



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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No. 64/32 PEACE KEEPING: SOME PROSPECTS AND PERSPECTIVES

Speech by the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the McGill Conference on World Affairs, Montreal, November 21, 1964.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am honoured to have been asked to address the closing banquet of this eighth annual McGill Conference on World Affairs. I recall with pleasure my attendance at your conference last year. I have also been impressed, over the years, with the contribution these conferences have made to Canadian thinking on issues of current importance in the field of international affairs. I want to say how much, in particular, I welcome the opportunity you have provided for members of the academic community and those professionally concerned with international affairs to meet and exchange their ideas and interpretations of these issues. I am sure there has been mutual benefit in that kind of exchange.

For this year's conference you have selected the theme "Disarmament and World Peace". As part of that theme you have asked me to say something about the concept of peace keeping. I think it is right that I should do so for two reasons: first, because peace keeping is perhaps -- as the introduction to a recently published staff paper of the Brookings Institution puts it -- "the most revolutionary development yet to occur in the field of international organization"; and second, because Canada has played an acknowledged part in the development of this concept and has participated in more United Nations peace-keeping operations than, I think, any other member state of the world organization.

The concept of peace keeping has evolved pragmatically in response to specific situations. It has not evolved along the lines envisaged by the framers of the United Nations Charter. Three examples will serve to illustrate the extent of the divergence:

First, the only explicit reference in the Charter to the establishment of United Nations forces for the maintenance of peace and security occurs in the context of action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression. As things have developed, however, peace-keeping forces have been called into action with the object of preventing trouble and they have invariably operated with the consent of the host country or countries.

Second, the part played by United Nations peace-keeping forces has been essentially impartial. That is to say, these forces have not attempted to identify themselves with either party to a conflict and have not attempted to enforce any particular political solution of pending problems.

Third, the peace-keeping operations of the United Nations have been dependent on the voluntary co-operation of member states in making contingents, supplies and transport available to the organization. That is because it has never been possible, for political reasons, to conclude the agreements envisaged in Article 43 of the Charter, under which military forces were to be placed at the disposal of the Security Council for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security.

The system contemplated in the Charter was, of course, based on the concept of collective security. And that concept, in turn, was predicated on great-power agreement and on the overwhelming superiority of military power derived from the forces of the permanent members of the Security Council. When it turned out that great-power consensus could not be established, it was inevitable that the system itself should prove unenforceable. Only on one occasion -- in Korea -- did the United Nations conduct an action to repel aggression more or less in accordance with what had been envisaged in Chapter VII of the Charter. But that was a special and unique situation, and I think we must accept it as a fact of international political life that, in the foreseeable future, the concept of peace keeping is likely to evolve in a substantially different direction.

I said a moment ago that the concept of peace keeping has developed in response to specific situations. Because these situations have varied in both nature and scope, it is difficult to arrive at any comprehensive definition of the term "peace keeping". If an attempt at generalization is to be made, however, I suppose it would be fair to say this:

First, peace-keeping involves the interposition of an international presence in one form or another.

Second, the object of peace keeping is, essentially, to prevent violence from breaking out or to contain and curtail it where it has already broken out. United Nations forces are strictly debarred from taking the initiative in the use of armed force and, indeed, may use it only as a last resort.

Third, peace keeping is designed to create or restore, as the case may be, an environment in which a peaceful solution of the problems at issue can be at least contemplated.

Fourth, while peace keeping is not itself a form of conciliation or mediation, it has been specifically coupled with mediation in some situations and has served to underpin the carrying out of mediatory solutions in others.

So far, peace keeping has been pre-eminently the province of the middle and smaller powers. One reason for this is that countries seeking a United Nations peace-keeping presence must be concerned to avoid the complications that could result from great-power involvement. For their part, the great powers would seem to have an interest of their own in letting the international community act in situations which, if not contained, might have the effect of extending the area of great-power confrontation. But if great-power acquiescence in peace keeping has been tacitly assumed, the extent of that acquiescence is still very much at issue. And it is an issue that is likely to confront us in critical form at the very outset of the General Assembly session which opens in New York in ten days' time.

The form in which the issue arises at this particular juncture is financial. In essence, the Soviet Union and its allies maintain that the Security Council alone can initiate, direct and prescribe the financial arrangements for operations to maintain the peace. They argue that certain peace-keeping operations -- those in the Middle East and in the Congo -- were not undertaken in conformity with the proper constitutional procedures as they see them, and that they are, therefore, illegal. That being so, the Soviet Union has refused to bear its due share of the expenses of these operations, and it has maintained that refusal, even in the light of an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (subsequently sustained by the General Assembly), which declares these expenses to be "expenses of the organization" payable by all member states. This is a situation which is naturally of concern to those who agree with the Secretary-General of the United Nations that peace keeping represents a vital step "toward a more mature, more acceptable and more balanced world order". What is at stake here is not merely -- or, indeed, mainly -- the solvency of the United Nations. What is at stake is a predictable United Nations capacity to intervene effectively in future situations involving peace and security. For it is obvious that the capacity of the United Nations to do so would be weakened if it were left to individual member states to decide, in each case, whether or not to contribute.

We have come a long way in evolving a meaningful peace-keeping concept in the United Nations context. I am confident in my own mind that the progress we have made cannot and will not be reversed. But this implies that some agreement can be reached on the financial issue of which I have spoken. Such an agreement, as I see it, must encompass both aspects of the issue -- the matter of past financial arrears and the working out of equitable financing arrangements for future peace-keeping operations. As far as Canada is concerned, we firmly believe that, except in those cases where particular circumstances dictate particular arrangements, the cost of United Nations peace-keeping operations should be regarded as an obligation to be shouldered in common by the United Nations membership. This is the objective towards which we have always worked and towards which we shall continue to work. We agree with the Secretary-General that a sound basis must be created "for providing the United Nations in the future with the sinews of peace".

Finance has, of course, been only one of the problems that has confronted the United Nations in mounting its peace-keeping operations. The provision of adequate forces and logistic support for those operations has been another. In the nature of things, the United Nations has had to rely on ad hoc

arrangements to meet each situation as it arises. Some countries, it is true, have set aside standby units within their regular forces, or separately recruited, to be available for service with the United Nations if required. This, has, I am sure, been helpful to the United Nations and will do something to mitigate the need for improvisation which has tended to characterize past peace-keeping operations and for which the United Nations has -- quite unjustly -- been criticized in some quarters. The fact is, nevertheless, that forces still have to be assembled at short notice, that these forces reflect differences not only in language and tradition but also in training, equipment and staff procedures, and that they have to be welded into an effective peace-keeping force under difficult and often delicate conditions in the field.

This is a problem which is not capable of any simple or immediate solution. As I have tried to suggest, no two peace-keeping operations have been exactly alike. By the same token, it may well be difficult to devise a method of planning that would take account of all situations calling for the employment of a United Nations force. Nevertheless, it seemed to us that there had been a good deal of experience accumulated in past peace-keeping operations and that there might be some value in correlating that experience and turning it to good account.

It was with that object in mind that the Canadian Government took the initiative in convening the conference which met in Ottawa from November 2 to 6. It was attended by representatives from 22 out of the 28 countries invited, most of them military officers. Major General Rikhye, the Secretary-General's military adviser, attended as an observer. May I say that I was much impressed by the high quality of those who were delegated to represent their governments at the conference. I took this as evidence of the importance which was attached to the conference by all participants.

The purposes of the conference have been much misrepresented in certain quarters. It was convened essentially to enable countries with experience in United Nations peace-keeping operations to compare notes, to identify and survey the technical problems that have been encountered, to pool our experience in meeting those problems and to see how, individually, we might improve our response to the United Nations in future situations requiring the services of an international force. There was no attempt made by the conference to reach formal conclusions or to chart any forward course of collective action. There was, likewise, no attempt by the conference to consider questions relating to the authorization, control or financing of peace-keeping forces. The conference recognized that these were questions belonging properly within the jurisdiction of the United Nations itself. And, finally, I want to make it quite clear that the conference did not discuss the earmarking of standby forces for United Nations service, though I have no doubt that the experience of those who have done so should be helpful to others who may decide to adopt such a course at some future time.

In making these observations I am concerned to put the conference in proper perspective. I am also concerned to deny allegations made in a Soviet memorandum which was conveyed to me on the eve of the conference. That memorandum alleged that the conference was designed to consider the earmarking of special military contingents for participation in United Nations peace-keeping

operations; that its objectives were "directly connected with the general course of certain powers aimed at using the United Nations in their special interests"; and that it envisaged the "creation of a military apparatus on a collective basis by a number of states members of military blocs with the aim of conducting military operations in the interests of this group of states under the cover of the United Nations flag". I have had occasion to deny those allegations before and I do so again this evening. They completely distort the intentions of the Canadian Government as sponsor of the conference and they impugn the good faith of those who accepted our invitation.

Although this was an informal, working-level conference, involving neither collective action nor collective commitments, I think the discussions fully justified our decision to convene it. If I were asked to summarize the results of the conference, I would say that it has achieved three things:

- First, it has helped to clarify and focus the appreciation of delegations of the practical problems involved in peace keeping;
- second, it has done something to improve the capacity of the participating countries to respond more rationally and more effectively to future appeals by the United Nations; and
- third, I am hopeful that the conference will have been instrumental in creating more understanding climate for the conduct of peace-keeping operations in the future.

There is no doubt in my mind that there will continue to be a need for peace-keeping operations. I say this in no spirit of pessimism or misanthropy but because our generation has witnessed great political and sociological changes which will take time to work themselves out and which cannot be counted upon to do so without some element of upheaval. I also regard peace keeping as part of the process by which the members of the international community have tended, over the past two decades, to organize their activities increasingly on a world basis. The focus of many of these activities has been the United Nations, and it is right and proper that the United Nations should also be the focus of our preoccupations with the problem of world peace. I am encouraged to think that the readiness with which countries have been prepared to call upon the United Nations to keep the peace is evidence of the extent to which that view is already shared. And finally there is the more distant prospect of a disarmed world. I need not remind you that both major parties to the disarmament negotiations have accepted the need for a United Nations peace force at that final stage of the disarmament process. As the joint statement of agreed principles to which they subscribed in 1961 puts it, such a force should be able to ensure that the United Nations "can effectively deter or suppress any threat or use of arms in violation of the purposes and principles of the United Nations". If that is a distant prospect, it does not diminish the current and crucial importance of strengthening the capacity of the United Nations to keep the peace. Only if this is done can we be sure that we are coming within reach of a more rationally ordered world society, which is itself a condition of a world without arms.