

## The Palestine Dispute

Thanks in part to the influence of the United Nations, the situation growing out of the dispute between Israel and neighbouring Arab states over questions relating to Palestine has been prevented from deteriorating. Although little concrete progress was made during the period under review toward settlement of outstanding issues, the means for reaching a settlement still exist and the United Nations has helped to keep the balance steady in the areas directly affected by the continuing dispute.

Both the General Assembly and the Security Council were called on in 1951 and the first half of 1952 to give their attention to questions relating to Palestine. The General Assembly considered reports submitted to it by two United Nations bodies operating in the area: (a) the Palestine Conciliation Commission, which has been trying since the summer of 1949 to help the parties concerned to settle outstanding issues; and (b) the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWAPR), which is concerned with the relief and rehabilitation of refugees.<sup>1</sup> The Security Council, on the other hand, was asked to consider charges of persistent violation of two of the four armistice agreements which had been negotiated with the aid of a United Nations representative during the first half of 1949. United Nations truce observers, who had been appointed originally under the terms of a Security Council resolution during the period of hostilities in Palestine, before the armistice agreements were signed, continued during 1951 and 1952 to serve as chairman and investigators for the four Mixed Armistice Commissions which watch conditions on Israel's borders.

### The Task of Conciliation and Mediation

By the end of 1950 the Palestine Conciliation Commission had found it impossible to get the Arab states and Israel to agree on anything more than a plan for partial release of frozen assets of refugees in Israeli and Arab banks and a preliminary formula which might be used as a basis for negotiation of a general peace settlement. The plan for release of bank assets was halted because of technical difficulties and the formula for negotiation of a peace settlement was soon abandoned. The crux of the difficulty faced by the Commission was the fact that the Arab states wished to use past resolutions of the General Assembly as a basis for any negotiations with Israel, whereas Israel wished a peace settlement to grow out of the arrangements made under the armistice agreements, which are more favourable to Israel than the arrangements recommended in resolutions of the General Assembly.

Shortly before the sixth session of the General Assembly convened, the Conciliation Commission tried at a conference in Paris between September 13 and November 19, 1951 to get the consent of Israel and its neighbours to a plan which the Commission itself considered to be a fair compromise between their conflicting demands.

<sup>1</sup>This subject is dealt with at pp. 63-65.