

33. Statement to the General Assembly by Secretary Rogers, 4 October 1971:

Secretary Rogers dealt at length with the situation in the Middle East and the prospects for the re-opening of the Suez Canal under a separate interim agreement between Israel and Egypt. He also mentioned the idea of proximity talks to that end. In his speech, the Secretary outlined a number of points for discussion. Excerpts:

The other place where progress is particularly required is the Middle East. Over several years, the United Nations has made determined and persistent efforts to achieve a lasting peace in this critical area. Nonetheless, the opportunities for success and the risks of failure remain in precarious balance.

Security Council Resolution 242, establishing the principles for a durable peace, was the first major step toward reason after 18 years of belligerency and a fragile, often violated armistice.

The cease-fire along the Suez Canal, now nearing its fifteenth month, was a second major step away from war.

It is time for a third major step toward peace.

For four years Ambassador Jarring has worked diligently to secure the agreement called for in Resolution 242. We support his efforts. We believe his mission remains the best path to an overall settlement and lasting peace. Our views on such a final peace settlement remain those expressed in President Nixon's foreign policy report earlier this year and in my statement of December 9, 1969.

Both sides to the conflict are committed to the fundamental and reciprocal principles to which the Jarring mission is dedicated - of living in peace with each other and of withdrawal from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict as set forth in Resolution 242. But, despite those commitments, a deep gulf of suspicion and distrust remains.

Each side is convinced of the justice of its cause. Each is concerned about its future security. A political settlement - based on mutual accommodation - could assure both. An attempt to achieve these ends by force will destroy all possibility for either.

This is why we believe that a third major step toward peace is essential:

- a step which can be taken now;
- a step that is practical;
- a step that could help to create the confidence and trust which are now lacking;
- a step toward full and complete implementation of Resolution 242.

That step is an interim Suez Canal agreement. That is why the United States has welcomed the interest of both Egypt and Israel in such an agreement. That is why, at the request of the parties, the United States has undertaken to play a constructive role in the process of arriving at an agreement.

In order to explore the positions of each side we have discussed concrete and specific ideas, designed to meet the legitimate needs and concerns of both sides. These ideas, given willingness and good intention on both sides, could become the basis for a break-through. They require further quiet discussions with the parties, an undertaking which we now hope can be expedited along the

following lines.

A first point is the relationship between an interim agreement and an overall settlement.

A fair approach should be founded on two basic principles:

- that a Suez Canal agreement is merely a step toward complete and full implementation of Resolution 242 within a reasonable period of time and not an end in itself;
- that neither side can realistically expect to achieve, as part of an interim agreement, complete agreement on the terms and conditions of an overall settlement. Those final terms and conditions will have to be worked out by negotiations under Ambassador Jarring's auspices.

A second point is the matter of the cease-fire.

Its maintenance is in the interest of all concerned. The ultimate objective, of course, is a permanent end to belligerency as part of a binding peace agreement. But such a commitment is not realizable in the context of an interim agreement. Neither would a cease-fire of a short duration be realistic. With goodwill on both sides, it should be possible to find common understanding between the parties on this issue.

Third, is the zone of withdrawal.

There are important strategic considerations involved in this key point. However, based on our discussions, we believe it should be possible to meet the principal concerns of both sides. I would offer only this brief observation: in the long run the most significant aspect of an interim agreement might prove to be that it established the principle of withdrawal looking to an overall settlement as a fact rather than as a theory.

Fourth, is the nature of the supervisory arrangements.

Both sides must have confidence that the agreement will not be violated, and that adequate machinery will be provided for prompt detection of any infractions. We are confident that ways reassuring to both Egypt and Israel can be found for altering and strengthening the supervisory mechanisms which have existed in the area for the past two decades.

Fifth, is the question of an Egyptian presence east of the Suez Canal.

The reopening and operation of the Suez Canal would require Egyptian personnel east of the Canal. It is understandable, too, that normal activities should be pursued in as much of the zone evacuated as possible. The question of an Egyptian military presence east of the Canal is one on which the parties hold opposite views. But here, too, the possibilities of some compromise are not negative.

Sixth, is the use of the Suez Canal.

The United States has long held that the Canal should be open to passage for all nations without discrimination. This principle is clear in the Security Council Resolution of November 1967. What is presently at issue is principally the timing at which this right could be exercised. We believe that an accommodation on this point is quite possible.

Therefore, because the parties have asked us, we intend to continue our determined effort to assist them in arriving at an interim agreement. This effort is imperative, we believe, because there is no

more realistic and hopeful alternative to pursue.

There are risks to peace; but the greater risk in inaction, unwillingness to face up to hard decisions.

A practical step now - an interim agreement - would make the next step toward peace less difficult for all the parties to take;

- would restore the use of the Suez Canal as a waterway for international shipping;
- would reestablish Egypt's authority over a major national asset;
- would separate the combatants;
- would produce the first Israeli withdrawal;
- would extend the cease-fire;
- would diminish the risk of major Power involvement, and
- would be an important step toward the complete implementation of Resolution 242.

The logic for such an agreement is overwhelming. If the leaders of the area would grasp this opportunity they would give new hope to their people for tranquillity, for progress and for peace.