

NSC BRIEFING

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1 April 1954

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~~THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE~~

The current flare-up in the Arab-Israeli cold war centers on two main trouble spots--Jordan and Syria.

Smoldering antagonism on the chronically tense Israeli-Jordanian border has steadily deepened since the Qibya massacre last October. It has now broken into the open with two serious incidents. The ambushing on 17 March of an Israeli bus in the Negev desert--responsibility for which has not been determined--was followed on 29 March by an attack on the Jordan village of Nahhalin. Israel's Premier Sharett admitted participation of Israeli citizens, but implied no official Israeli responsibility by describing the raid as a "local affair."

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[REDACTED] who visited Nahhalin,

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be apparent the raid was planned and executed by Israeli armed forces.

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Israel refused to attend the <sup>local</sup> UN armistice commission meeting which censured Israel for the attack.  
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In western Jordan, near the Israeli border, there are 11,700 Arab Legion troops. Israel has secretly redeployed troops and called up some reserves. Approximately 12,000 Israeli troops are located in this central sector.

The continuing dispute over the Jordan River waters helped to promote the flare-up on 11 March over fishing rights on Lake Tiberias. Heavy fire was exchanged between Israeli gunboats and Syrian outposts on the shore. The armistice commission condemned both sides, but the local UN chairman prohibited even traditional Syrian civilian access to the lake. This decision threatens imminent break-down of the Syrian-Israeli armistice machinery and will create an infiltration  
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one third of its troops, located in southern Syria. Israel has about 10,000 troops in its northern sector.

The following developments may be anticipated. Syria, though involved with its own internal problems, will probably walk out on the local armistice commission if Syrian fishing rights in Lake Tiberias are not restored. Syria might create trouble if Israel resumes work on its diversion canal there. In Jordan, bitter hatred mixed with fear will continue the present border tenseness. <sup>However,</sup> The Arab states, aware of Israeli military superiority, are not likely to attack Israel.

In Israel, Sharett is under pressure from military groups who are insisting on tough treatment of the Arabs. For reasons of international reaction, Israel can hardly afford to launch a full-scale attack now,

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which might embarrass Israel internationally.

Long-range prospects for any relaxation of the cold war between Israel and the Arab states are likewise dim. Israel is becoming increasingly annoyed with the West and with the United Nations. It is greatly disturbed over Western defense plans in the area which might strengthen the Arabs. At the same time, Israel is irritated with the Orbit because of anti-Semitism and restrictive emmigration policies. The 28 March Soviet veto of a UN resolution condemning Egyptian interference with Israeli-bound shipping through the Suez Canal will deepen Israel's dissatisfaction with diplomacy and the UN as instruments for achieving peace in the area.

These frustrations will make Israel more disposed to deal  
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with on an international level. Israel will continue to exert maximum pressure, particularly in the United States, to gain its ends. It may be expected to develop a tougher and more provocative policy in dealing with the Arabs.

The Arabs, unable to engage in all-out war, will be tempted to push senseless terrorism on a private level and, on an official level, to sharpen boycotts and political pressure. They will cautiously avail themselves of whatever Soviet support is forthcoming. They will be encouraged by the recent Soviet veto, which follows an earlier one favoring Syria in its dispute with Israel over Jordan waters.

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