

Abroad

Recognizing the Realities in the New Palestine

By ANNE O'HARE McCORMICK

What will happen now in Palestine? No more will the Judean hills echo to the shrill sound of Scottish bagpipes or the bugles of the Irish Fusiliers. Gone are the uniforms and installations, the overlay of English language and custom, which for a quarter of a century have both blurred and deepened the lines between the old villages and the new colonies but have never succeeded in giving this strange and stubborn land the look or character of a British outpost.

The High Commissioner was piped aboard his departing cruiser yesterday in the Bay of Haifa to the sad and inappropriate strains of "The Minstrel Boy." The British withdrew as ceremoniously as they entered the country after the first world war. But they left behind them in Haifa a Jewish city under complete Jewish control. They left the Arab city of Jaffa, deserted by all but a small fraction of its population, in Jewish hands. They left a Jewish army and a large, vigorous and determined Jewish population. Louder than the salute of guns fired in his honor, Sir Alan Cunningham might have heard from the shore the triumphant shout of a new nation proclaiming its independence as the land of Israel.

The British Role

President Truman's surprise move in immediately recognizing the new state does more than anything to give it reality and to emphasize the difference between the Palestine problem of today and that of yesterday. This act nullifies our previous policy, including the trusteeship plan rejected yesterday in the U. N. Assembly and will decisively influence the attitude of the rest of the world.

Recognized by the United States, Israel is now a political entity. Whatever may be said of British rule, the fact is that this new state took root, grew, prospered and attained its present position and power under the Mandate. The shadow and the dream outlined in the Balfour Declaration became a reality in this period. History may accuse the British of failing to bring the rival claimants to the land into the administration and forcing them to work together. If the country is now swept by a full-scale war, the British will be blamed for throwing off responsibility and pulling out before there is any authority to take their place. But the record will also say that a nation was born and grew to the fighting age with British aid and under British protection. This was the force that really pushed them out.

Jewish Action

It is the fact that stumped the United Nations. For this nation now exists. Nearly all the territory allotted to them in the U. N. partition plan is occupied and controlled by the Jews. Fully half the 400,000 Arabs in the Jewish zone, not including the population of Jaffa, which is in Arab territory, have fled. As soon as the British evacuated, the Jews began to fight for Jerusalem. In the six months since November, they have put partition into effect.

There is no point now in going back to old controversies on the clashing rights of Jews and Arabs in Palestine, or the wisdom of the Zionists in putting all the emphasis on nationalism and the state. They have created a state, and they have also created an Arab League, and although this is divided by internal dynastic rivalries and has yet to demonstrate military strength, it represents the formidable long-term danger the land of Israel has to face in the opposition of the Arab world. The Arabs, invading yesterday from Egypt, are just beginning to fight, and even if they should prove easy to beat by a well trained and disciplined army of men battling for their lives, they will be hard to live with.

They have to be lived with. This is as potent a reality as the birth of a Jewish state. All other phases of the problem could be debated as long as the third party in the Palestine triangle stood between the other two. Today the problem is different. The grim prospect is that Arabs and Jews will be left "on their own" to slug it out—with immeasurable damage to human life, to the country, to the chance of economic and human cooperation that takes priority in every plan of settlement.

Grounds for Hope

Palestine will not be the same again. It will be a long time before it can be a place of peace. But if the Arabs can only forget their grievance and resign themselves to the irrevocable, if the Jews can only think of tomorrow, there is a basis of negotiation in the realization that neither side will be able to gain a permanent victory. Both have something to gain by partition—the Palestinian Arabs independence from the neighboring Arab states and a share in the developments the Jews must push to be self-supporting; the Jews the end of guerilla war and a guarantee of future safety.

Washington's second-thought argument against partition, now superseded by a third thought, was that it could not be applied without fatal consequences. Yet if it could be worked out by agreement, it is easy to see that the two states would be bound in time to something approaching the bi-national system that men like Dr. Magnes have long advocated. Anyway, there is no turning back to the status quo ante. Like the United States, the United Nations and the divided people of Palestine have to recognize present realities.