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SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE TWENTIETH YEAR OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Speech by the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the United Nations Association of Pittsburgh, October 20, 1964.

It is a great pleasure for me to be in Pittsburgh today to address this annual United Nations Day luncheon. I feel honoured by your invitation and particularly value the opportunity to give you a Canadian view of the progress and problems of the United Nations.

We are now on the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations. The infant organization of 1945 has shown a surprising capacity for sustained growth. It has survived, although there were times when many doubted that it would. It has shown resiliency in the face of frequent attempts by the Communist states to limit its function to that of a debating society. It has steadily grown in strength -- despite crises which seemed to threaten its very existence.

I ask you to consider this proposition -- that the United Nations now fills an accepted and honoured role in the conduct of international relations. It would be infinitely more difficult to keep the peace, to build up confidence among states, and to grapple with the great problem of under-development without the existence of an agency such as the United Nations.

There is a corollary to this proposition, however, and that is this -- if peace keeping by the United Nations has now become a practical necessity in the conduct of international affairs, then it must be provided for, planned for and paid for as a collective responsibility. The same proposition holds true of United Nations activities in the economic and social fields.

The Impact of the New Member States

The United Nations as an institution is currently passing through a period of profound change. Its internal structure is changing, as is the political climate within which it must operate. This is largely due to the great increase in membership that has taken place since 1945. It was my particular privilege in 1955 to be able to play a part in breaking the log-jam that had for many years frustrated attempts to give the United Nations membership a more truly representative complexion. Since then the way has been cleared for

the admission of many newly-independent states, especially from Africa. This has forced the older members to rethink their own role, but it has also given them an opportunity of cultivating new friends and developing new interests.

I regard this injection of new blood into the United Nations as both desirable and encouraging. I believe the new member states can be trusted to use their voting strength wisely and to make a constructive contribution to the future evolution of the United Nations. No one, after all, has a greater stake than they have in the success of that organization.

It is significant that the new African states strongly supported the United Nations' operation in the Congo through four long years, often marred by confusion, misunderstanding and bitterness though it was. The new member states also rallied to the side of Dag Hammarskjold -- that great proponent of a dynamic world organization -- when he came under attack from the Soviet Union. And it is fair to say that the new states have been among the most zealous in bringing about the fulfilment of the Charter aims of equal rights and self-determination of peoples and in encouraging respect for human rights without distinction as to race, colour or creed.

With the help of the new member states, I am confident that the United Nations will in time become a much more effective instrument for international co-operation. This process will require patience and a great deal of hard work. It will involve lengthy and complicated negotiations among the main power groupings. And it will demand of the affluent nations a much greater appreciation of the aspirations and needs of the developing countries which now compose two-thirds of the United Nations membership.

Uncertainties about the Future

Various uncertainties cloud the future of the United Nations. At a time when it continues to be confronted by serious international problems, the organization still suffers from internal weaknesses and from a lack of mutual confidence as between the various regional and ideological groupings within the compass of the organization.

Developments in recent years have also produced some severe shocks and surprises for the United Nations. Its response to some situations -- notably the Cyprus crisis -- has been neither as prompt nor as effective as the circumstances clearly warranted. Only a few states came forward with offers of contingents and money for the peace-keeping operation in Cyprus and it has not received broad support from the United Nations membership as a whole.

Surely all countries, including those of the Communist world, have a common interest in the maintenance of international peace and security. It seems equally obvious to us in Canada -- as I am sure it does to you -- that, when the United Nations takes action in the peace-keeping field, whether on the initiative of the Security Council or that of the General Assembly, its members share a collective responsibility to pay for the costs of these operations. Yet the fact is that the present operation in Cyprus is limping along on a system of voluntary contributions. This would not appear, on the face of it, to be a very happy augury for the future.

Somewhat paradoxically, there is at the present time more real interest in peace keeping, in the problems and techniques of United Nations operations and in the study of ways in which the peace-keeping capacity of the organization can be strengthened, than at any other time since the organization was founded. The current Canadian proposal for a meeting to exchange experience on the practical and technical problems encountered in United Nations operations has aroused great interest. Even the Soviet Union has come forward with its own proposals for strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations in the field of peace and security -- a clear indication that they appreciate that, in one way or another, peace keeping under the aegis of the United Nations is here to stay.

Two Major Problems

In the time at my disposal I propose to focus upon what we in Canada regard as two of the major problems now facing the United Nations and to indicate to you how these problems look through Canadian eyes.

Peace Keeping

I turn first to peace keeping. The problems in the peace-keeping field cannot be fully understood without some appreciation of their background. As you know, there are a number of key articles in the Charter dealing with the maintenance of international peace and security which, in effect, assume that United Nations military forces would be under the direct control of the Security Council and its Military Staff Committee and that their main use would be to repel aggression.

This part of the Charter was an early casualty of the cold war. It has never been put into practice, with the exception of Korea, because the great powers disagreed on the forces to be raised, the size of the units each would contribute and the military bases which the projected United Nations force would use.

The whole development of peace keeping under the United Nations has followed a different pattern. The concept of peace-keeping operations, in which the force acts with the consent of the country concerned to contain violence and restore normal conditions conducive to a peaceful settlement of the problem at issue, has evolved despite the failure of the collective security system envisaged in Chapter VII of the Charter. Thus, we have seen the use of an international police force in one situation, an observer or truce supervisory group in another, and a United Nations presence or good-offices mission to fit yet another set of circumstances.

This new approach to the use of military forces to keep the peace has opened up fresh possibilities for constructive international action. It has, however, also brought new, fresh problems in its wake. One result has been that each United Nations peace-keeping force has had to be raised on an ad hoc basis, sometimes with the authority of the Security Council and sometimes with that of the General Assembly. There are no agreed procedures or rules to determine how the force is to be mounted, how the operation is to be directed or who should pay for it.

We in Canada share the hope of other governments, such as your own, that the day will come when political agreement will make it possible for the United Nations to be fully capable of keeping the peace. Meanwhile, we think a good deal can be done in an informal way to strengthen the United Nations by enabling it to respond more quickly and more effectively in an emergency. We hope that other countries will decide to set up stand-by military forces for United Nations service as Canada, the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands have done. Iran also has recently announced its intention to create such a force. We are encouraged by the Secretary-General's strong support for the stand-by concept and by the steps which have been taken to create a small military advisers' staff within the Secretariat. As a further step, we have proposed a meeting to exchange experience on the practical military problems encountered in United Nations operations. We believe that a meeting of this sort, at the working level and among people with a first-hand knowledge of these problems, would be of particular help to those countries which can expect to be called upon to assist the United Nations in future emergencies.

Financing

Peace-keeping action will obviously be quick and effective only if the United Nations can proceed in the sure knowledge that the money will be there when the bills are presented. In recent weeks you have all become increasingly aware of the bitter debate now raging on the obligation of all member states to pay their assessed share of duly authorized peace-keeping operations. It is a debate which reaches into the past and casts a long shadow on the future -- for I think it must be clear that what we are arguing about is not simply the debts which have arisen from past peace-keeping efforts but the means of financing those operations which may be authorized in the future. There must, to my mind, be movement on both fronts.

The question of past arrears threatens to develop into a serious confrontation when the General Assembly opens its doors next month. There is no avoiding the stark fact that the United Nations now runs an operating cash deficit of close to \$120 million, of which well over 90 per cent represents arrears owed in respect of the costs of the United Nations Emergency Force in the Middle East and the United Nations Operation in the Congo. The Soviet Union and its allies, who account for the lion's share of these arrears, persist in regarding these two peace-keeping operations as illegal adventures, because they were not fully in accordance with the Soviet thesis that the Security Council alone can initiate, direct and make financial arrangements for operations to maintain the peace. On these grounds, the Soviet Union has refused to pay one penny of the costs.

I will not burden you with the overwhelming evidence which persuades us that the Soviet Union is wrong. Suffice it to say that the Charter makes it clear that the Security Council has primary but not exclusive responsibility in this sphere; that the General Assembly has formally accepted the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice that the expenditures incurred in the Middle East and in the Congo were "expenses of the organization", which all member states were obliged to pay; and that the Charter clearly and specifically provides in Article 19 that members whose arrears exceed the two previous years' assessments shall have no vote.

The United Nations cannot, of course, force the Soviet Union to pay; we cannot, so to speak, put our hand in the Russian till. But if the Soviet Union persists in rejecting the principle of collective responsibility, persists in refusing to pay "one kopeck" towards its accounts, then, in our view, the General Assembly has no option but to invoke the Charter sanction against non-payment of duly assessed shares.

Let us be clear that this is not a prospect which any country relishes. One does not talk idly of depriving any nation of its vote. We are not inflexible nor do we wish to be unduly legalistic. There are several alternatives open to the Soviet Union and it is still my hope that it will choose one of them to fulfil its responsibilities as an important founder member of the United Nations.

The maintenance of peace and security may well be a costly matter. We must not forget, however, that that cost is infinitesimal in comparison with the benefits which peace and security bring in their wake. Moreover, the issue is not a simple one of money, important as that is. What is at stake is the principle of collective responsibility and the very future of the organization on which we have built our aspirations for a peaceful world. If we are to permit governments a free choice of paying or not paying for duly authorized peace-keeping operations, then it is obvious that we will have dangerously weakened the capacity of the United Nations to respond to future emergencies.

Looking at the past, with its sorry history "of drift, of improvisation, of ad hoc solutions, of reliance on the generosity of the few rather than the collective responsibility of all", we must plan more judiciously for the future. It is imperative that we agree on long-term arrangements to cover the financing of future peace-keeping operations which will command the widest possible measure of support. For our part, we believe an essential ingredient will be a special scale of assessments for peace keeping which will acknowledge not only the collective responsibility of all but also the fact that the capacity to pay of many countries -- and I have in mind particularly the developing countries -- is limited. I am also attracted by the proposal that there should be a special committee set up to make all future recommendations on possible methods of peace-keeping financing. Here we are in an area where fruitful negotiation should be possible. Certainly, we cannot much longer proceed on the present unsatisfactory basis.

If I have painted a rather sombre picture, it has not been in any mood of despair or alarm. What I have sought to do is to put into proper perspective the issues which underlie the present debate. I am still hopeful that, with the requisite patience and determination, we can fashion peace-keeping machinery which will vindicate our belief that the United Nations can be an instrument capable, in the words of the Charter, of saving "succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

Here, then, are two of the major problems confronting the United Nations on the eve of its twentieth anniversary. They are serious problems and they will need to be faced. But the viability of the United Nations cannot, of course, be assessed simply in terms of the problems it has not yet managed to solve. Indeed, these problems themselves are symptomatic of the

extent to which the United Nations has been able to carry forward the concept of a sensibly-ordered world community. There is encouraging evidence to suggest that this concept carries the broad support of the overwhelming majority of the member countries of the United Nations. I am also convinced that, in time, all countries will come to recognize -- if they have not already done so -- that their interests and those of the world community are in large measure identical. For, in the final analysis, it is only in a stable and secure, in a peaceful and prosperous world that nations can best further their own purposes and ensure a better and a richer life for their peoples. And therein, I believe, lies the ultimate and abiding strength of the United Nations.

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