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NEAR EAST/AFRICA BRANCH

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

For Week Ending
22 September 1948

Vol. III No. 37

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GREECE

Although the Greek Army has successfully driven the 1,400 guerrilla of the Murgana pocket (south of the old Grammos area) back into Albania, the army has suffered reverses in the Vitsi area (north of Grammos), where counter-attacks by the 4,500 guerrillas involved has forced the army to retreat and wait for reinforcements. During the week over-all guerrilla strength increased by 300 (for a grand total of approximately 21,000), and the guerrillas engaged in small-scale but effective activity throughout Greece. It appears that supplies are being sent to the guerrillas by caique from Albania, and a parachute drop in the Peloponnesus has also been reported. Fire support and border crossings are reported along all the satellite-Greek frontiers, and although a few guerrillas retreating into Albania and Yugoslavia were disarmed, it has been established that shortly thereafter they were rearmed and sent back to Greece. The Greek Army probably will not be able to overcome all of the large guerrilla concentrations along the northern frontiers prior to the end of 1948.

TURKEY

The situation with respect to tobacco, the noxious weed, is at last unfurrowing some highly-placed Turkish brows. The ECA organization shows signs of being about to assist in the sale of Turkish tobacco to Germany, which in prewar years was an important market. Furthermore, it appears that the fumes of tobacco can penetrate the iron curtain, for the Turks have eagerly sought to draw up trade agreements not only with Finland and Austria but also with Czechoslovakia and Poland, for the major purpose of unloading huge surplus stocks of tobacco. Any other trans-curtain country which shows interest in the Turkish variety of nicotiana tabacum can easily overcome any Turkish titubations about being unduly friendly with a pro-Muscovite government.

Criticism of Present Inonu by leaders of the new Nation Party has probably brought about a reaction in the country which is antipathetic to the new group. It was expected that the new party would take a political line that was based largely upon intense dislike of the chief of state. Although there are very large numbers of Turks eager enough to join an anti-government group (provided it does not offend nationalist sentiment), going too

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far in criticizing Inonu is one way of obstructing such an occurrence. The "old man of Cankaya"---Inonu---is highly respected by the Turks, who are pretty generally aware of his statesmanlike qualities as well as his faults. A worse blunder of the new party's leaders is their assumption that the general public will accept their demand for abolition of the "chief system" as justifiable criticism of Inonu. Clearly such an attack is absurd in the extreme. Inonu's outstanding action, and one that has perhaps made him unique in at least his own age, is that he has been a leader with very great authoritarian powers who continues to strive mightily to delegate that power to its proper place---the adult population of the Turkish Republic. The Nation Party's leaders would be better advised to seek more controversial bait.

PALESTINE

The formation of an Arab Palestine government has been announced by the Arab League notwithstanding the violent objections of Transjordan, backed by Iraq. This move apparently represents an attempt by the non-Hashimite members of the League (primarily Syria and Egypt) to: (1) prevent the incorporation of central Palestine into Transjordan; (2) placate nationalist opinion, which has long demanded an Arab government for all Palestine; and (3) shift the main responsibility for developments in Palestine from their own governments and armed forces to an independent Palestine government. Despite the fact that the Iraqi and Transjordan armies are in effective control of central Palestine, the establishment of even a shadow Palestinian government will place those two countries in an embarrassing position. If Abdullah fails to cooperate with the new government, he will incur the hostility of Arab nationalists throughout the Near East. Unless, however, he is prepared to defy that opinion and to face the threat of civil war, he can not rule those areas which his Arab Legion has been largely instrumental in defending from the Jews. Moreover, the strength of nationalist feeling in Iraq makes it doubtful whether the Iraqi Government will long be able to support Abdullah in his defiance of the Arab League's action. The reported fusion of the Iraqi and Transjordan high commands is at best a paper agreement and will probably not long stand up under this new strain. The public rift in the Arab political front, if allowed to continue, may well result in the creation of two opposing camps, one supporting a pro-Mufti Palestinian government and the other favoring control by Transjordan of Arab Palestine. Such an eventuality would greatly complicate the implementation of any UN decision regarding Palestine.

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The tragic assassination of UN Mediator Count Bernadotte on 17 September in a Jewish sector of Jerusalem produced far-reaching results overnight. The arrival in Paris of the news of Bernadotte's death along with the arrival of the Mediator's report from Rhodes underlined to stunned members of the UN the immediate necessity for decisive UN action both on the conflicting demands of Arabs and Jews and on the new problem of the 400,000 refugees.

In Palestine itself tension was as near the breaking point as at any time since the truce began on 18 July. The Israeli Government faced its most severe crisis to date. The lowering of Israeli prestige in the eyes of the world as a result of Bernadotte's death within Israel-controlled territory forced Israeli officials at last to come to grips with the terrorists in an effort to ferret out the assassins, reputedly members of the "Homeland Front," a splinter group from the Stern Gang. Israeli officials were prodded into action by the newly appointed Interim Mediator, Ralph Bunche, who charged Israel with responsibility for Bernadotte's murder, pointing out that recent statements and actions by members of the Provisional Government disparaging the efforts of UN observers were not conducive to preventing or discouraging terrorism against UN representatives. The immediate curfew imposed on Jerusalem by the Israeli Government, along with the searching of Jerusalem by military authorities for members of the Stern Gang, indicates the gravity with which Israel regards the new crisis. There is some speculation, however, as to just how far Israel will go in cleaning out terrorist groups. In the past these groups have been of real value in spearheading attacks against the British (during the Mandate) and subsequently against the Arabs. Concerning the Israeli fear of an external Arab attack, it seems probable that, in spite of rising tensions on both sides, the reported massing of troops and military equipment by the Arabs for the purpose of initiating attacks against Israel resulted more from Israeli fear than from factual evidence.

ITALIAN COLONIES

New manifestations of Tripolitanian nationalist sentiment have cropped up in anticipation of a UN decision on the former Italian colonies. Fear of a possible return of Italian rule has led to a number of small-scale riots in the city of Tripoli, where anti-Italian feeling has been especially high; a bomb was placed outside the office of the Italian airline, and another bomb damaged the home of a pro-Italian Arab. The announcement of US-UK proposals for separate disposition of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania has also irked Tripolitanian nationalists, most of whom favor a united, independent Libya. Although no rioting ensued, posters promptly appeared attacking "imperialist British and Zionist America."

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INDIA--PAKISTAN

India's consolidation of its Hyderabad triumph has taken place with remarkable speed. The Nizam, who capitulated after less than five days of desultory resistance to the invading Indian troops, quickly indicated his desire to please India by enjoining his subjects to obey India's military governor and by abandoning his efforts to obtain the intervention of the UN Security Council. The fanatical Moslem Razakars, against whose raids India's action was ostensibly directed, have been officially disbanded without notable commotion; their leader, Razvi, and some of his followers have been arrested. Indeed, India's occupation of Hyderabad has progressed so rapidly as to suggest some collusion between the Indian Government and the Nizam, whose previous intransigence may have been influenced by fear of Razakar reprisals.

Pressure by the US and other nations to have India's resort to armed force in Hyderabad regularized through some form of UN action will irritate the Indians but will not change the status quo. The UN Security Council may drop the Hyderabad case upon receipt of formal statements from the Nizam and India indicating that hostilities have ceased and that the wishes of the Hyderabad population will not be ignored. Even if the Security Council calls for a UN-sponsored plebiscite, the situation will remain basically the same, inasmuch as Hyderabad has a preponderantly pro-Indian Hindu population.

No immediate change in the Kashmir military situation is expected. Although India is undoubtedly tempted to undertake an all-out drive in Kashmir now that a quick decision has been gained in Hyderabad, the Government of India will probably be restrained by: (1) approaching bad weather and the time required to redeploy troops and improve supply lines; (2) the fear of prejudicing the Indian case before the Security Council, which will soon receive the report of the UN Kashmir Commission; and (3) the imminent departure of Prime Minister Nehru for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference in London and the UN General Assembly in Paris.

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