



## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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### THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, was interviewed by Mr. Charles Lynch, CBC United Nations correspondent, in a television programme shown in Canada on November 25. Excerpts from the telecast follow:

....Mr. Lester Pearson, Canada's Minister of External Affairs, was the man who first proposed the United Nations Emergency Force. The General Assembly took up the item at once. It has been described as the action that saved the peace. Perhaps it is too early to say that, but at any rate the world is not at war. The United Nations Emergency Force has set things humming-hopeful things. The first units already are at their post in the Suez Canal Zone. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Dag Hammarskjold, has been to Cairo and back. The Commander of the Force, Major General E.L.M. Burns, has been here for consultations and has returned to take up his somewhat weird and wonderful command. For her size, Canada's role in all this has been remarkable. She proposed the Force. She is sending troops. She sits on the advisory committee for the Force. The Commander of the Force is a Canadian. Our guest has been a central figure in much that has happened, Canada's External Affairs Minister, Mr. Lester Pearson. Mr. Pearson, welcome to our programme. Could you tell us, Sir, has the United Nations Emergency Force worked out as you hoped it would when you first suggested it?

Mr. Pearson: It was less than three weeks ago when the resolution was introduced setting up this Force. During that very short time far more has been accomplished than any of us could have reasonably expected, although there are a great many difficulties to overcome yet. But what has been done I think has been really quite amazing as you have indicated yourself. The Forces from six or seven countries, including Canada, are on the spot now. Offers have been received from another nineteen or twenty which have not been accepted in the sense that they have been incorporated in the force, largely because work of preparation for

the absorption of forces has not yet been completed. On the whole, however, an amazing amount of work has been done.

Mr. Lynch: We have heard a lot here, and I believe in Ottawa as well, about these supposed Egyptian objections to Canadian participation in the Force that the Egyptians feel that the Canadians are too British for their tastes. Can you pin that one down?

Mr. Pearson: I know a great deal of interest has been aroused in that question and it is quite true that our own participation in the Force at the moment is not as we expected it to be. A fortnight ago when the Canadian offer was made to the Secretary-General it was of an infantry battalion, as you know. And that was accepted very gratefully by the Secretary-General and the Commanding Officer, who had been appointed by then and who is a Canadian (which would have some bearing on Egyptian objections). And we were told at that time that we would be performing a very useful service if we could move that regiment down to the sea coast, down to Halifax where it could be shipped on the "Magnificent", and steps were taken to do that at once. Then, as you know, the Secretary-General, went to Cairo. He there discussed a great many things about the Force, its functions and composition, with the Egyptian Government. That is quite understandable because after all this Force has to serve on Egyptian territory, and though I for one, and a good many others also, don't admit that the Egyptian Government could have a veto over the composition of the Force, I think the Secretary-General is very wise in consulting them and trying to get their co-operation. And when he did consult, he found that there was a reluctance on the part of the Egyptian Government to have such a large part of the infantry Force at the beginning consisting of Canadians.

Because the Egyptian Government thought it would create misunderstandings in Egyptian public opinion, which wasn't able easily to distinguish between various members of the Commonwealth, the Secretary-General, who has the decision in this matter, subject to the United Nations Assembly, was impressed by this point of view in respect of the immediate functioning of the Force. When he came back to New York, he discussed it with us and with General Burns who was here then. By that time General Burns had decided that the most important thing was to get his headquarters organized and his service troops out there --- signallers and that kind of thing -- and air transport, not only air transport for the Force, but the air component for the Force generally. And therefore he asked us if we would supply those units at once with the infantry to come along later when he felt it was possible to absorb them. By that time there shouldn't be any difficulty on anybody's part. I want to make it quite clear, however, that the participation of Canadians in this Force has been accepted by the Egyptian Government itself, that the Egyptian Government

does not veto the participation of any units in this Force and that this is quite clear with the Secretary-General. The question of when the Canadian infantry units come forward will be determined by the advice we get from the Commanding Officer sent on by the Secretary-General.

Mr. Lynch: Do you think it was unfortunate that a regiment with the name "The Queen's Own Rifles" which might be calculated to set the Egyptian hair standing on end, was chosen as the Canadian Regiment?

Mr. Pearson: Perhaps, but that is an honourable name for a Canadian regiment and, of course, while it may have lead to some temporary misunderstanding, we are not likely to change the names of our regiments for purposes of that kind.

Mr. Lynch: Canada seems to be playing a role in this matter of the Force out of all proportion to her population. Do you think she can carry it off and can we expect the Canadian role to continue on this level?

Mr. Pearson: I think we will be happy to participate in this force to the extent of our ability. I think Canadian opinion is behind this decision of the Government. This is an imaginative and important move on the part of the United Nations and Canada, which has been interested in the idea of a United Nations Police Force for many, many years, and has made previous proposals precisely to that end, will want to do her full part. We are also, as you have already stated, on the advisory committee which will have something to do with the determination of policy in regard to this matter and I think we will be glad to serve on that committee too.

Mr. Lynch: You said in the General Assembly that we have been very close to catastrophe over this Middle Eastern crisis. Is it too early to say that the crisis has been averted?

Mr. Pearson: It is too early to say. It did seem during that dramatic night when this idea of the Force was put forward in the debate, that the situation was very rapidly deteriorating and I think this idea of a United Nations Force going in has helped to hold the line. But it is far too early yet to say that the crisis has been averted and the dangers have been removed. We can't be too comfortable about that until we not only have brought about a cease-fire but we have also brought about a political settlement out there. Only then can you talk about dangers being over.

Mr. Lynch: What do you think the Soviet intentions really are in the Middle East?

Mr. Pearson: That's a very difficult question to answer categorically, but it seems to me that their actions have indicated that they would like to continue trouble out there.

They show no signs of a constructive attitude and while I do not think, for what it is worth, that they wish to precipitate an all-out war there or possibly any other place, nevertheless I see no signs that they would like to bring about a constructive political settlement to remove all the danger of conflict in the area.

Mr. Lynch: This African-Asian bloc about which we hear so much here, is it really as solid as some people seem to think it is?

Mr. Pearson: It is certainly not solid insofar as voting is concerned, as you must have noticed. They have been split on several very important votes and they do not vote as a unit. They discuss things together and they try to agree on decisions, just as we do in the Commonwealth.

Mr. Lynch: What about the Commonwealth? How has that been affected by this?

Mr. Pearson: We have had different points of view on this issue, as you know -- at least three different points of view, but we are meeting regularly as a Commonwealth and we are trying to iron out our differences and getting closer together. And I think we are closer together than we were when the Assembly opened.

Mr. Lynch: What about Canada's relations with the United Kingdom and the United States?

Mr. Pearson: Our relations with the United Kingdom have been close and friendly during this Assembly and our relations with the United States are, of course, equally close and equally friendly.

Mr. Lynch: Has that been the case throughout this crisis would you say?

Mr. Pearson: So far as the Canadian Delegation is concerned, that is true. But there hasn't been the same close and intimate relations between certain other friendly delegations as we would like to have seen.

Mr. Lynch: Thank you very much Mr. Pearson.