

It is never easy to explain an abstention, and in this case it is particularly difficult because we are in favour of some parts of this resolution, and also because this resolution deals with such a complicated question.

Because we are in favour of some parts of the resolution, we could not vote against it, especially as, in our opinion, it is a moderate proposal couched in reasonable and objective terms, without unfair or unbalanced condemnation; and also, by referring to violations by both sides to the Armistice Agreements, it puts, I think, recent action by the United Kingdom and France—and rightly—against the background of those repeated violations and provocations.

We support the effort being made to bring the fighting to an end. We support it, among other reasons, because we regret that force was used in the circumstances that face us at this time. As my delegation sees it, however, this resolution which the General Assembly has thus adopted in its present form—and there was very little chance to alter that form—is inadequate to achieve the purposes which we have in mind at this Assembly. Those purposes are defined in that resolution of the United Nations under which we are meeting—resolution 377 (V), Uniting for Peace—and peace is far more than ceasing to fire, although it certainly must include that essential factor. This is the first time that action has been taken under the “Uniting for Peace” resolution, and I confess to a feeling of sadness, indeed even distress, at not being able to support the position taken by two countries whose ties with my country are and will remain close and intimate; two countries which have contributed so much to man’s progress and freedom under law; and two countries which are Canada’s mother countries.

I regret the use of military force in the circumstances which we have been discussing, but I regret also that there was not more time, before a vote had to be taken, for consideration of the best way to bring about that kind of cease-fire which would have enduring and beneficial results. I think that we were entitled to that time, for this is not only a tragic moment for the countries and peoples immediately affected, but it is an equally difficult time for the United Nations itself. I know, of course, that the situation is of special and, indeed, poignant urgency, a human urgency, and that action could not be postponed by dragging out a discussion, as has been done so often in this Assembly. I do feel, however, that had that time, which has always, to my knowledge, in the past been permitted for adequate examination of even the most critical and urgent resolution, been available on this occasion, the result might have been a better resolution. Such a short delay would not, I think, have done harm but, in the long run, would have helped those in the area who need help most at this time.

Why do I say this? In the first place, our resolution, though it has been adopted, is only a recommendation, and its moral effects would have been greater if it could have received a more unanimous vote in this Assembly—which might have been possible if there had been somewhat more delay.

Secondly, this recommendation which we have adopted cannot be effective without the compliance of those to whom it is addressed and who have to carry it out. I had ventured to hope that, by a short delay and in informal talks, we might have made some headway, or at least, have tried to make some headway, in securing a favourable response, before the vote was taken, from those Governments and delegations which will be responsible for carrying it out.

I consider that there is one great omission from this resolution, which has already been pointed out by previous speakers—more particularly by the representative of New Zealand, who has preceded me. This resolution does provide for a cease-fire, and I admit that that is of first importance and urgency. But, alongside a cease-fire and a withdrawal of troops, it does not provide for any steps to be taken by the United Nations for a peace settlement, without which a cease-fire will be only of temporary value at best. Surely, we should have used this opportunity to link a cease-fire to the absolute necessity of a political settlement in Palestine and for the Suez, and perhaps we might also have been able to recommend a procedure by which this absolutely essential process might begin.

Today we are facing a feeling of almost despairing crisis for the United Nations and for peace. Surely that feeling might have been harnessed to action or at least to a formal resolve to act at long last and to do something effective about the underlying causes of this crisis which has brought us to the very edge of a tragedy even greater than that which has already taken place. We should then, I think, have recognized the necessity for political settlement in this resolution and done something about it. And I do not think that, if we had done that, it would have postponed action