Statements in the U. N. Security Council on the British-French Operation in Egyp
Special to The New York Times.
New York; Nov 1, 1956; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2002)
pg. 16

Statements in the U. N. Security Council on the British-French Operation in Egypt

Special to The New York Times.

UNITED NATIONS, N. Y., Oct. 31—Following are the texts of remarks to the Security Council today on the British-French attack on Egypt by the Secretary General, the Soviet and Egyptian delegates, and extracts from other statements:

Dag Hammarskjold, Secretary General

Yesterday morning — on the basis of the information then available—I would have used my right to call for an immediate meeting of the Security Council had not the United States Government in the course of the night taken the initiative.

Yesterday afternoon—on the basis of reports of the Anglo-French ultimatum to Egypt—I would have acted likewise had not the substance of the matter already been under consideration as one new aspect of the item proposed by the United States.

This morning, under my special mandate from the Security Council which still is formally valid, I would have directed an appeal to the Governments of Israel and Egypt to the effect of the second draft resolution of yesterday, had not the most recent developments rendered my mandate and such an initiative pointless.

This afternoon I wish to make the following declaration: The principles of the Charter are, by far, greater than the organization in which they are embodied, and the aims which they are to safeguard are holier than the policies of any single nation or people.

As a servant of the organization the Secretary General has the duty to maintain his usefulness by avoiding public stands on conflicts between member nations unless and until such an action might help to resolve the conflict. However, the discretion and impartiality thus imposed on the Secretary General by the character of his immediate task may not degenerate into a policy of expediency. He must also be a servant of the principles of the Charter, and its aims must ultimately determine what for him is right and wrong. For that he must stand.

A Secretary General cannot serve on any other assumption than that—within the necessary limits of human frailty and honest differences of opinion—all member nations honor their pledge to observe all articles of the Charter. He should also be able to assume that those organs which are charged with the task of upholding the Charter will be in a position to fulfill their task.

The bearing of what I have just said must be obvious to all without any elaboration from my side. Were the members to consider that another view of the duties of the Secretary General than the one here stated would better serve the interests of the organization, it is their obvious right to act accordingly.

Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., The United States

I simply wish to say that the United States thinks highly of the Secretary General, of his mind and of his character. We regard him as being both able and fair. We share the opinions that he has just expressed and his concept of his duties. If there were a vote of confidence in him here this afternoon, we would unhesitatingly vote our confidence in him.

Louis de Guiringaud, France

(Unofficial interpretation from the French)

In my capacity as representative of France, I should like to associate myself with the statement made by the representative of the United States. I believe that I can say the same thing in my capacity as President.

Arkady A. Sobolev, Soviet Union

(Unofficial interpretation from Russian)

May I begin by stating that the Soviet delegation trusts the Secretary General of the United Nations and supports him.

The situation in the Near East has grown sharply worse since yesterday's meeting of the Security Council. According to information just received, an invasion has begun —an invasion of joint United Kingdom - French troops in Egypt. Thus the Governments of the United Kingdom and France, from the threat of armed intervention in the Near East, have proceeded to the implementation of their proclaimed plan of occupation of the Suez Canal Zone.

The Soviet delegation expresses its deep sympathy with the people and Government of Egypt confronted with a severe ordeal. We have no doubt that the people of Egypt, which has gone through many trials, in this difficult hour as well will be able to defend its independence and freedom against any attacks from without.

The acts of the United Kingdom and France, which have committed aggression against Egypt, constitute a crude violation of their obligations assumed under the United Nations Charter. The Charter requires members of the United Nations to refrain from the threat of the use of force or the use of force in their relations with other states. France and the United Kingdom, in their acts against Egypt, not only threatened to use force but, at the present time, are carrying out aerial bombardments of Egyptian towns and landing their armed forces on the territory of Egypt, a member of the United Nations. That is to say, in violation of the United Nations Charter they are using force.

The responsibility of the Governments of the United Kingdom and France for the extremely dangerous situation created by their acts in the Near East is aggravated by the fact that they did not allow the Security Council to carry out its functions in connection with the maintenance of international peace as defined by the Charter.

Israeli Connivance Charged

The Governments of the United Kingdom and France have assumed the heavy responsibility for a serious aggravation of the international situation, committing armed intervention against Egypt at a time when Egypt was repelling Israel aggression. Attention has already been called to the fact that Israel aggression and the aggression of the United Kingdom and France against Egypt is being carried out according to a single plan prepared in advance. The Israel aggression was calculated to create conditions facilitating the seizure by United Kingdom and French forces of the Suez Canal.

The Governments of the United Kingdom and France are attempting to justify their acts by the statement that they are taking the Suez Canal under their protection and insuring freedom of transit through the canal. However, it is quite clear that this artificial justification is designed only to cover up the aggressive acts of the United Kingdom and France against Egypt.

Indeed, on the one hand, Israel aggression is instigated against Egypt and, on the other hand, the United Kingdom and France are striking a blow against the victim of that aggression, which is Egypt.

If the United Kingdom and France really wanted a just settlement of the Suez question, they have at their disposal other, peaceful ways and means. As is known, the Security Council in the past considered the question of the Suez Canal and prepared a plan for the settlement of the Suez question by peaceful means.

Under that plan, it would have been possible to secure a settlement of the Suez question which would have corresponded both to the national interests of the sovereign Egyptian state and to the interests of the users of the canal.

Sees Israeli Aggression

However, such a method was not to the liking of the United Kingdom and France. They preferred a forcible solution of this question, and precisely for that purpose they utilized Israel aggression against the Egyptian state.

The representatives of the United Kingdom and France here attempted to justify the aggressive acts by stating that the United Kingdom and France were attempting to put an end to combat and restore peace and quiet in the area. However, the behavior of the United Kingdom and France testifies to the contrary.

At the moment when the Security Council was considering the question of Israel aggression against Egypt and was attempting to find ways and means to reach a peaceful settlement of the conflict, the United Kingdom and France—by-passing the Security Council and violating the standards of international law and the principles of the United Nations—issued a crude ultimatum.

This ultimatum, incompatible with the dignity of a sovereign state, had the purpose of serving as a pretext for the seizure of the Suez Canal by United Kingdom and French troops. In that ultimatum the United Kingdom and France demanded that Egypt withdraw Egyptian troops ten miles from the Suez Canal.

In issuing such an ultimatum, the United Kingdom and France are, on the one hand, attempting to force Egypt to hand over to Israel troops territory to the east of the Suez Canal and, on the other hand, demanding—in violation of all agreements—that Egypt give up its protection of the Suez Canal.

Thus the United Kingdom and France are acting like colonialists used to dictating their will to the peoples of the past. But the time of the domination of this area by colonialists has long since passed. This action can only cause regret on the part of all peace-loving peoples in the

Council Action Demanded

The action of the United Kingdom and French Governments constitutes a crude violation of the United Nations Charter and of the dignity and sovereign rights of the Egyptian state. It constitutes a denial of the inalienable right of peoples to independence and freedom.

The Security Council cannot remain idle in the face of such a complicated situation. It must adopt immediate measures to put an end to the aggression against the Egyptian state and to restore peace and calm to that area of the world.

Concerned by the situation in the Near East, the Soviet Union delegation considers it necessary for the Security Council to condemn the aggressive acts of the United Kingdom and France, acts which have taken the form of bombing populated Egyptian territory and landing United Kingdom and French forces in Egypt.

We think that the Security Council should request the Governments of the United Kingdom and France immediately to withdraw their armed forces from Egyptian territory. If necessary, the Soviet Union delegation is prepared to submit an appropriate draft resolution to the Security Council.

The Security Council, which bears the main responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, cannot remain aloof; it must fulfill its direct and immediate responsibility. The peoples all over the world are waiting for the Security Council's decision.

Dr. Joza Brilej, Yugoslavia

I should like to say that the views expressed here by the Secretary General have the full support of my Government. On behalf of my Government, I should like to reiterate our appreciation for the efforts he has always tirelessly deployed in the cause of peace.

Omar Loutfi, Egypt

(Unofficial interpretation from the French)

At the very moment I am speaking, Franco-British aircraft have begun a bombardment of Egypt, the intention being to land armed forces. This can be inferred from a United Press report, which I shall read out:

"An air offensive by bomber aircraft under Allied command is at this moment being launched against military objectives in Egypt."

According to a Reuters report: "British planes carried out an air attack on the city of Cairo at 7 o'clock this evening."

France and the United Kingdom persist in their aggressive policy, which is based on obsolete concepts of colonialism. The appeals addressed by President Eisenhower, the personal messages which he was good enough to address to the President of the Council of France and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom have not altered the aggressive stand taken by these two states, permanent members of the Security Council.

The position taken by the overwhelming majority of the members of the Security Council who voted yesterday in favor of the United States draft resolution and the protests and positions taken by members of the Afro-Asian group have all remained unheeded and have had no effect whatever.

As I stated yesterday, the Egyptian Government, pending necessary measures being taken by the Security Council, will have no other recourse than to defend itself and to safeguard its rights against such aggression.

We shall persist in this stand, which is in accordance with the terms of the Charter entitling us to invoke the right of self-defense against invaders. This is the position taken by Egypt, which is fully in line with the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

Violation Held Unwarranted

It is quite clear that the unilateral position taken by the French and British Governments, which, as I pointed out yesterday, wish to settle by force a matter which has ben submitted to the Security Council, is a flagrant and unwarranted violation of the United Nations Charter.

Evidence of this will be found in the fact that yesterday, and for the first time, these two states exercised the right of veto, and thus prevented the Security Council from adopting a resolution which, in particular, called for an immediate cease-fire. No recourse to force can be had save in accordance with the principles and stipulations of the Charter.

France and the United Kingdom are assuming a tremendous responsibility before the entire world, which history will not forget. Although they know full well the meaning of war and the ravages which it brings in its wake, they do not hesitate to unleash such a war to defend obsolete colonial and selfish interests.

We have been taught by history that war does not pay and that it boomerangs against the aggressor. The last World War is a vivid example of this contention.

This armed and unprovoked aggression in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, committed by two permanent members of the Security Council, constitutes a serious threat to the United Nations, to world peace and to all mankind.

The situation is fraught with seriousness. The precedent is a perilous one.

The Charter has entrusted you, the members of the Council, with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. I ask you to assume full responsibility in this case. Condemn aggression. This is your right and this is indeed your duty.

Nasrollah Entezam, Iran

(Unofficial interpretation from the French)

I listened with great emotion to the Secretary General's statement. I would like to tell Mr. Hammarskjold that he has always enjoyed the entire confidence of my delegation and that this confidence has been increased by the courageous stand he has just taken. He will therefore have the entire support of the Iranian delegation, and I would even say of all countries devoted to peace.

Sir Pierson Dixon, Britain

I should like at the outset to associate myself with the expressions of regard for the Secretary General which have been voiced by various members of the Council. We have the highest regard for the integrity and impartiality of Mr. Hammarskjold.

As members of the Council will be aware, since our meeting yesterday evening it has been announced that the Egyptian Government regrettably has rejected the communication from Her Majesty's Government and from the French Government dated 30 October, and as a consequence Her Majesty's Government and the French Government have intervened in accordance with that communication.

I should like to say at once that I have informed myself on the true nature of the press and agency reports which have been quoted around this table in regard to military operations. I am authorized to say that the action which is being taken is strictly limited to military targets, primarily airfields, and I would draw attention to the fact that the civilian population was warned to keep clear of such targets before the operations started.

This intervention, as I hope to show in the course of my remarks, has as its overriding purposes the safeguarding of the Suez Canal and the restoration of peaceful conditions in the Middle East.

It is one facet of a highly complex and dangerous situation and it cannot therefore be considered, as the Egyptian representative in his letter contained in Document S/3712 invites us to do, as a separate and isolated development.

I do not, of course, for one moment accept the implications and insinuations in that letter. But in so far as this matter relates to an aspect, and a troubling aspect, of the general situation, naturally I am ready to discuss it.

Soviet's Troubles Cited

The Soviet representative told us yesterday, and he has repeated it again today, that this intervention was part of a long-prepared plot hatched by the British, French and Israeli Governments, designed to stir up trouble in the Middle East in order to restore old colonial empires, or words to that effect.

I think nobody will take this very seriously. I think we can all understand why the representative of the Soviet Union would wish to invent such stories in view of his own country's troubles in East Europe.

I need only make this simple point. It is common knowledge that over the past few months our relations with Israel have been very difficult and even strained. And why? Because of the strenuous efforts made by Her Majesty's Government to reduce the tensions around its borders.

Indeed, my colleagues will recollect that it was only a few days ago that the representative of Israel had some sharp words to say about the sympathy I had expressed for Jordan.

We have also heard the argument that, since the Government of Israel has agreed to keep its troops ten miles away from the Suez Canal, no threat to the canal now exists and the Anglo-French intervention is no longer justified.

But I must point out that the Israeli Government accepted the terms of the communication of the United Kingdom and French Governments on the assumption that the Egyptian response would be positive. But, as we know, the Egyptian response was unfortunately negative.

From all the information at our disposal, and we can claim, I think, to be reasonably well informed about affairs in the Middle East, we judged that the danger of a major clash between Israel and its Arab neighbors had become more imminent than at any time since the signing of the armistice agreements.

Wider Conflagration Feared

I am not, of course, in a position to reveal the full evidence, and I must ask my colleagues to accept that this judgment was well founded. It was in the light of this weighty judgment that Her Majesty's Government and the French Government took the grave decision that their immediate intervention was required to safeguard the Suez Canal and prevent a disastrous conflagration which might spread.

Whether or not our intervention will extinguish the conflict, as it is intended to do, is not dependent on us alone. It depends very much on the understanding, support of those members of the international community who are also concerned to see peace and order restored in the Middle East.

As there has regrettable been a considerable misunderstanding of the policies of Her Majesty's Government and the French Government in this matter, may I once again formulate what are the objectives behind our intervention. They are, in the first place, to stop all warlike action on land, sea and air as soon as possible; secondly, to enforce a separation of the belligerents; and thirdly, to protect the Suez Canal for the free passage of ships of all nations.

Any prolonged fighting along the banks of the [Suez] Canal would seriously endanger the lives and shipping of many nations of the world. Great Britain and France are the main users of this canal, and our vital interests would be endangered if free passage were interrupted. I need not go far back into the past, but I should like to recall that the circumstances in which the canal was seized were circumstances in which violence and resort to illegal methods were employed.

We have a right to defend these vital interests, and we believe, moreover, that in so doing we are also defending the interests of all nations, and there are many, whose economies depend on this great international right-of-way.

But although we have acted to protect our vital interests and those of other nations in this international waterway, our other purpose, as I have made abundantly clear, has been, and remains, to prevent an armed clash between Israel and Egypt leading to a general conflagration.

Our intervention is a temporary measure which we were obliged to take in the absence of any effective collective machinery for restoring peace and order in a matter of such extreme emergency.

Moreover, it is our firm intention to insure that the Israel forces now in the neighborhood of the canal should be withdrawn as soon as possible from Egyptian territory.

Let me state also with emphasis that we do not and could not condone any Israel action aimed at the occupation of positions in Egyptian territory. Let there be no misunderstanding about this. It is our view that Israel should withdraw its forces from their present positions as soon as this can be satisfactorily arranged. As I stated yesterday, we have no hesitation in regarding Israel's incursion across the Egyptian border as a violation of the armistice agreement.

Aggression Charge Denied

In the misleading version of events contained in the letter from the delegation of Egypt now before us, and in the statement made this afternoon by the representative of Egypt, my Government and the French Government are accused of committing an act of aggression.

This is a very serious charge to make in the Security Council, bearing in mind the provisions of Chapter VII of the Charter. We strongly deny such charges and do not think it will be profitable for the Council to discuss them. What does constitute and what does not constitute an act of aggression is, as we all know, a matter for debate.

But the matter which the Council should consider today and on which we ask for the Council's understanding support is a temporary intervention by the two Governments that are in a position to restore peace and order effectively and speedily in an area of the world where a major conflagration threatens us. Our intervention is not aimed at the sovereignty of Egypt, still less at the territorial integrity of Egypt.

Dr. Victor A. Belaunde, Peru

(Unofficial interpretation from the Spanish)

It is extremely gratifying for my delegation to note that the Secretary General not only considers himself the efficient head of an administrative organization, but also as a man who has received a mandate from seventy-six nations to see to it that the provisions of the Charter are observed. It would be inconceivable for the Secretary General not to have this consciousness of his mission. Failing such an appreciation of his task, he would not be able to carry out the many and varied tasks entrusted to him by the United Nations Charter.

We feel therefore duty bound at this stage to reiterate our complete and unswerving confidence in the Secretary General and we give our support to the concept of the Secretary General as to the duties of the Secretary General.

Second Statement By M. de Guiringaud

(Unofficial interpretation from the French)

I shall now speak as representative of France. It is with regret that the French delegation found itself compelled last night to oppose the adoption of the draft resolutions submitted to the Council. If we did this, it was because we thought that in the present case the Council could not only confine itself merely to the consideration of only one aspect of the problem, and that in our view it was necessary for us to take account of all the elements involved in the situation.

The French Government considered that the tension in the Middle East had become gradually so serious that it was no longer possible not to view the situation as a whole and in every aspect and to act accordingly.

We were confronted with an attack carried out by Israeli forces in the Suez Canal Zone and in the direction of the canal. We had every reason to believe that the military developments might go so far as to hinder free transit through the canal. The latest news received from Egypt, which referred to the positions of the Israeli troops, show how well founded our apprehensions were.

Experience has also taught us that, whatever the moral weight of the Council's decisions, unfortunately, in that part of the world, they had little practical effect, as the United Kingdom representative pointed out yesterday, for lack of force to implement them.

The French and British Governments considered, therefore, that a serious threat existed against the Suez Canal and that if rapid, effective and decisive action were not undertaken immediately, we were running the risk of seriously jeopardizing traffic through the canal for an indefinite period of time. Now, free navigation through the Suez Canal is of vital importance to most countries of the world.

Risk of Misunderstanding

The French and British Governments considered it their duty to take all necessary measures, even if these measures would be misunderstood at first by some of their friends, in order to guarantee and prevent any impairment of freedom of navigation through the canal. The French Government considered that the attack carried out by the Israeli forces was only an episode in the permanent state of hostilities which exists between Egypt and the state of Israel. It seemed to us that the time had come to take measures likely to prevent any repetition of these incidents.

These are the reasons underlying the action taken by the French Government in the Suez Canal area. In our view, this action is designed to assure an immediate settlement of the current incidents and to make it possible to find a solution very quickly which would be likely to eliminate the threats to the canal.

The French Government would stress the temporary nature of the presence of its troops in the Canal Zone and would stress also the fact that it in no way intends to infringe upon Egyptian sovereignty.

Like the United Kingdom Government, the French Government cannot accept the accusations that it has acted counter to the principles of the Charter. The decision was taken only with the desire to insure as effectively as possible the rstoration of order in the Canal Zone before it was too late.

In these circumstances the French Government is convinced that the purposes which it pursues are the same as those of the majority of members of the Council which we wish to reach, and we ask them to understand the motives which inspired it and to assist it in carrying out the action which, in agreement with the Government of the United Kingdom, the French Government has undertaken in the interests of the international community.

Second Statement By Mr. Entezam

(Unofficial interpretation from the French)

The only excuse they [Britain and France] had found for their act was a reference to the threats existing at present in the Middle East, and in particular in the Suez Canal area.

But where did those threats come from? If it was Egypt that had created a menacing situation, then, sir, may I ask, why did not your countries come before the Security Council and explain their case and seek a solution?

Then it would have been for Egypt to find an excuse to explain why she had sent troops and state the views it held in respect of the situation and justify the action it had undertaken. However, I believe that an excuse of that kind, coming from those who had themselves sent troops, is completely unjustified.

The second excuse that might have been invoked was that a threatening situation existed in the canal zone because of the aggressive action undertaken by one state. In that case, what did your countries do to stop that aggression? Your countries, sir, opposed the draft resolution that was submitted yesterday. Today, instead of punishing aggression, you have attacked the victim of that aggression. How would it be possible for your countries to find some excuse before world opinion?

My delegation stands for a peaceful settlement of these issues in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, avoiding all armed intervention and respecting the sovereignty of states. None of that has been done. No heed has been paid to those principles. The council must not simply listen to speeches, but must find practical means to bring an end to this unwarranted armed attack.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.