PEACEKEEPING
AND THE
MANAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

by Henry Wiseman

Turmoil, conflict and war, whatever their local causes and consequences, affect most other regions of the world. Quite naturally "the world" seeks the means to avoid these conflicts, to stop them when they do occur; or at least limit or confine the violence and hostilities pending efforts by diplomatic means to peacefully resolve the disputes in question. The people in Central America, Sri Lanka, Southern Africa and the Middle East who are caught up in this turbulence seek external assistance to end hostilities. And the rest of the world fears that any of these or other conflicts could escalate into an international nuclear holocaust.

Such appeals to "the world" become appeals to the United Nations, which is directly charged and empowered, according to the Charter, to "maintain international peace and security." The record of the United Nations has been mixed. Much less has been accomplished than was expected from the organization when it was established in 1945. It has, nonetheless, given rise to the practice of peacekeeping which has demonstrated both achievement and promise.

Canadians have a longstanding history of moral and practical support for the United Nations. Approximately 77,000 Canadian servicemen and servicewomen have participated in UN peacekeeping and observer missions. It is therefore understandable that Canadians should now endeavour to continue along that road and also to try and improve the peacekeeping capabilities of the United Nations. Every year, at the United Nations, diplomats exclaim the virtues of peacekeeping. They implore all Member States to make better and more frequent use of this international mechanism in the management of conflict and the maintenance of international peace and security.

WHAT IS PEACEKEEPING?

Simply stated, **peacekeeping is the use of military personnel to monitor and supervise a cease-fire between belligerents.** The expectation is that once a cease-fire has been assured, the political climate will become more conducive to diplomatic negotiation and possible settlement through direct diplomacy by the Secretary-General or some other third party.

Peacekeeping was first introduced by the United Nations in the 1948 war between the newly-created state of Israel and the Arab world, although this was an observer mission only. United Nations Peacekeeping operations involving supervision of a ceasefire among belligerents did not take place until the Suez crisis of 1956. The United Kingdom, France and Israel had launched a combined attack on Egypt to prevent the nationalization of the Suez Canal (a vital oil lifeline to the West before the days of super tankers) and to stop Palestinian raids into Israeli territory. Occurring in the same weeks as the Soviet invasion of Hungary, the situation threatened to engulf other nations in the conflict.

At the Security Council, heated discussion and accusation characterized the search for a formula to solve the immediate crisis. Innovative Canadian diplomacy under the guidance of Lester Pearson resulted in the adoption of a General Assembly resolution to establish "an emergency international force to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities." Thus peacekeeping evolved as an important phenomenon in the international system. Six thousand men from ten countries were sent to "secure and supervise" the cease-fire and the withdrawal of foreign troops. Peace reigned on the Sinai for ten years. Then in 1967, contrary to the intent of arrangements reached in 1956, Egypt advanced its military forces into the Sinai toward Israel and demanded that the United Nations withdraw the Emergency Force. The Secretary-General agreed, and in the face of the rising crisis, war ensued.

Yet this creative, innovative mechanism of 1956 set the pattern for the introduction of ten similar operations over the next twenty-two years. Peacekeeping evolved into two basic types. Though they