



## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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Address by the Prime Minister of Canada,  
Mr. L.S. St-Laurent  
on the International Situation  
November 4, 1956

I think it my duty to speak to you tonight about the very grave events of the last two weeks. I should like first to talk about the Middle East crisis. I would like to explain to you the Government's recent actions in the context of our general policy in the Middle East. For the last few years peace has been precarious in this area, especially around the borders of Israel, whose creation as a state was recommended by the United Nations General Assembly with Canada's support in November 1947.

While the tensions arising out of the situation in the Middle East have continued, Canada has steadily encouraged efforts to secure a fair settlement based on the principle that Israel should live and prosper -- but not the principle that it should expand at the expense of its Arab neighbours.

A recent communist intervention in the Middle East has contributed directly to the present crisis. By supplying offensive weapons in large quantities to Egypt the Communist world threatened to upset the balance of power between Israel and its Arab neighbours. In order to help redress this potential imbalance Canada agreed a few weeks ago to authorize the export of 24 F-86 jet fighter planes to Israel over a six-month period. We realized however that a permanent settlement between Israel and its neighbours arranged by the United Nations was the only way in which peace could be preserved in the long run.

Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal Company increased the dangers inherent in the Middle East situation. The Egyptian action introduced a threat to the trade on which the economic life of many countries depends. It placed the control of shipping in the Canal in the hands of a government which for some years has been denying access to the Canal for Israeli ships in defiance of a Security Council resolution.

In the crisis which resulted from the nationalization of the Canal Company the Canadian Government has followed a definite and consistent policy in public statements and in private discussions with the nations concerned. We have advocated that a settlement of the issues relating to the Canal which directly affect so many countries should be achieved under the auspices of the United Nations and that there should be no resort to force. The Canadian Government welcomed the 18-power proposals agreed to at the London Conference in August as a sound basis for negotiating a settlement. We have stated our belief that this settlement should respect the legitimate sovereign rights of Egypt. It should also safeguard the right of ships of all nations to pass through the Canal. At the same time it should protect the international waterway from arbitrary and unjustified intervention by any country, including Egypt. We have stated our belief that this settlement should be embodied in co-operative arrangements with which the United Nations should be associated in an appropriate manner.

Because we believe that a permanent settlement of Israel's relations with its neighbours and of the future of the Suez Canal should be reached by peaceful negotiations under the aegis of the United Nations, the Canadian Government regrets that Israel proceeded last week to use force against Egypt, although we recognize that Israel have been subject to grave threats and provocations during the last few years. Though we recognize the vital importance of the Canal to the economic life and international responsibilities of the United Kingdom and France, we could not but regret also that, at a time when the United Nations Security Council was seized of the matter, the United Kingdom and France felt it necessary to intervene with force on their own responsibility.

Your Government has acted promptly in this crisis. We have taken immediate steps to further the safety of Canadian civilians in the Middle East. We have suspended the shipment of jet interceptor aircraft to Israel. The Canadian Government voted for consideration of the Israeli attack at the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on November 1 which was called after Security Council action was made impossible by the negative votes of two of its permanent members.

A United States resolution was introduced which called for an immediate cease-fire, the prompt withdrawal of forces and the end of military shipments to the area. On Friday morning this resolution was carried by 64 votes in favour to 5 against, including the United Kingdom and France. Canada and five other nations abstained in the vote on this resolution.

In explaining the reasons for this abstention, I should like to quote part of what Mr. Pearson said in the General Assembly:

"I regret 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 will have enduring and beneficial results."

He later added:

"I therefore would have liked to see a provision in this resolution.... authorizing the Secretary-General to begin to make arrangements with member governments for a United Nations force large enough to keep these borders at peace while a political settlement is being worked out."

We have swiftly followed up this suggestion. At another special session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York last night Mr. Pearson introduced a resolution on behalf of Canada which requests the Secretary-General to submit within 48 hours a plan for a United Nations force to secure and to supervise the cease-fire arrangements which were referred to in the United States resolution. Mr. Pearson explained that no members of the United Nations are to be asked to provide forces without their previous consent. The Canadian Government is ready to recommend Canadian participation in such a United Nations force if it is to be established and if it is thought that Canada could play a useful role.

The Canadian resolution was passed by the General Assembly early this morning without a single dissenting vote although there were a number of abstentions. At the same time the General Assembly passed a resolution sponsored by 19 nations; it reaffirmed the United States resolution about cease-fire arrangements and authorized the Secretary-General to arrange with the nations concerned the implementation of this resolution and asked him to report on their compliance.

The establishment of the United Nations force will be to ensure an effective cease-fire in the affected area. The governments of the United Kingdom and France have signified their willingness, under certain conditions, to suspend their military intervention if a United Nations truce force is given responsibility. According to present information, Israel and Egypt have stated their willingness to accept cease-fire arrangements provided other parties also co-operate.

We have strong reason to believe that a United Nations command will be established within the 48 hours set in the Canadian Resolution. This is only the first step toward a permanent settlement of Middle East problems. In

the General Assembly last night the United States introduced two new resolutions which seek to establish United Nations committees to consider the future of Israel's relations with its neighbours and the future of the Suez Canal. We believe these resolutions represent a constructive approach to these problems. We will actively participate in efforts to make progress on the lines which the Assembly has approved.

We have spent anxious days of late and I am sure you all share our anxiety. The present crisis has strained both the Western alliance and the bonds of the Commonwealth more than any other event since the Second World War. If we can use it as the opportunity to dissipate the black cloud which has hung over the Middle East these many years, the present danger and strains may prove to have been a price worth paying.

I have spoken at length about the momentous events in the Middle East, but I must refer also to the grave and tragic events which have led to turmoil and bloodshed in Eastern Europe. For the first time since the end of the war a real hope appeared, in the last two weeks, that some at least of the countries which have contributed so much to the civilization of the world might secure some measure of independence from Moscow.

In Poland, a form of national communism has been established which appears determined to demand as a minimum the right to develop along its own lines, and not according to a Moscow pattern. Not least encouraging was the release of the Roman Catholic Primate of Poland.

We were also encouraged by a statement from Moscow which said that the Soviet leaders were prepared to negotiate their relations with Eastern Europe on the basis of equality and non-interference in their neighbour's internal affairs.

Even before this announcement, the brave Hungarian people had risen to demand the freedom so long denied them. The Hungarian revolution was a passionate and significant outburst of national feeling, both strongly anti-Russian and anti-Communist. We rejoiced in the release of Cardinal Mindszenty and other religious leaders and we shared the hopes, as well as the anxiety, of our fellowcountrymen of Hungarian origin.

Today, these hopes seem to have been shattered. Soviet action has made a mockery of Soviet statements. According to the latest reports, Soviet armed might is being applied against the gallant and practically unarmed people of Hungary. Moscow has announced that it will crush the Hungarian revolt and re-impose its will on Hungary by brute force.

Last night, in an emergency session, the Security Council met in response to an appeal from the Hungarian Government and considered a U.S. resolution condemning Soviet military interference in the internal affairs of Hungary. The resolution was vetoed by the Soviet Union. The matter was then referred to a special session of the General Assembly which is now meeting and which provides the opportunity of condemning in the most forthright terms the callous disregard by the Soviet Union of the elementary rights of the Hungarian people.

Our aim is that the people of Eastern Europe should be free to choose their own form of government, a basic human right they have not enjoyed for years. The Soviet Union's resort to military force against a neighbouring nation is a most serious threat to the peace which we have solemnly pledged ourselves to preserve and defend in signing the Charter of the United Nations.

The one encouraging aspect of the events of the last few days has been the almost unanimous action of the nations of the world in endeavouring to implement their obligations under that Charter.

And, in conclusion, I wish to assure my listeners that all the members of their Government have been in full agreement at all times as to what should be done and what could be said and when it should be done and when it could be said. And I am sure that, if and when any action of ours requires, according to our practices, the approval by Parliament, that approval will be given in no uncertain terms.

Let us all hope that this approach to unanimity of men of good will of so many nations may help to realize that part of our daily prayer to a Power greater than any here below: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven".

s/c