that Britain will wait and see how the war goes. Then, if the battle lines become fairly static, the British may press the Arabs to make a compromise settlement with Israel.

Trans-Jordan. The King of Trans-Jordan is an ambitious man, Abdullah has said he wants Palestine as part of a projected empire. He is also considered the most "reasonable" of the

Arab rulers, a man who is willing to make a deal and get a profit rather than risk everything.

There have been persistent rumors that Abdullah does not want to risk losing the flower of his Legion in a direct assault against Israel but instead would be pretty well satisfied if he could take over the predominantly Arab portions of Palestine for himself.

These reports may or may not be true. If they are, Abdullah may run into trouble with other Arab rulers—who distrust him and have their own ambitions. King Farouk of Egypt, who sent his forces across the Palestine border into the Negev desert, presumably wants to keep what he conquers. There is a possibility of competition between Abdullah and Farouk for parts of the Negev.

But all the fighting last week—and all the debates in the U. N. and the speculation in world capitals—did not yet add up to anything like a complete picture of Palestine's future.

Associated Press