

So soon after our Vietnamese experience -- and with many people saying "not over that road again" we find ourselves engaged in a multinational peace-keeping operation in the Middle East. Are we being consistent or are we just letting ourselves be talked into a dangerous, thankless and perhaps useless task.

We did remember our frustration in Viet-Nam, some of the recurring problems of the Cyprus operation and we certainly recalled the collapse of the old UNEF in 1967. We did not accept the call to participate in a new UNEF without careful consideration.

Experience over the years has led us to look for certain criteria that, in our judgment, should be met if a peacekeeping operation is to be effective and if Canadian participation in it is to be worthwhile. We have no illusion that, in this imperfect world, the criteria for an ideal peacekeeping operation will ever be met in full.

The criteria Canada seeks to apply when considering participation in a peacekeeping operation include certain points of a political nature, as well as others of a more technical kind. A fundamental point is the existence of a threat to international peace and security. There was no doubt of that in this case. Ideally, peacekeeping should be directly linked to agreement on a political settlement among the parties to the conflict. At least, there should be reasonable expectations that the parties will negotiate a settlement. The peacekeeping force must be responsible to a political authority, and preferably that authority should be the United Nations. The sponsoring authority should receive reports and have adequate power to supervise the mandate of the force. The parties to the conflict must accept the peacekeeping force and Canadian participation in it must be acceptable to all concerned.

The Secretary-General gave us formal assurance that the presence of a Canadian contingent would be acceptable to all parties, and especially to Egypt, since UNEF was to be deployed on Egyptian territory.

With respect to the question of a United Nations political authority, on this occasion the super-powers jointly proposed a peacekeeping force, and all members of the Security Council, except China, approved.

The Secretary-General set out as essential conditions that the force must have at all times the full confidence and backing of the Security Council, and that it must operate with the full cooperation of the parties concerned. This was approved by the Security Council and we felt more assured that the new UNEF was to be on a sounder basis than that of 1956. It was on that basis that we acceded to the Secretary-General's request and accepted our assignment on the force.

I do not want to give you the impression that Canada has played a central or key role in this Middle East crisis. But with other participants in UNEF we have helped to provide a breathing space that has been indispensable. It has permitted an exchange of prisoners of war between Egypt and Israel. It has enabled the Egyptians and Israelis, with Dr. Kissinger's remarkable and indefatigable assistance, to work out an agreement on the disengagement of forces and has provided the essential security in which that agreement could be implemented. This is, of course, only a beginning. Problems remain which have proven intractable