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No. 53/40 Complaint by Burma regarding aggression by the Republic of China

Text of a statement delivered on November 4, 1953, in the First Committee of the eighth session of the General Assembly by the Vice-Chairman of the Canadian Delegation, Mr. Alcide Coté, Agenda item 25.

When this question was under consideration by the First Committee in April during the seventh session of the General Assembly, my delegation expressed the opinion that the Nationalist forces under General Li Mi's command, numbering approximately twelve thousand, had maintained themselves in Burma for three years, contrary to international law, and had refused to withdraw or to be disarmed and interned. My government agreed that this placed the Burmese Government in an intolerable position. We expressed our sympathy for their predicament and our greatest respect for the restraint which had been shown in bringing their case to the attention of the United Nations only after several years of negotiations outside which had failed to produce a solution.

At that time we felt that there was a good chance of reaching an agreement with the Government of the Republic of China to use its influence to secure the withdrawal of these foreign troops from Burma. We expressed the hope that the Burmese Government would not press for a formal condemnation of the Nationalist Government of China. We were prepared to support a resolution deploring the activities on Burmese soil of the forces under General Li Mi's command and we felt that a practical solution could be reached by negotiation between the parties directly concerned with such assistance as third parties might be in a position to give.

On that occasion, the distinguished representative of Burma did not oppose the modification of his original proposal. In our opinion, he thereby exhibited the restraint which we hoped would lead to the peaceful solution of the problem. When the distinguished representative addressed this committee during the present session, therefore, it gave us considerable concern to learn that he was forced to report that "no solution has yet been reached". It disturbed us a great deal to learn from him that the air traffic bringing in supplies to the forces of General Li Mi had not ceased but that planes continued coming from Formosa through Thailand bringing in supplies. The evacuation schemes put up by the Burmese were apparently not being implemented. It gave us cause for most serious concern to learn that it had become necessary for the Burmese, after becoming convinced that nothing would come of the talks, to resort to bombing

the hideouts and strongholds of the Chinese Nationalist forces including Monghsat.

On the other hand, we have been pleased to note that, due to the efforts of the United States and Thailand, sufficiently acceptable assurances have now been given regarding the evacuation of some two thousand troops and their families. The Burmese have, therefore, ceased their operations against the foreign troops until the 15th of November, in anticipation of a genuine first step being taken by that time in solution of this problem. We agree with the distinguished representative of Burma that the evacuation of two thousand troops does not constitute a complete solution of the problem and that the Republic of China cannot disclaim further responsibility. We agree that there is a moral duty at least to disarm the remaining forces.

In expressing this attitude, we are not unaware of the immense difficulties of the situation. The original forces which entered Burma from Chinese territory have been allowed to increase in numbers and to continue occupation of Burmese territory encouraged and supplied during a period of several years. The distinguished chairman of the Chinese delegation has himself pointed out to us, in his intervention in this debate, that in dealing with General Li Mi he was convinced that he was "face to face with a fanatic". The fanatic General is apparently convinced that it is the mission of him and his army to save Burma and all of Southeast Asia. It is most unfortunate that this fanatic was kept in command so long and that a situation like this should have been allowed to develop and that steps were not taken during the time when it could have been dealt with more easily and effectively. Facilities were available but no action was taken.

The problem before us now, however, is how to deal most effectively with an intolerable situation which could threaten the peace of the whole area. It is the opinion of my delegation that genuine preliminary steps are being taken at the present time. We note with satisfaction that the distinguished representative of the United States has stated that the interest of his government will not cease with the evacuation of these several thousand troops and that consultations will continue regarding what further action might usefully be taken.

My delegation has been impressed by the conciliatory and helpful attitude expressed by the distinguished chairman of the Chinese delegation as well as by the patience and moderation of the Burmese Government. We have confidence that the efforts of the United States and Thailand will yield results. We feel that due to present developments it would be appropriate for this committee to note that the position taken by the General Assembly in April last still stands. We could note that effective preliminary steps are being taken at the present time. We could emphasize the necessity of finding a solution satisfactory to Burma and express the hope that Burma will be able to report to the General Assembly at an early date that our resolution of April has been satisfactorily implemented.

Note: Following is the text of the resolution adopted by the First Committee on November 5, 1953 by a vote of 50 in favour (including Canada), 3 against (China, Lebanon, Syria), with 6 abstentions (Egypt, Iraq, Saudia Arabia, Turkey, United States, Yemen).

Canada shared in co-sponsoring the resolution along with Australia, Brazil, India, Mexico, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

The Canadian representative formally moved the resolution for the adjournment of any further consideration of this question to a date not earlier than November 23. (November 16 had been proposed in the original resolution. In so doing Mr. Alcide Côté said this adjournment would give time for clarification of many points raised in the debate. By November 23 it should be possible to state that the evacuation had been completed. The committee would then be able to pass the item on to the General Assembly in a much better way than it could now.

Resolution adopted November 5, 1953:

The First Committee

Having considered the report of the Government of the Union of Burma contained in Document No. A/2468, the letter dated 26th October, 1953, on the same subject contained in Document No. A/C.1/L.69 and the letter dated October 29th, 1953, from the Chairman of the United States Delegation (A./C.1/L.71).

Decides under rule 75 of the Rules of Procedure to adjourn further consideration of this question by this committee at the present session to a date not earlier than November 23, 1953.



Notes: Following is the text of the resolution adopted by the First Committee on November 2, 1953 by a vote of 50 in favour (including Canada), 3 against (China, Lebanon, Syria), with 6 abstentions (Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United States, Yemen).

Canada shared in co-sponsoring the resolution along with Australia, Brazil, India, Mexico, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

The Canadian representative formally moved the resolution for the adjournment of any further consideration of this question to a date not earlier than November 23. (November 16 had been proposed in the original resolution. In so doing Mr. Alcides Costa said this adjournment would give time for clarification of many points raised in the debate. By November 23 it should be possible to state that the evacuation had been completed. The committee would then be able to pass the item on to the General Assembly in a much better way than it could now.

Resolution adopted November 2, 1953:

The First Committee

Having considered the report of the Government of the Union of Burma contained in Document No. A/2468, the letter dated 20th October, 1953, on the same subject contained in Document No. A/C.1/L.69 and the letter dated October 29th, 1953, from the Chairman of the United States Delegation (A/C.1/L.71).

Besides under rule 25 of the Rules of Procedure to adjourn further consideration of this question by this committee at the present session to a date not earlier than November 23, 1953.