

*The Address—Mr. Pearson*

United Nations and charged by the country against which the action had been taken. That is something that has happened, and it is something we tried to talk over with our friends before it happened.

It will be recalled that eventually the matter was taken to the security council of the United Nations, and it will also be recalled that not long before the use of force by Israel against Egypt certain principles for a settlement of the Suez question had been agreed on at the security council. One of those principles which had been accepted by Egypt at that time, was that the canal should be insulated from the policies of any one nation, including Egypt. Therefore at that particular moment, through those conversations at the security council, and what is more important through conversations going on in the secretary general's office, we had some hope that an international solution might be reached which might be satisfactory to all concerned.

At that time, and I am speaking now of a period of only a week or two before the attack by Israel took place, we had no knowledge conveyed to us of any acute deterioration of the situation, nor did we have any knowledge or information about anything which could be called a Russian plot to seize Egypt and take over the Middle East. At that moment, and against that background, the Israeli government moved against Egypt.

Here also, to put the matter in perspective, it is necessary to understand the background. The people of Israel have lived for years in a state of unrest and insecurity against this threat of extermination by their neighbours. With that unrest on their borders, with no stability of any kind, with a military balance changing against them, and in the face of those continued threats on October 29—and it is interesting to realize that that was less than a month ago; events have moved with such bewildering and dramatic speed—the Israeli government took the situation and the law in its own hands and moved against Egypt for reasons which seemed very good to it at the time.

I admit—and I am sure all members in this house must admit—the provocation which may have prompted this move. We in the government tried to understand that provocation; nevertheless we did at that time, and do now, regret that the attack was made at that time and under those circumstances. Then, as the house knows, the United Kingdom government and France intervened in the matter on the ground, so they claimed, that it was necessary to keep the fighting away from the Suez canal and thereby keep the canal open. They wished, so they said

in Paris and in London, to keep a shield between the opposing forces.

That was the only purpose they put forward at that time, or indeed have put forward formally since, to explain their intervention—to stop the fighting and put a shield between the opposing forces. No other purpose was alleged; and when the United Kingdom representative to the United Nations spoke at the first emergency meeting of the general assembly on Thursday, November 1, he explained the purpose of the United Kingdom and French action in these words:

The first urgent task is to separate Israel and Egypt and to stabilize the position. That is our purpose. If the United Nations were willing to take over the physical task of maintaining peace in the area, no one would be better pleased than we. But police action there must be, to separate the belligerents and to stop the hostilities.

That was their purpose merely to separate the belligerents and to stop the hostilities.

Well, to carry out that purpose, as we know, the French and British governments sent an ultimatum to Egypt and to Israel, a 12-hour ultimatum that was accepted by Israel whose forces at that time had come within ten miles of the Suez canal, but was rejected by Egypt which had been asked to withdraw its forces beyond the Suez canal; and following that rejection the United Kingdom and French forces intervened by air and later on the ground.

At that time far from gratuitously condemning the action the Canadian government said through the Prime Minister, and indeed through myself, that we regretted the necessity for the use of force in these circumstances; and these circumstances, I confess, included an element of complete surprise on our part at the action taken.

There was no consultation—and this has been pointed out—with other members of the commonwealth and no advance information that this very important action, for better or for worse, was about to be taken. In that sense consultation had broken down between London and Paris on the one hand, the commonwealth capitals and—even more important, possibly,—Washington on the other.

Nevertheless, instead of indulging then or since in gratuitous condemnation we expressed our regret and we began to pursue a policy, both here by diplomatic talks and diplomatic correspondence, and later at the United Nations, which would bring us together again inside the western alliance and which would bring about peace in the area on terms which everybody could accept.

Our policy, then, in carrying out these principles was to get the United Nations into the matter at once; to seek through the United Nations a solution which would be