



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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No. 64/29 Speech by the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, at the Dinner for Delegates to the Meeting of Military Experts to Consider the Technical Aspects of UN Peace-Keeping Operations, Ottawa, November 5, 1964.

** Paragraph delivered in French

Distinguished Delegates and Guests:

May I say, first of all, that it has been a pleasure and a privilege for Canada to act as host country for your meeting this week.

** We are very conscious of the honour paid to us by the presence here in Ottawa of so many persons with long and distinguished careers in the military and diplomatic services of your home countries. This is tangible evidence of the importance which our 23 governments attach to the peace-keeping concept and of our common desire to work towards the full realization of the peace-keeping potential of the United Nations.

We are also honoured by the presence of a representative of the Secretary-General. It has been a pleasure for us to have Major General Rikhye at this meeting in the capacity of an observer.

In some respects this meeting is a landmark on the road we have travelled towards a co-operative approach to the problems of international peace and security within the focus of the United Nations.

A few years ago a meeting of this kind would not have been possible. It is of some significance that today the employment of military forces for peaceful purposes under the auspices of the United Nations is recognized as filling a practical need in the conduct of international affairs, and those of us who look upon these peace-keeping operations as something involving our responsibility as members of the world community are bound to take them into account in our national planning.

This development is truly revolutionary in its character. It has evolved over the years in such a pragmatic and gradual fashion that we have still to appreciate its full implications for thought and action on the international plane.

Yet much has already been done to give shape and substance to this new concept of peace keeping - "the adaptation of the military art to the task of maintaining the peace".

I was interested to read a press report the other day that a point of view expressed in the corridors during the conference - certainly not on your agenda - was that United Nations peace-keeping operations may perhaps have been too successful, with temporary United Nations military solutions militating against permanent political solutions. If I may be permitted at this late stage to join an argument which perhaps never really took place, I submit that, as civilized human beings and servants of governments pledged to uphold the Charter, we can never accept the idea that a single death or the degradation and misery of a single family is not too high a price to pay for a so-called permanent political solution. We must not succumb to the temptation to assume that if you don't win, you lose; to see things in terms of black or white, or right or wrong, and to ignore the fact that there can be shades of grey. We must never lose sight of the fact that even if we fail to achieve all that we set out to do, and even if all we accomplish is perhaps to maintain an uneasy status quo or stabilize an uncertain demarcation line, this in itself can often be counted as a genuine contribution to the maintenance of peace.

The basic principles governing the use of United Nations peace-keeping forces were first developed under the guidance of Dag Hammarskjold. They have been patiently and painstakingly refined under Secretary-General U Thant. Experience has shown that it is possible to inject an international armed force into situations of the greatest danger and difficulty provided the force is used for clearly defined and restricted purposes, is fully under control of the organization, acts impartially at all times, and maintains its primary posture of arms for defence.

For those of us who have shouldered responsibility in these operations, there has been the problem of how we can best render this service and how we can most effectively respond to United Nations requests for assistance in future peace-keeping operations.

This in essence has been the subject matter of your meeting, the first of its kind to be organized.

Our thought in arranging this conference was to provide an opportunity to pool and share the experience which each of our countries has gained in contributing to successive United Nations operations. Each of us, it was hoped, would have much to learn from the experience of others.

The agenda you have been discussing was prepared primarily with operations of the nature and scale of UNEF, ONUC and UNFICYP in mind. I believe, however, that a good deal of the subject matter of your deliberations will prove to be of value also in the conduct of smaller, but no less onerous and dangerous, extensions of the UN presence in trouble-spots around the world. The operational and logistic problems that have been faced by UNMOGIP, UNTSO and UNYOM, for example, have, in their own way, been every bit as difficult as for larger operations. I should like to pay tribute to the selfless service and devotion

to duty of the soldiers and civilians who, over the years, have cheerfully accepted this thankless duty in the interest of peace.

I hope you will conclude your discussions tomorrow with the feeling that this series of informal meetings in an atmosphere that permits a frank and honest exchange of views has been worthwhile. Your agenda was a very heavy one. If this meeting has helped to stimulate and provoke thinking about these important practical problems it will have served its purpose.

The Secretary-General has pointed out that the United Nations must maintain and develop its active role in the keeping the pace. There is, in his view, no acceptable alternative method of keeping peace in the world to the steady and sound development of the peace-keeping functions of the United Nations. To quote U Thant:

"However improvised and fumbling the United Nations approach may be, we have to develop it to deal with the sudden antagonisms and dangers of our world, until we can evolve more permanent institutions...The pioneering co-operative efforts made by the United Nations to keep the peace ... constitute vital steps toward a more mature, more acceptable and more balanced world order. We must have the confidence and the means to sustain them and the determination to develop out of them a reliable and workable system for the future".

This meeting is a step in that direction. It has shown the value of consultation and co-operation among governments with a common interest in improving the peace-keeping machinery of the United Nations.

This meeting has also shown that it is entirely possible to discuss the practical side of United Nations peace keeping without diverging into the field of political controversy.

It was held with the understanding that there would be no commitment as regards future developments. The reason for this was a simple and obvious one - it is not for a conference such as this to take decisions on matters which can only be definitively resolved within the strict constitutional framework of the United Nations.

But this meeting has, I am sure, created a more understanding climate for future discussions of these problems. What is important is that, after many years of improvisation, there is an opportunity to make some progress on the practical side. It is a door to a more rational and systematic method of organizing, supplying and directing these operations.

On balance, I trust you will feel that this meeting helped to identify the problems and to make some progress towards their solution.

Perhaps the vital point is that what is most important about this conference lies beyond the meetings which conclude tomorrow. If the conference leads to other things, to better preparedness on the part of each of our governments, to an appreciation of the other's difficulties, to further consultation and liaison, then surely no stronger case can be made for it. It is this point which is at the heart of my impressions of your conference.

s/c