

*Arab-Israeli War*

● (2200)

When I was in Cairo three years ago, I recommended that the Arabs give official recognition of the State of Israel and thereby show that they were willing to take a positive step toward solving the crisis. I actually believed that this would serve to convince Israel that negotiations could begin and a lasting peace could be agreed upon. Since that time the Arabs have stretched out their hand on many occasions in an effort to make peace with Israel and to have their lands restored but it has never been enough for Israel. It is becoming more and more obvious that Israel has no intention of withdrawing from any of the occupied country and since their aggressive attitude has not met with even a slap on the wrist from Canada or the United States there is no reason for them to change their aggressive attitude. Not only is this situation deplorable but it is made more so by the attitude of this country which seems to want to ignore the poor co-operation on the part of Israel. I suggest it is time our friendship for the Arab world be shown more positively by seeing that at least our elected representatives be given the opportunity to understand the Arab point of view.

That letter was dated April 12, 1973. The minister answered it and stated, among other things, that he did not think Canada was biased in its attitude. He pointed out that he did not find it helpful to comment publicly on every incident of violence related to the Israeli-Arab dispute. He pointed out that Canada remains committed to the Security Council resolution 242 as the best means of achieving peace in the Middle-East. He also stated that Canada supported the mission of Ambassador Jarring.

He suggested that if members of parliament are not sufficiently aware of the Arab point of view, a discussion of the situation should be initiated by means of a request to the chairman of the external affairs committee. Mr. Speaker, my experience with that committee, as quoted in my letter to the minister, would seem to obviate any formal request for discussion of a matter which seems to be the most important problem in the world today.

I found it amazing yesterday during the question period to witness the display in this House of some honourable members, in particular of the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), asking the government to term as aggression the action of Syria and Egypt and to try to place the blame upon whom and at what point the first shot was fired. I did not notice the right honourable gentleman being so concerned—and I am sure he is always concerned about human rights—about the shooting down of the Lybian airliner by Israel some months ago. He was not ready to brand Israel as an aggressor when Syrian planes were shot down in international skies far away from Israeli borders a few weeks ago. Nor did he have any remarks to make when another civilian aircraft was forced down in Israel simply because they thought some undesirable people might be aboard.

What the right hon. gentleman does not seem to realize is that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. He deplores acts of terrorism, as we all do, when they are committed by Palestinians, but the same act committed with the sanction of the Israeli government into the heart of the Lebanese capital seems to be all right with him.

Then we have our friend the leader of the NDP. Yesterday he was very concerned in this House about Canada's position regarding the right of Israel to exist. He repeated this fear again tonight. I want to assure the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) that I believe in Israel's right to exist and I do not have a biased attitude in this regard.

But I have enough objectivity to want to know if that right to exist on the part of Israel should exclude the right of the Palestinians to their homeland, and indeed if it should mean that we must condone the acquisition by Israel of a piece of Syria, a piece of Jordan and a piece of Egypt, as well as the creation of a racist state throughout all of Palestine where no one but Jews can exist as first-class citizens.

I have said that Canada has taken a one-sided view because it does not know both sides of the story. It is not possible for any of us here to make any kind of judgment unless we understand the problem itself. We cannot go into all the history here, but a knowledge of 50 years of history presents realities that should be remembered by those in this House who are ready to condemn out of hand, without knowing the facts, the results of this long chain of events that have been taking place in the Middle East.

I am sure there is none of us here who does not sympathize with the long suffering of the Jews in Europe. But, I ask, should the Arabs be punished because of it? In this respect a leading Israeli journalist said, "Whatever their subsequent follies and outrages might be, the punishment of the Arabs for the sins of Europe must burden the conscience of Israelis for a long time to come".

What of the great powers? They have continually interfered in the Middle East situation. Before they started their meddling half a century ago, Arabs and Jews lived side by side without serious problems. Since the great powers have created this terrible situation, it is up to them to solve it. But the solution is not in the feeding of arms to both sides of the conflict.

Unfortunately, the United Nations has not been able to do very much. Resolution 242 was passed unanimously. It asked for the withdrawal of the Israelis from lands which were occupied by force during the 1967 war. The resolution has gone unheeded. When Mr. Rogers, the secretary of state of the United States, made an effort to negotiate a settlement, his efforts were turned down completely by Israel. Dr. Jarring made a valiant effort on behalf of the UN and his efforts were turned down by Israel, which in effect suspended his mission. Therefore, it would appear that only the big powers would be able to bring about a settlement. In any case, as long as the Israelis occupy Arab lands which were acquired by force, the Arabs feel they are in no position to negotiate because there is nothing left to bargain with.

Where does Canada stand in all of this? I reiterate that there is only one possible course for us to take and that is one of objectivity. However, we cannot possibly be objective if we continually listen to only one side of the story. For example, how can we receive unbiased reports from Canadian journalists who report the war through information received in Tel Aviv? This one-sided reporting has been typical of what has been available to Canadians for many years. In any case, there is no excuse for the Canadian government to adopt a one-sided attitude. It is up to us to support whatever effort could bring about a just peace.

A few hours ago we heard that the Egyptian president offered a measure of negotiation. I do not know what the details were because I was in this chamber and heard very little about what was said. Obviously, he is now in a position of greater strength and sees a possible way to end