

No. 685

120,280/10-1153

*The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom*¹TOP SECRET
PRIORITY

WASHINGTON, October 11, 1953—2:26 p. m.

1929. For Aldrich. Eric Johnston, Chairman International Development Advisory Board, has been appointed by the President as his Special Representative with rank of Ambassador to proceed on a mission designed to remove some of the causes of tension between Israel and her Arab neighbors, particularly Jordan and Syria, paying special attention to adjustments needed to reduce the refugee problem in Jordan. He will take as a point of departure the TVA study made on behalf of the UNRWA, which is now in the hands of the United Nations and which is a competent engineering study of the water problems of the Jordan Valley system.

The problem is of particular urgency now because the TVA study has just been completed and must be made public soon, while the General Assembly is in session, with all the political questions that naturally will arise. In addition, Israel's unilateral action in commencing diversion of water in the Demilitarized Zone below Lake Huleh has increased tensions in the area. The ever present need for resettling the refugees as soon as possible gives added urgency to the mission.

It is obvious that the engineering findings of a unified water resources plan cannot be carried out without political agreement on the part of the riparian states. Particularly this would involve a number of concessions by Israel to permit relinquishment of exclusive territorial control over the outlets to Lake Tiberias (the natural storage reservoir for the Yarmuk), since the maximum opportunity for settlement of Arab refugees by Jordan appears to lie in the East and West Ghor of the lower Jordan Valley.

It is our intention that the principal beneficiaries will be the refugees, although Jordan, Syria and Lebanon would also benefit. Israel will be called upon to make certain sacrifices, but we feel that Israel has responsibilities to the refugees which she herself apparently has never faced, and believes that some concessions on Israel's part are necessary before the Arabs can be induced on their part to take important measures toward refugee resettlement.

We expect to take the line with Israel that the proposals stand on their own as just and that after the long support and assistance

¹ Repeated to New York.