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SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON UPPER JORDAN PROJECT

Talk with Colombian Counselor De Chaves

1. Dr. de Chaves, Counselor at the Colombian Embassy in Washington, had phoned to this Embassy yesterday asking for material on the Upper Jordan canal problem. I took the opportunity to hand over this material personally and have a talk with him on the question. We had lunch together to-day.
2. If I had expected to meet a man who would be interested primarily in the issue on its own merits, in the problems of the demilitarised zone, the water rights, the hydro-electric and irrigation projects, etc., I was much mistaken. Our talk centred from the very beginning on the problems of power politics, lobbying and pressure - Dr. de Chaves assuming that we were entirely right but openly and cynically acknowledging that this was almost irrelevant since the question was one of balancing pressure on the Government of Colombia by the Vatican and the Arabs against that of the United States.
3. De Chaves insisted that a major and decisive change in the situation had taken place this morning: he had been informed over the phone by his New York colleagues that the United States delegation to the U.N. had notified the Colombian delegation that the U.S. had reversed its position and was going not only to vote for the amendment suggested by Charles Malik but even to introduce this amendment. This information was in direct contradiction to what he himself had been told by Assistant Secretary of State Key and his associates Ludlow and Stein. They had brought pressure to bear on the Colombians to vote for the draft resolution as it stood now; he, de Chaves, had relayed that pressure to his delegation in New York - and now, with the sudden switch of the U.S. delegation, he was in rather an embarrassing situation. When I pointed out to him that his latest information was in direct contradiction to what we too had been told most emphatically by the U.S. State Department and delegation, this did not impress him too much: he was used, he said, to sudden switches in the position of the U.S. delegation and to a complete lack of coordination between that delegation and its own State Department. When I tried to convince him that his New York people had possibly meant other amendments, such as the insignificant one intended to please the delegate of China, he most vigorously insisted that the point at issue was the amendment saying that General Bennike would have to consult "the two Governments concerned" and should permit a resumption of work only "with the consent of the two Governments concerned".

I promised him to find out what was known to us and our

delegation on this surprising information and to let him know as soon as I found out.

3 (According to our urgent investigations, there was no shift in the U.S. position and de Chaves' statements were based on a misunderstanding).

His account of the situation up to that newest development was somewhat confused - although he personally did not impress me at all as confused. He himself had prepared a memorandum on the whole issue for his own Ambassador and the head of the Colombian delegation to the U.N.; his memorandum had been very strongly pro-Israel. In the beginning the Colombians had intended to vote for the draft resolution (without the new amendments), especially after the Americans had indicated, in talks by Mr. Key and his associates here and in a demarche made by the American Ambassador in Bogota, that they were greatly interested in that affirmative vote. Then, however, the Home Government in Bogota had suddenly reversed its position and had given instructions to vote for the resolution only if amended so as to be acceptable to the Arabs, and to vote against it if not thus amended. This switch was undoubtedly caused by pressure on the Government on the part of (a) the Vatican, (b) the Syrian and Lebanese immigrant communities of Colombia, who are especially strong in the home town of the Foreign Minister. If the assumption that the Americans had switched their position and were going to introduce the new amendments proved correct, the position of the Colombian Government would of course be very easy: they would vote for the amendments and for the amended resolution and would thus satisfy both the United States and the pro-Arab pressure of the Vatican. On the assumption that his newest information proved to be a misunderstanding and that the Americans were insisting on the original text, I failed to elicit from him a clear-cut statement. He was unwilling or unable to tell me whether the delegation had received from the Home Government final instructions to vote against the resolution if not amended; I got the final impression that the ultimate vote would be left to the discretion of the head of the delegation to the U.N. The intention expressed was definitely to vote against the resolution; this intention could be changed only by the strongest display of American pressure.

4. In general, the Colombian Ambassador in Washington was strongly pro-Israel, while the head of the delegation to the U.N. was definitely pro-Arab. He, de Chaves, had received from the chief delegate, both orally and in writing, strong objections to his pro-Israeli memoranda. Some of the arguments contained in the remarks of the chief delegate were as follows:

- (a) The demilitarized zone was under Syrian sovereignty or at least co-sovereignty; anyhow, it was not Israeli territory and Israel was not entitled to do in that area anything without Syrian consent;
- (b) Although the present project spoke of hydro-electric development

only, it opened the way for future irrigation projects that might result in the transformation of the Lake of Galilee into a salt water lake and the drying up of the water resources of the Arab areas on the Lower Jordan;

- (c) Although formally the internationalisation of Jerusalem and the problem of the Arab refugees were not directly relevant to the issue at stake, they were relevant in the general pattern of developments: Israel was in the habit of accepting those U.N. resolutions that were convenient to her and rejecting or ignoring those that were unpalatable to her; she was used to creating established facts and to expect the world to recognise them later - she should not be allowed to get away with this method of international behaviour;
- (d) This question was so intimately connected with the broader problem of international water rights that it could not be decided on its own merits in the narrowest sense.

In connection with the general complaints against Israel's attitude to U.N. resolutions etc., he said that the chief delegate had insisted that it was not only a question of the two resolutions on Jerusalem and the return of the refugees, but had read to him over the phone a long list of U.N. resolutions which Israel was violating; he remembered none of those resolutions by heart. He asked me whether I could supply him with a list of U.N. resolutions which Israel was honouring and implementing.


5. When I expressed some astonishment that the Vatican should not be content with its strong insistence on the internationalisation of Jerusalem and its opposition to Israeli policies on that count, but should broaden the scope of its hostility to include everything Israeli and to oppose Israel on all counts, he insisted that that was so. He thought that maybe we were under-estimating both the strength of the Vatican's opposition to us on the Jerusalem issue and its influence "in certain countries".

6. We then spent a few minutes moralising on the sad state of affairs where an issue could no longer be decided on its own merits but where legitimate interests and rights had to be sacrificed for political expediencies and games. I expressed, with a straight face, serious doubts as to whether either the Vatican or the Government of Colombia would really be prepared, in contradiction to all established principles of justice, to condemn Israel on an issue in which it was undoubtedly right, just because it was allegedly wrong in other issues.

7. In the course of the conversation, de Chaves personally revealed himself as very strongly pro-Israel (for what it is worth). He said that he had spent many years of his life dealing with or studying problems of minorities and that on this count he was interested in and close to the Jewish problem. Before 1948 he had played with the idea of volunteering

for the Haganah. He is a graduate of Columbia University in International Law. He does not expect to stay long in the diplomatic service; he has been here for only a few months, since the establishment of the new regime in Colombia, and he expects to go back together with the Ambassador and to enter Colombian politics. He expressed the desire to write a long article on Israel in general and the Upper Jordan crisis in particular for one of the leading American magazines - especially so as he believes that the pro-Israel side has not been fairly represented in the popular American press for years. The general impression created, not only in "Life" and "Time", but by the American press in general, is that Israel was doing a great deal of fruitful work in its own country but was mistreating the Arabs inside its own frontiers, creating unnecessary difficulties for the poor Arabs outside its frontiers and violating U.N. decisions all along. This impression was not being contradicted, he thought, by any intelligent or fair press reporting on our own part or on the part of our friends or objective observers.

He promised to study the material I had brought him and to contact me for further explanations or discussions if necessary. He also requested a copy of the Israel-Syrian armistice agreement. We promised each other to keep in touch.


Y. Shamoni

cc: Minister and Staff
Kidron, New York
Tbv, New York
Maum, Jerusalem
Malat "
Mahav "