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PROSPECTS FOR PEACE KEEPING

An Address by the Honourable Paul Martin,
Secretary of State for External Affairs,
at Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts,
on November 17, 1965.

I am honoured, Mr. Chairman, by your invitation to speak here in the series of the Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Lectures sponsored by Radcliffe College and the Harvard-Radcliffe World Federalists....

This is an occasion, however, on which we are concerned less with the United States and Canada and our own familiar continental horizons than with world events and the role of the United Nations. No one who had any connection with Dag Hammarskjöld, or was at all aware of the great events in which he was involved, would, of course, need to be reminded of a man distinguished by great gifts of mind and character. I am glad, however, that so many universities have chosen to sponsor memorial lectures as a means of carrying on the public discussion of the organization of world society to which the international public servant whom we are honouring made so many brilliant contributions.

Dag Hammarskjöld made many of his most memorable comments on the problems of world security and welfare when he had to analyze intricate constitutional questions within the United Nations and delicate matters of international diplomacy.

I have chosen the subject "Prospects for Peace Keeping" because it leads us immediately into specific and difficult questions of policy concerning which generalities about support of the United Nations are not of very much help. I should like, as a member of the Canadian Government personally involved in decisions about these questions, to comment on what appear to me to be the fundamental questions at issue and to tell you of the action which Canada has taken or is advocating.

The questions now being debated in New York have to do with the responsibilities of the Security Council and the General Assembly for the initiation, control and financing of peace-keeping operations.

Since we tend to think of a great many activities of the United Nations as being devoted to peace, it might avoid misunderstanding if I defined, as carefully as possible, what these activities are. The United Nations has a number of means available to it to maintain or achieve international peace and security. I am not here concerned with enforcement action against an aggressor -- the Korea type of operation. Only the Security Council is likely to be able to carry out such action. I am not concerned either with procedures for peaceful settlement of disputes before they reach the stage of conflict. These procedures of conciliation, arbitration, mediation -- what we now call peace building -- do overlap with peace-keeping operations but they do not by themselves lead at present to any serious disagreement within the United Nations.

Between conciliation and enforcement there is peace keeping. I am referring to the United Nations Emergency Force in the Middle East and to the United Nations operations of varying kinds, with the most complicated titles, in the Congo, Cyprus, Kashmir, Lebanon and in other locations, which have either been terminated or are still under way. In such projects the essential aim of the United Nations is to interpose its presence in situations of conflict or potential conflict until longer-term solutions can be worked out at the political level. These operations have not been mandatory and were not meant to be coercive. The forces, groups or individuals manifesting the United Nations presence have entered the territory of the state concerned only with the consent of the authorities there. They have carried out diverse functions -- observation in areas of conflict, patrolling cease-fire lines and frontiers or assisting in the preservation of order.

It is with this peace-keeping sector of the United Nations' wide range of responsibilities that I am concerned. The dimensions of the problem we now face in this field are very great. Although there are developments from time to time which give hope of a solution, there is a continuing and fundamental disagreement about the role of the United Nations in the domain of international peace and security. The frustration and paralysis in General Assembly activities in the past couple of years and the possibility of a major confrontation over voting rights show how serious the problem has been.

At the present time the United Nations has an accumulated debt somewhat under \$100 million, resulting chiefly from the refusal of some members or the disinclination or avowed inability of others to pay their share of the costs of peace keeping. This debt presents serious problems for the United Nations but not because the amount is too great for the members as a whole to bear. So far as the money itself is concerned, we should remember that the Secretary-General calculated last year that the total expenses of the organization in 1964 -- including peace-keeping costs -- amounted to about a quarter of one per cent of the defence budgets of the leading military powers alone. The real problem is that two great powers, the Soviet Union and France, both permanent members of the Security Council, insist, from somewhat differing standpoints, that contributions requested from them for peace-keeping costs are either illegal or optional. There is disagreement about the principles which should determine an equitable sharing of the financial burden of peace keeping and, as a result, this burden is, in our opinion, unfairly distributed.

In commenting on the differing viewpoints and on the continuing need for peace keeping, I should like to emphasize one essential point. The United Nations can only with difficulty undertake important initiatives in areas of direct or major great-power interest. In terms of such interests, peace-keeping operations are most likely to be in peripheral areas. There are, however, degrees of remoteness. How remote, for example, is Kashmir from great-power preoccupations? If we are considering the nations allied in NATO and the Warsaw Pact, it is possible to say that in this area there is a balance of military power, a recognition of respective positions on certain matters such as German reunification or Berlin, with which the Security Council as such is not likely to deal. But Cyprus is of direct and continuing concern to members of the NATO alliance.

Outside the NATO-Warsaw Pact area, there are the complicated and changing great-power relationships involving Communist China. There are areas where the entry of new nations into the world scene, the recurrence of old animosities, conflicts of race and religion or economic and social instability could lead to threats to the peace of the world as a whole. These threats to regional peace could involve, with varying degrees of intensity, the great-power clash of interest. Whether we like it or not, our world has achieved a degree of common involvement in political and economic affairs which requires an attempt at common management. The Prime Minister of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, who can speak for a continent well aware of this fact, made the point vividly when he said that "all nations border on each other - no sea, no range of mountains; constitutes a barrier to events outside"....

The Security Council is still formally seized of 69 matters affecting international peace and security -- some admittedly dormant, but many containing the threat of serious conflict. One would have to be optimistic almost to the point of complete naivety to believe that the need for United Nations intervention will diminish. This is not a question of trying to solve all problems or trying to achieve universal peace overnight. It is a question of trying realistically to limit some of the risks to world peace in areas where United Nations action is a practical possibility.

It has never been assumed, of course, that immediate action by the United Nations would be desirable or possible in all areas where peace was threatened. There is not only the limitation already mentioned arising from great-power involvement. The Charter anticipates the possibility of action by regional agencies consistent with the purpose and principles of the United Nations. The United Nations and regional agencies have complementary roles to play and there is no doubt that these agencies can contribute effectively to peace both in conciliation and in peace keeping. The United Nations must, however, retain ultimate responsibility for all developments affecting peace and security. It might have to supplement regional action and it alone would be responsible for enforcement. The United Nations must be able to respond to all these needs.

From the consideration of need we turn to the consideration of interest and intention on the part of member states. Do most nations want the United Nations to go on with peace-keeping operations?

The most obvious answer to that question is that no government within the United Nations has, so far as I am aware, opposed the general idea of United Nations intervention of the type described. Not one of the peace-keeping operations which have been undertaken by the United Nations could have been initiated without the tacit support of the majority of the members and the active support of a significant number of states willing to contribute in terms of political negotiation, men, materials and money.

The difficulties of obtaining great-power agreement, the complexities of the local situations requiring peace-keeping action and the doubts of some members that they stood to benefit directly, may have affected the views of some governments which have not contributed much on the financial side. There are, however, important reasons of national interest which, in the long run, support peace keeping.

Dag Hammarskjöld pointed out, quite rightly, that it was the unaligned nations, those nations not protected by membership in some relatively stable power system, which would derive the greatest benefit and sense of security from a vigorous United Nations. We talk now of making a world safe for diversity, of having differing political systems, various regional alliances and a multiplicity of sovereign states exist together without the threat of annihilation, disastrous conflict or continual friction. This objective has evident appeal for newer nations, which are anxious both to preserve newly-found sovereignty against any rude intervention by force and to get on with economic development. The United Nations cannot give them any categorical assurances as to such conditions, but it is one institution to which they can turn for help of all kinds without commitment to blocs or political systems.

These calculations of national interest reinforce long-term support for peace keeping, so far as many states are concerned. In addition, the United States and Britain give peace keeping their active support, and a number of middle powers, of which Canada is one, are willing to use those elements of strength and security in their own positions to advance United Nations interests.

We come, therefore, to another fundamental question about peace keeping, that concerning its actual effectiveness on the spot. Here I should like to remind you of the very considerable differences between various types of peace-keeping action. The disputes over the financing of major operations, involving the movement of armed forces into the Middle East in 1956 and the Congo in 1960, have tended to focus attention on action of this type. We are, therefore, inclined to forget what has been done by groups of unarmed military observers or by other missions manifesting the United Nations presence under conditions of great tension. Peace keeping in Lebanon in 1958, for example, involved the very effective use of observers. The conception, execution and termination of the task showed how decisively the world community could manifest its presence in helping to achieve stability. Other observation and truce-supervision missions in the Middle East and Kashmir have rendered important assistance in ending hostilities.

Peace keeping involving the use of armed forces has presented special problems. There is now not much doubt, however, that multi-national forces under United Nations control can be mounted and despatched and can commence and carry through their specific functions with considerable efficiency. Hammarskjöld referred correctly to "possibilities for international organization which, once proven, cannot in future be disregarded". The critics of operations administered by the Secretary-General have probably been alarmed by the very speed and good order with which action can be taken. Even in the Congo, where conditions developed in a very dangerous way, rapidly getting beyond the point at which one might envisage effective peace keeping, the discipline and imaginative diplomacy exhibited by those acting for the United Nations was truly remarkable.

The long-term results of peace keeping naturally cannot be judged so quickly or so definitely. The United Nations Emergency Force remains in the Middle East. The Congo operation was concluded only last year. Cyprus is still in a dangerous state and the Kashmir issue has flared up again and broadened. Prospects for permanent stability in an area cannot be easily measured at short range. Peace keeping has not been expected, by itself, to solve basic problems leading to conflict. It is intended to prevent them from getting beyond the possibility of negotiation and diplomatic procedures and perhaps to introduce some lasting elements of stability and confidence into a situation. We must not be too surprised or disappointed when parties to a dispute are slow in working out a political solution. The United Nations is like an army which has committed forces to battle and secured some initial objectives with impressive but limited victories; it must still pursue a long campaign.

We must, of course, see peace-keeping techniques as being essentially diplomatic ones, used in harmony with the realities of power in the world, in order to achieve as much as possible in the way of order, peaceful change and the elimination of dangerous friction.

Considering the problem from this realistic standpoint, I would say that sending observer and truce missions to several areas of the world, placing forces in the Middle East after the Suez crisis in 1956 to prevent further fighting, assisting authorities in the newly-independent Congo in 1960 to establish order under conditions at times approaching chaos, and landing troops in Cyprus in 1964 to help prevent a civil war that might have led to an international war in a very sensitive area, were the only practical and positive decisions the United Nations could have made. These decisions, the follow-up action and the accompanying negotiation inside or outside the United Nations have almost certainly helped to avoid greater disasters. There may be much to learn from experience, but peace-keeping operations do offer promising techniques for the United Nations in its general role as an agent of international peace.

These are what seem to me to be the fundamental issues one must examine before commenting on the specific matters now in dispute or considering future prospects. There is very likely to be a continuing need for such operations. They are likely to enjoy fairly wide support. They can, in fact, be carried out efficiently and offer opportunities for durable settlements.

One might suppose, therefore, that in this field there was some hope of co-operation at all levels in the United Nations based on a common interest.

Unfortunately this is not the case. The dispute over the powers of the General Assembly in initiating, controlling and assessing the sharing of the costs of peace keeping has its roots deep in the history of the United Nations. It is not possible to review that history now. We can merely note that the United Nations has reached a very difficult point in its history; it has an accumulated debt, a patchwork of payment arrangements for operations under way and a constitutional crisis over responsibility for peace keeping.

Future developments in this field depend very much on the general international atmosphere, and particularly on the relations between the Soviet Union and the United States. They are, therefore, not easy to predict.

The Soviet Union believes that only the Security Council can take decisions on questions relating to the establishment, financing and use of United Nations forces. It is using all the arguments it can muster from the Charter and all its power and influence to make its point of view prevail.

The Soviet Union can impose a kind of financial veto and is doing so. It has, of course, made a very general commitment to contribute voluntarily to a fund to overcome the debts, in recognition of the fact that the majority of nations did not finally force the issue over the loss of voting power. I hope that it will make this contribution during the current Assembly session and that others also will help voluntarily to restore United Nations solvency. If the Soviet Union makes this contribution, however, it will undoubtedly extract as much benefit as possible from this act in trying to ensure that its views prevail in the future. If they do, then the Assembly would have little significant power in the peace-keeping field and the Secretary-General and the Secretariat, on whose prompt and impartial action so much depends, would be hampered seriously in their tasks.

Complete control of peace-keeping operations by the Security Council would not, of course, end all such operations or prevent any firm recommendations on world crises. The Council took a vigorous stand on the India-Pakistan conflict in September and the observation and truce supervision role of the United Nations in that area has been extended. Already, however, the Soviet Union is objecting to the follow-up actions taken by the Secretary-General to help arrange a cease-fire.

Clearly it would be undesirable if the Soviet Union were able to impose its more restrictive interpretation of the United Nations role on other Council members or on the membership as a whole. There are occasions when it is essential for the Assembly, acting through middle and smaller powers, to attempt as balanced a solution as possible.

The position of France is, of course, different from that of the Soviet Union, both with respect to motivation and with respect to compromise solutions which might be found. It is a rather conservative and restrictive position so far as the possibility of effective peace keeping is concerned. As a result, France seems unlikely to play a role in the field of United Nations peace keeping commensurate with its wide influence and contacts in world affairs.

The attempt of some permanent members of the Council to return to the assumptions of 1945 meets, of course, with the stubborn opposition of other permanent members and of many other nations. A great deal has happened in 20 years. The General Assembly, which now has a great many more members, has shown that it can act effectively and responsibly. It is most unlikely to override great-power interests. For one thing, the realities of economic and military power put important limitations on too ambitious schemes for United Nations action. But the diffusion of political power means that there are many areas in which middle and smaller powers should and do take a lead in international action.

These are the realities of the clash within the United Nations and they would seem to demand a compromise or negotiated settlement. In that settlement appropriate weight must be given to all relevant considerations -- the proper functioning of the Charter, the particular responsibilities of the permanent members of the Council, the interests and obligations of the middle powers which, in fact, are the major participants in peace keeping and the rights of the membership as a whole.

I have already spoken in considerable detail about fundamental questions at issue, and I do not intend, therefore, to discuss the various complicated formulas put forward for passive acceptance of certain decisions, for opting out of financial obligations or for sharing responsibility between Council and Assembly. These discussions and negotiations will go on for some months yet, probably until the 1966 session of the Assembly.

What I should like to do in this concluding section is to outline the essential points in the Canadian position. I may say that, on the important issues currently under discussion, we find ourselves very close to United States positions. I might also take this occasion to pay tribute to the way in which the United States, with all its other preoccupations as a great power, has given unstinting political support to United Nations peace keeping. Canada has taken part in most peace-keeping operations and can appreciate that, without the logistical and financial support of the United States, they could not have been established and maintained.

The Canadian Government has stressed that the first priority is to restore the United Nations to financial solvency. We have pledged a voluntary contribution ourselves, and hope that as many nations as possible will respond to the need. These voluntary contributions do not require commitment to particular theories about responsibility for peace keeping in the past or in the future. Overcoming the accumulated debt would be one important step towards creating confidence and defining an area of common interest from which we could try to reach a new understanding about peace keeping.

The Canadian Government has also proposed that the United Nations improve its capacity for prompt action in the peace-keeping field by preparing in advance for emergencies. Last November, a conference was convened in Ottawa with representatives of 23 countries which have shown special interest in peace keeping in order to discuss some of the technical and military aspects of these operations. The exchange of views and experience was helpful and of benefit to the United Nations. We should hope that, if agreement is worked out

on the constitutional issues, the Secretary-General would be able to take on this kind of advance planning and co-ordination. If this proves impossible, we would be ready to consider, with our friends, how best to carry on the work begun at Ottawa.

On the central issue under debate, Canada has given full recognition to the primary responsibility of the Security Council and, in particular, to the responsibilities of the permanent members for the authorization of peace-keeping operations. We have insisted, however, that the General Assembly should retain its residual rights in this general field of international peace and security, in case the Council cannot act effectively. We are convinced that there is a common interest which can be found by serious negotiation and defined for the guidance of the organization in the future.

We have also laid particular stress on the necessity of a broadly-shared responsibility for financing. If it becomes the rule, voluntary financing by limited numbers of member states will undermine the moral authority of the United Nations. To achieve the greatest possible political effect, a United Nations mission, observer group or force should represent the moral commitment of as nearly universal a group of nations as possible. We recognize the special problems of the less wealthy members and admit the difficulty of compelling a sense of universal obligation, but if the final effect of compromise is that a comparatively few nations make the real effort, financial and otherwise, to meet the need for United Nations action, then the success of the action will be prejudiced from the start.

Finally, I would point out that we not only recognize the primary role of the Security Council in international peace and security, but hope that the Soviet Union would do something to bring the United Nations back to the real hopes of its founders in 1945. It would be an indication of a significant desire for co-existence if that nation tried to give meaning to the concepts of 1945 in the context of the realities of 1965, even in limited areas of the world. If the Soviet Union really wants to look again at the Charter arrangements for assembling forces under the Military Staff Committee of the Security Council (an organ which has never functioned), then we and others would be glad to consider how such arrangements could be made. If the Soviet Union really looks forward to an international force protecting a disarmed world, then I cannot think of a project which governments -- or peoples -- would view more joyfully.

There is a condition, however, to our support. The condition is that discussion of such projects should not be used to confuse, impede or delay urgent peace-keeping action or the achievement of a firm understanding now as to legitimate Assembly powers. Let us eliminate the debt, find equitable continuing financial arrangements, and define some powers. There will then be ample further opportunities for co-operation.

The majority of member states, in deciding not to insist on a strict application of Article 19 about voting powers, respected the position of a great power which could not be compelled. They expected that the Soviet Union would seek a statesmanlike solution that would both protect its legitimate national interests and take into account the wishes of the majority with respect to United Nations capacity for peace keeping. They gave the Soviet Union the

benefit of any doubt as to its interest in peace, and they now await constructive Soviet suggestions. There was no general surrender to Soviet views, and obvious abuse of its position by a great power would call forth a vigorous reaction from others....

I agree with U Thant who observed in an extensive report on the subject this summer, that there is danger that much of the controversy will, at times, seem "somewhat academic in nature" if we confine it to fine points of Charter interpretation. It is the vivid realities of particular peace-keeping operations which we must keep before us -- the men, the organizational effort, the risks and the accomplishments and all the visible evidence of United Nations presence and prestige in troubled areas. The subject is not an academic one for me. I think of the Canadian troops I have visited in Cyprus, where they wear the blue beret of the United Nations and maintain an international presence in an area only too susceptible to violence. The world has experienced enough of the paralysis of fear and indecision and of annihilating war. It is good to see, in the operations I have discussed, evidence of courage, reason and civilized order.

There are many difficulties in undertaking such operations. Some could fail. Not every challenge can possibly be met. The advisability of acting in each situation must be considered most carefully in the light of our experience. But these words of caution could be used of any new and hopeful ventures in international co-operation or in the general progress of human society. Caution must not destroy our will for peace.

I recall the moving words of Dag Hammarskjöld when he spoke at a celebration in Williamsburg commemorating the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights. He spoke in terms particularly meaningful for an American audience about the growth of belief in the dignity of man. His words apply to all United Nations efforts to remove fear and support human dignity.

He said: "It is when we all play safe that we create a world of the utmost insecurity. It is when we all play safe, that fatality will lead us to our doom. It is 'in the dark shade of courage' alone that the spell can be broken."

We have always needed courage to do something new. We need courage now to act for peace.

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