

Middle East continues to boil after 10,000 years

by George Kaufman
Nebraskan Staff Writer

The Middle East:
It was there that man first learned to cultivate grains, to farm, allowing groups of men to live together in large communities, to specialize, to cooperate to build irrigation canals and to take the first steps of a spiraling cycle which would spread across the earth and see man living in huge cities of millions of inhabitants.

It was there, too, that man first learned to call the land his own and to fight and kill others who would take it away from him.

AND IT IS there that today — 10,000 years later — the most bitter fight over ownership of land is raging. The roots of this struggle, which threatens perhaps to end the cycle of man begun on that same soil so many bloody wars ago, burrow deep into the world's history and prehistory, reaching almost to the beginning.

Birthplace of 3 religions

That arid land, which has been the birthplace of great religions, the crossroads of the world's cultures and the battleground of empires, is no stranger to struggle. But now that struggle — intensified in modern times by the Suez Canal, oil and international politics, and an integral part of the Russian-American prestige game — involves the possibility of global nuclear war.

THE FOCAL point and the rallying symbol of the fight is Palestine, named for the ancient Philistines and called holy by Jews, Moslems and Christians.

While the Christians have sent tens of thousands to die on the holy sands, it is the Jew, and the Moslems who now contest it in mortal conflict. The Arabs have promised to "drive the Jews into the sea," and the Israelis have vowed never to give up their hard-won "homeland."

Both regard the occupation of the land as a holy covenant with God, and both trace their claim to the Koran and the Holy Bible. In Genesis 17:8 the Lord promises Abraham on his deathbed, "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed . . . the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession."

Books affirm ownership

Of Abraham's two sons, the Jews trace their beginning to Isaac and the Arabs to Ishmael. The Bible affirms God's holy covenant with Isaac and the Koran promises the land to Ishmael and his seed. The holy books of Israel and Islam urge the peoples against each other just as the holy book of Christianity justified the Crusaders' killing.

BETWEEN 800 and 600 B.C. the Assyrian and Babylonian armies crushed the states of Israel and Judea, scattering the Jews throughout Europe and the Mediterranean in the fateful Diaspora.

Since that time, the Jews have lived in the Holy Land under a series of rulers, including the Romans and the Ottoman Turks until their defeat at the end of World War I.

So, while the Jews cannot claim the area as theirs since 600 B.C. (with the exception of brief intervals), still the Arabs have little more evidence. Only under the powerful Saladin in the twelfth century did the Moslems hold sway over the area.

THE JEWS did not acculturate following the Diaspora. Wherever they had been scattered, they remained a distinct cultural unit, refusing to be assimilated or being refused the possibility by an unprecedented universal prejudice. Always the country of their house was not the country of their home; always the prayers and the songs spoke of the "Promised Land," the ancient home of Abraham.

As the Ottoman hold on the Holy Land weakened, the desire mounted for a migration — at first a trickle and then a sizeable flood — of Jews toward the "homeland." The phenomenon the Arabs would despicably call "Zionism" began. Jewish money and influence, both by then of considerable proportions, organized behind the movement.

New claim given

In 1917 the Jews got an important updated claim to a National Home, this time not from God but from the British government. British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour repaid Dr. Chaim Weizmann for his help during the war with a statement in a note saying, "His Majesty's government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people."

His statement, although later withdrawn under pressure, set off an intensification of the Zionist movement and began the modern Arab-Israeli conflict. Up to this time, there had existed fairly friendly relations between Jews and Arabs in the region.

FROM 1920 ON, the increasing pressure of more Jewish migration set off bitter riots, reprisals and counter-reprisals. In the 1930's the Hitler influence sent more and more Jews out of Europe toward the Middle East and the tensions increased, lining up the Jews on the Allies' side and the Arabs mostly with the Nazis.

A small Jewish underground called the Haganah grew strong during the war years, and afterward went underground again in order to become the military arm of the Zionists. The Zionist fire was fed when the British severely limited immigration to Palestine while hundreds of thousands of Jews were left in dismal refugee camps in Europe.

In 1945 the opposition also polarized and solidified in the form of the seven-member Arab League led by Egypt, always to be the leading force in pan-Arab anti-Zionism.

THE BRITISH, caught between these two forces, threw the problem into the United Nations in 1947, where, after long and acrid debate, Palestine was partitioned into a Jewish and an Arab sector.

While not recognizing the U.N. mandate, still the Arabs began to withdraw from the designated area. But the withdrawal was not peaceful. Gang wars and communal riots raged all along the coastline.

Haganah carves zone

As it became apparent that the U.S. and Britain would not stand behind the mandate, David Ben-Gurion, leader of the Haganah, organized a Jewish offensive, carved out a Jewish zone and declared it "Israel," with Ben-Gurion as Prime Minister

and Weizmann president of the Provisional Council. The date was May 14, 1948. A day later President Truman declared U.S. recognition of the government and other nations followed slowly.

BUT THE RECOGNITION meant nothing in Israel, as the Arabs had launched a vicious counter-offensive. The Israelis reeled, then gathered strength and set off a series of victories which ended in an armistice and its admission to the U.N. on May 11, 1949.

Since that time, the situation has simmered, boiled over three times and never been peaceful. Following the latest outbreak of war June 5-10, 1967, the Middle East has been a seething mass of raids and counter-raids, seemingly more volatile

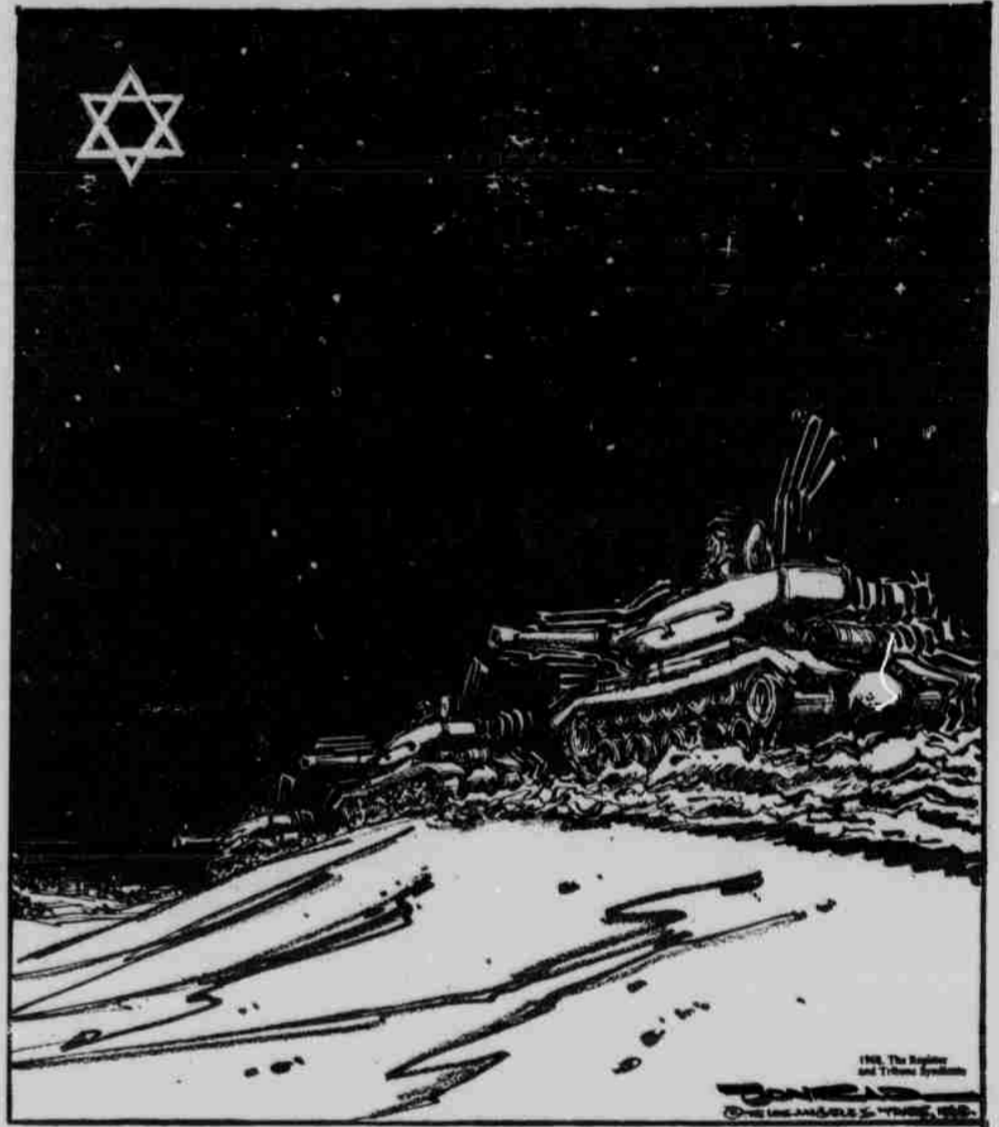
than ever before. The blame for war has yet to be decided, but fixing the blame will not appease either side, and with the Russians aligned on the side of the Arabs and the United States evidently committed to the protection of Israel, the solution is not yet in sight.

MANY SAY there is no solution, and the United Nations refuses to prove them wrong. No effective action has been taken by the world body and many blame the U.N. for the June, 1967, war since U Thant removed peace-keeping forces from the lines.

Hopefully, Russia and the U.S. will see the danger of global war and retreat from strong commitments. But territorial war cannot be so easily assuaged, and the pot continues to boil.

Conrad's opinion

Wiseman from the East . . .



It's that season again . . .

Listen to what I say: 'blessed are active peacemakers'

by Connie Winkler
Nebraskan Staff Writer
"Said the King to the people everywhere
Listen to what I say, to what I say,
Pray for peace, people everywhere:
Campus ministers say that some churches are not only praying for peace, but doing something about it.

"The church should be an active peacemaker," said Dr. Alan Pickering, of United Ministries in Higher Education (U.M.H.E.). "If the church is to administer to all people, it must be ambiguous and carry water on both shoulders — talk about peace and war." Pickering said.
Up until a short time ago, the churches felt they were

already supporting the war effort because they provided military chaplains. Now they are starting to present the other side, he said.
"WE FEEL the idea of peace hasn't been given enough emphasis and we are elevating this aspect," said the U.M.H.E. co-ordinator. In the first 100 years of the

church, a man couldn't be a Christian and a soldier. In the next 150, it was a sin to be a soldier, but after the war the soldier could make a commitment to the church. With the crusades the church made war, Pickering continued.
"We don't want to go back to the first days of the church, but we do want to change the priorities from building institutions to building the world.

Our church is for the ends of higher education and for such is an arena of ideas for the university. U.M.H.E. serves all groups from the Nebraska Draft Resistance Union to the Cornhusker for picture sessions. The church must provide a place for issues to be raised peacefully, or the issues will be raised elsewhere, perhaps violently, Pickering said.

THOUGHTS ON peace have to start somewhere and we are starting here, he continued. "I am personally committed to peace and I want other people to have to make the same kind of decision that I did after being in World War II," Pickering said. He feels that the war in Vietnam has failed on all levels.
"I wish peace were not something we talked about once a year when the season demands," Pickering said. "It is nice to sit and think about the innocence and helplessness of a baby at this time of the year, but war is not good for children all year around."

"Peace will come when man is reconciled with God and then he will be able to reconcile himself with his fellow man and nations," said Rev. Donald Imming of the Catholic Student Center.
The Rev. Al J. Norden of the University Lutheran Chapel agreed with Imming. "Once man has found a peaceful relationship with Christ, then he simply doesn't

want anything but peace with his fellow man," Norden said.
THE MAIN emphasis of the church is as a peacemaker to the individual, but the church should not be confined to the sacristy, Imming said.
Imming feels that the church should speak out on moral questions in general such as the National Council of Churches and the Catholic bishops did recently on the question of war.
Groups and individuals can take a stand on specific issues, but the church has a right and duty to speak out when moral conflicts parallel actual situations. The church should have spoken out on Nazi Germany and, now, on the racial issue in general, Imming said.
The church is not well enough informed nor does it have the "people power" to speak out and act on specific issues. Churches will continue to try to develop peaceful attitudes and these attitudes will be spread to other groups, Imming continued.

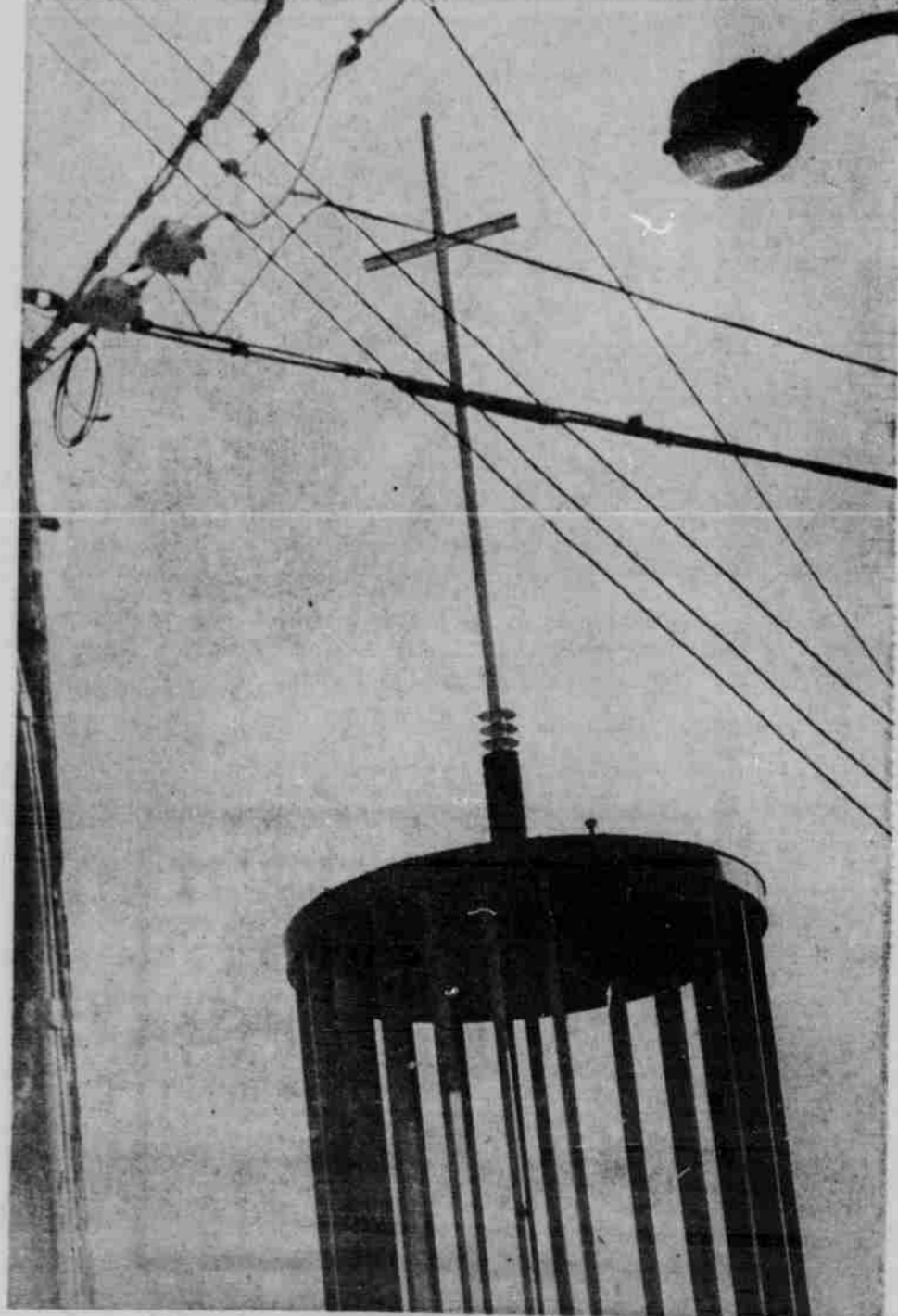


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NORDEN STRESSED that "government is ordained by God and that government has a duty to protect its people." He felt World War II was justified because he said the government was defending its people.
"The church cannot tell governments what to do unless it becomes clear that the government is fighting unjustly and going vastly beyond what is good for the nation." Vietnam has not reached this point yet, he said.
"We will continue praying for peace and keep ourselves informed about what the government is doing," Norden concluded.
"The church can bring about peace by serving as an interpreter of the role of the United Nations," said Duane Hutchinson, director of the United Methodist Chapel. The UN doesn't have funds for the purpose of public relations

entry fees for the recent model United Nations and Hutchinson is going to the UN with a group of students this summer. The minister himself belongs to several groups connected with the UN and the World Federal Government organization.
Hutchinson would call for peace through the United Nations from the pulpit. But he feels that the peace movement today tends toward isolationism and our intervention in Vietnam should have been done under the auspices of the UN.

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