

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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No. 64/7 The United Nations in an Era of Limited Peace

Text of a Speech by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin, to the Empire Club, Toronto, on April 2, 1964.

... In a thought-provoking lecture on March 24, Mr. Adlai Stevenson suggested that the world had moved beyond the policy of containment to a policy of cease-fire and peaceful change. He called it an era of "limited peace". He asked some penetrating questions about what can and must be done to ensure that the nations pursue the path of peaceful settlement of disputes and situations.

The attitude of states toward war is all important in this regard. Governments and people everywhere must re-examine critically the notions that some wars are justified and that warfare can be limited. The plain fact of contemporary history - which most states see clearly - is that beyond every brushfire conflict lies nuclear conflagration and world-wide devastation. A threat to the peace in any part of the world poses a threat to all nations which none can take lightly.

This stark fact underlines the urgency of strengthening the sinews of peace, of improving the international means for dealing effectively with the sparks of armed incident and the dangers of unresolved dispute. The United Nations is one means, but how effective is it?

Pressing Problems in Cyprus

The Cyprus situation presents the United Nations and its members with some pressing problems of far-reaching importance and implication. Some of them are fraught with immediate risks to the maintenance of peace. Others hold potential threat for the effective existence of the United Nations in future. Canada has been deeply concerned about these developments - not only in recent weeks but as the underlying dilemma has deepened in the United Nations during the past few years. Our relief about small gains made has not diverted our attention from the large issues which undermine the United Nations capacity to respond to the recurring demands of peace.

The Cyprus situation raised such a demand yet, when the call came for the United Nations to establish a peace force in Cyprus, the response from member governments was on the whole disappointing. Canada was among the first countries to be approached for assistance. We were the first country to commit itself definitely to provide troops. Other nations joined us in this move and I pay warm tribute to Sweden, Finland and Ireland, whose contingents are to serve with Canadians in the Cyprus operation. I make special mention to the United Kingdom, which is continuing under the United Nations flag to contribute substantially to the cause of peace in that troubled island.

Why was the response restricted in size and slow in execution? If we examine some of the factors, we may detect some basic cause of weakness and see ways of strengthening the United Nations capacity to meet peace-keeping demands.

Hesitancy of UN Members

At the United Nations, the general attitude toward the Cyprus crisis was one of hesitation. The great powers were divided on the issue - but this was not unusual. A large number of countries appeared indifferent to the deterioration of a situation which threatened to explode into international conflict. A few states wanted to take advantage of the situation for their own mischief-making, but most states seemed reluctant to have the United Nations involved at all. There was a marked unwillingness either to provide contingents for the force or to contribute the necessary funds for the operation.

We can take comfort from the fact that the Security Council on March 4 decided to establish a force and appoint a mediator; that, after some delay, five member governments agreed to provide contingents and ten to make contributions to the voluntary fund for financing the operation. The force is now operational under General Gyani and the mediator has taken up his difficult assignment.

Now, I realize that the situation in Cyprus poses a very difficult problem for the United Nations. It will not be easy to arrive at a political solution. It may not be easy to maintain order. There is latent danger in the bitterness and distrust which past violence and bloodshed have engendered in the two communities inhabiting the island. The United Nations mediator and the United Nations policemen on the Cyprus beat will require courage, patience and endurance. They will have to choose their way carefully through the maze of difficulties and dangers.

But in the past the United Nations has not shirked its peace-keeping responsibilities merely because of difficult situations. The Congo operation had its share of complication and risk. What it did not have, and what is needed most in these situations, is the wholehearted support of United Nations members. This means not only political and moral support but men, materials and money. The United Nations must have adequate resources to perform its tasks.

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Financing Cyprus Peace Force

The method of financing the Cyprus force is significant because, once again, it brings into sharp focus the fundamental issues raised in relation to the financing of these peace-keeping operations. This audience will be aware that for the past few years the United Nations has been teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, because of the heavy burdens assumed in the Middle East and the Congo but more significantly because a number of member states - including two great powers - with full capacity to pay have failed to pay their share of the financial costs. Others have been slow in paying, even when reductions were granted to take into account their relative incapacity to pay.

This is a deplorable situation for an organization established primarily to maintain peace and security. It is especially urgent in view of the growing demands for peace-keeping operations, which have demonstrated their worth. It is moving toward a climax this year because a number of states, including the Soviet bloc, now have accumulated arrears of payment which make them vulnerable to Article 19 of the Charter. It provides for the loss of vote in the General Assembly when arrears amount to two full years. When it next meets, the General Assembly will have to deal with this critical situation, which has far-reaching political and financial implications, unless steps have been taken in the meantime by those in default to liquidate their arrears.

Canada's Straightforward Policy

As a consistent and firm supporter of the United Nations, Canada believes that all member states should willingly accept their share of the financial burdens of peace-keeping, just as they all share in the benefits which flow from continuing peace and stability. Our policy in this regard is straightforward. We have responded promptly to requests for military assistance in all theatres of United Nations peace keeping. We have paid our assessments in full. We have made voluntary contributions on an ad hoc basis to keep the operations afloat. We have made and supported proposals designed to afford an opportunity for negotiated settlement of the financing arrangements.

We are convinced that the principle of collective responsibility is the only sensible basis for financing peace-keeping operations. We believe that Article 19 was intended to provide the sanction for that principle. But recognizing the practical difficulties which have arisen, Canada seeks accommodation - and not confrontation - on these fundamental issues. We shall continue to do so in the United Nations bodies established specifically to deal with these financial problems. We strongly urge the delinquent states to approach such discussions constructively, to join with us in our determination to resolve the financial dilemma and ultimately the political conflict which underlies it.

Improving Peace Operations

We also invite other states to consider jointly what can be done to improve the United Nations methods for establishing peace-keeping operations. We are fully aware that standby arrangements within the United Nations framework are not immediately feasible, because of political and practical problems which have priority. But we are equally aware from diplomatic discussions that some members are disturbed about the sad state of United Nations preparedness in this important area of activity. Like Canada, they have made their own arrangements for earmarking national contingents for United Nations service. Canada regards this as a promising and practical approach in the face of present circumstances, and one which should be developed through closer consultation among interested states.

There are these practical problems and the underlying political issues, which have proved intractable for a long time questions of organization, representation and procedure. In particular, the Security Council needs to re-assert its authority for exercising political control in relation to peace-keeping operations. This need goes beyond the control of operations because in essence they may be without lasting benefit unless the actual causes of tension and disturbance can be removed. To exert its proper influence the Council should be enlarged to permit a balanced composition in its membership with equitable representation for all geographical areas. Its functions should be performed, and perhaps modified to meet the changing situation in the world. These and other constitutional questions beg for answers as the United Nations approaches its twentieth year.

Peace Arrangements Cannot Delay

But the practical problems of peace-keeping today cannot wait long. In Cyprus they must be solved pragmatically, as the United Nations finds its footing there and confidence is restored. In the General Assembly - and before that in the Working Group on Twenty-one on United Nations Finances - the financial dilemma must be faced squarely and constructively. And in the future, whether formally inside the United Nations framework or outside it in the arrangements of interested member states, the methods for training, assembling and directing international military forces must be improved so that they can be deployed on the shortest notice.

These are the formidable challenges of the immediate future. They may loom even larger during the coming summer. But the very size of the problems, their complexity and their significance require that United Nations members of all shades of opinion face their responsibilities in this regard resolutely. They must put aside their short-sighted and debilitating manoeuvring for national, regional and ideological influence. They must demonstrate their determination to co-operate in keeping the United Nations effective. Our era of limited peace demands no less.