



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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UN EMERGENCY SESSION ON MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

Statement by Mr. Sidney E. Smith, Secretary of State for External Affairs, in the House of Commons, August 23, 1958.

I welcome this opportunity to give to the members of the committee a report on the proceedings of the special emergency meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations which was adjourned on Thursday evening last.

I have prepared a statement for the information of the members of the committee. That statement will have to do with an account of the proceedings, and then I will attempt to offer some evaluation of what was achieved there, the part the Canadian Delegation attempted to play, and some ideas about the immediate and long-term future that the unanimously adopted resolution may have for the peace and security of the world.

I would begin, Mr. Chairman, by recalling very briefly why the emergency special meeting of the General Assembly was convened. As we all know, Mr. Chairman, the immediate reason for holding this special emergency meeting of the General Assembly was the fact that the Security Council on August 7 had under consideration complaints that had been made to the Security Council by Lebanon and by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan concerning interference by other countries in their domestic affairs.

It had, of course, been hoped in the period immediately prior to that meeting that some means of resolving the issue involved might be found through the calling of a Security Council meeting of a rather special character, at which heads of state might attend and at which heads of states, great powers and others, could get together, formally and informally to discuss problems of the Middle East. Many of us had in mind that at such a meeting at a high level other countries which were not members, which were not represented on the Security Council but which were directly concerned with the problems of the Middle East, would be given an opportunity to present their views concerning those problems.

I am sure, Mr. Chairman, that hon. members will recall the Canadian Government advocated the holding of such a meeting within the framework of the Security Council; but when it became apparent that further action in the Security Council was no longer possible, having regard to the lack of unanimity among the permanent members of the Security Council and the use of the veto by the U.S.S.R., the questions at issue were transferred to the General Assembly and there was called by the U.S.S.R. an emergency special session under the procedures envisaged in the uniting for peace resolution of November 3, 1950.

At that time the Canadian Government took the stand that since a solution of the Middle East questions was still to be pursued within the United Nations framework, we were prepared to support efforts within the General Assembly toward the finding of a solution of those problems.

Without going into detail of the underlying reasons for the transfer of those complaints from the Security Council to the General Assembly, I will simply say that the Soviet Union apparently decided that it might stand to gain by such a change of forum which would afford a better sounding board for propaganda steps; but I would remind the committee that the United States Government had placed before the Security Council a proposal that a meeting of the General Assembly should be held, provided that the discussions and deliberations within the Security Council broke down.

Main Statements

There were three main statements of position at the start of the general debate at the emergency session of the General Assembly, and those three statements afford a background for what happened in the next 10 days. The first statement was made by the Secretary-General on August 8, and I would interpolate here that by that statement on August 8 at the so-called pro forma meeting of the General Assembly the Secretary-General indeed set the tone for a constructive debate. He outlined on that occasion what he termed some of the basic needs for action in the region of the Middle East and suggested the desirability of finding a formula by which the affairs of the states of the region could be looked at very carefully and whereby they could take a more positive attitude with respect to the affairs of their neighbours.

Second, in that introductory statement he emphasized the need of finding a formula to permit a United Nations solution to the problems of Lebanon and Jordan. Third, he held forth on the need for a co-operative approach to the economic problems of the Arab Middle East. While he made no specific proposals, he succeeded on that occasion in drawing the attention of the 80 nations represented in the General Assembly to the important truth that the key to the problems of the region rests largely in the hands of the states of the area themselves.

The second important contribution made to the opening discussions at the emergency session of the General Assembly was made by the President of the United States of America. On August 13 he successfully attempted to translate some of the principles enunciated by the Secretary-General into positive proposals. Members of The House no doubt will recall having seen references to his six points in the press. He addressed himself in a positive fashion not only to the immediate but to the long term problems of the Middle East, and I would say here that in his address to the General Assembly President Eisenhower insisted at all times that any remedy for the anxious situation there and any solutions to the problems must be put forward and carried out by the United Nations. He took great care to say that he was not suggesting that the United States alone should carry out these measures, but rather would promote solutions of short term and long term problems under the aegis of the United Nations.

I would mention in this context that the President emphasized, as did the Secretary-General on August 8, the need to recognize the right of the peoples of the Arab nations to determine their own destinies, and he stated positively that no one could ever envisage solutions to their problems which would be permanent if they were in any manner imposed on the nations of the Middle East.

The third statement to which I should like to refer is that made by Mr. Selwyn Lloyd, the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, who promptly endorsed President Eisenhower's remarks. That is the background which set the stage for the very constructive and profitable debate.

However, I have a fourth statement in mind to which I should like to refer. At an early stage of the meetings of the emergency session of the General Assembly we had the draft resolution and supporting statements of the Soviet Union. Far from attempting to broaden or build upon the constructive approach that had been made by the Secretary-General, the President of the United States and the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, the Soviet resolution was essentially negative, dwelling solely on the question of withdrawal of United States and United Kingdom forces from Lebanon and Jordan.

The Soviet resolution disregarded other Middle East issues, such as the economic issue and the political issue, that were directly involved in the deliberations of the Security Council and would have to be taken into consideration if anything constructive were to come out of the emergency session of the General Assembly. Those were disregarded. The role assigned to the United Nations by the draft resolution of the U.S.S.R. would be that the Secretary-General would be given no opportunity to eliminate the underlying causes of tension in that area.

Furthermore, the accusing overtones of the statement by Mr. Gromyko when he presented the U.S.S.R. resolution, a statement which alleged aggression on the part of the United States and the United Kingdom, were clearly designed to be destructive, and held no hope or promise for reasonable and moderate discussion in the Assembly free of propaganda of the cold war.

The Soviet resolution, was the only one that at that time was before the emergency session of the General Assembly, and may I also say here that it had no prospect of adoption because the majority of delegations recognized that this emergency session of the General Assembly had been convened to do much more than simply arrange for the substitution of United Nations action for national action in Lebanon and Jordan.

That was the only resolution. By reason of that fact, the narrow and negative basis of the Soviet resolution, several countries wondered whether they could not offer to the General Assembly a resolution that would be more constructive, one that would be much more satisfactory, than the one that had been proposed by the U.S.S.R.; a resolution that would lay the ground work for a comprehensive consideration of the problems of the Middle East; a resolution that would use the Secretary-General as its instrument, the instrument of the United Nations in this particular field of trouble and excitement; a resolution that would lay the foundations for durable peace and stability in the area.

Canada-Norway Resolution

So, as so often happens, it fell to certain middle powers to undertake the difficult task of devising a resolution which would seek to attain this objective, while at the same time taking into consideration the many widely divergent points of view and conflicting interests. So Canada and Norway found themselves playing a leading role in presenting to the General Assembly a type of resolution that would be constructive and comprehensive as compared with the essentially negative one that had been presented by Mr. Gromyko of the U.S.S.R.

I seize this opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to pay a tribute to the devotion and the vision of the Norwegian Delegation, and I single out among that delegation the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Mr. Hans Engen, for his hard work, his tact, and his vision with respect to the formulating of a resolution that would accomplish those objectives to which I have referred. While that was going on and we were formulating this Canadian-Norwegian resolution there were other representatives particularly in the Afro-Asian group, who were active in drafting their own resolution which reflected their overriding reoccupation with the question of troop withdrawal. The Norwegian and Canadian Delegations, on the other hand, were striving, as I have indicated previously, for something much broader both in terms of Assembly support and of what would enable the United Nations to attempt something by way of a permanent settlement; a resolution that would enable the United Nations, through the Secretary-General and otherwise, to get at the basic roots of the Middle East problem and not to deal

only with the symptoms of that situation.

For our part we in the Canadian Delegation kept certain principles and objectives clearly before us throughout the whole period of intense negotiation which led up to the introduction of the Canadian-Norwegian resolution, with which were associated five other sponsors. In the first place-and I dwell on this point, Mr. Chairman-we in the Canadian Delegation wanted something which would command the support of the Arabs themselves; for it seemed obvious that there could be no durable settlement in the Middle East without not only the consent of the Arab countries but their active co-operation. It might have been possible-I think it would have been possible-for the Canadian-Norwegian resolution to carry the required two-thirds majority vote; but if the Arabs were opposed to that resolution we could not look forward to any success in seeking to solve the problems of the Middle East.

The second principle that the Canadian Delegation had in mind always-and I say again throughout the intensive negotiations-was that regional support alone, the support of the Arab countries, would not be enough or would not suffice without the complementary support and co-operation of the great powers, all of whom are committed in various ways in the disputes of the Middle East.

Third, the Canadian Delegation was intent upon finding a reasonable solution satisfactory to all the principal states concerned to cover the problem that had been brought forward on many occasions, the problem of troop withdrawal. This would have to be something which would give to the United Nations and particularly to the Secretary-General a central role without, however, confining the mandate to the narrow issue of troop withdrawal.

It would at the same time-I refer to the draft resolution-we hoped create a situation by which the United Nations would be enabled to exert a benevolent and constructive influence not only in the present but in the future in the Middle East, through helping to establish an economic institution for the collective benefit of the Arab states and to provide perhaps an economic undergirding-economics and politics are closely interlocked and intertwined-that would make for a new and happier basis for the relations not only among themselves but with the neighbouring states in the area. I say "among themselves". I am, of course, referring to the Arab nations; and I reiterate, not only to provide a new and happier basis for relations among themselves but also with the neighbouring states in the area.

We did not expect necessarily to have all these principles and objectives set forth in detail in the resolution. But what the Canadian Delegation wanted was to find a starting point from which the objective which I have endeavoured to describe here today could be pursued.

We were aware at the outset that we would have to rely on the ability and good offices of the Secretary-General to carry out both the letter and the spirit of the draft resolution. I will not attempt to recount in detail the long and intensive negotiations which went into the formulation of the seven power draft presented on August 18. We will look at the draft for a moment, but in a general way.

May I say that the draft was revised at least seven times as to context, which will indicate the care given to the particular views advanced by the various countries and groups of countries from time to time. At one time we believed we had a workable resolution, but then the attitude of the distinguished delegate from Jordan certainly surprised us and seemed to make it impossible for us to carry out the design which we had prepared for our resolution. Members of the committee may recall that the representative of Jordan in his statement to the General Assembly appeared to reject any substantial role for the United Nations within Jordan, and he seemed to oppose on behalf of his Government the presence of any United Nations representatives or any United Nations instrumentality within the territorial boundaries of his country with one possible exception and one had to look through a magnifying glass to discern that exception. However, that roadblock was removed within 24 hours, when the Jordanian representative subsequently modified his position.

The essential elements of the resolution which we co-sponsored may be described in these words. It reaffirmed that all member states of the United Nations should refrain from action which might impair the freedom, independence or integrity of any state, which might cause civil strife or subvert the will of the people in any state; and it called upon all member states to observe these obligations especially in the area in question. It requested the Secretary-General to make such practical arrangements after consultation with the governments concerned as were deemed necessary, and who could do this better than the Secretary-General? But he would have to do it on the spot.

May I refer for the moment to the U.S.S.R. resolution in this context. That resolution instructed the Secretary-General to go to Lebanon and Jordan for the purpose of supervising the withdrawal of troops, and nothing more. But our resolution, and I am not giving away any secrets when I say this, met with the entire satisfaction of the Secretary-General, although it imposed a great load upon him. In our final resolution the Secretary-General was to make such practical arrangements as he, in consultation with the governments concerned, might find would adequately serve to help in upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter in relation to Lebanon and Jordan in the circumstances obtaining at the time in those countries.

In our resolution the question of withdrawal of the troops of the United States and the United Kingdom was not the subject of a specific provision, but in the preambular clause it was noted by the General Assembly that declarations were addressed to the President of the General Assembly in the letters

written to him on August 18 by the representatives of the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom, in which they stated their willingness and desire to withdraw from Lebanon and Jordan respectively when the United Nations could take effective action to ensure, without regard to any regime or political party, stability and security in those countries.

Therefore the resolution sponsored by Norway, Canada and the five other countries did not, as I have said, expressly refer to withdrawals but implicitly made provision for the withdrawal of those forces by ensuring the mandate of the Secretary-General in the light of the United States and United Kingdom declarations as contained in the letters to which I have referred.

Finally, the seven power draft resolution-the Canada-Norway resolution-invited the Secretary-General to continue his studies with respect to the feasibility of establishing a stand-by United Nations Peace Force. Hon. members will recall that in this House during the earlier discussion on external affairs I expressed the view of the Government in that regard, and we welcomed the insertion of a reference to a stand-by force.

In the seven-power resolution there was also a statement to the effect that careful study would be given to the question of economic development in the countries of the Middle East, and it urged the Arab-countries in explicit terms to study the representations made to them by the Secretary-General, which were endorsed by the President of the United States. It also requested the member states to co-operate fully in the carrying out of those studies and to assist in implementing the more positive and operative parts of the resolution. Finally, it invited the Secretary-General to report on his activities in trying to establish agreement among the Arab countries, the first of such reports being required to be made to the General Assembly by not later than September 30, 1958.

While the seven-power draft does conform to the principles and does meet the main objectives which had governed the Canadian approach, we were at the same time conscious of the shortcomings of that resolution. I endeavoured to make it clear, on behalf not only of Canada but of the other co-sponsors, in my statement in support of the resolution on August 19, 1958 that we were open to constructive suggestions with respect to its improvement. I stated particularly and at once that if it were to serve to secure great power and regional support we immediately conceded that the resolution could not be considered by any country or group of countries as perfect. In the atmosphere which prevailed on Tuesday of this week however, this resolution undoubtedly offered the only common denominator which would warrant broad support as a formula for the reconciliation of conflicting interests.

I referred once again at that stage to the negative aspect of the other resolution which had been tabled by the U.S.S.R. I stated on behalf of Canada that our resolution could serve as a point of departure to reconcile some of the conflicting interests, and expressed the hope that it would serve as a basis for discussion. It must be remembered that we had been negotiating for nearly a week and nothing positive had been put before the Assembly in terms of a resolution. There was nothing of that kind on which to centre the attention of the General Assembly other than the unsatisfactory and negative Soviet resolution.

There was a general and intense will-we could sense it-in the meeting of the General Assembly to study anything which seemed to carry with it a plan for the future and not just a consideration past events. This resolution gave a new focal point on Tuesday afternoon for the attention of the representatives of the nations who were in that hall on that occasion. In my statement in support of the resolution I frankly admitted-and I say this for the third time in words other than those I have already used-the shortcomings of the text which was presented in the resolution, but I say without any conceit and without any lack of modesty that I have reason to believe that these observations by Canada's Delegation gave some hope for a common point of view coming of the Arab ranks.

Arab Resolution

While the debate on the Canadian-Norwegian resolution was taking place on Wednesday there occurred what was indeed a dramatic and sudden reappraisal from the Arab ranks as a whole, though I would say it was not entirely a surprise to some of us. This led to the submission of a new draft resolution to the Assembly by all ten Arab states, and this new development altered the whole basis on which the Assembly's discussion had been proceeding and led rapidly, on Thursday evening, to a unanimous vote in favour of the Arab resolution.

Canada, and indeed all the sponsors, and the United States, the United Kingdom, France and other great powers immediately expressed their willingness and happiness to join with us, the co-sponsors of the Canadian-Norwegian resolution, in this new development. Therefore it was particularly fitting in the light of the article in the Charter regarding the regional settlement of disputes, that it should have been the Arabs themselves who came up with this formula and provided a starting point for working out a solution to the issues which have wracked the Arab world and on more than one occasion have threatened the peace of the whole world. I am satisfied that the resolution meets most of the main objectives which the co-sponsors of the seven-power resolution had in mind and, in fact, it draws heavily on the letter and the spirit of the seven-power resolution which we had co-sponsored.

The Arab resolution contains three main elements. First, it reaffirms pledges already given by the Arab states that they will respect the systems of government established in the Arab states, and it calls on all members of the United Nations to conform with the principles of mutual respect for each other's integrity and non-interference in each other's affairs. This passage corresponds very closely in meaning to a similar passage of the seven-power resolution, but it expresses itself in terms which are more precise and which have a more particular relevance to the Arab and Asian world.

Second, the Arab resolution requests the Secretary-General to make such practical arrangements as would adequately help in upholding the purposes of the Charter in relation to Lebanon and Jordan in the present circumstances. These are the exact words of the seven-power resolution. But the Arab resolution, unlike the Norwegian-Canadian formula on withdrawal, refers expressly and exclusively to withdrawal in the text of the resolution in the words "and thereby facilitate the early withdrawal of foreign troops from the two countries". This is a more direct formula for dealing with the crucial question of troop withdrawals than had been attempted in the seven-power draft, and I would remind those who might wish to scrutinize too carefully the wording of this section-"and thereby facilitate the early withdrawal of foreign troops from the two countries"-that this formula was accepted willingly by the United States and by the United Kingdom.

May I quote to the committee the words of the Secretary of State of the United States when he said they would heartily endorse the Arab resolution. These are his words:

"The United States rejoices at the prospective assumption by the United Nations of the responsibility which we reluctantly assumed in an emergency and are eager to lay down."

He was followed immediately by the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom who stated in effect, that the quicker the practical arrangements contemplated in the resolution could be made on a realistic basis, and here I quote, "the sooner it will be possible for us to withdraw our troops". The Lebanese and the Jordanians accepted this Arab resolution voluntarily, and the United Arab Republic pledged its earnest support for the fulfilment of the engagements which were set out in the resolution relating to this matter. I shall return to this point in a moment.

The third element in the resolution consists of a repetition of the provision in the seven-power resolution inviting the Secretary-General to continue his study with a view to possible assistance regarding an Arab development institution in the economic field, and to provide for this under amicable political arrangements.

I say frankly that there are two elements which I would like to have seen included in the Arab resolution. In my statement in the General Assembly in support on the Canadian-Norwegian resolution I expressed the hope that there might be concluded an interlocking network of non-aggression agreements which would guarantee the independence and integrity of each and all of the Middle East states. I had in mind particularly the relations of the Arab states with their non-Arab neighbours.

That is not in the resolution. Members of this committee will be glad to hear, however, that from the remarks of some of the Arab leaders representing several of the Arab countries, made in support of their resolution, there is reason to hope that the cordial relations now established among the Arab states will be carried forward into their individual and collective relations with non-Arab states of the region. I look upon this as a result which can logically flow-and in some measure I expect it-from the activities which the United Nations through its Secretary-General will shortly be undertaking in this area.

The only feature of the seven-power resolution which failed to reappear in the Arab resolution was the reference to the United Nations peace force. That is not in the Arab resolution, whereas it was in our resolution. The text of that part of our resolution urged the Secretary-General to continue his studies with respect to the establishment of a peace force under the flag of the United Nations, and our purpose was to insist that this item be on the agenda of the thirteenth regular session of the General Assembly which will begin on September 16.

I must admit, however, that in a resolution dealing with the Middle East situation it is hardly relevant to put in a paragraph that refers to a United Nations agency that could operate not only in the Middle East but throughout the world. I assure hon. gentlemen of this committee, however, that this omission need not be regarded as significant. It has been definitely stated that it will be on the agenda of the thirteenth regular session of the General Assembly to which I have referred. To have pressed it at that time which I should like to have done on behalf of the Canadian Delegation, would have revived widespread anxieties concerning the use of force for the settlement of international disputes, even though that force would operate under the United Nations flag. Bringing in that extraneous matter might have delayed a solution which holds out the promise of a settlement of disputes in relation to a particular area. But I say this very carefully, Mr. Chairman; it is a matter which deserves extremely careful study.

I should warn hon. members of the committee that I was conscious of a deep division of opinion within the Assembly on this whole question of a stand-by force, a division that grew deeper and deeper during the succeeding days of the debate.

There are many practical problems to be faced, not the least of which will be a decision as to who should be the final arbiter of when political or military circumstances would justify the use of a United Nations armed force. This was impressed upon me as the debate proceeded. But I say again it is now under study by officials of the United Nations, and there will be an opportunity to consider this more carefully in the meetings of the Assembly that will begin next month. It is the armed aspect, the police aspect, of any proposal that would carry with it the suggestion that it should operate under the flag of the United Nations that worries many of the nations, small and great.

Unanimous Support

I look upon the Arab resolution as an evolution from and fulfilment of the seven power resolution with which Canada had been associated and one, moreover, which holds out better prospects for peace in the Middle East. Why? Because this formula and this resolution have come out of and were proposed by the Arab states themselves, and have won the unanimous support of all members of the United Nations including—and I would emphasize the importance of this—the approval of all the great powers. Mr. Gromyko expressed his intention to vote for the Arab resolution. He could not afford to do otherwise. He could not afford to vote against the Arab resolution; yet at the same time he fell back on propaganda and said, "This is really what we were after when we called for the emergency session of the General Assembly". And so we have regional support, indeed a regional genesis, of the Arab resolution and we have the approval of the great powers. It was a unanimous decision. That is one of the principles we in the Canadian Delegation had in mind when we began, in association with the Norwegians, to formulate a positive, creative and comprehensive resolution to present to the Assembly.

The Secretary-General will be leaving for the Middle East on Monday afternoon. I saw him yesterday at a luncheon, and I could say that despite the inherent modesty of the man he has a certain self-confidence with respect to the success of the role that he will play in the next one or two weeks in the Middle East that will be of assistance to him in translating into practical and successful action the mandate he has received from the Assembly. In accepting that mandate the Secretary-General is adding to the already heavy burden of responsibility which he has been called upon to assume in recent weeks, and none of us should underestimate the difficulties or delicacy of the new tasks we are asking him to assume. This is related to the solution of these problems.

The fact that his mandate is a broad one, leaving him wide discretion to consult and act on his own initiative as circumstances may require, is a tribute indeed to the confidence which the Assembly, speaking with a unanimous voice, reposes in

his skill and integrity. I am sure I reflect the opinion of hon. gentlemen on both sides of this House when I say Canada shares in that confidence in the Secretary-General. We must now hope most earnestly that the unanimity that was found in New York will be fully reflected in a co-operative attitude on the part of all states concerned in order that the United Nations, which the Secretary-General so wonderfully symbolizes, will be successful in bringing about a new era of peace and stability in the Middle East.

The unanimous adoption of the Arab resolution has been eminently satisfactory, but we now need deeds. I am not discounting my hope and indeed my expectation when I say that now is the time for deeds on the part of the states concerned to achieve a practical realization of that resolution. As the Secretary-General leaves New York on Monday afternoon I hope he will carry with him the thoughts and prayers of everyone who voted for that resolution.

I have referred to certain documents, resolutions and a declaration of intention, and for the benefit of hon. members of the committee I now propose to table them.

Nuclear Tests

I have one further reference to the present international situation. I would say, Mr. Chairman, that there were two events yesterday in many ways of equal significance to the unanimous adoption by the emergency session of the General Assembly of the Arab resolution. Those two events were the announcements on the part of the United States and the United Kingdom to the effect that they would be willing on October 31 to begin negotiations with the U.S.S.R. for an agreement that would provide for the cessation of nuclear tests. That would be a tripartite agreement or two bilateral agreements. I have expressed the hope that those agreements could be sealed under the United Nations.

I would remind the members of the committee, Mr. Chairman, that for several months the Canadian Government has urged that such an agreement should be entered into, and that is why we urged the holding of a meeting of nuclear scientists at Geneva. We had hoped that in a cool atmosphere the scientists could find a satisfactory arrangement with respect to the detection of nuclear tests which would lead and indeed point the way to a political agreement in that regard. No doubt Canada, geographically speaking, must be used to station the equipment or instruments or whatever techniques have been suggested by the scientists at Geneva, but as the Prime Minister said yesterday Canada will be eager and willing to do her part in implementing such an agreement. That is not disarmament, Mr. Chairman, but it points the way to disarmament. It prevents further armament, if you allow me to put it that way.

We had hoped, Mr. Chairman, that within the next few months it will be possible to convene a group of experts, such as those who met at Geneva in the last few months, who would study control techniques and control devices that would prevent the possibility of surprise attack. With that hope and the statements yesterday of the United States and the United Kingdom with respect to their proposals to the U.S.S.R. and the unanimous decision of the emergency general session of the General Assembly, I feel better about the international situation than I have felt since I became a member of this House. But words will not be enough.

S/C