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Indian-Pakistani War: UN Meets

The UN Security Council, meeting in an emergency session called by U.S. Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg, Council president for the month, voted unanimously September 4 to approve a resolution urging India and Pakistan to "take forthwith all steps for an immediate cease-fire" in Kashmir. The resolution (sponsored by Bolivia, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Malaysia, the Netherlands and Uruguay) also urged both nations to withdraw their forces to their "own side of the [1949 truce] line" in Kashmir and to "cooperate fully" with the UN observer group "in its task of supervising the observance of the cease-fire." The resolution asked UN Secretary General U Thant to report to the Council "within 3 days on implementation of this resolution."

Prior to the Council vote, Thant had filed a report with the Council on the Kashmir crisis. The report, based on information supplied by Lieutenant General Robert H. Nimmo of Australia, head of the UN Military Observation Group in Kashmir, confirmed that since August 5 "armed men, generally not in uniform, had been crossing the Kashmir cease-fire line into Indian Kashmir for the "purpose of armed action on the Indian side." Thant warned that the situation had "again become acute and is now dangerously serious," posing a "potential threat to peace not only between India and Pakistan but to the broader peace."

At a meeting September 6, the Council again unanimously approved a resolution calling on India and Pakistan "to cease hostilities...immediately...and promptly withdraw all armed personnel back to the position held by them [before] August 5." The resolution urged Thant to "exert every possible effort to give effect to this resolution" and to the one adopted September 4. In response to this plea, Thant told the Council he would leave for India and Pakistan in an effort to mediate (he left September 7). The Council decided to stay in continuous session to "determine what further steps may be necessary to secure peace and security in the area."

In debate prior to the vote, Pakistani representative Syed Amjad Ali had charged September 6 that "what Hitler and the Nazis did in Europe India has taken upon itself to do in Asia." Ali accused India of invading Pakistan as part of a goal aimed at "eventually crushing Pakistan" and abolishing the 1947 partition of British India. Ali said India had provoked Pakistan (a) by announcing in December 1964 that New Delhi would annex Kashmir and (b) by seizing 3 Pakistani posts in Kashmir's Kargil area in May (subsequently abandoned to UN forces by India in June).

In reply, Indian Foreign Secretary C. S. Jha said Pakistan should take "effective steps" to halt armed infiltration of Indian Kashmir. Jha accused Pakistan of attempting to alter the cease-fire line "by force." Jha insisted that Indian Kashmir war "part of the Indian Union" and that this "sacred right" cannot be taken from India "even by the United Nations."

A new report filed with the Council by Thant September 6 said the fighting was "broadening and intensifying." The report contained a reply by the Pakistani chief of staff to General Nimmo's "official protest and urgent request" for the withdrawal of Pakistani forces. The reply said: "Under the circumstances how can you expect us to unilaterally halt our purely defensive operations which are designed to forestall Indian aggressions?"

Thant left New York September 7 on his mission to India and Pakistan. In an airport statement, Thant said: "I have no illusions about this mission. The issues are infinitely complicated and difficult, and the situation out there is extremely grave." Earlier September 7 Goldberg had met with Thant and later had expressed hope that when Thant "appears in the subcontinent the voice of reason rather than force will prevail."

Thant had appealed for peace in messages sent September 1 to Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and Pakistani President Mohammed Ayub Khan. Thant urged them to accept the formula subsequently adopted by the UN Security Council September 4 and 6. Thant said the use of regular Indian and Pakistani army troops in the conflict reflected "the depths of my fears" that "an outright military confrontation between the armed forces" of both nations "is threatened." Thant said such a possibility "can have only the gravest implications for the peace of the world and for the lives and well-being of the inhabitants of Kashmir and the peoples of India and Pakistan."

In a reply to Thant made public September 4, Shastri said the "starting points of any steps towards the restoration of peace" would have to be Pakistani moves to halt infiltrations across the Kashmir cease-fire line, to withdraw the infiltrators and its own troops from Indian Kashmir and to take responsibility for preventing further infiltrations.

Ayub Khan was reported September 7 to have answered Thant that efforts by the UN, Pakistan and India to implement the UN resolutions on self-determination for the people of Kashmir was the proper way to end the conflict. Ayub complained that Thant's appeal was for nothing more than a return to the status quo, in which Pakistan's repeated demands for a plebiscite were ignored. Ayub charged that the UN observers had submitted opinions on the fighting without being certain about the identity of the armed men in Kashmir.

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