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OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING PALESTINE AND THE ARAB COUNTRIES

NOTE:

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The Military Situation in Palestine

The new State of Israel is strong in military equipment, finances, and morale, and possesses a striking power which could easily seize the remainder of Palestine as well as adjacent parts of Lebanon, Syria, or of Egypt north of the Suez Canal. It is probable that the next military adventure will be to annex the Jerusalem area. The Arabs cannot successfully renew the appeal to arms if they lack unity, leadership, arms and airplanes.

This is a striking reversal of the situation as it was on June 1, 1948. Israel then was screaming for high power "cease-fire" order from the United Nations whereupon the Great Powers forced the first truce using explicit threats to Arab countries if they failed to comply. At that time the Arabs, assured by treaty with Britain of continued supplies of arms and ammunition, were on the offensive, had reached to a point eight miles from Tel Aviv, and had cut to the coast between Haifa and Nakura. With the truce and its stipulation that neither side should get military advantage of any kind during the truce, Britain suspended the military supplies to the Arabs, previously delivered in accordance with treaty agreements. Meanwhile, however, arms procured from many sources -- including more than fifty Messerschmidt fighters -- poured into Israel. By the time the first truce expired these Messerschmidt fighters took complete control of the air and were able to disperse enemy infantry and to "strafe" Arab towns and villages, just as before Dunkirk British and French troops had been rendered impotent by Messerschmidt planes.

Arab morale was further damaged by the success of British diplomacy in detaching Trans-Jordan and Iraq from the joint Arab military program, and by the battle defeats inflicted by Israel on the Arabs in the successive seizures by Israel of Arab territory, without regard to United Nations orders to retire to positions held at the various cease-fire dates.

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II. A Long-Range Disaster

The establishment of the State of Israel by force, with intimidation of Arab governments by the US and the USSR, with the cutting off of British arms and ammunition (the Arabs' only source of supply), with ample sources for Israel of munitions and finance, the Israeli battle-victory is complete, but it has solved nothing. If boundaries to an Israeli State, any boundaries, had been set and guaranteed by the Great Powers, peace might return to the area. On the contrary, we have actually a victorious state which is limited to no frontiers and which is determined that no narrow limits shall be set. The Near East is faced with the almost certain prospect of a profound and growing disturbance by Israel which may last for decades.

(a) Instead of restoring the boundaries of the Province of Judea as they were in 70 AD, the Israeli leaders now state freely, though usually unofficially, their demand for an ever-expanding empire. Their present possessions are regarded by them as only a beachhead into the Arab and Muslim World -- a large part of which they intend to exploit. They are not prepared to live off what the land will yield as the Arabs do.

(b) The index of the cost of living in Israel has risen to 500% of what it was in that area from 1933 to 1939. Having driven out the Arabs from their homes, Israel lacks cheap labor, and without a very large per capita subsidy the economy of the state would soon collapse. This the Israeli Government intends to prevent by continuing to secure funds from Zionists and other sympathizers abroad by large loans, and, as soon as possible, by the exploitation of the Arab hinterland, especially the agriculture and industries of Syria and Iraq.

(c) Alone among the Great Powers, Britain has been working on a plan to restore a balance between the forces in Palestine but it already appears that this plan is probably doomed to fail. Zionist pressure in the USA, Anglophobia in Iraq and Egypt, and above all, Russia's determination to prolong chaos in the Near East and to complete the discrediting of British and American diplomacy, combine to work against the policy of the British Government and its collaborators. King Abdulla of Trans-Jordan and the Prime Minister of Iraq, Nuri Said, are among the latter.

(d) The duration of the disaster is guaranteed also by the unsolved problem of 700,000 Arab refugees. Whether or not these refugees are fed, clothed, and kept alive for the time being, they remain as a primary source of resentment, distress and continuing expense. No workable plan has been proposed for their resettlement in a gainful livelihood. Israel sneers at the UN order to repatriate or compensate them. Riots have already taken place in some of the refugee camps and refugee leaders have addressed their followers in vituperative language denouncing American, British, Zionist, and Arab League failures, of which they are the helpless victims. They include many intellectuals who are more than ripe for Communist propaganda, some of whom are now meeting regularly in Aleppo.

III. Arab Politics

Since the Arab military defeats and the complete rebuff of the Arab position at the United Nations Assembly in Paris, the Arab League has practically disappeared as a political force, and the several Arab countries are pursuing nationalistic policies looking for allies and friends.

Only Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and perhaps Lebanon have a good chance to succeed in maintaining their independence by following the new isolationist policy. Saudi Arabia alone follows a completely realistic policy of refusing to commit suicide for sentimental or fanatical reasons. Egypt is still internally insecure and with recurring assassinations and riots may face internal upheaval and the liquidation of the upper classes.