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Middle East conflict [1958] - July 22

SECCO documents

Verbatim Record of the 837-th Meeting

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UNITED NATIONS
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COUNCIL



GENERAL
S/PV.837
22 July 1958
ENGLISH

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SEVENTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 22 July 1958, at 3 p.m.

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| <u>President:</u> | Mr. ARAUJO | Colombia |
| <u>Members:</u> | Canada | Mr. SMITH |
| | China | Mr. TSIANG |
| | France | Mr. de VAUCELLES |
| | Iraq | Mr. ABBASS |
| | Japan | Mr. MATSUDAIRA |
| | Panama | Mr. ILLUECA |
| | Sweden | Mr. JARRING |
| | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics | Mr. SOBOLEV |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Sir Pierson DIXON |
| | United States of America | Mr. LODGE |

This record contains original speeches and interpretations. The final text, containing translations, will be distributed as soon as possible.

Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be sent in duplicate, within two working days, to the Chief, Meetings Service, Department of Conference Services, Room 1104, and also incorporated in mimeographed copies of the record.

AS THIS RECORD WAS DISTRIBUTED AT 0930 HOURS ON 23 JULY 1958,
THE TIME-LIMIT FOR CORRECTIONS WILL BE 0930 HOURS ON 25 JULY 1958.

Publication of the final printed records being subject to a rigid schedule, the co-operation of delegations in strictly observing this time-limit would be greatly appreciated.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted.

LETTER DATED 22 MAY 1958 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF LEBANON ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL CONCERNING:

"COMPLAINT BY LEBANON IN RESPECT OF A SITUATION ARISING FROM THE INTERVENTION OF THE UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF LEBANON, THE CONTINUANCE OF WHICH IS LIKELY TO ENDANGER THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY" (S/4007).

LETTER DATED 17 JULY 1958 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF JORDAN ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL CONCERNING:

"COMPLAINT BY THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN OF INTERFERENCE IN ITS DOMESTIC AFFAIRS BY THE UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC" (S/4053).

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Toukan, representative of Jordan, Mr. Azkoul, representative of Lebanon, and Mr. Loutfi, representative of the United Arab Republic, took their places at the Security Council table.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): At this morning's meeting the representative of the Soviet Union submitted for consideration of the Council certain amendments to the Japanese draft resolution, which have now been circulated in document S/4063. The Council will now continue its debate.

Sir Pierson DIXON (United Kingdom): I would like to comment briefly on the amendments which were moved this morning by the representative of the Soviet Union. While my delegation would see no objection to restoring the original operative paragraph 1 of the Japanese draft resolution in document S/4055/Rev.1, the remainder of the amendments moved by Mr. Sobolev do not prove acceptable to us. I am rather surprised, indeed, that he should have moved them, for they proceed from a basis which has already been rejected by the Council. The amendments, in fact, amount to a restoration of the central thought in the draft resolution presented by the Soviet Union last week in document S/4047/Rev.1. That resolution, of course, was rejected by an overwhelming majority of the Council. I would point out that it was not just the United Kingdom and the United States but eight members of the Council that voted against the Soviet draft resolution, and that only one member, the Soviet Union itself, voted in its favour.

We heard the representative of Lebanon tell us this morning that it was with some misgivings that his Government had decided to accept the Japanese draft resolution. Indeed, it is clear, I think, from the statements made in the Council yesterday that most of us regard the Japanese draft resolution as, in a sense, a compromise. It has been carefully drafted in order to take into account the views expressed by the representative of the Soviet Union. Certain paragraphs in the former United States draft resolution to which Mr. Sobolev took particular exception have been excluded and others have been redrafted. Yet, in spite of this, the representative of the Soviet Union now seeks to amend this compromise draft resolution by reinserting into it the central point of his own rejected resolution -- that is, a recognition that the landing of United States troops in Lebanon constitutes intervention in the domestic affairs of Lebanon, and a request by the Security Council to the United States to withdraw its forces immediately. As I say, that whole conception has already been rejected by the Council.

The amendments, furthermore, seek in their further elaboration to circumscribe the efforts which the Secretary-General will be making with a view to ensuring the territorial integrity and political independence of Lebanon.

Those are my reasons for being unable to support the amendments moved by the Soviet delegation this morning.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): Has any member of the Security Council a suggestion to make on the way in which we should proceed to vote on the Soviet amendments to the Japanese draft resolution? Shall we vote upon them separately or as a whole?

Mr. SOBOLEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)(interpretation from Russian): The Soviet delegation will not object if each amendment is taken singly.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): Since there are no suggestions in this connexion from any member of the Council -- although the Soviet representative has declared that he has no objection to his amendments being voted upon singly -- we shall vote on the Soviet amendments (S/4063) as a whole.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

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| <u>In favour:</u> | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| <u>Against:</u> | Canada, China, Colombia, France, Iraq, Panama, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America |
| <u>Abstaining:</u> | Japan, Sweden |

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): The result of the vote is 1 vote in favour, 8 against and 2 abstentions. Therefore, the Soviet Union amendments are not adopted.

(The President)

We shall now vote on the Japanese draft resolution (S/4055/Rev.1).

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Canada, China, Colombia, France, Iraq,
Japan, Panama, Sweden, United Kingdom of
Great Britain and Northern Ireland,
United States of America

Against:

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): The result of the vote is 10 votes in favour and 1 against. The negative vote being that of a permanent member of the Security Council, the draft resolution is not adopted.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: The Security Council has just failed to take additional action in the grave emergency facing us. However, the responsibility of the United Nations to make all efforts to live up to the purposes and principles of the Charter remains.

The Council now has before it two proposals for the calling of an emergency special session of the General Assembly. I cannot anticipate its decision on those proposals. However, time is of the essence, and whatever the outcome of the further consideration in this Council there is need for practical steps to be taken without any delay. That is the background against which I would like to make the following declaration.

In a statement before this Council on 31 October 1956 I said that the discretion and impartiality imposed on the Secretary-General by the character of his immediate task must not degenerate into a policy of expediency.

On a later occasion -- it was 26 September 1957 -- I said in a statement before the General Assembly that I believed it to be the duty of the Secretary-General "to use his office and, indeed, the machinery of the Organization to its utmost capacity and to the full extent permitted at each stage by practical circumstances". (A/PV.690, page 31-35) I added that I believed that it is in keeping with the philosophy of the Charter that the Secretary-General also should be expected to act without any guidance from the Assembly or the Security Council should this appear to him necessary towards helping to fill any vacuum that may appear in the systems which the Charter and traditional diplomacy provide for the safeguarding of peace and security.

It is my feeling that, under the circumstances, what I stated in those two contexts, on 31 October 1956 and 26 September 1957, now has full application.

I am sure that I will be acting in accordance with the wishes of the members of the Council if I, therefore, use all opportunities offered to the Secretary-General, within the limits set by the Charter and towards developing the United Nations effort, so as to help to prevent a further deterioration of the situation in the Middle East and to assist in finding a road away from the dangerous point at which we now find ourselves.

First of all -- the continued operation of the United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon being acceptable to all members of the Council -- this will mean the further development of the United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon so as to

(The Secretary-General)

give it all the significance it can have, consistent with its basic character as determined by the Security Council in its resolution (S/4023) of 11 June 1958 and the purposes and principles of the Charter.

The Council will excuse me for not being able to spell out at this moment what it may mean beyond that. However, I am certain that what I may find it possible to do, acting under the provisions of the Charter and solely for the purposes of the Charter, and guided by the views expressed around this table to the extent that they have a direct bearing on the activities of the Secretary-General, will be recognized by you as being in the best interests of our Organization and, therefore, of the cause of peace.

The Security Council would, of course, be kept fully informed on the steps taken. Were you to disapprove of the way these intentions were to be translated by me into practical steps, I would, of course, accept the consequences of your judgement.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): At this point of our debate, the President of the Security Council considers it his duty to make a short statement in connexion with a motion which will be presented at the conclusion of the statement.

The Security Council must consider four fundamental points which are all of the greatest importance. First of all, we must bear in mind the statement we have just heard from the Secretary-General of the United Nations in which he establishes that the United Nations cannot remain passive in the face of such an emergency. It cannot remain a mere spectator. The United Nations must pursue and continue to pursue all the possibilities which the Charter of the United Nations offers and which are set forth in the resolution of the Security Council adopted on 11 June 1958 to preserve and strengthen peace in the Middle East.

It has already been shown that the steps previously taken by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in full conformity with the Charter and with the authorization contained in the aforementioned resolution brought certain positive results which all the members of the Security Council as well as the interested parties to this conflict have accepted with gratitude as important and opportune.

There is another factor which the Security Council must bear in mind. It is well known by public opinion that the Parliament of Lebanon is to elect a new President at the end of this week. The election of a new President, who might be the result of a patriotic agreement between the Government party of Lebanon and the Opposition, would certainly clarify to a great extent this very difficult and complex situation.

(The President)

We cannot prejudge the result of that election. We know that the constituent Assembly will initiate its work on 24 July.

All of these circumstances would seem to indicate that the Security Council must, under no circumstances, close the door to a compromise solution which would remove the causes of this situation which have brought so much agitation to the Middle East.

There is a third and most important point which we must bear in mind at this time. It is very important, and perhaps even more important than the points that I have already referred to. The President of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union has already invited the Heads of State of the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, and India to meet with him and with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, as soon as possible, in a conference of the highest importance which would seek a solution that could be recommended to the Security Council of the United Nations so that we might once and for all put an end to these dramatic differences which are today interrupting the normal life of the Middle East.

We are aware of only some of the replies from some of the Governments who have been invited to this most important meeting to which I have just referred. The Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom has already publicly announced that the United Kingdom is disposed to take part in such a conference, but within the framework of the United Nations. The Government of the United States of America has made a similar statement, and it is a statement which we consider of the greatest importance. The Foreign Minister of Canada, in the important statement that he made during our meeting of yesterday, has declared that his Government, in view of the recent occurrences in the Middle East, considers that it is opportune to study these problems at such a conference on the highest possible level.

We are all aware of the fact that other foreign offices are today studying very closely the proposal which has been made by the President of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union. While, for obvious reasons, they have not all been invited to such a meeting, they certainly have a duty to their peoples and to the United Nations to express their opinion in connexion with the aforementioned invitation of the Soviet Union.

(The President)

There is another factor of the very greatest importance. The delegation of the United States of America and the delegation of the Soviet Union have, for different reasons, presented similar proposals to the Security Council. These proposals call for the convening of a special emergency session of the General Assembly of the United Nations so that the General Assembly might consider the problems of the Middle East.

This statement, which I have tried to make as brief as possible, will surely demonstrate to one and all that, first of all, the United Nations must continue to act effectively in that particular part of the world which is today threatening the peace of the whole world. Secondly, it points out that all the foreign offices of the world are certainly considering all these problems and all the possible solutions which might help us. You must excuse me if I become a little hard, but we cannot pass over in silence or fail to consider any one of the possible solutions which might be suggested.

It is for these reasons that I, as President of the Security Council of the United Nations have spoken to you gentlemen. In speaking to you I am trying to reach all of the peoples of the world, and especially the interested parties in this conflict in the Middle East, in the hope that they will do absolutely nothing and take absolutely no steps to worsen the already complex situation which exists in that most important part of the world.

I should like now to make my proposal. I propose the adjournment of this meeting, in accordance with rule 33 of our provisional rules of procedure, and I would point out that I, as President, would be in a position to convene the Council should any one of the members so request, providing this meets with the agreement of all members of the Council.

(The President)

The adjournment of this meeting of the Security Council has been proposed in accordance with our rules of procedure. Nevertheless, I am prepared to call on the representative of the Soviet Union.

Mr. SOBOLEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)(interpretation from Russian): I am fully alive to the fact that according to our rules of procedure a motion for adjournment is voted on without a debate. But I am confident that as President of the Security Council you will allow the members of the Council to have their say about what the Council is to do next. I am not proposing that we engage in a debate on the adjournment itself but that we should discuss what the Council should do in order to find a solution to the very important question which is on its agenda. I am grateful to the President for this opportunity which has been offered to me to speak.

If the proposal that the Security Council adjourn without setting a date for its next meeting is adopted, it would put the Council in a difficult position. The Security Council would disband without taking a decision. In other words, we would not know when the Council would resume its deliberations which, as the whole world knows, have manifestly not yet been completed and consummated.

There is a concrete proposal before the Security Council as to how the United Nations should act now that the Security Council has proved itself unable to perform its functions. Moreover, I should like to point out that under the suggested procedure, world public opinion would not know when the Security Council would finally take up the problems and proposals and take a decision on them, whether it would be tomorrow, the day after, at the end of the week, next week, next month or when. Nevertheless, events are running their inexorable course -- ominously so if I may be so bold as to point this out.

You mentioned, Mr. President, a certain event which is going to take place very soon, within the next few days. You invoked it as grounds for postponing consideration by the Council of the proposals before it. You very aptly recalled that within the next few days, according to the Lebanese Constitution, presidential elections are supposed to take place in that country.

(Mr. Sobolev, USSR)

But I would draw the Council's attention to another point, although all the members must surely know that. What are the circumstances under which these elections will be held? After all, it is no secret that these elections will not at all be held in the circumstances which are provided for under the Constitution of the country. I imagine that nobody will deny the fact that the Constitution of Lebanon certainly does not envisage presidential elections in the presence of foreign troops. I think that it is quite obvious to all that no constitution, including the Constitution of Lebanon, can provide for presidential elections at the gun-point of American troops or in the presence of atomic weapons, of which we have been hearing so much in recent times. That aspect of the case should not prompt the Council to do nothing and to adjourn, but, on the contrary, such a solution in Lebanon should encourage the Council, incite the Council, to act decisively, promptly and without delay.

Secondly, Mr. President, you also mentioned -- and again quite rightly -- the proposal of the Soviet Government which suggests a meeting of the Heads of Government of the United States, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, France and India, with the participation of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in order to consider the whole situation in the Middle and Near East and to explore a possible solution for the very grave and dangerous situation which is fraught with far greater dangers than is the case now or than we can contemplate now.

It is true that there is such a proposal, and it is true that to date there has been no reply to this invitation even though the preliminary date for such a session had been set as Tuesday, 22 July. But I can assure you, Mr. President, that this proposal is not at all designed and was not designed to slow down or impede the action of the United Nations in performing its functions and responsibilities with a view to restoring peace in the Near and Middle East. On the contrary, this proposal is designed to speed up the finding of such a solution, which would, on the one hand, satisfy the national interests of the peoples of that area and, on the other hand, lead to eliminating the threat that which weighs heavily not only on the Middle East and Near East but on the whole world.

(Mr. Sobolev, USSR)

That is why it is difficult for me to agree that this proposal of the Soviet Union should be regarded as an excuse for the Security Council or for the United Nations as a whole to stop operations, as it were. Such an interpretation, I submit, would not in any way accord with the intentions, **the noble** intentions, if I may say so, which prompted this proposal.

The Security Council had an opportunity today to perform its duty in maintaining peace and international security, a duty which has been placed upon its shoulders under the Charter and by the wishes of the peoples of the world. The Security Council had an opportunity to take a decision which would be in full accord with the Charter and with the expectations of all peoples. If the Security Council had accepted the Soviet amendments to the Japanese draft resolution and had approved the Japanese draft resolution as amended, that solution would have been the one which all peoples of the world are waiting for, and the results of that decision would have been the withdrawal of United States troops from Lebanon and the restoration of peace and quiet in Lebanon.

(Mr. Sobolev, USSR)

The result of such a decision would have been, I would say, a sigh of relief in all countries of the world, and yet the Security Council was once again paralysed because of the position taken by the United States and United Kingdom, who spoke up against the amendment which the Soviet Union tabled.

Sir Pierson Dixon said here that the votes of the United States and United Kingdom in this case were not a veto, but that is not so, Sir Pierson. Your vote and the vote of the United States cast against any proposal are just as much a veto as any other negative vote on the part of any permanent member of the Security Council, because you know full well that, irrespective of the votes cast by other representatives, your negative votes mean that this proposal or a given proposal will not be adopted in this Council. That is why the position of the United States and the United Kingdom decided the issue. It is their position which made the Council impotent to act as its responsibilities call upon it to act under the Charter.

If the Security Council is incapable of acting, then the Council has before it other proposals which open the door to the action of another major organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly, and I suggest that the Council would act wisely if it were to consider these proposals now and take action on them. That is what the peoples of the world expect the Council to do. I think that you cannot, you should not, adjourn this meeting of the Council without setting a date for its next meeting. Under these conditions, when the situation in the Near and Middle East continues to deteriorate hourly, the Security Council cannot defer for long taking a decision, and I think it would act wisely if it were to continue its work even tomorrow, not postponing it, but acting promptly, quickly and without delay.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): The Council has a procedural motion before it. The representative of Lebanon, however, has asked to be allowed to speak. The President is inclined to consider that no debate should take place on the motion which he himself has submitted in accordance with paragraph 2 of rule 33 of our provisional rules of procedure. However, in view of the role which has been played by the representative of Lebanon in our discussions, and in an endeavour to interpret the rule to the best of my ability, I am wondering whether we could not hear the representative of Lebanon and allow him to make the brief statement that he wishes to make if no member of the Council raises an objection.

Mr. AZKOUL (Lebanon)(interpretation from French): I thank the President as well as the members of the Security Council for granting me this opportunity to say a few words at the conclusion of these debates. The praiseworthy efforts that were made by the Council to find a solution to the problem of foreign intervention in the domestic affairs of Lebanon have unfortunately not been fruitful. I must therefore express the regret of my Government that those efforts, despite the intensity with which they were explored, could not lead to a positive and concrete result which would assist my Government in overcoming and dispelling the threat to its independence and integrity.

With your permission I must also express a second regret. This second regret applies to some comments which the President of the Council made and which were followed by comments from the representative of the Soviet Union -- remarks bearing on the presidential elections in Lebanon. I must express this regret with the greatest sincerity, since the President and all members of the Council know that what we complained about to the Council was, specifically, outside intervention in our domestic affairs, and that the question of the presidential elections was largely a domestic concern of Lebanon. I apologize to the President because I have such high regard for him personally, and great admiration. I regret that I was obliged to make this statement.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): We have before us the President's proposal to adjourn the meeting. Objection has been taken to this proposal by the representative of the Soviet Union, and we shall therefore vote upon it.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Canada, China, Colombia, France, Iraq,
Japan, Panama, Sweden, United Kingdom of
Great Britain and Northern Ireland,
United States of America.

Against:

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): The result of the vote is 10 in favour and 1 against. The President's proposal is adopted.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.