ISRAEL AND EGYPT FENCE AT EL AUJA
By HARRY GILROYSpecial to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
New York Times (1857-Current file); Mar 7, 1954; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 200
pg. 27

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Road Center Is the Site of a Settlement Cairo Protests In Demilitarized Zone

By HARRY GILROY
Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

EL AUJA, Israel, Feb. 22—Nature long ago wove a geographical design that made it inevitable that this desert road center would be fought over century after century.

Today it is the site of a demilitarized zone and of an Israeli kibbutz (communal settlement) about which Egypt has complained to the Security Council of the United Nations. It is also the seat of the Egyptian-Israeli Mixed Armistice Commission where the numerous acts of violence along the adjacent frontier are argued over.

The geographical destiny of the place, close against Israel's border at a point thirty-seven miles due south of Gaza, was apparent during a motor trip to the demilitarized zone. The approach road ran south and west fifty-five miles from Beersheba among the sinuous forms of low sand-colored hills. This was obviously one of the two main gateways from Egypt to Israel, the other being through the Gaza strip.

At El Auja, which consists of a half-dozen mud-colored buildings huddled around an abandoned railway line, the reverse strategic situation could be seen.

One road went north across sand dunes to Rafah, on the coastal road to Egypt; another went southwest between high hills to Suez, and a third road went west to Ismailia being on the Suez Canal.

Recalls American Scene

On a flat hilltop about a mile southeast of El Auja stood the cluster of dormitories and work sheds. This is the controversial kibbutz. Within view, on a similar hilltop on the other side of El Auja, were the ruins of Nitsana, where papyrus records were found that indicated it was a thriving Byzantine town in the Seventh Century when Arab warriors swept over it on the way to conquer Palestine.

In the bare clay yard around which the kibbutz buildings were ranged the scene was somewhat reminiscent of "Exam Week" in the veterans' housing development of an American college. Sturdy young men and women, wearing all shades and fashions of dungarees, strolled about or indulged in play.

Four men who were drilling a well in the center of the yard and several girls who could be seen bustling around the community kitchen were the only busy persons.

The kibbutz secretary, Solomon Levy, explained that the idlers had knocked off work to prepare for the noon meal. Mr. Levy, a young man with tousled brown hair, sunglasses and a beard, spoke faultless English. He switched to French for the benefit of another reporter on the expedition and then to Hebrew for the accompanying Israeli Army officers.

Mr. Levy said the members of the kibbutz were from many countries. They had been organized and were receiving backing from a branch of Mapam, the left Socialist Labor party. They also got help from the Jewish Agency for Palestine, he said.

The kibbutz was established five months ago and has planted a couple of fields in the surrounding lowlands with grass in the hope that something like the old Byzantine way of living can be recreated.

Seated in one of the austere bunkrooms of the settlement, Israeli officers connected with the Israeli Army officers connected with the Mixed Armistice Commission read out documents from its record and described recent happenings in the demilitarized zone. This was their story:

El Auja, which lies on the Israeli side of a border demarcated in 1906, was in the hands of Israeli forces at the end of the fighting with the Egyptians.

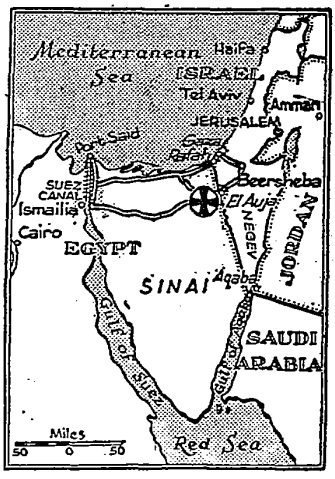
The armistice agreement established a triangular zone around the strategic intersections as an area in which neither Israel nor Egypt was to have military forces. An exception was that Israeli troops were to administer the military armistice commission headquarters in the zone and that the guard for the headquarters—as distinct from the cooks and administrative personnel—was to be rotated between Egyptian and Israeli detachments.

Last fall Egypt complained that Israel had conducted military activity in the zone, killed a Bedouin and drove off members of his tribe who were trying to use two wells in the zone, established a kibbutz in contravention of the armistice and maintained four armed policemen in the zone.

The Mixed Armistice Commission passed a resolution, with the Israeli member dissenting, that Israel was indulging in military activity in the zone and maintaining armed police.

The neutral chairman of the commission abstained from voting when Egypt presented her resolution finding the kibbutz an armistice violation and so the resolution failed of adoption. The chairman pointed out that there was no civilian activity in the zone at the time when the armistice was adopted and that there was no reference in the agreement to civilian activity.

Israel has appealed to Major Gen. Vagn Bennike, Chief of Staff of the United Nations truce organization, for reconsideration of the resolution adverse to it. As for Egypt's complaint about the kibbutz, Israel holds that the case was settled when the neutral chairman found that there was nothing in the armistice agreement about civilian activity. It is reasoned that anything not barred is allowed.



The New York Times March 7, 1954
ROAD CENTER: El Auja (cross) is involved in an Israeli - Egyptian dispute.

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