

As the Prime Minister said on May 7, we are issuing invitations to a number of nations with experience in this field to attend an exploratory conference in Canada within the next few months. We are following up with detailed suggestions as to the pattern which such a joint examination of this problem might follow. Out of it we hope to obtain not only improved methods by which those nations can prepare themselves for peace-keeping service under the United Nations but some concrete conclusions which could be made available to other interested states and which would perhaps encourage them to set up stand-by units within their national forces.

Speaking of the United Nations, I know I can say for all members of this House that we are looking forward to the visit on Monday and Tuesday next of the United Nations Secretary-General, U Thant, who will address the combined Houses of Parliament in this Chamber on Tuesday morning. He will find us a nation dedicated to the Charter of the United Nations, as has once again been demonstrated by Canada's contribution to the difficult peace-keeping operation on the island of Cyprus.

I regret taking up all this time, Mr. Chairman, but I did feel that a comprehensive statement on these matters was due ... and there are two matters of current interest upon which I cannot refrain from speaking, particularly in the light of the assurances I gave several times this week in answer to questions on orders of the day.

Cyprus: Its Meaning for NATO

So much has been said in the House about Cyprus that I would not be justified in entering into a detailed recapitulation of the United Nations operation there, either in respect of the Peace Force or the concurrent endeavours of the Mediator. I would, however, like to give the House a brief account of how this matter was dealt with at the recent NATO meeting, where it became in fact one of the principal preoccupations of the assembled ministers.

I went to The Hague representing the only country at that meeting which is participating in the Force, although two days later the Foreign Minister of Denmark was able to announce that his country's forces had just arrived in Nicosia. And, of course, the United Kingdom is a member of the Force and is also a member of the NATO Council. But the United Kingdom had a force on the island long before the United Nations force was established, and did an essential part in dealing with a most difficult situation. It is the major component, with 2,700 troops, and it is bearing a heavy responsibility.

I went to The Hague convinced that advantage should be taken of the NATO meeting to impress upon the Greek and Turkish Foreign Ministers two points: first, the concern of all other members of the alliance over the weakening of the southeastern flank of NATO resulting from the deterioration in relations between these two countries because of Cyprus; and second, the need for the two countries to exercise restraint in their relations with each other as well as a moderating influence on the two communities in Cyprus in order that the peace keeping and political mediation of the United Nations might be facilitated.