

MAX DESFORE

NEHRU PROPOSES REFERENDUM ON KASHMIR UNDER U.S. AUSPICES

Monday November 3, 1947

THE INDEPENDENT ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

NEW DELHI: The United Nations was projected into the situation in strife-torn Kashmir today by an Indian government leader's suggestion that it supervise a plebiscite to determine



the status of that princely state. The suggestion came from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, prime minister of the new dominion of India, to which Kashmir's Hindu maharaja decided to join his predominantly Moslem state a week ago in order to obtain help against Pathan raiders coming from Pakistan's northwest frontier province.

Declaring that India had no intention of maintaining troops in Kashmir once the

danger of invasion is passed Nehru said: "We have declared that the fate of Kashmir is ultimately to be decided by the people. That pledge we have given, and the maharaja has supported it not only to the people of Kashmir but to the world. We will not and cannot back out of it."

"We are prepared when peace and law and order have been established to have a referendum held under international auspices like the United Nations. We want it to be a fair and just reference to the people and we shall accept the verdict." Nehru termed the invasion of Kashmir by the Pathan raiders a violation of international law and an unfriendly act into a neighbouring country. He said they were fully armed, well trained and had competent leadership, and added:

"All these men have come across from Pakistan territory. We have a right to ask the Pakistan government how and why these people could come across the frontier province or West Punjab (in Pakistan) and how they had been armed so effectively Is the Pakistan government too weak to prevent armies from marching across its territory to invade another country, or is it willing this should happen?" Reports of the military situation in Kashmir, where Indian troops are fighting beside the Kashmir forces, remained conflicting. Pakistan radio said yesterday that Moslem patrols had penetrated the streets of the provincial capital of Srinagar, but this was denied by the Indian government. The latter acknowledged, however, that the invaders had approached to within eight miles of the Srinagar airport, chief base of the Indian army's defence operations.

A despatch from Srinagar quoted Max Desfor, Associated Press photographer, as saying he had seen more than 20 villages in flames while flying over a section of the Kashmir valley extending to within about 20 miles of the capital. Desfor said, however, that he saw no evidence of any Pathan columns closing in on Srinagar and that there were no signs of any clearly defined battle front.