

The Commission assured itself that Israel was keeping a record of Arab properties transferred by the Custodian to the Development Authority for the use of Israeli citizens. A small staff appointed by the Commission continued to work on a pilot project for identifying and evaluating Arab properties in a limited area. The Commission encouraged Arab refugees to accept the partial release of blocked accounts in Israeli banks which the Government of Israel had offered, and went on to discuss the possibility of securing the release of the remainder of the accounts.

Joint Exploitation of Jordan Water Resources

On September 2, 1953, Israel began canal-digging operations in one of the demilitarized zones on the Syrian frontier in order to divert Jordan water westward to a declivity above Lake Tiberias where a hydro-electric plant could be operated. At a later stage Jordan water was to be piped to southern Israel for irrigation purposes. Syria had not agreed to either project. On September 23 General Bennike, Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine, asked Israel to stop work on the canal in the demilitarized zone until agreement could be reached. The operations continued, however, and on October 16 Syria referred the matter to the Security Council. On October 28 Israel undertook to suspend digging operations within the demilitarized zone pending consideration of the question by the Security Council.

Syria's complaint was debated at intervals in the Security Council until January 20, 1954, when a vote was taken on a joint draft resolution proposed by France, the United Kingdom and United States. This endorsed General Bennike's action in asking for suspension of the operations. It called on the parties to comply with all his decisions and requests, pointing out that the armistice agreement must be strictly and faithfully observed if the return of peace was to be promoted. General Bennike was asked to explore the possibility of reconciling Israeli and Syrian interests while safeguarding the rights of individuals in the demilitarized zone. The Governments of Israel and Syria were called upon to co-operate with General Bennike and to refrain from any prejudicial unilateral action. Although this draft resolution was supported by seven members of the Security Council it failed of adoption because of a Soviet veto. The U.S.S.R. and Lebanon insisted that there should be a clearer indication that the basis of the proposed reconciliation should be acceptable to the Syrian Government.

In October 1953 a personal representative of President Eisenhower, Mr. Eric Johnston, went to Arab capitals and to Israel to ask for consideration of a plan prepared by TVA experts and submitted to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for regional development of water resources of the Jordan Valley. Israel announced a project of its own for the same purpose. In February 1954 the Arab states appointed a group of engineers to prepare another plan for the joint exploitation of the water resources of the Jordan Valley. Later in the month the Secretary-General of the United Nations asked Dr. Ralph Bunche to head a committee of the Secretariat to examine all plans put forward in this connection. After a second Middle East tour Mr. Eric Johnston was able to report