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THE UNITED NATIONS AT THE CROSSROADS

The following passages are from a speech delivered to the Canadian Club of Montreal on April 12 by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Paul Martin:

We are facing, at this moment, one of the most serious crises we have faced since the end of the Second World War. It is not a crisis which has come upon us suddenly. As Canadians, as members of the International Commission, we have watched that crisis build up in Vietnam over the past ten years.... It has reached the point where the maintenance of peace and security in that part of the world are seriously at issue.

In such a situation, the interests, of the international community are deeply engaged. We should be right to expect, therefore, that the international community would bring its influence to bear upon that situation. And the channel that comes to mind for doing that is, of course, the United Nations. For the United Nations is the highest expression of the collective will to peace of the international community....

VARIED ROLE OF UN

If we look back over the past two decades, it would be difficult to think of many situations of the kind which is now confronting us in Vietnam in which the United Nations has not had a part to play. In some it has served as an organ of mediation. In others it has acted to contain the conflict until a settlement could be negotiated at the political level. In others still, it has been able to muster an international presence to supervise and guarantee arrangements

freely entered into by the parties concerned. At the very least, the United Nations was able to keep open the channels, to provide a discreet venue for contact between the parties. And it was able to do these things because there is written into the Charter of the United Nations a collective commitment by all its members in all situations "to unite their strength to maintain international peace and security".

But here we are, faced with a situation that is full of the gravest risks, with a situation that is threatening to set back much of the patient progress we have made towards broadening the basis of international co-operation, and the United Nations has been powerless to intervene. It has been compelled to stand by in impotence while the situation deteriorated. It has been incapable of taking the action it should be taking to reverse the course of events in Vietnam, to bring the parties to the negotiating table, to prepare the ground for a peaceful and honourable accommodation. It has been incapable of doing these things because some of the parties concerned have refused to accept its credentials to act in this situation and because it is itself engaged in a crisis which has had the effect of paralyzing the general will for international action....

UN FUTURE IN DOUBT

What I am concerned with...is the future of the United Nations as an organization. Twenty years after the First World War, the League of Nations came to the end of its effective life. And it foundered on the rock of collective security. Are we going to allow, can we afford to allow, the United Nations to

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