

Clark Addresses General Assembly

The 44th Session of the UN General Assembly opened in New York on September 18, 1989. The following are excerpts from a speech delivered by the Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the General Assembly on September 26, 1989.

Mr. President, before beginning my main remarks I want to comment on two particular developments of relevance to the United Nations.

The first concerns the application of modern technology to the challenge of peacekeeping. In April of this year, Canada completed a comprehensive study, the purpose of which was to explore the utility of all forms of aerial surveillance to the peacekeeping tasks now before the international community. The conclusion of this study was that these overhead technologies — satellite or airborne — could significantly increase the efficiency of peacekeeping operations and related verification endeavours. This study will be submitted to the UN for its consideration.

I believe this is an important development both symbolically and as an achievement in its own right. It is the sort of pragmatic, concrete work necessary to allow the UN to handle its ever-expanding peacekeeping responsibilities more effectively. It also symbolizes one of the fundamental purposes of this Organization: harmonizing the wonders of modern technology to the tasks of peace-building and not war-making.

The second development on which I would like to comment is the readiness by Canada, if asked, to supplement the United Nations presence in Namibia by sending trained and respected police forces. Canada supported enthusiastically the idea that nations should help meet the urgent requirements for skilled policing in Namibia. We are ready to send members of our national force, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who have played such a decisive and constructive role in our own history.

They were, in effect, Canada's first peacekeepers. In 1874, in one of the actions which made us a transcontinental nation, the North-West Mounted Police marched west, across 100 miles to establish by their presence, the rule of law in the Canadian West. They brought order, not force, and by their conduct, established a respect that endures to this day, and has made them one of the most admired police forces in the world. They would carry to Namibia not only their skills, but their reputation as keepers of the peace.

This would be the first time in Canadian history that the RCMP has undertaken such a role. In order to be ready, their Commissioner asked for 100 volunteers. So far, 2,000 members have responded to that call — from a total force of over 14,000. We believe that Canadian mounties, who more than a century ago brought a universal respect for law and order to our own West, can extend that tradition to Namibia, as that new nation finally comes of age.

This is an unprecedented and challenging period in world affairs.

On the one hand, there is real movement on problems that, not long ago, seemed intractable — that is true in Southern Africa, in Indochina, in parts of the Middle East and, most dramatically, in East-West relations.

At the same time, the sense of crisis becomes more acute. Our climate is changing, bringing drought, or inundation, or threats to our very survival. New diseases develop. New technologies allow proliferation of the most deadly weapons. Terrorism becomes more widespread.

What is common about these problems is that none of them can be solved by one nation acting alone, nor by one group of powerful nations concerting their will.

In the past, we assumed the world could survive man's worst excesses. Now, in an age of suitcase bombs, and the AIDS pandemic, and holes in the ozone,

there is doubt about that elemental ability to survive. Doubt, but not despair — indeed the opposite of despair. What marks this period in world affairs is an activism and a pragmatism which yield surprising results. And they come together here, in this United Nations.

We are entering an era where the words of the UN Charter must cease to be goals to which we aspire; they must become descriptions of our common action. And the term "United Nations" cannot simply be the name of our institution; it must become a statement of our common purpose.

Who today can imagine a nuclear war in which there are winners and losers?

Who can envisage a conventional war in Europe which does not consume the prize?

Who can construct a solution to the debt crisis which does not involve compromise?

Who can foresee a cleaner global environment without international cooperation and joint action?

And who can imagine a resolution of the many crises in the developing world without a reasoned and productive dialogue with the developed world?

In the past, it was the adherents of unilateralism who were known as realists and the advocates of cooperation who were labelled idealists. I submit that the reverse is now the case. Cooperation is now the new realism, and pragmatism is the path to progress.

Much has been accomplished in recent months and years; much more remains to be done.

Within the East-West relationship, there is a new willingness to abandon sterile linkages, and to seek solutions to tractable problems even when other areas remain contentious.

This welcome attitude has invigorated this institution and brought hope to many conflicts and regions of the world. We encourage its continuance.

Arms control is now characterized by real compromise and give and take. Problems which are truly acute are being