

United Nations Preparedness

Once again, the urgent requirements in Cyprus have illustrated the need to prepare in advance for prompt United Nations engagement in peace-keeping operations. This is a matter of contingent planning in United Nations headquarters by military and political staffs, of earmarking, training and equipping units and personnel in national defence establishments, of improving methods for processing United Nations requests for assistance, of standardizing operational procedures.

Canadian views in this regard have been stated so often that it is hardly necessary for me to do more than mention them. We have been pressing for the establishment of a military planning staff which could assist the Secretary-General and his political advisers in establishing and conducting peace-keeping operations. Canada has been exploring ways and means of making its own stand-by arrangements more effective.

Other member states share our views about earmarking and training troops for United Nations service. The Nordic countries and the Netherlands have firm policies in this regard. Recent indications are that more governments are thinking along the same lines.

Last autumn, the Prime Minister, taking note of these developments, suggested that it might be useful to pool experience and ideas for improving United Nations peace-keeping methods. Because of prevailing international political circumstances, this cannot be done at the present time through formal action by the United Nations. For the time being, interested members may have to accept that a permanent peace-keeping force cannot be established, although it has emerged as one of the ultimate goals of disarmament programmes put forward in Geneva.

Yet Cyprus and other situations already on the international horizon show that peace-keeping operations by the United Nations may be needed on very short notice. The demands are almost as varied as the situations which arise. In Greece, Kashmir and Palestine, military observers on the ground were needed. In Lebanon and Yemen, air observers played a key role. In Gaza and the Congo, an international force was essential. On many occasions, the United Nations has urgently needed mediators and conciliators.

The obvious conclusion is that the United Nations cannot stand still in its preparations for such operations. It has accumulated experience but some of the lessons have been learned the hard way. The underlying risk of escalation to war demands more effective preparedness.

Other Factors

Other internal problems need to be solved -- problems of representation, admission of new members, administration. Many of these have resulted from the rapid enlargement of membership. The process of adjustment has not kept pace with that significant development.