

*External Affairs*

also from the impatience of these people in the Middle East to convert political freedom into economic and social progress and more fundamentally it comes from the pressure especially in Egypt of a rapidly growing population on the productive resources of the country which cannot keep pace with that increased population.

There is also, and we are now getting closer to the immediate difficulties, the bitter and at times seemingly insoluble problem of the relations between Israel and her Arab neighbours which came to a head in the explosion of last October.

Since that time the United Nations has brought about a cease fire and has established an agency for securing and supervising that cease fire. How that was done was discussed in the house last November. Since that time the United Nations has been considering the withdrawal of Israel from Egypt. There has been agreement from the beginning in New York with this withdrawal in principle, but it has been difficult to convert that agreement in principle into one of practice, whether the agreement should be unconditional or whether it should be conditional.

The house will remember that after the withdrawal of United Kingdom and French forces from Port Said last December the forces of Israel also withdrew from all Egypt or Egyptian administered territories except the points Sharm al-Shaikh on the strait of Tiran and the Gaza strip. Israel for some time was unable to withdraw her forces from those two places without assurances, first, about navigation in the strait of Tiran and the gulf of Aqaba and, second, that Gaza was not to be returned to a situation where it could be used as it had been used previously as a base for attack on Israel.

Egypt and the other Arab and a great many Asian states refused to consider at the assembly any arrangement on these matters, or even at times to discuss them, until a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces had been effected. They refused to agree that the United Nations emergency force could be used in any sense as an occupation force, particularly India and Yugoslavia which were supplying strong and effective contingents to this force held strong views on that point and their views are important. The Arab-Asian group also refused to accept at the United Nations assembly any change in the armistice arrangements of some years ago between Egypt and Israel concerning the Gaza strip while permitting Israel to benefit from other provisions of that armistice arrangement. As for the gulf of Aqaba and the strait of Tiran the Arab-Asian group, or most of them, felt that freedom of navigation

there would depend on the legal status of the gulf and the strait, the waters of which some of them considered to be not international but territorial.

Those two positions were far apart and it would have been difficult for the United Nations to reconcile them even if there had been a maximum of good will or mutual understanding between the conflicting sides, and it is an understatement to say that there was no such good will.

The Canadian position has I think been consistent from the beginning. From our very first statement at the United Nations assembly last November we took position then and we have maintained it since that the withdrawal of Israeli forces and arrangements following that withdrawal were related and that one could not be discussed or decided without taking into consideration the other.

For us it was not a question of rewarding Israel for something she might have done by force last October; it was not a question of allowing her to lay down formal conditions governing her withdrawal. It was a question of whether we should not take action in our own interest, and in the interest of the United Nations and of peace, to see that the former conditions in that area—conditions of fear, insecurity and conflict—were not restored.

Our delegation preferred a single resolution to bring this about, with provisions, first, for withdrawal and, later in the same resolution, for arrangements to follow withdrawal. We were trying to do that, to draft a program, and a resolution based on that program, which in our opinion would have been fair to both sides, but we were told it would not be possible to secure the necessary two-thirds majority of the assembly for any such resolution. The United States was particularly hesitant about the prospects of securing agreement with regard to a resolution of that kind, and we were warned that if we put forward such a resolution, and it failed to secure two-thirds of the votes of the assembly, the net result would be bad. We did not entirely accept that position, but we did agree that there was no possibility of securing a two-thirds majority for a resolution of that nature if the United States did not actively support it. And in the result, as hon. members know, on February 2 a second resolution, short and not too specific, was passed on arrangements to follow withdrawal.

Israel hesitated to withdraw her forces from Sharm al-Shaikh and the Gaza strip on these vague and somewhat ambiguous assurances