



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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STATEMENT ON PALESTINE

A statement by Mr. L. B. Pearson, Chairman of the Canadian Delegation to the Third Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, at Paris, in the First Committee, on November 22, 1948.

The present situation in regard to Palestine represents a logical development in the series of events which began when the Palestine question was referred to the United Nations by the Mandatory Power in the spring of 1947. It is deplorable that this process has been interrupted by unnecessary violence with unhappy and even tragic consequences for the inhabitants of Palestine. By and large, however, the pattern of development has been a coherent, if at times a discouraging one. I think that its existence and the way that matters have been working out up to the present, gives a clue to what we should expect in the future.

The basic recommendation, which was first made by UNSCOP, and then confirmed by the General Assembly on November 29th last, was that the two communities in Palestine should be given a separate political existence. Many of us regretted the necessity of making this recommendation. Our motives in supporting it have been challenged, and our judgment violently attacked. However, so far as the delegation and government for which alone I have the right to speak, are concerned, our decision last year was sincerely and objectively taken after considering all the other possible solutions which had been proposed for this complicated and terribly difficult problem. We were honestly of the opinion that there was no practicable alternative to partition, and with other delegations we felt that this was the advice we should give to those most concerned. Some form of unitary or federal state would, of course, have been preferable, but there was no possibility of forcing political unity on the Arab and Jewish peoples of Palestine in a form which would not have been bitterly resisted by one side or the other. In these circumstances, the only thing we could do was to reconcile ourselves to the necessity of separation as the solution which seemed best in the circumstances. It was not the recognition of this necessity but the necessity itself which has been the source of the difficult situation in which Palestine now finds itself. Let those who charge that this decision was the cause of all the bloodshed and destruction that have degraded the Holy Land in the last 12 months ask themselves whether there would have been peace and order in that area if a unitary state had been forced on the Jewish population of Palestine, or if the Assembly had made no recommendation at all.

The degree of separation and the geographical terms of the separation of the two communities, Arab and Jewish, in Palestine, were both matters of uncertainty when the Assembly first decided in favour of partition. We hoped then (though not blind to the obstacles and difficulties in the way) that it would have been possible for the two communities, though in separate states, to work together through a very considerable measure of economic integration. The resolution of November 29th was based on this assumption, which in turn led to the further assumption that a complicated