

At that time, and I am speaking now of a period of only a week or two before the attack by Israel took place, we had no knowledge conveyed to us of any acute deterioration of the situation, nor did we have any knowledge or information about anything which could be called a Russian plot to seize Egypt and take over the Middle East. At that moment, and against that background, the Israeli government moved against Egypt.

### The Threat to Israel

Here also, to put the matter in perspective, it is necessary to understand the background. The people of Israel have lived for years in a state of unrest and insecurity against this threat of extermination by their neighbours. With that unrest on their borders with no stability of any kind, with a military balance changing against them, and in the face of those continued threats on October 29--and it is interesting to realize that that was less than a month ago; events have moved with such bewildering and dramatic speed--the Israeli government took the situation and the law in its own hands and moved against Egypt for reasons which seemed very good to it at the time.

I admit--and I am sure all members in this house must admit--the provocation which may have prompted this move. We in the government tried to understand that provocation; nevertheless we did at that time, and do now, regret that the attack was made at that time and under those circumstances. Then, as the house knows, the United Kingdom government and France intervened in the matter on the ground so they claimed, that it was necessary to keep the fighting away from the Suez canal and thereby keep the canal open. They wished, so they said in Paris and in London to keep a shield between the opposing forces.

That was the only purpose they put forward at that time, or indeed have put forward formally since, to explain their intervention--to stop the fighting and put a shield between the opposing forces. No other purpose was alleged; and when the United Kingdom representative to the United Nations spoke at the first emergency meeting of the General Assembly on Thursday, November 1, he explained the purpose of the United Kingdom and French action in these words:

The first urgent task is to separate Israel and Egypt and to stabilize the position. That is our purpose. If the United Nations were willing to take over the physical task of maintaining peace in the area, no one would be better pleased than we. But police action there must be, to separate the belligerents and to stop the hostilities.

That was their purpose, merely to separate the belligerents and to stop the hostilities.

Well, to carry out that purpose, as we know, the French and British governments sent an ultimatum to Egypt and to Israel, a 12-hour ultimatum that was accepted by Israel whose forces at that time had come within ten miles of the Suez canal, but was