

ISRAEL'S ARAB NEIGHBORS

By I. ARTUSKI, *Tel Aviv*

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The recent developments in the Arab countries have considerably shaken our indifference and calmness. King Farouk's abdication and the other political and social upheavals in the Arab countries have awakened a feeling of unrest.

There is no doubt that the military defeat during the war with Israel was one of the important reasons for the upheavals in the Arab countries. Though General Naguib found it expedient to state that he does not seek revenge against Israel, the real problem is whether his proposed army, with modern equipment, does not in itself constitute a threat to the State of Israel. Certainly, Shishkly, the dictator of Syria frequently threatened that there is no place in the Middle East for Jews and Arabs.

It is true that Israel's military power is far stronger today than it was four years ago. But who can evaluate the present and potential might of the Arab countries? The figures show: one and a half million Jews compared with forty-five million Arabs. And what about Israel's geo-political location? The state is encircled by Arabs. It is a small country with more than a thousand miles of boundaries to defend, with a frontier only twenty-five miles from Tel Aviv, with a frontier in the very heart of Jerusalem. Besides, there are no natural barriers, thus making it almost impossible to guard the frontiers.

We cannot overlook the fact that in many other vital respects besides the military, the situation is not to Israel's advantage. The patriotic fervor of the Israelis has declined in the last four years, as against an upsurge of Arab nationalism. The almost one million Arab refugees, beleaguering Israel's boundaries are nursing their hatred and hoping to avenge their four-year exile.

Today we hear how hollow rings the Zionist assurance of yesteryear that only in Israel can the Jews be secure. Responsible parties in Israel are aware of their tragic geo-political situation and they are using all their means to prevent a "second round."

The chief means is the building of a strong and well-equipped army as a threat against the aggressive intentions of the Arab countries. But the trouble with this means lies in the fact that it exhausts the energies of Israel. The greater part of relief funds is being used up for defense. The military expenditures are

an important reason for the catastrophic economic conditions of the country.

Also the campaign for the "Ingathering of the Exiles" is considered as a factor of military significance. The "Ingathering of the Exiles" has been evaluated not only as the realization of a national goal, but as a means eliminating the numerical disproportion between the Jews in Israel and the Arabs in the neighboring states. But today, the "ingathering" plan has been abandoned since the government of Israel has had to reduce immigration because of Israel's economic conditions. Even the annual quota of 120,000 reduced from 200,00 cannot be met — simply because Jews from countries permitting free emigration have no desire to settle in Israel.

Little wonder that *Herut* of August 22, 1952, poses this question: "Cut off from the millions of Jews outside of Israel, what chances have we against our enemies, even if we fight like heroes, so long as the present static immigration situation persists for the next five or ten years?"

What about peace?

After three years since the conclusion of the armistice agreements between Israel and the Arab countries, there has been no improvement in their relations. The Arab countries are not yet reconciled to the existence of Israel. They still consider Israel an alien occupying body that must be eliminated sooner or later. What about Israel's peace aspirations? Some people may consider this question absurd. Of course, the government of Israel is against war; of course it wants to avoid war with the Arab countries. *But the question is: does Israel now want a stable peace with the Arab countries?* The *Jerusalem Post*, a pro-government newspaper, on September 15, 1952, wrote:

"Some foreign observers, as well as some Israelis, believe that Israel does not actually want peace with the Arabs. It is probably more correct to say, that Israel has never believed in a peace with the Arabs. Israel was so busy keeping its powder dry, that now possibly its policy has also become dry."

But the problem is much more complex. Peace with the Arabs, at present at least, would mean at best, acceptance by Israel of its present boundaries. But will Israel relinquish the other half of Jerusalem? Is Israel willing to remain enclosed within its unnaturally long and twisting boundaries?

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No Zionist organization in the country from Herut to Mapam has abandoned its striving for all of Palestine and all of Jerusalem.

The truth is that both the Israelis and the Arabs, for different reasons, do not want peace now. Both are speculating on better times. Both are interested in staving off both the war and the peace.

The present no-peace, no-war status carries the danger of war. It undermines the economic and the financial situation of the state. It is obnoxious to the Western powers, who are concerned with the total defense of the Middle East.

Time may bring a change of values to both sides. The Arabs may eventually understand that the Israelis will refuse to be pushed into the sea, and that there must be a place in the Middle East for both Israelis and Arabs. But the Arab countries can reach such a conclusion only when they will be assured that Israel has no aggressive intentions. Can such assurance be given by a Zionist state that has as its goal the "ingathering" of at least the majority of the Jewish people and that must therefore think in terms of territorial expansion?

We believe that the best way to secure real peace between the Arabs and Israel would be the establishment of a federative union of Israel and the Arab states. Such a federative union permitting complete internal autonomy would annul the division of Jerusalem and make up for the lack of natural frontiers. It would disclose new possibilities for the economic development of all the countries. It would eliminate the need for oversized armies, the funds for which could be used for productive purposes. It would also lead to a cultural understanding between the Israelis and Arabs, and to a true fraternity of peoples.