

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



CANADA

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 64/11 Text of a speech made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin, to the Ottawa Branch of the United Nations Association, at the International House, Ottawa, May 4, 1964.

I am grateful for this opportunity to discuss the Cyprus problem with the Ottawa Branch of the United Nations Association. There have been some misconceptions of the reasons for Canadian participation in the United Nations peace-keeping operation in Cyprus, and some misunderstandings of what the Canadian contingent is expected to do on that island. Consequently I welcome this opportunity to explain the situation, particularly because comment on our participation, on the actions of our troops and on the performance of the United Nations in Cyprus should be constructive if it is to serve the objective we all seek -- the restoration of order and tranquillity in that island and the maintenance of international peace.

The reasons for Canadian participation in the Cyprus peace-keeping operation may be summarized as follows:

- (a) The urgent need for international co-operation to preserve peace in Cyprus had become increasingly evident in the months and weeks preceding the United Nations Security Council resolution of March 4, 1964. The need for leadership in constituting a peace-keeping force became urgent in the days just before the Canadian decision of March 13, 1964, to contribute.
- (b) The future of the United Nations was at stake, because, if the world organization had not fulfilled its purpose and acted to maintain peace and security in Cyprus, confidence in the United Nations would have been seriously undermined.
- (c) Our participation in NATO obligates us to do our utmost to prevent conflict between Greece and Turkey and exposure of the Eastern flank of the alliance.
- (d) Cyprus and Britain are members of the Commonwealth, and we could not ignore the difficulties in which they had become involved.
- (e) The suffering of the people of Cyprus - the victims of tragic internecine strife that threatened to engulf the island - demanded the attention of all who believe in human decency and dignity.

Lesson of Two Wars

In two World Wars Canadians have learned at great cost -- and our Governor General very recently drew attention to that cost in terms of the gaps in our contemporary society -- that we cannot live in isolation. Canada's own security and vital interests are affected by conflict in any part of the world; hostilities, even of a small or limited nature, can easily escalate into catastrophic international conflict unless effective action is taken immediately to prevent, to confine or to limit them. The price of peace is constant vigilance and willingness to make sacrifices for its preservation.

As the situation in Cyprus evolved during the early part of this year, it became increasingly evident that, if international peace and security was to be preserved, international intervention on the island would be necessary. Finally, the Security Council of the United Nations recommended the establishment of a peace-keeping force for a period of three months "in the interests of preserving international peace and security, to use its best efforts to prevent a recurrence of fighting, and, as necessary, to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order and a return to normal conditions."

It soon became apparent that, unless the peace-keeping force could be established quickly in Cyprus, intervention by outside countries might occur and it would be difficult or impossible to control the consequences. The possibility of outside intervention had become imminent by March 13.

Unfortunately, however, there was no rush to the colours, to the blue and white of the United Nations, and some of the reasons for this were obvious -- the great powers, other than Britain, which was already involved as one of the treaty guarantors, could not participate. Some United Nations member nations were precluded from assisting because their armed forces were urgently required for their own self-defence, and some of the smaller nations lacked financial or military resources. Many members were unable to contribute because their armed forces were not adequately trained and equipped for the task.

Canada Shows the Way

Fortunately, Canada was prepared -- in every sense of that word -- to provide the necessary leadership. Canadians have demonstrated, by their support of peace-keeping action in Kashmir, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Yemen, the United Nations Emergency Force in Gaza, in the Congo, and now in Cyprus, their conviction that the United Nations must not fail in its vital peace-keeping function and their determination that Canada shall play its full part in these endeavours.

Canada was also conscious of other international obligations in the defence of freedom. NATO is one of the essential elements in that defence and we recognized the dangers to alliance solidarity of disunity, and of continuing instability in the Eastern Mediterranean. I would like to stress that peace-keeping activities under the United Nations complement the stabilizing influence of NATO in a host of areas where a military alliance cannot operate.

Canada is also devoted to the future of the Commonwealth, a unique interracial and intercontinental concept in which we have invested great hopes for the future. One of the characteristics of the Commonwealth relationship has always been that its members, without any binding commitment to do so, have been disposed to help each other in times of trouble. In this case two Commonwealth countries are involved.

I hope that Canadians will never be indifferent or insensitive to the sufferings of peoples, no matter how remote geographically the situation may be from Canada.

Cyprus is a country of great beauty, but it has had a turbulent and dramatic history. In his poem, Lawrence Durrell described the island as:

"an island of bitter lemons where the dry grass underfoot tortures memory"

Cyprus is a country of contrasts -- of forests and gardens, of desert and ruins, of gaiety and tragedy, of blue skies and seas, and, I regret to say, of black hatred. Somehow the two communities that live there must be brought to realize that their future lies in working and living together in peace, with tolerance and mutual respect.

The United Nations Force has now been in Cyprus for just under a month and the mediator is searching for a long-term solution to the problem of maintaining real tranquillity. This work has just begun and in dealing with the difficulties and differences over the best means of conducting the United Nations operation we must not lose sight of the disaster that might have devolved if the United Nations had not come forward in time of crisis.

Other Reasons for Canadian Lead

It is very important to note some of the other reasons why Canada was able to provide leadership in the United Nations at the time of the Cyprus crisis. For a number of years now, Canada has maintained on stand-by duty a battalion for possible service under the United Nations specially trained for peace-keeping duties, and this enabled us to respond quickly to the Secretary-General's request. Only a few other governments have made similar advance preparations. We hope that many more will do so, and we are urging that positive steps in this direction be taken in the immediate future to assist the United Nations in the fulfilment of its peace-keeping role.

In the Cyprus operation, Britain, Sweden, Ireland, Finland and Canada are contributing contingents to the Peace-Keeping Force. Australia and New Zealand are providing policemen to help prevent incidents. Austria has provided police and a hospital unit. A number of other countries are contemplating contributions, and 19 nations have so far pledged \$5.4 million to the cost of the operation. We are urging that the Force be internationalized to the greatest extent possible.

The Canadian Government's decision to contribute to the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus had the full support of Parliament, and was approved by Parliament. We realized from the very beginning that this would be a challenging assignment for Canadian troops. Indeed, during the debate in the House of Commons on March 13, our Prime Minister said that it might well be the most difficult which the United Nations had yet accepted and Mr. T.C. Douglas reminded the House that the Canadian people ought to have no illusions about the "hazardous, thankless and discouraging task" which was being undertaken.

Canadians can be very proud of the Royal 22nd Regiment and the Royal Canadian Dragoons who are serving in Cyprus. Our officers and men serving under the United Nations insignia in exceedingly demanding circumstances are bringing great credit to their country through their ability to act with just the right mixture of firmness and restraint.

Supporting Mediator

We must ensure that, by our actions in Canada and by our public statements, we are helping and not hindering the United Nations in the performance of its activities in Cyprus. The mediator, Mr. Sakari Tuomioja, has an extremely complicated task to perform. He is using his best endeavours with the representatives of the Cypriot communities and with the four governments directly concerned to promote "a peaceful solution and an agreed settlement of the problem concerning Cyprus, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations".

Fundamental to the solution of the Cyprus dispute is the restoration of normal inter-communal life on the island. We are attempting to further this end in two main ways: first, by the counsel we are offering to the leaders of the two communities in Cyprus and secondly by our contribution of Canadian soldiers to the United Nations Force who are themselves acting as conciliators at the local level.

All parties to the dispute must recognize that Canada has no special interest to pursue in Cyprus. As I said in the House of Commons on April 6, impartiality is the essence of the United Nations Force in Cyprus. We should not say or do anything at any time which could be construed as favouring one side or the other and thus make the role of our contingent more difficult or add to the delicate responsibilities now being undertaken by the mediator.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations announced on April 28 new steps for increasing the effectiveness of the United Nations Force on Cyprus so as to avoid if possible further outbreaks and improve the prospects of a settlement. The Canadian contingent plays an important part in these plans. In his latest report to the Security Council, the Secretary-General says in part

"In situations as complex as that now prevailing in Cyprus, the worst enemies are suspicion, fear and lack of confidence, breeding, as they so often do, hatred and violence. I believe that it may be useful, therefore, to make public at this particular time a programme of reasonable objectives which all parties should readily find it possible to support. I earnestly hope that on the basis of the

practical goals set forth in this programme, Cyprus, with the assistance of UNFICYP, may be able to move significantly toward peace and normality."

Conclusion

No one who is at all familiar with the situation in Cyprus has any doubt of the problems which lie ahead. We will inevitably face added difficulties, but the nations of the world had no responsible alternative except that of supporting the United Nations in yet another peace-keeping endeavour.

I can assure you that the active peace-keeping role of our troops in Cyprus will receive the strong support that it deserves from the Government and people of Canada. We are in daily communication with the United Nations in New York and the United Nations Force Commander in Cyprus through our Permanent Representative to the UN and our High Commissioner in Nicosia. We are taking every opportunity to make constructive suggestions to the United Nations.

One of the suggestions which we are now supporting strongly is that there be a high-level meeting between representatives of the Governments of Greece and Turkey at the earliest possible date. It seems to us desirable -- even essential -- that this meeting should take place in order to remove dangers of miscalculation or misunderstanding and to try to find some path out of the dark despair into which this unhappy situation might otherwise deteriorate. Such a meeting would not necessarily solve the Cyprus problem, but it might serve to avert the further involvement of other governments.

I know we can count on a continuation of the sober and realistic support which the Canadian people have given to the Government in connection with the task on which our Canadian troops have embarked in Cyprus. I am grateful for the understanding and sympathy with which the difficulties the UN faces are being received. I can assure you of the Government's determination to do everything in its power to help in bringing about a return to peaceful conditions in this troubled area. There is no other course open to men and nations of goodwill if we are to be true to ourselves, our country and the international community.

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