

Foreign Policy

As we know, this does not preclude the general assembly, through the uniting for peace resolution, from asserting its view, but in so far as enforcement action is concerned this can only come, as I know my right hon. friend will recall, under the authority of the security council.

I indicated that the council ought to be in continuous session, with its members constantly available so as to be ready to act whenever necessary. I well recognize that there might be some danger of precipitating a premature confrontation in the council if it were to meet before the parties to the dispute were ready to agree to some interim steps which might be taken, perhaps as a result of the visit of the Secretary General. Naturally, if there were serious incidents or other developments which might lead the council members to believe there might be conflict, then the council could meet at once to deal with the situation. Yesterday's announcement by the president of the United Arab Republic that he was stopping Israeli shipping in the Gulf of Aqaba may require the council to meet.

Urgent consultation between the members is now taking place and Canada as a member of the council is participating in these discussions. There are considerations, as I am sure the house will realize, which must be very much in the minds of the members of the council before they decide to take particular steps or before they decide to meet.

President Nasser is reported to have stated in his speech last night that U.A.R. forces had occupied Sharm-el-Sheikh and that the U.A.R. would not permit a ship flying the Israeli flag to pass through the Gulf of Aqaba.

Mr. Lewis: May I ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs whether President Nasser did not say more than that? Did he not also say he would not permit any ship carrying strategic material to enter the gulf?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): That is right. He said he would not allow ammunition or materials of war to pass through.

I was just about to observe that this was one of the matters that the Secretary General will undoubtedly be discussing. I asked our representative on the council to take full part in the discussions in New York that are now taking place, and to note particularly the discussions that have already taken place between certain of the permanent members of the council.

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As the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer) said during the question period, this situation is one that we in this country all very much regret. I am sure that people throughout the world regret it. There is recognition of the effectiveness during the past ten and a half years of the United Nations emergency force. The fact that the U.A.R. has asked for the withdrawal of the force and that two of the contributing members indicated they would no longer serve in the force—

Mr. Churchill: Which two are they?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): As I indicated last Friday in answer to a question by my right hon. friend, the two which took that position were India and Yugoslavia. These are considerations that have to be borne in mind in assessing the effectiveness of the force as an instrument of pacification. I welcomed this discussion in light of our experience in this particular kind of situation, but the difficulties of maintaining a force must be borne in mind.

The United Nations truce supervision organization, essentially an observer group now with 120 men although at one time it had a personnel of some 700, has certain powers under the mixed armistice commissions created by the security council. These powers could enable it, together with certain other powers, to act as an effective international presence and a United Nations body to keep the peace between the conflicting parties. It may be that at this moment the time is not appropriate for putting this into effect, notwithstanding the desirability, because it must be remembered that such a force cannot be established without the consent of the parties involved, the host countries, in this case the United Arab Republic and Israel, nor can it be accepted in terms of an enlargement of powers by the security council unless all five of the great powers consent. So it will be understood why there should be consultations and negotiations prior to a formal meeting of the council.

• (4:20 p.m.)

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, would the minister allow a question? He mentioned those with whom he had communicated on Saturday and said he would have been willing to discuss the matter with the ambassador of the U.S.S.R. Was there any reason why that consultation did not take place, or was he absent?