

Foreign Policy

Mr. Speaker, I believe those words are as applicable to Canada and this house as they are in Britain a country not engaged in the war in Viet Nam and having in that regard a position similar to that of Canada. We are not a combatant in that war but in 1954 we assumed a responsibility under the terms of the Geneva Accord.

My right hon. friend today although not confining himself to two subjects, dealt primarily with two. I will deal with the first one, the situation in the Middle East. As we all know, the Secretary General of the United Nations is now in Cairo on an important and delicate mission. He will be exploring with the president of the United Arab Republic the ways and means by which the United Nations might be of assistance to the parties immediately concerned with the present situation on the border of Israel. On Saturday morning I discussed with U Thant a number of matters. I should add hastily that the differences in modalities between the Canadian government and the Secretary General—and they were only differences in modalities—in no way affect our regard for the high office which he holds nor do they in any way affect the high regard we have for the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

• (4:10 p.m.)

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I discussed with him the possibility that the United Nations truce supervision organization might be reactivated in Gaza and the Sinai as an aid to peaceful conditions in the area. He will look into the possibility and, I am sure, investigate what might be feasible in the light of the position of the government of the United Arab Republic in requesting the withdrawal of the United Nations emergency force. The Secretary General explained to me in detail his reasons, some of which I have given today in an answer to a question, for the step he took in answer to the demand, addressed in the first instance by the foreign minister of the U.A.R. to the general commanding the United Nations force. He circulated a report summarizing his position in that regard to the security council on May 19 last.

I told the Secretary General that I understood and respected his position even though we differed on certain aspects of the procedures involved, but that our only concern now in view of the decision he has taken is to be of whatever assistance we can to enable the United Nations to play a useful role in the area. This will depend in part on the results of his conversations in Cairo. I did express

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

the hope that he might find it possible to visit other countries in the region so that when he returned to New York he could give a complete report on steps that might be taken by the United Nations to ease the position and restore peaceful conditions.

I reminded him that in a similar situation in 1958, after the landing of marines in Lebanon and British forces in Amman and Jordan, the then Secretary General announced that he was going to see the president of the United Arab Republic, and it was while he was in Cairo that he indicated his intention, in the interests of establishing an equilibrium in the area, to visit Israel and Jordan, and indeed he went to Iraq.

It is my hope that the discussions the Secretary General will have in Cairo will make it possible for this balancing kind of visit to take place. I also spoke when I was in New York on Saturday to the ambassadors of the United Kingdom, France, the United Arab Republic, Israel and Syria. I would have welcomed as well an opportunity to speak to the ambassador of the Soviet union but he was not available.

I took the opportunity to explain to these spokesmen for their governments the views of the Canadian government and as well to obtain their views. I expressed our concern over the potentially dangerous situation which had arisen and endorsed the Secretary General's plea for restraint by all concerned. I made it clear to the representatives of governments from the area that Canada had no intention of abandoning its impartial attitude toward the problems of the Middle East and that our chief interest was to work out with the United Nations some solution to restore stable conditions in the area.

I also indicated that as a major contributor to peace keeping operations we were naturally anxious that nothing be said or done which would destroy the confidence that member states must have in the United Nations as a conciliator and impartial presence. Let me say that notwithstanding the present ineffectiveness of the United Nations in many areas this government believes in its potential strength and in its necessity as an institution in this interdependent nuclear world of ours.

While in New York I also discussed the role of the security council in the present situation. My right hon. friend spoke of the authority of the assembly. It must not be forgotten that the security council is the agency under the charter constitutionally set up to deal with situations that threaten the peace.