

consultation was taking place without the knowledge or participation of the Egyptian Government.

The United States Government will be pleased to receive any further comments of the Government of the United Kingdom respecting the matters set forth above and desires to express its continued interest in the views of the British Government with regard to the freedom of transit of the Suez Canal.

WASHINGTON, March 11, 1953.

No. 584

683.84A/3-1853: Telegrams

*The Chargé in Israel (Russell) to the Department of State*¹

SECRET PRIORITY

TEL AVIV, March 18, 1953—7 p. m.

1470. Joseph Tekoah, assistant legal adviser to Foreign Ministry, states that March 16 Israel-Syrian meeting discussed demarcation line in all sectors of demilitarized zone and that following points of divergence between parties emerged:

(1) Northern sector demilitarized zone. Israel argued for line established on basis of present cultivation and possession of land, with compensation for Arab-owned land being cultivated by Israelis. Syrians argued for line based on ownership of land. Syria allegedly rejected suggestion by Vigier that Commission be set up to inquire into present cultivation and ownership and to propose to next session line taking into account both principles.

(2) Central sector. Divergence on three major points: (a) Syrians "insisted" on principle of land compensation for all Arab-owned land in demilitarized zone "regardless of whether Arabs at present inhabiting zone as in case Shamalna or whether Arabs living in Syria". According Tekoah, Syria was thus returning to its position prior to acceptance Gaon letter to Vigier (Embtel 1380)² of "demanding right annex piece of land equivalent to sum total of Arab-owned land left on Israel side of new demarcation line." (b) Syrians put forward claim for "island of land between two arms of Jordan River opposite Buteiha." Tekoah described this as departure from Jordan agreement to line along eastern bank of river. Added that Israel was prepared consider giving them island on understanding eastern arm of river would be "dammed off" but that this was rejected by Skugan representatives. (c) Syria reportedly claimed "full water rights". According Tekoah, this was departure from earlier Syrian agreement accept Israel's position on Jordan River (Israel

¹ Repeated to Damascus, Jerusalem, London, Amman, Baghdad, Beirut, Cairo, and Jidda.

² Document 575.