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NSC BRIEFING 1 February 1955

BACKGROUND-ZIONIST SPIES

I. Sentences announced 27 Jan--two who received death penalty executed 31 Jan. Trial of 13--charged with espionage for Israel and sabotage (including firing of US Information Agencies libraries in Cairo and Alexandria)--began in early December '54.

A. Two of 13 accused tried in absentia - including the alleged chief of spy ring - Israeli army officer.

B. Fourteenth suspect committed suicide before arrest, so only 11 in dock.

C. Second suicide - Max Bennett- occurred 21 December, during trials. 25X1

D. Thus only 10 present at trial's end: 2 acquitted, 2 sentenced death.

II. Ambassador Caffery in Cairo, the French Consul (who attended daily) and representative of French Zionist organizations, all agreed trials "undoubtedly fair" and "no sign of anti-Semitism."

III. Accused confessed activities in favor Israel--including travel to France and Israel for training, also planting incendiaries in USIA libraries.

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A. Defense pleaded youth, claimed accused had been "duped" by Israeli army organizer of the network. All accused apparently Egyptian nationals, although one claimed to be "French Protected National" (Tunisian).

IV. Trial ended 5 January, sentences announced 27 January after being confirmed by Military Governor (Colonel Nasr). Two sentenced to death were:

- A. Dr. Musa Muruk - 28 year-old doctor at Jewish hospital in Cairo. Claimed French "Protected National" on basis of Tunisian origin. Admitted receiving espionage training in Israel. Alleged head of Cairo "cell" of network.
- B. Samuel Azar - 24 year-old teacher, alleged head of Alexandria "cell." Reported to have had wireless equipment in his possession.
- C. Other sentences range from 7 years to life at hard labor (2 life, 2 fifteen, 2 seven).