

Harassment of UN Personnel

There is one point upon which I must touch, however, and that is the regrettable circumstance whereby individual members and units of the United Nations force in the Congo have all too frequently found themselves in conflict with the forces they had come to the Congo to help. Sometimes these incidents have taken the form of obstruction or harassment of individuals or small units by clearly undisciplined groups of Congolese soldiers. On other occasions, as in the recent incidents at Banana and Matadi, what has happened has been, to some extent at least, a matter of deliberate policy and direction.

It is difficult for me, as a Canadian, to take a detached view of these matters. Canada's contribution to the United Nations forces in the Congo is small in terms of total numbers, but this fact does not make the life or the welfare of any one of these men a matter of any less concern to the Canadian Government and the Canadian people. It is not an easy thing to see these individuals endangered or humiliated, in what can only seem to be a completely pointless manner. In addition to Canada's understandable concern about its own forces, the incidents to which I have referred have grave implications for the United Nations as a whole. What is at stake here is not some obscure point of interpretation, but the fundamental meaning and dignity of the United Nations organization and the personal safety of its representatives in the Congo. It is Canada's view that a most unequivocal stand in this regard must be taken by the United Nations and that it must be unreservedly supported by all the members of this body.

Our strong view on this matter of adequate security for United Nations personnel in no way detracts from our recognition of limitations governing the use of force by United Nations troops in seeking to prevent violence and civil war as provided for in the Security Council resolution of February 21. This is an entirely different matter. Clearly, the United Nations is not a party to the conflict in the Congo, nor is it pitted against any faction there. It must by its mandate, as I have already noted, be impartial. It can employ force, under its mandate from the Security Council, but only as a last resort. This qualification must be taken to mean precisely what it says and must be applied in each case according to the circumstances. For the rest, the United Nations must make its best endeavour to bring about an appropriate understanding of its aims and objectives in the Congo, and to eliminate the misunderstandings which have been a tragic source of trouble in the past. My Delegation has urged repeatedly in the appropriate quarters, and urges once more, that these efforts be vigorously pursued.

Attacks on Secretary-General

I have said that it is difficult for countries and governments to take a dispassionate view when the dignity, the safety, and even the lives of their nationals seem to be being placed pointlessly in jeopardy. It is almost equally difficult to be forced to watch while the complex and painful problems which I have described are cynically used, by some, to mount a vicious attack against the fabric of the United Nations and against its dedicated Secretary-General. I can only say that it has bolstered my country's confidence in the soundness of the United Nations that this cynical attempt to exploit the tragedy of the Congo for extraneous and unworthy purposes has met with so little positive response.