Proceedings of a Council

Held with the

Seminole Chiefs and Warriors

INTRODUCTION

In this council meeting the Seminoles unsuccessfully pleaded to remain in south Florida. Their descendants, two generations later, settled on or along New River.

Camp near Fort Jupiter, E.F. Feb'y. 24. 1838.

At 12 o'clock m. the Chiefs Toskegee and Hallek Hajo, accompanied by about thirty warriors, and several women and children, made their appearance in camp, to hold a Council previously agreed upon. After going through the customs usual on such occasions, such as dancing, shaking hands, &c, a sister of Micanopy advanced towards the General, and spoke a few words, the substance of which was that they had come in to conclude a firm peace, and to await here the decision of the President as to their remaining in the country - She was followed by a sister of Cloud, who expressed similar sentiments. - the women then retired, and the Chiefs and warriors took their seats in the Council, which was attended by all the General, Field, & Staff Officers of the Army present, and such others as were not on duty.

The talk was commenced by Hallek Hajo, who stated that they had long despaired of ever having peace with the white people, when the Great Spirit, pitying their condition, had induced the General to send out a messenger to them with a white flag - this they gladly received, and consented to hold a conference, which they did some two weeks ago - it was to fulfil what they had there agreed upon, that they now came in - they came of the same minds now as then. They professed great attachment to the land, poor as it was, which had given them birth, and earnestly begged that they might still be permitted to live on it - they pledged themselves to keep within the limits assigned them, and that they would, on no account, commit any depredations on the property of the whites - they represented themselves as having been very much harassed by this war, and said their only wish was to be again at peace.

General Jesup commenced by enumerating various instances of their bad faith on former occasions, and particularly at Fort Mellon, where Micanopy, who had come in consequence of a messenger which he had sent out to him, declared that he and his people were ready to fulfil the treaty of Payne's Landing, as renewed at Fort Dade - that he himself sent Toskegee to bring his people in, but in place of coming in, they had disregarded their promises and determined to fight - that in obedience to the orders of the President he had put his troops in motion - they fled before him, and he overtook them at the Cypress below this place. Had he wished to destroy them the pursuit would have been continued; but desirous of saving them, he sent out a messenger and offered them peace - they met him with a flag, said they were tired of the war; that they had suffered a great deal by it, and wanted peace; but that they did not wish to leave the country - He informed them he had no authority to permit them to remain; but that he would recommend to the President to allow them a small piece of land, on condition that they should assemble in Camp within ten days, with their warriors, women, and children, and await his decision - to this they had agreed; but that in place of coming in at the end of that time, although fifteen days had now elapsed, but a small portion were yet in. Having thus deceived him so frequently, the General asked what guarantee he could have that they were
not now deceiving him, or what reliance he could place on their words, and he observed that if they expected any favours from the President, they must be prepared to fulfil their own engagements. To this they replied that it was still their determination to adhere to their engagements, but that their people were so much scattered, and their women and children had gone so far into the Swamps, it was impossible to get them out as early as they had anticipated; but that all were on their way, and would soon be in.

The General here asked if they fully understood that had been said to them - the principal speaker, Hallek Hajo, assured him they did, that it had often been talked over among themselves - to satisfy himself, however, General Jesup proceeded to recapitulate the principal points of the agreement entered into with them - one of these, viz. - that their residing in the Country depended upon the President's approving of the General's recommendation to that effect; and that in case he should not approve they were to emigrate peacefully - Hallek Hajo professed to have misunderstood, affirming that this had not been explained to him - that he had not heard this in the previous council - Lt. Col. Gates, however, who was present at this council, being called upon by the General to state what had there taken place, declared that they were told by General Jesup "that they must come in ten days with their women and children - that he would recommend to the President to grant them a portion of this country to live in; but that in case he did not agree to do this, they were to emigrate to the West." The head chief, Toskegee, said that his recollections of the talk were precisely similar to those of Lt. Col. Gates. The General then asked them distinctly, if in the event of the President's not permitting them to remain in the country, they would remove peacefully, - Hallek Hajo answered that he was not prepared to reply to that question - that he would have to consult some others who were out. Toskegee said they would not fight again. To give time for further consultation, and in order that the matter might be perfectly understood by all, the General gave them two days to deliberate upon it, when they are to come in again, and announce their decision. At 3 o'clock P.M. the Council adjourned.

W. G. Freeman
lieut.4th Arty.
actg. Secretary of Council