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A Calculus of Interest

Canadian Peacekeeping Diplomacy in Cyprus, 1963–1993

GREG DONAGHY

Abstract: Fifty years ago, Canadian peacekeepers landed on the small Mediterranean island of Cyprus, where they stayed for thirty long years. This paper uses declassified cabinet papers and diplomatic records to tackle three key questions about this mission: why did Canadians ever go to distant Cyprus? Why did they stay for so long? And why did they leave when they did? The answers situate Canada's commitment to Cyprus against the country's broader postwar project to preserve world order in an era marked by the collapse of the European empires and the brutal wars in Algeria and Vietnam. It argues that Canada stayed—through fifty-nine troop rotations, 29,000 troops, and twenty-eight dead—because peacekeeping worked. Admittedly there were critics, including Prime Ministers Pearson, Trudeau, and Mulroney, who complained about the failure of peacemaking in Cyprus itself. But their frustrations were offset by a triumvirate of humanitarian, diplomatic, and partisan justifications for soldiering on, and so, Canada stayed until the balance sheet of interests shifted in the 1980s.

THERE HAS OFTEN been a whiff of wry cynicism associated with Canada's long, thirty-year role in Cyprus. Early on, rotating Canadian commanders greeted new arrivals with an ambiguous line from Shakespeare's *Othello*: "You are welcome, Sirs, to Cyprus." Departing officers wordlessly handed their reliefs a large sink plug

and chain.¹ But there was little that was genuinely ignoble or base about Canada's commitment to Cyprus—a veritable case study of the kind of active, responsible, middle-power diplomacy that defined the country's foreign policy for much of the mid-twentieth century. Rescuing Cyprus from its postcolonial rupture was not a job for which Canada volunteered, though it dovetailed neatly with the personal and foreign policy ambitions of its first Canadian sponsor, Secretary of State for External Affairs Paul Martin Sr.² As Cyprus settled into a frustrating stalemate punctuated by moments of acute danger, it fit less well with the foreign policy goals of Martin's successors, who doubted that peacekeeping was “a reliable source of influence, kudos, or even of any great satisfaction.”³ Their frustrations, however, were consistently offset by a triumvirate of humanitarian, diplomatic, and partisan justifications for soldiering on, and so, Canadian peacekeepers stayed until the balance sheet of interests shifted in the late 1980s. Canada in Cyprus is a lesson in diplomatic accounting and the calculus of interest.

As Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson and his new Liberal cabinet hurried through Ottawa's cold spring sunshine to be sworn in as Canada's nineteenth government in April 1963, they knew that the world about them was rapidly changing. A decade earlier, Canadian diplomacy was clearly at the height of its postwar influence. Backed by large defence and foreign aid expenditures—these topped 8 percent of GDP in 1953–1954—Canada's diplomats had been among the main architects of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the multiracial Commonwealth.⁴ They had pioneered international aid and defined the norms and procedures of the United Nations (UN). But that world was fading. As Europe and the Far East recovered from the Second World War, and postcolonial Africa and Asia pushed to the forefront, Canada's relative standing declined, and with it, the scope for meaningful diplomacy. West Germany and France jostled

¹ Arthur Andrew, *The Rise and Fall of a Middle Power: Canadian Diplomacy from King to Mulroney* (Toronto: James Lormier, 1993), 75.

² On Martin's foreign policy ambitions, see Greg Donaghy, *Grit: The Life and Politics of Paul Martin Sr.* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 189–197.

³ Andrew, *The Rise and Fall of a Middle Power*, 75.

⁴ David Bercuson, “Canada, NATO, and rearmament, 1950–1954: why Canada made a difference (but not for very long),” in John English and Norman Hillmer, eds., *Making a Difference: Canada's Foreign Policy in a Changing World Order* (Toronto: Lester, 1992), 104–105.

for a bigger role in NATO, raising questions about Canada's place in the alliance. Third World nations added race and economics to Commonwealth and UN agendas, pushing aside traditional Canadian worries about stability and global governance. The change was highlighted in *Saturday Night Magazine*, the brainy monthly for Canada's liberal elites. Donald Gordon, the former Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) London correspondent turned political scientist, fired a shot across Pearson's bow in October: "Warning: Our Halo Abroad is Slipping."⁵ Settling in, Pearson and Martin cast about for a distinctly Canadian role in world affairs.

The search was conducted over the winter of 1964 in the course of the government's long promised defence policy review. A staunch cold warrior, Defence Minister Paul Hellyer favoured Canada's traditional NATO role in Western Europe. Canada's ambitious foreign minister, Paul Martin, took a more expansive view. He attacked Hellyer's grasp of recent global developments, and criticised him for emphasizing Canada's NATO functions while failing to take into account Europe's renewed capacity to defend itself. Most important, he charged, Hellyer overlooked the threat to global order posed by decolonisation, ignoring the role Canada was already playing in the Middle East, the Congo, and Indochina.⁶ Pearson agreed, and he summoned Martin and Hellyer to his Sussex Drive residence to hash out an approach to world affairs that placed a much stronger emphasis on UN peacekeeping. By the time they were done, and the *White Paper on Defence* was published in March 1964, the looming conflict between Turkey and Greece over Cyprus was already testing the government's faith in UN peacekeeping.

Cyprus was precisely the kind of threat to global order that Martin and his diplomats in the Department of External Affairs feared. A former British colony, it had gained its independence in 1960 under a complex constitution that was designed to protect the rights of its Turkish-Cypriot minority, which represented about 20 percent of the island's 600,000 people, from its larger Greek-Cypriot majority. The new state hobbled along for almost three years until its frustrated

⁵ Donald Gordon, "Warning: Our Halo Abroad is Slipping," *Saturday Night*, October 1963, 23-25.

⁶ Martin to Hellyer, 21 December 1963, Raymont Papers, File 768, DHIST. The debate is treated fully in Greg Donaghy, *Tolerant Allies: Canada and the United States, 1963-68* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 95-97.



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president, the Greek-Cypriot leader Archbishop Makarios, tried to amend the constitution unilaterally in late 1963. Turkish-Cypriots protested, Greek-Cypriots rioted, and a full-blown crisis erupted. When Turkey threatened to intervene to defend Turkish-Cypriots, raising the prospect of war with Greece, both NATO members, Britain boosted its presence and imposed a truce. In the midst of its headlong retreat from empire, Britain had no appetite for colonial adventure and quickly set out in search of help.

Wary of Makarios's links with the UN's nonaligned members and anxious to prevent Moscow from meddling in NATO's eastern flank, London favoured a NATO force. Through January 1964, Martin and his officials followed Anglo-American efforts to pull the force together. They were not inclined to be helpful and tried to forestall an invitation to join. Canada was engaged in five other UN missions, and Cyprus was a tough nut to crack. Moreover, Canadian diplomats declared as loud as they could, the island was a European problem and there were European countries "well able" to act.⁷ But no one paid much attention, and late in the afternoon of 31 January, British and US diplomats arrived at Martin's office with an *aide memoire* inviting Canada to join a NATO peacekeeping force for Cyprus.⁸

The Anglo-American plan collapsed within days, rejected by Makarios, who insisted on linking the force to the UN Security Council. As British and American diplomats flirted with various UN formulas acceptable to Makarios, Greece, and Turkey, the mood in External Affairs grew edgy. Arnold Smith, an influential assistant under-secretary, fretted that the force lacked clear political objectives. He suspected the British of scheming to maintain political control while shifting the military burden onto others. The mission, he warned, would assume imperialist overtones without an unimpeachable link with the UN, leaving Canada "out in the cold with the neo-colonialists."⁹

Martin shared these concerns and he was irked when his efforts to engage London and Washington were ignored. "Both us and British [sic]" he complained, "are acting without too much prior consultation

⁷ Arnold Smith, Memorandum for the Minister, 29 January 1964, RG 25, Vol 10130, File 21-14-1-Cyprus, LAC, and Martin, "At the Right Hand of Power: A Record of Canadian Foreign Policy, 1963-1968," 422, Martin Papers, Vol 463, LAC.

⁸ Ross Campbell, Memorandum for the Acting Under-Secretary, 1 February 1964, RG 25, Vol 10130, File 21-14-1-Cyprus, LAC.

⁹ G.S. Murray to Smith, 12 February 1964, and Smith to File, 24 February 1964, RG 25, Vol 10130, File 21-14-1-Cyprus, LAC.

with Canada & the others.”¹⁰ He was even more irritated a few days later when visiting British Foreign Secretary R.A. Butler ignored his signals and cheerfully told the press that London confidently expected a thousand Canadian troops. Martin rushed out a denial “as a warning to U Thant & our friends that they do not [sic] take us for granted.”¹¹ No decision on Canadian participation would be taken, Pearson told the House of Commons on 19 February, until Ottawa was happy with the force’s composition and its terms of reference.¹²

Again the prime minister’s statement had little impact, and rumours continued to surface in New York and London that Canada was about to join Britain alone in fielding a force. Martin told Smith to scotch the stories, insisting that Canada would only join a UN force which included at least one other significant UN member.¹³ The minister wanted other issues addressed too before the force took final shape. He wanted a UN advisory committee to give Ottawa a voice in the force’s political policies as well as a broadly-based mediatory mechanism to develop a long-term solution for Cyprus.¹⁴ He was also anxious to ensure that funding for the force would not undermine the disputed principle that peacekeeping was a core UN duty, whose costs were a collective responsibility.¹⁵

None of these issues were resolved by 4 March, when the Security Council passed a resolution creating a UN peacekeeping force for Cyprus. Secretary-General U Thant quickly invited Canada, Sweden, Finland, Ireland, and Brazil to participate. As he issued his invitation, the secretary-general made it clear that he expected Canada to serve, an assumption shared in chancelleries and editorial offices around the world. Martin, with backing from Pearson and the cabinet, refused to be rushed.¹⁶ In addition to his earlier worries about consultation and mediation, there were legitimate questions to be asked about the

¹⁰ Martin marginal note on Campbell, Memorandum for the Minister, 8 February 1964, RG 25, Vol 10130, File 21-14-1-Cyprus, LAC.

¹¹ Smith’s marginal note on his Memorandum for the Minister, 18 February 1964, RG 25, Vol 10130, File 21-14-1-Cyprus, LAC.

¹² Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 6.

¹³ Smith, Memorandum for File, 24 February 1964, RG 25, Vol 10130, File 21-14-1-Cyprus, LAC.

¹⁴ Ottawa to New York, tel G-22, 25 February 1964, and Ottawa to London, tel S-88, 1 March 1964, RG 25, Vol 10130, File 21-14-1-Cyprus, LAC.

¹⁵ Cadieux, Memorandum for the Minister, 3 March 1964, and Ottawa to New York, tel V-66, 3 March 1964, RG 25, Vol 10137, 21-14-6-UNFICYP-9, LAC.

¹⁶ Cabinet Conclusions, 5 March 1964, PCO, LAC.

force's duties, financing, and terms of reference. Crucially, would the small force of 7,000 be ordered to disarm Greek-Cypriot guerrillas totalling almost twice their number?

U Thant, whom Martin liked, was evasive and inconclusive. He refused to adopt a consultative mechanism or consider a broad UN mediatory role. Moreover, he declined to answer questions on engaging with guerrilla forces, though his advisors indicated that UN commanders would not try to disarm Cypriot irregulars.¹⁷ Though the UN's position fell far short of Canadian desiderata, the pressure to act was becoming unbearable. Renewed rioting seized Cyprus, as Greek-Cypriots surged forward to capture Turkish-Cypriot territory in anticipation of a UN-imposed halt. At home, Pearson's government faced an escalating barrage of criticism from the Progressive Conservative and New Democratic opposition, who pinned the delay on Liberal obstructionism. When Martin reassured them that "Canada will not shirk its responsibility," the press pounced.¹⁸ In a mocking editorial, entitled "'Not Shirking' duty but...", the *Toronto Star* accused the minister of "double talk."¹⁹ The *Toronto Globe and Mail* echoed the charge, reproaching Martin for being "less than forthcoming with his answers," and demanding "Why the Delay?"²⁰

Martin played for time. On 10 March, he summoned the ambassadors of Sweden, Finland, and Ireland to his East Block office, where he assured them that Canadian forces were ready to go. The delay was not Canada's fault. To the consternation of his advisors, who watched the last bit of Canadian leverage slip away, he explained that the decision in principle had been made months earlier. Canada, he insisted, simply wanted clear answers to its questions about the force's role and its prospects. He intended to get them.²¹

This was an impossible posture to maintain as the demand for action built over the next thirty-six hours. There were warnings from New York of escalating communal riots in Cyprus, Turkish threats to

¹⁷ New York to Ottawa, tel 356, 10 March 1964, RG 25, Vol 10130, Vol 21-14-11-Cyprus, LAC.

¹⁸ "Canada Gets Force Ready, Waits Word," *Montreal Gazette*, 7 March 1964.

¹⁹ "'Not Shirking Duty, but..." *Toronto Star*, 9 March 1964.

²⁰ "Cyprus: Why the Delay," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 10 March 1964.

²¹ Mac Bow to Mr. Cadieux, 11 March 1964, RG 25, Vol 10130, File: 21-14-1-Cyprus, LAC, and Martin, "At the Right Hand of Power," 422.

intervene, and British hints that it could not hold on alone.²² These were confirmed on the evening of 11 March, when the deputy UK high commissioner, John Wakely, handed Martin an urgent message from the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Duncan Sandys. Unless speedy progress was made, Sandys threatened, London would review its Cyprus commitment as early as 12 March. He pressed Canada “to announce immediately its willingness to participate in a UN force in the hope that it would lead others to follow suit.”²³ Tired and cranky under the pressure, Martin was not optimistic. “The financial straits of the UN were deplorable and the size of the UN force inadequate,” he complained.²⁴

As Martin left Ottawa the following day for engagements near Toronto, the dynamics in New York were shifting. Though the Irish, in no hurry to help the British, could not be counted on for an early decision, the news from other potential contributors was promising. Finland would not take a final decision until its president returned to Helsinki on 14 March, but its foreign minister estimated the odds of approval at 99 percent. This was thought to be enough to satisfy Sweden’s desire for another neutral in the force, and Stockholm was reportedly ready to indicate its acceptance on 13 March. The Swedish announcement would fulfill Canada’s requirement for an “international force,” but would come too late for the British, who insisted on assurances by 12 March. Martin and Pearson conferred by phone, agreeing that Canada would take the risk of being the first to act. While the prime minister hurried to inform the House, Martin turned his government Jetstar south, towards New York and the UN.²⁵

For almost an hour, the small plane circled New York until a break in the fog and snow allowed it to land. Late for his appointment with the secretary-general, Martin rushed downtown to inform U Thant that Canada was ready to join a UN force “if and when such a force was constituted by the UN.”²⁶ The minister was pleased with

²² New York to Ottawa, tel 359, 10 March 1964 and tel 368, 11 March 1964, RG 25, Vol 10130, File 21-14-1-Cyprus, LAC.

²³ Ross Campbell, Memorandum for the USSEA, 12 March 1964, RG 25, Vol 10130, File 21-14-1-Cyprus, LAC.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ross Campbell, Memorandum for the USSEA, 12 March 1964, RG 25, Vol 10130, File 21-14-1-Cyprus, LAC; “Martin Spurred Cyprus Force Decision,” *Toronto Star*, 14 March 1964.

²⁶ New York to Ottawa, tels 374 and 387, 12 March 1964, RG 25, Vol 10130, File 21-14-1-Cyprus, LAC.

U Thant's assurances that UN peacekeepers would not be involved in disarming irregular forces, but was astonished to learn that the UN leader could not assure him that Sweden had agreed to participate. U Thant insisted that he could do nothing to hasten Sweden's commitment. "His passivity amazed me," Martin wrote later. "The whole shebang was on the brink of collapse and U Thant did not realise it. When he claimed that he could not move because of lack of funds, I replied abruptly, 'We cannot act like shopkeepers.'"²⁷

The stunned Canadian returned to Ottawa in a "gloomy" mood. The following morning, Martin gathered in his office with his deputy minister, Marcel Cadieux, and Ross Campbell, a smart and outspoken assistant under-secretary whom Martin liked and trusted. They marvelled at U Thant's unwillingness "to use his great office to persuade the Swedes and the others to join the force."²⁸ Perhaps, Martin wondered aloud, Canada should just ignore the UN and encourage the Europeans itself. Someone suggested sending a message through the Swedish and Finnish ambassadors. Maybe, Martin asked, he should call their foreign ministers? Cadieux said no, but Campbell liked the idea. "We had nothing to lose," he argued, "and everything to gain."²⁹

With a glass of milk and a sandwich by his side, Martin began to work the phones, calling his counterparts in Dublin, Stockholm, and Helsinki. This was the kind of personal diplomacy that he loved, drawing on the shared "political bond between foreign ministers."³⁰ The Swedes, it turned out, were skeptical of the Finnish pledge and were reluctant to act. After securing a conditional commitment from Ireland, Martin could assure Stockholm of other neutral participants in the force.³¹ It was enough. On the basis of his transatlantic calls, he told his cabinet colleagues early in the afternoon of 13 March, Ireland and Sweden would join the force.³² As the House of Commons

²⁷ Paul Martin, *A Very Public Life, Vol 2: So Many Worlds* (Toronto: Deneau 1985), 547.

²⁸ Martin, "At the Right Hand of Power, 435.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ross Campbell, Memorandum to Mr. Martin, 13 March 1964, RG 25, Vol 10130, File 21-14-11-Cyprus, LAC. As an anonymous External Affairs source explained to the Ottawa press, "Ireland triggered Sweden. Actually, the Irish agreement was a bit of a surprise." See, "Martin Spurred Cyprus Force Decision," *Toronto Star*, 14 March 1964.

³² Cabinet Conclusions, 13 March 1964, PCO, LAC.

gathered that evening in emergency session to debate and approve the despatch of 1,200 Canadian peacekeepers, an advance contingent of twenty-nine officers raced towards Cyprus, signalling a temporary end to the crisis in Cyprus.

Martin savoured his triumph. As peacekeeping historian Alan James argues, it was perhaps immodest of him to claim in his memoirs that the force came into being solely as a result of his telephone calls or that he was its author.³³ Sweden and Finland were already headed that way. As Martin himself conceded to the press at the time, “I really didn’t do that much.”³⁴ But with British and Turkish deadlines looming, Martin forced the pace and gained a day when minutes mattered. For that, he deserved the shower of praise and favourable press coverage that rained on him in the spring of 1964.³⁵

The praise was short-lived. As Martin feared, Cyprus quickly became a headache. The political deadlock, frequent skirmishing along the demarcation line, and the UN’s financial arrangements which left Canada and the other contributors shouldering most of the costs meant regular drubbings for Canada’s hapless foreign minister at the hands of the opposition during the next few years. And not just the opposition. When Egypt threw Canadian peacekeepers out of the Sinai in 1967, the prime minister could hardly restrain himself: “I remain very worried that this force will go the way of [the United Nations Emergency Force],” Pearson scolded Martin; “hold the line and keep the peace without doing anything to bring about a political settlement and, in the end, being asked to leave.”³⁶

Canadian skepticism deepened markedly over the next two decades. In part, that reflected the foreign policy preferences of Pearson’s successor, Pierre Trudeau. The Montreal Member of Parliament had come to Ottawa determined to resolve Canada’s constitutional difficulties, and he was scornful of Pearson’s distracting internationalism. The new prime minister wanted a more modest diplomacy, and his foreign policy review, issued in 1970, ranked peacekeeping a lowly fourth on its list of priorities. More important, Canadian frustration reflected the absence of any political progress

³³ Alan James, *Keeping the Peace in the Cyprus Crisis of 1963–64* (London: Palgrave, 2002), 110–111.

³⁴ Cited in “Martin Spurred Cyprus Force Decision,” *Toronto Star*, 14 March 1964.

³⁵ Donaghy, *Grit*, 214–215.

³⁶ L.B. Pearson to Paul Martin, 22 August 1967, RG 25, Vol 10,648, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-4, LAC.



Members of the Canadian contingent serving with UNFICYP at an observation post in Trakthomas, Nicosia, Cyprus. 27 March 1964. (UN Photo 86335). [United Nations 86335]

in Cyprus, the steady drain on Canada's coffers, and the growing fear that Canada's commitment to Cyprus, which still totalled over 500 troops in early 1974, might be permanent. Behind the scenes, Canadian policy-makers campaigned hard for financial reform and championed plans to restructure the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) as a much smaller observer force in 1974, in 1978, and again, twice, in the 1980s. Their efforts were fruitless, dismissed by force commanders and UN experts as too risky, or opposed by Security Council members France and the Soviet Union, both anxious to avoid absorbing UNFICYP costs.³⁷

By the late 1970s, convinced that UNFICYP had "become part of the problem" and that the stalemate reflected a "lack of political will" among all the major stakeholders—the Greeks, the Turks, the Cypriots, and the UN—Canada increasingly let its frustrations show.³⁸

³⁷ Details on these various initiatives are on the file 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, in RG 25, LAC.

³⁸ Athens to Ottawa, tel 747, 5 July 1977, RG 25, Vol 10,648, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-4; Klaus Goldschlag's marginalia on T.C. Hammond to Goldschlag, DFR-1488, 3 May 1979, RG 25, Vol 10,646, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

Don Jamieson, foreign minister from 1976 to 1979, told friends that he was baffled by the “bizarre and sad” dispute, and publicly signalled his “disappointment” in December 1976.³⁹ His Progressive Conservative successor, Flora MacDonald, was even more outspoken. “We cannot be expected to continue our participation indefinitely,” she wrote an opposition backbencher in 1979, “unless we see some indication that a negotiated settlement can be reached.”⁴⁰ Allan MacEachen, foreign minister from 1982–1984, told UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar that he would continue to back the force, but he “had to hold my nose” to do it.⁴¹ “Agreed,” sighed Foreign Minister Joe Clark in 1986, when approving yet another extension to UNFICYP’s mandate, wearily adding in parenthesis, “again.” A cheeky advisor added an exclamation mark.⁴²

Despite their frustrations, when Ottawa diplomats and ministers reviewed Canada’s commitment to UNFICYP, they found compelling reasons to stay. Most important, of course, the UN mission essentially worked, largely preserving the stability that was seen as the vital precondition for inter-communal talks and an eventual settlement. “The UN force was still required to prevent a reversion to violence and to permit moves towards a better political settlement,” Martin challenged his skeptical prime minister in late 1967, amid renewed Turkish threats to invade. “Canada had no option.”⁴³ Six years on, his successor, Mitchell Sharp, sounded a similar note. “The presence of the UNFICYP,” the minister assured his cabinet colleagues in November 1973, “has been essential in helping to prevent relatively minor local incidents from escalating out of hand.”⁴⁴

³⁹ Cited in Paul Martin, *The London Diaries, 1974–1979*, edited by William Young, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 393; see also, Don Jamieson, “Canada’s International Responsibilities: Speech to the Canadian Institute of International Affairs,” Canada, Department of External Affairs, *Statements and Speeches*, No. 76/32, 3 December 1976.

⁴⁰ Flora MacDonald to Roland de Corneille, 22 November 1979, RG 25, Vol 10,648, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-4, LAC.

⁴¹ A.A. Després to File, DFR-1990, 7 June 1983, RG 25, Vol 12,665, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁴² Clark’s marginalia on J.H. Taylor, Memorandum for the Minister, IDR-4347, 24 November 1986, and MINA to IDR, 1 December 1986, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, Historical Section, DFATD.

⁴³ Cabinet Conclusions, 21 December 1967, PCO, LAC.

⁴⁴ Sharp, Memorandum to Cabinet, 22 November 1973, RG 25, Vol 10,648, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

This remained true for Canadian policy-makers even after Greek-Cypriot nationalists overthrew Archbishop Makarios in July 1974, sparking a Turkish invasion. UNFICYP was caught in the middle. The crisis drew the UN force, including its Canadian contingent, deep into the dangerous business of negotiating ceasefires, evacuating civilians, and staring down combatant forces, most famously at the Ledra Palace Hotel, Nicosia International Airport, and Camp Kronborg. The summer's fighting, which left two Canadians dead and seventeen wounded, fuelled doubts about the mission in Canada. "Canadian troops," insisted the *Globe and Mail*, "should be brought home."⁴⁵ At the very least, Trudeau argued, other countries should help shoulder the burden. But time was short, and when the UN asked for more Canadian troops to handle UNFICYP's expanded role, ministers squirmed uncomfortably, hesitated and delayed, and then doubled Canada's contingent, more conscious than ever of UNFICYP's humanitarian element.⁴⁶

For Canadian diplomats, the crisis, which soon settled back into a familiar impasse, underlined UNFICYP's importance as an essential source of regional stability. "Peacekeeping activities in Cyprus," insisted Ted Lee, Canada's high commissioner to the island, "have since their inception made a contribution to stability in region ... Cyprus without UNFICYP would not have enjoyed the stability, albeit relative and precarious, it had prior to the anti-Makarios coup and consequent Turkish intervention. Subsequently, UNFICYP has been the critical ingredient in minimizing the potential for further military action."⁴⁷ Mark MacGuigan, the clear-sighted pragmatist who was named secretary of state for external affairs in 1980, bluntly defended Canada's role in the following terms: "There is no warfare going on and often that is all you can achieve in the world ... You can prevent people from killing each other. You can't always make them love each other."⁴⁸

But Canadians were hardly boy scouts. Liberal and Conservative governments alike backed the UN mission because it clearly advanced Canada's foreign policy interests in NATO, at the UN, and in a number of bilateral settings. As a NATO ally, Canada had an obvious Cold War

⁴⁵ *Globe and Mail*, 16 July 1974.

⁴⁶ Cabinet Conclusions, 25 July 1974, PCO, LAC.

⁴⁷ Tel Aviv to Ottawa, tel 1188, 15 September 1976, RG 25, Vol 10,648, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-4, LAC.

⁴⁸ Cited in Ottawa to Permanent Representative in New York, tel DFR-1740, 6 June 1980, RG 25, Vol 10646, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

stake in defusing tensions between Greece and Turkey, stabilizing and reinforcing the alliance's "sensitive southern flank." This was more important than ever following the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, when instability through an "arc of crisis" in the Eastern Mediterranean might limit US access to bases in Greece and to Turkish airspace.⁴⁹ Defence policy officials embraced UNFICYP as one bright spot in Ottawa's otherwise lacklustre performance in NATO under Trudeau. "To some extent," argued Ross Francis, head of defence relations in External Affairs, "our contribution to UNFICYP has offset our relatively modest share in Western defence."⁵⁰ A retreat from Cyprus, advised officials, would surely strain relations with Washington and London, as well as with Canada's smaller NATO allies, who might well be obliged to pick up the slack.

Support for UNFICYP also weighed in Canadian policy at the United Nations, where it was regularly cited as evidence of Ottawa's commitment to the organisation's charter and the principle of collective security. More practically, shrewd diplomats reminded their political masters, Canada's role in Cyprus provided ready grounds for dodging "less desirable operations." It was wielded this way in 1977 when British Foreign Secretary David Owen suggested an unpalatable Canadian contribution to a peacekeeping force in Rhodesia, and again in 1982, when the United States sought to enlist Canada in a multi-national force in the Middle East.⁵¹

The force proved a useful instrument as well for managing bilateral relations with Greece and Turkey, providing a "logical basis" for Canada to avoid taking sides in the tricky dispute on the grounds that this might impair its impartiality.⁵²

There were compelling domestic reasons to stay the course too. Canadians liked peacekeeping. According to historian Norman Hillmer, it let them believe that Canada could be "the world's conscience, untainted by power politics and considerations of narrow

⁴⁹ de Montigny Marchand, Memorandum for the Minister, DFR-1379, 28 April 1983, RG 25, Vol 12,562, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁵⁰ Ottawa to Delhi (Masse Only), tel IDR-4450, 22 November 1983, RG 25, Vol 12,665, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁵¹ de Montigny Marchand, Memorandum for the Minister, DFR-1378, 25 April 1983, RG 25, Vol 12,562, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁵² *Ibid.*

or selfish interests.”⁵³ Moreover, an influx of Greek immigrants beginning in the mid-1960s had created a formidable constituency of over 200,000 new Canadians with a strong stake in Cyprus.⁵⁴ Indeed, domestic politics could be decisive. When the UN asked Ottawa for sixty extra soldiers to replace a departing Swedish contingent in 1987, the reaction among the professional diplomats and soldiers was uniformly hostile. Canada’s UN Ambassador Stephen Lewis, a former provincial politician, reached a different conclusion, and he appealed directly to Foreign Minister Joe Clark. “Above all,” Lewis argued, “there is a critical political dimension to all of this, which cannot be overlooked. The provision of 60 additional soldiers allows the Secretary of State for External Affairs (and the prime minister) to give positive public credence, yet again, to our unswerving commitment to multilateralism and the kind of special role Canada plays in this world.”⁵⁵ Clark backed his ambassador.

But the stable Cold War world that had long underpinned Canada’s calculus was already changing. *Glasnost* (“openness”) and *perestroika* (“restructuring”) had begun to shake Mikhail Gorbachev’s Soviet Union, which quickly lost its grip on Eastern Europe. By 1989, the Berlin Wall was down and the Cold War over. Peace brought different dangers, but also hope, and Western support for renewed forms of internationalism surged, manifest most clearly in a wave of enthusiasm for new UN peacekeeping missions. Canadians backed the UN’s ambitious agenda, and between 1988 and 1993 Canada joined sixteen UN operations (more than it had in the entire forty years after 1945).⁵⁶ There were soon 500 Canadian soldiers along the Iran-Iraq border, and hundreds more in Namibia and war-torn Central America. Tougher missions in Cambodia, the Western Sahara, and the Balkans beckoned. These were costlier too. Between 1945 and 1980, Canada had spent \$266 million on peacekeeping; in 1992–1993

⁵³ Norman Hillmer, “Peacekeeping: The Inevitability of Canada’s Role,” in Michael A. Hennessy and B. J. C. McKercher, eds., *War in the Twentieth Century: Reflections at Century’s End* (London: Praeger, 2003), 145.

⁵⁴ See, for example, A.E. Gotlieb, Memorandum for the Minister, DFR-1888, 16 June 1981, RG 25, Vol 10648, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-4, LAC.

⁵⁵ Permanent Representative in New York to Ottawa, tel 2607, 7 August 1987, RG 25, Vol 19430, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁵⁶ Figures cited in Manon Tessier and Michel Fortmann, “The Conservative Approach to International Peacekeeping,” in Nelson Michaud and Kim Richard Nossal, eds., *Diplomatic Departures: The Conservative Era in Canadian Foreign Policy, 1984–93* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2003), 118.



M-113 APCs of the Canadian Contingent on patrol near Nicosia. 28 August 1974. [United Nations 69123]

alone, the bill topped \$175 million.⁵⁷ Burdened by massive federal government deficits, Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney struggled with the surging costs.

In April 1991, Mulroney tapped Barbara McDougall as his new foreign minister with a mandate to chart Canada's response to this shifting world order. It was a solid appointment. The forty-four year old McDougall was a trained economist, who had carved out an unlikely career as a prominent investment analyst among the traditionally male-dominated bastions of Toronto's financial hub. She traded spreadsheets for politics in 1984, when she joined Mulroney's cabinet as a junior minister, winning promotion to the senior employment and immigration portfolio in 1988. Her handling of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, and her hardline approach to immigration reform confirmed her reputation as a strong and skillful political performer.⁵⁸ "She's a warm cuddly

⁵⁷ Cited in Tessier and Fortmann, "The Conservative Approach," 121.

⁵⁸ Brian Mulroney, *Memoirs, 1939-1993* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007), 947, 873, 1004. See also Charlotte Gray, "New Faces in Old Places: The making of Foreign Policy," in Fen Hampson and Christopher Maule (eds.), *Canada Among Nations, 1992-93: A New World Order?* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1992), 19-21.

lady—and tough as nails,” quipped one Toronto admirer.⁵⁹ Financially prudent, skeptical, and independent-minded, McDougall had few fixed conceptions about foreign policy and was ready to confront a changing world.

Her skepticism was reinforced by the restless cadre of diplomats who had joined External Affairs in the 1960s and now filled its top ranks. They mistrusted the postwar “golden age” and the Pearsonian internationalism that underpinned Canada’s commitment to Cyprus. They dismissed the “regal ambassadors” who populated Canadian embassies during their apprenticeship as “ridiculous and offensive.”⁶⁰ For Paul Heinbecker, who joined this cohort in 1965, this was “a made-in-Canada generation, tough-minded, self-confident and savvy, even a little ruthless.”⁶¹ These were, he added, “no-nonsense, no-bullshit, get-it-done, shrink-from-no-one kind of people.”⁶²

The minister sent a strong signal for change right from the start. Just weeks on the job, she was asked to approve the routine UN request to renew Canada’s UNFICYP commitment for another six months. She reluctantly agreed, but insisted that it was time to “review the whole issue of peacekeeping—and maybe force the issue.”⁶³ Her message echoed in External Affairs, and by the end of June 1991, diplomat Michael Dawson and Lieutenant-Colonel Tony Anderson had re-examined Canada’s role in Cyprus. Their paper weighed the mounting manpower and fiscal demands on Canadian peacekeeping, the failed efforts to re-structure and re-finance the force in New York, and the endless deadlock in Cyprus itself. The two analysts reviewed the arguments for and against the status quo in familiar terms, but greatly expanded the range of available options. Canada could stay indefinitely, flee immediately, or maintain its current contribution,

⁵⁹ Cited in Ian Hunter, “Barbara McDougall: will she be the next to lead the Tories?” *Ottawa Citizen*, 31 March 1991.

⁶⁰ Earl Drake, *A Stubble-Jumper in Striped Pants: Memoirs of a Prairie Diplomat* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 39, and Confidential Interviews.

⁶¹ Paul Heinbecker, “Burney’s prescription is not a good fit for today’s Washington,” *Diplomat and International Canada Magazine* (May–June, 2005).

⁶² Cited in Frank Edwards, “Glen Shortliffe, 72/ Diplomat, Civil Servant,” *Globe and Mail*, 22 May 2010.

⁶³ de Montigny Marchand, Memorandum for the Minister, IDR-2181, 12 June 1991, and McDougall’s marginal notes, RG 25, Vol 25,050, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

while setting a date for its departure unless there was clear evidence of progress. Dawson and Anderson favoured the third option.⁶⁴

Through July and August, officials from External Affairs and National Defence hammered out a strategy for withdrawal. A deal was easily struck: the diplomats promised to back the military's desire to quit Cyprus, increasingly disparaged as a "summer camp" where combat skills went to erode. In exchange, National Defence brass supported External Affairs' campaign for a continuing military presence in post-Cold War Germany.⁶⁵ The timing seemed perfect. During the summer, us President George Bush had persuaded the four main parties in the Cyprus dispute to meet in New York for talks with Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar. Concerns about Canada's UN commitment could be turned aside by citing Ottawa's willingness to send mine-clearing specialists to Cyprus as part of a confidence-building measure associated with the talks. In early September, McDougall blessed a plan to push the UN to find a Cyprus solution by making it clear to stakeholders that whether or not there was progress, Canada would take a "hard look" at its commitment after 1994.⁶⁶ The foreign minister, in New York for the UN's General Assembly, told Pérez de Cuéllar that Canada would not stay indefinitely.

The news that fall was not hopeful. Touring Cyprus in November, Austrian President Kurt Waldheim, a former UN secretary-general, surprised observers by abruptly suggesting that Austria's contingent ought to leave.⁶⁷ A week later, after months of negotiations, Turkish commanders in Northern Cyprus rejected plans for the mine-clearing confidence-building exercise. Operation Spiral, bitterly joked the Permanent Mission in New York, "was spun."⁶⁸ More worrying still, Athens and Ankara refused to pursue their talks, leaving Bush doubtful of progress and the UN Secretary-General openly pessimistic. "Both Turkish and Greek Cypriots have come to live with the status quo and enjoy the benefit of it," wrote Canada's high commissioner to

⁶⁴ Michael Dawson to General B.A. Goetze, and attached "Paper to Review Canada's Contribution to UNFICYP," RG 25, Vol 25,050, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁶⁵ Ken Calder to Jeremy Kinsman, 4 October 1991, RG 25, Vol 25,050, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁶⁶ Ibid, and de Montigny Marchand, Memorandum for the Minister, RWR-2704, 13 September 1991, RG 25, Vol 25,050, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁶⁷ Vienna to Ottawa, tel 205, 11 November 1991, RG 25, Vol 25,050, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁶⁸ Permanent Representative New York to Ottawa, tel 7220, 19 November 1991, RG 25, Vol 25,050, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

Cyprus, Michael Bell, and there was “no end in sight.”⁶⁹ McDougall agreed, and when her officials asked to kick-start UN consultations on the long-term future of UNFICYP, she demurred. Instead, she resolved on a tougher line in her forthcoming talks with US Secretary of State Jim Baker and the new UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Canada’s ambassador in Washington, Derek Burney, was doubtful. The US administration had a large stake in Cyprus, whose future was carefully monitored by the powerful Greek-American community, and any retreat in Cyprus would come with a price. “We should not stake out positions we cannot sustain,” the veteran diplomat warned his rookie minister, reminding her that recent Canadian efforts to place UNFICYP on a better financial basis had ended in a “humiliating retreat with our tail between our legs.”⁷⁰ McDougall was undeterred. When she met with Baker and Boutros-Ghali in January, she was firm and forthright. Canada would not act rashly, she promised, but it was “time to terminate.” Ottawa would give official notice of its intention to leave in June 1992, and be gone “within two years.”⁷¹

McDougall’s *démarche* stunned the Americans, who described it as a “bombshell.” Baker’s office bluntly warned Burney “not to do anything precipitous.”⁷² London too was skeptical, wondering if radical change was “desirable and feasible.”⁷³ But McDougall’s threat concentrated minds wonderfully. When Greek Foreign Minister Antonis Samaras heard of the deadline—“devastating”—he promised a new round of successful talks. “This is good,” replied McDougall, for “without demonstrable progress on the substance, we shall give formal notice that the Canadians will pull out.”⁷⁴ There were other signs that Canadian pressure was working. Washington and London both accelerated their efforts to restart communal talks, while in New York, Marrack Goulding, the UN under-secretary for peacekeeping,

⁶⁹ Tel Aviv to Ottawa, tel 8751, 21 November 1991, RG 25, Vol 25,050, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁷⁰ Washington to Ottawa, tel 2440, 8 January 1992, RG 25, Vol 25,050, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁷¹ Reid Morden, Memorandum for the Minister, IDR-1042, 9 January 1992, RG 25, Vol 25,050, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁷² Washington to Ottawa, tel 513, 17 January 1992, RG 25, Vol 25,505, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁷³ London to Ottawa, tel 4025, 21 January 1992, RG 25, Vol 25,505, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁷⁴ Prague/CSCE Del to Ottawa, tel Cdel-04, 30 January 1992, RG 25, Vol 25,0505, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

began to canvas options for a smaller, more manageable force in Cyprus. Indeed, by June, progress was encouraging enough to prompt McDougall herself to head to the region to assess the situation. She was armed with a “non-paper” offering a Canadian contribution to a re-structured “mixed mission” of observers supported by a small infantry component.⁷⁵

The minister’s quick trip thorough Athens, Ankara, and Cyprus was cheering. She was skeptical of the region’s bureaucrats, who suffered from too much history and not enough trust. “Officials are generally defensive and recriminatory,” she reported, “UN reps are washed out.”⁷⁶ The minister found her political counterparts much better company, “more directed to a positive future and willing to break the patterns of the past.” She was particularly impressed by Cypriot President George Vassiliou, “a leader genuinely in search of reconciliation.”⁷⁷ Given the renewed prospects for progress and a chance to earn a return on the investments of a generation of Canadian soldiers, McDougall decided that “we ought to give it a last shot.” A week later, Canada extended its mission another six months, refraining from making good its threat to go.

Cyprus remained a Canadian priority during the summer of 1992. On McDougall’s advice, Mulroney raised it at the Group of Seven (G7) Summit in Munich, which endorsed his demand for faster progress. But by fall, momentum was stalled again. When Canadian representatives pressed for “significant redefinition and downsizing” at the September troop contributors meeting, they encountered renewed UN hesitations.⁷⁸ From UN sources, they learned too that the latest round of inter-communal talks were going “very badly.”⁷⁹ In State Department and Whitehall corridors, American and British diplomats and ministers, *sotto voce*, began to whisper that Ottawa ought to stay. Nonsense, interjected Canada’s high commissioner to Cyprus, Norman Spector. An influential Tory loyalist who had served

⁷⁵ Michael Brock to IFB, IDS-1869, 22 May 1992, RG 25, Vol 25,505, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁷⁶ Athens/Mindel to Ottawa, tel Mdel-2, 2 June 1992, RG 25, Vol 25,505, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁷⁷ Tel Aviv to Ottawa, tel 214, 4 June 1992, RG 25, Vol 27,639, File 21-14-6-UNCICYP-1, LAC.

⁷⁸ Ottawa to Tel Aviv, tel IDD-226, 2 November 1992, RG 25, Vol 27,639, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁷⁹ Permanent Mission New York to Ottawa, Cosics 1132, 5 November 1992, RG 25, Vol 27,639, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

as Mulroney's chief of staff from 1990 to 1992, Spector emphatically rejected that option, insisting that "Canada must upset the status quo."⁸⁰ McDougall and her cabinet colleagues needed little convincing, and in December 1992, she finally announced that Canada would leave Cyprus within a year.

Most Canadians left Cyprus in 1993, though former Foreign Minister Joe Clark hung on as the secretary-general's special representative, and a single soldier served (and continues to serve) with UNFICYP. That seems entirely appropriate, and perhaps reflects the deep sense of duty that has always rested close to the core of Canada's Cyprus commitment. A responsible search for global order drew Canada to the Eastern Mediterranean in 1964, and kept it there. Through fifty-nine troop rotations, 29,000 troops, and twenty-eight killed, successive Canadian governments held firm for thirty years. UNFICYP was good for Cyprus, but it was also good for Canada, advancing its NATO and UN objectives, while reflecting legitimate domestic political interests and values. When this balance shifted with the end of the Cold War, Canada's stake in Cyprus diminished sharply. This was not, as some have complained, evidence that Canadians had "lost our place in the world," or that Canada was "out of the game."⁸¹ Rather, the Cyprus experience reminds us that Canadian peacekeeping diplomacy so often combined an idealist grasp of the desirable with a realist appreciation of the possible.



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⁸⁰ Tel Aviv to Ottawa, tel 441, 23 November 1992, RG 25, Vol 27,639, File 21-14-6-UNFICYP-1, LAC.

⁸¹ This diminutive theme echoes in Andrew Cohen's bestselling *While Canada Slept: How We Lost Our Place in the World* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004) and Paul Heinbecker's *Getting Back in the Game: A Foreign Policy Playbook for Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010).

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