

the canal project is purely a civilian undertaking, and does not violate the provisions of the Agreement.

Israel regards the possible creation of a permanent international agency on the scene as an undesirable intrusion, and a reflection on Israeli sovereignty. However, the Israelis maintain that they are genuinely interested in cooperating in the Johnston plan. It embodies the major elements of Israel's own project for diversion of the Jordan waters, although it would provide only the absolute minimum amount of water to meet immediate Israeli development plans. Nevertheless, the possible political benefits to Israel which might reasonably be expected to follow the water agreement, and the economic attractions of the international scheme, are sufficient inducements to make the plan desirable to the Jewish state.

Israel has been growing increasingly impatient during recent months over continued delay in implementation of the plan, as a result of Arab failure to accept it. At the conclusion of Mr. Johnston's latest talks in the Middle East, the Arab states asked for further time to study the plan. The Israelis agreed to delay work on their own diversion scheme in the hope that the plan for international development would be accepted, but indicated that they would feel compelled to proceed with their own scheme during the 1956 dry season (May to October) if the Arabs had not yet agreed to the Johnston plan.

During his recent mission to the Middle East, Mr. Hammarskjöld was questioned about the implications of possible resumption of work by Israel in the demilitarized zone. While he did not insist that this would constitute a violation of the Armistice Agreement, he indicated that it might be contrary to the Security Council Resolution of 1953. Certainly it can be argued that the approval of General Burns would have to be obtained before work could be resumed. However, Israel points out that the issue technically has been under "urgent examination" by the United Nations for more than 2 1/2 years, and that in the absence of any Security Council action in all this time, Israel is free to resume digging operations. Both the United States and the United Kingdom governments have warned the Israeli government against proceeding with its diversion scheme at this time.

Recently there have been unconfirmed reports from Jerusalem that the Secretary-General intends to propose a modified version of the Johnston Plan, to operate under United Nations auspices, to the parties.

Israel's attitude toward the timing of resumption of work may not be unrelated to considerations of military preparedness. The Israelis may calculate that work in the demilitarized zone could be proceeded with this year without encountering serious opposition from the Syrians or precipitating war, which may not be the case next year with the increased flow of arms to the Arab states.

The Syrians have stated frequently that they would regard renewal of digging operations in the demilitarized zone as a cause for war and that they would expect Egyptian assistance under the terms of their alliance. Egypt has assured them that military assistance would be forthcoming. It has never been quite clear how far this position was qualified by undertakings given to Mr. Hammarskjöld during his cease-fire talks in Damascus. The United Kingdom Embassy in Damascus believes that Syrian leaders are by no means confident of Egyptian support in the event of Syrian military action over diversion of the Jordan river, and therefore would offer only token military opposition to resumption of work by Israel, before appealing to the Security Council. United States sources in Syria, on the other hand, express the view that Syria would put up strong resistance, and quote Syrian officials as saying in effect that they would blast the Israelis out of the zone if they attempted to resume digging. Since we have no direct diplomatic contacts with the Syrian