

November 14, 1961

Robert C. Strong to Phillips Talbot, 'Your Appointment with Israel Ambassador Harman'

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Summary:

Talbot is to raise the issue of visits by "neutral" scientists to the Dimona reactor.

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Mr. Farley

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NEA--Mr. Phillips Talbot

NR--Robert C. Strong

SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY											
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November 14, 1961

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I thought this was to be changed!

Your Appointment with Israel Ambassador Harman, 4:45 p.m., Tuesday, November 14.

DISCUSSION:

Ambassador Harman is calling at the Department's request. We propose that you (1) take exception to recent Israel moves to impose revised customs and visa procedures in the New City of Jerusalem, vis-a-vis consular corps and UNRSC personnel, which appear a calculated effort to advance Israel's claims to sovereignty there in violation of longstanding U.N. resolutions; (2) note the Israel Knesset's adoption on November 6 of a motion opposing repatriation of refugees to Israel territory; (3) raise a "neutral" visit to the Dimona reactor; and (4) reveal our willingness, as a concession, to return PL-480 negotiations to Washington at Israel's request.

Mr. Hamilton of NE will be present.

1. New GOI Procedures in Jerusalem: Israel's recent moves are summarized in the telegram you approved yesterday for transmission to Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and New York (Tab A). Israel's proposed actions may strike at our posture in support of U.N. resolutions on Jerusalem and in any case impugn the integrity of U.S. and U.N. officials. The Israelis have "tried this on" before in several ways but have not persisted in the face of a prompt and adverse reaction by the U.S., U.N., and other interested parties. We hope the international community can be similarly persuasive in this instance.

2. Israel Knesset's Anti-Repatriation Motions: On November 6 the Knesset debated the refugee problem. In a statement on behalf of the Government, Foreign Minister Meir emphasized that Israel, as a sovereign state, must be the sole judge of who may enter its territory. She said Israel is willing, however, to negotiate the refugee issue outside the context of a general peace settlement on the basis that the solution is resettlement and "mutual compensation". Mrs. Meir stated Israel's 1949 offer to take back 100,000 refugees is no longer valid. She concluded by saying Israel's position is not that "not a single refugee" can return, but the solution to the problem is resettlement.

The Knesset then adopted a motion (Tab B) introduced by Ben-Gurion's and Mrs. Meir's Mapai party, to constitute a guide for Israel's U.N. delegation, approving the Government's opposition to repatriation as stated by Ben-Gurion on October 11 and Mrs. Meir on November 6. The resolution would appear to close tightly the doors left slightly ajar by Mrs. Meir's remarks, stating categorically that the refugees shall not be returned to Israel

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territory since the sole solution is resettlement in the Arab countries.

The Mapai resolution was approved 68-7 by parties almost across the board. It is probable the vote accurately reflects the majority of prevailing public opinion. Our objection is the support (and probably inspiration) given it by Government speakers, such action being out of step with the tenor of the Kennedy-Ben-Gurion talk on May 30. The motion, coming on the heels of Ben-Gurion's earlier statement, places Israel in the position of appearing rather aggressively intransigent, and has already begun to complicate our efforts to keep the Arabs to the path of moderation in the forthcoming SFC refugee debate. In addition, the Knesset motion has seriously disturbed Dr. Johnson, who understandably feels it tends to undercut the efforts he has made. Our recommendations below are designed to convey our concern but at the same time avoid improper criticism of a foreign parliamentary debate.

3. "Neutral" Visit to Dimona Reactor: Prime Minister Ben-Gurion told the President in May that he approved a "neutral" visit to the Dimona reactor. In June 1961 Mr. Meyer suggested to Ambassador Harman that arrangements might appropriately be discussed with Mr. Farley, informally, in conjunction with the IAEA meeting then taking place in Vienna. Israel declined and expressed a preference to discuss arrangements here after Mr. Farley's return. S/AE is now preparing some suggestions that Mr. Farley might present to the Israel Embassy, designed to render a neutral visit as natural as possible and obviate any overtones of inspection, which is unacceptable to Israel. We are anxious that this neutral visit materialize (it seems doubtful Israel will move without some gentle prodding on our part) to get us out of our present position of being the guarantor of Israel's nuclear intentions on the basis of our scientists' secret visit last May, results of which were quietly communicated, with Israel's approval, to selected governments including the Arabs.

We believe this conversation offers a good opportunity to let the Israelis know that Mr. Farley expects to have some helpful suggestions in this line for discussion with the Israel Embassy in the near future. If you prefer, however, I can mention this to Israel Minister Gazit.

4. Location of PL-480 Negotiations: The Israelis continue to argue the advantages from a practical standpoint of returning the Title I negotiations to Washington, at the same time making clear that they are now prepared to leave the decision up to us. We find their arguments for returning the negotiations to Washington plausible. They include: their Washington representatives have the power of decision to an extent far exceeding the authority we give Tel Aviv, which must report back for Washington's approval of even slight modifications of U.S. negotiating instructions; Israel representatives here must return to Israel if the negotiations are held there, to the neglect of their other responsibilities, because the Israel expertise is here and is not shared by Jerusalem ministries; the most difficult problems in negotiation involve Israel's

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desiderata as they affect the marketing interests of third countries, who make their appeal to Washington rather than the Israel Government. For these and other reasons the conclusion of an agreement is delayed many unnecessary months. We have discussed this question with the other concerned agencies--Agriculture, AID, etc--and have found no resistance to the idea of return to Washington. The workload on Washington offices is about the same in either case.

We can inform the Israelis of our decision as a completely unrequited concession to their viewpoint, thus compensating to some extent for recent disappointments in other matters.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Altered Customs and Visa Procedures in Jerusalem: That you comment on the basis of our instructions sent to Tel Aviv for the Embassy's use with the Foreign Office (Tab A), referring to Israel's three actions of which we have been appraised, and our attitude toward its proposed modifications in customs and visa procedures, respectively.

2. Knesset Anti-Repatriation Motions: That, recalling Assistant Secretary Cleveland's October 19 conversation with the Ambassador (Tab C), in the course of which Mr. Cleveland made clear our view that a Knesset debate of the refugee problem preceding the forthcoming UNRWA debate would not be particularly timely, you comment along the following lines:

a. We have received from Embassy Tel Aviv a summary report of the November 6 Knesset debate on the refugees and the text of the resolution which was introduced by Mapai and subsequently adopted.

b. Without presuming to comment on proceedings in a foreign parliament, we are concerned about the impression which the support given this motion by Government spokesmen including the Foreign Minister will create of an uncompromising Israel Government position. As a result it will be far harder for Israel's friends to keep the forthcoming SPC refugee debate within rational and constructive bounds and to secure a positive outcome. In fact, these developments in Israel can destroy whatever inclination for moderation may have been developed among the Arabs in recent weeks as a result of the Johnson mission and our continuing talks with them. Further, we would raise the question whether the statements by government officials are not prejudicial to the understanding of Prime Minister Ben-Gurion and President Kennedy last May.

3. "Neutral" Visit to Dimona Reactor (For possible reference to NK-Mr. Strong): Pursuant to Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's assurance to the President in May and the Ambassador's conversation with Mr. Meyer on June 16, 1961, we think the Ambassador would like to know that Mr. Farley is now preparing suggestions which he hopes to discuss shortly with the Israel Embassy here, helpfully designed to render a neutral visit as natural as possible and obviate any overtones of inspection.

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4. Location

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4. Location of PL-480 Negotiations: We have examined this question with care, taking into account our own Embassy's desires in the matter and the present trend towards decentralization of authority from Washington to the missions in the field, studying these concessions against those matters of Israel concern which have been brought to our attention in the Ambassador's own letter of October 16, 1961, and by Economic Minister Manor in several conversations with Department officers. From our standpoint there seems to be little advantage to return the negotiations here, but, because it obviously is of great importance to the GOI, we have decided to defer to their wishes, at least for the current year.

CONCURRENCES:

S/AR:Mr. Farley (Neutral Visit)(in draft)

UNP:Mr. Palmer (Status of Jerusalem and Knesset Refugee Motion)(in draft)

L/NEA:Mr. Hewitt (Status of Jerusalem)(in substance)

L/NEA:Mr. Washburn (Status of Jerusalem)(in substance)

NE/E:Mr. Williams (PL-480 Negotiations on behalf of E, AID, and Agriculture)(in draft)

ATTACHMENTS:

Tab A - Tel Aviv DEPTTEL 295,
November 13, 1961.

Tab B - Tel Aviv EMBTEL 323,
November 8, 1961.

Tab C - Memorandum of Conversation
dated October 19, 1961.

NEA:NR:WJHamilton/WRCrawford:ebb
11/14/61

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