



THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ADDRESS OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS TO

AMBASSADOR JOHNSTON'S STATEMENT TO THE ISRAELI COMMITTEE

January 31, 1955

We have studied with care the papers which were handed to us today. I regret to say that the proposals they contain appear to us to offer no basis on which an agreement might be possible; and I say this despite a determined disposition on our part to explore every possible approach which might be productive.

It is my opinion, at this stage of our negotiations, that there is no point in discussing further the complicated details which we have explored so exhaustively in the past few days. So far as basic data are concerned there is little difference between us. Variations between your computations and ours derive for the most part from the way in which the figures are used and interpreted. Our real difficulties spring from an apparent inability to accept the same premises and basic principles.

Before I discuss the nature of the differences which now exist, I should like to correct a misconception in the statement read by the Prime Minister this morning. I have at no time proposed that the demands of the Arab countries be fully satisfied before Israel's requirements are met, and I reject any such interpretation of the methods we have suggested for dividing the waters of the Jordan-Yarmuk system. It will be recalled that the original proposals discussed with you a year ago suggested allocations on the basis of beneficial use of the water to irrigate lands within the basin. During our discussions in June there were important unresolved questions as

to the amount of water required to irrigate the lower Jordan^{Valley}. We now have obtained detailed information on these requirements which has made it possible to increase Israel's share over the original estimates.

Because there is not enough water to satisfy all needs, it is essential to establish criteria which would impose limitations on the respective shares of the states concerned. In the case of the Arab states the criterion of beneficial use within the basin appeared to be acceptable; in the case of Israel this limitation was removed on the assumption that the waters remaining would be sufficient to provide Israel with an equitable share of the total supply. We believe that this assumption has been borne out and that the amount suggested in my proposals of January 30, 1955, approximating 40% of the total, does indeed offer to Israel a fair and reasonable portion of the river system.

I should like to comment very briefly also on the Prime Minister's reference to the Litani River. When this matter was first mentioned to me, I made it clear that I felt that its inclusion in our negotiations regarding the Jordan would be unproductive. This attitude was in no sense dictated by a desire to exclude forever from Israel any possibility of obtaining a portion of the Litani River; my position was based upon the conviction that it would be fruitless in the present political climate even to approach Lebanon on the question. This is still my conviction.

As to the questions on which we are still apparently divided, I should like to summarize the present position as I see it. The main points at issue between us involve first, the use of Lake Tiberias as a major storage reservoir for the Valley as a whole; second, the amount of irrigable land to be served in Jordan; and third, the feasibility of supplying a substantial part of Jordan's needs through the development of local underground water resources.

We have devoted ourselves during the past few days to a re-examination of the proposal to utilize the natural advantages of Lake Tiberias as a reservoir for the Valley. We have deliberately and painstakingly sought an alternative which would, within economic reason, have equal advantages and produce as much benefit for all concerned. In this we have been unsuccessful. Our conclusions coincide with those of every eminent engineer who has studied the problem of Jordan Valley development over the past two decades. No alternative plan offers the possibility of conserving so much of the water for the benefit of peoples who desperately need every available drop; every alternative so far examined exceeds the limits of sound economics and reasonable cost.

Even so, my mind remains open on this subject. If Israel can offer an alternative to the use of Lake Tiberias which will have demonstrably equal advantages, I shall be more than willing to consider a substitution. At the present stage, however, I am of the opinion that no such alternative is possible.

With respect to the related questions of the area to be irrigated in Jordan and the possibility of ground water development, I can only reiterate the position I have stated often during our conversations of the past few days. The determination of the area of irrigable land — a basic consideration in applying the beneficial use criterion in Jordan — was made by competent engineers, soil scientists, and agronomists, using the most modern and efficient methods. We intend to ask the Government of Jordan to accept these findings; and I cannot reasonably suggest that they be altered or revised solely for the purpose of accommodating Israel's claim for a larger share of the available water.

At the same time, I would recall and emphasize to you my assurance that the United States Government will undertake to make certain that no water is wasted by Jordan or any other state in the implementation of a Valley development program for which the United States provides financial and technical support.

Equally certain — and this applies specifically to the question of ground water development — is the assurance already given you that every possible effort will be made to develop to the maximum all resources of this kind.

As you know, I am obliged to leave for Cairo in the morning. My task there is certain to be difficult; and my movements in the immediate future will be influenced by what happens there. During this time, however, I hope that you will review once again the proposals advanced in my statement of January 30th; and that your painstaking and serious consideration will bring us closer to the end we are seeking.