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LETTER DATED 4 APRIL 1967 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS TO THE UNITED
NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

I should be grateful if you would take the necessary steps to have the attached memorandum of the USSR Government concerning "United Nations Operations for the Maintenance of International Peace and Security" circulated as an official document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) N. FEDORENKO

* Also issued under the symbol S/7841.

MEMORANDUM

OF THE USSR GOVERNMENT CONCERNING "UNITED NATIONS OPERATIONS
FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY"

The question of operations for the maintenance of international peace and security with the use of armed forces has recently been the subject of active debate in the United Nations.

As is well known, one of the principal purposes of the United Nations, as laid down in its Charter, is to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, i.e. to maintain international peace and security. Accordingly, interest in the question how the United Nations fulfils its functions in that field is entirely understandable. However, certain Powers ostensibly concerned to strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations in safeguarding international peace and security are in fact launching an offensive against the provisions of the United Nations Charter which regulate measures taken on behalf of the Organization to safeguard or restore international peace, in particular measures connected with the employment of armed force. What we refer to is the undisguised effort to accelerate the elaboration of proposals aimed at revising the basic provisions of the United Nations Charter, under which the Security Council alone is authorized to decide on all questions pertaining to measures for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The United Nations Charter has never suited those whose purposes and political principles differ from the purposes and principles of the Charter. One cannot fail to see that the object of the propaganda campaign developed by the United States and some of its allies is to exert influence upon those States, particularly smaller nations, for which the United Nations, as established on the basis of its Charter, is an important guarantee of their security and independence.

The current discussion in the United Nations of the problems of safeguarding international peace and security shows that some States threatened by the encroachment of the imperialist Powers on their independence and sovereignty fear that the United Nations will not be in a position to safeguard their security effectively unless the General Assembly is given the power to adopt decisions on peace-keeping operations, binding on all Members of the United Nations, designed to protect the victims of imperialist aggression, including the dispatch of

United Nations armed forces to the affected areas. In that connexion, it has been suggested on a number of occasions that the Western Powers would be unable to prevent the adoption of such decisions by the General Assembly because they possess no right of veto in that body, whereas they do possess the right of veto in the Security Council and could therefore use it to block the adoption of such decisions.

Accordingly, the Soviet Government deems it necessary to outline its position on the question of United Nations measures involving the employment of armed forces - a question of vital importance to the Organization.

At the very outset we must warn against certain dangerous misconceptions, such as the idea that the security of small nations can be safeguarded, with United Nations assistance, on any basis other than that of strict observance of the provisions of the United Nations Charter which regulate the employment of force on behalf of the Organization. In point of fact, only the unflinching observance of the Charter can provide a real guarantee that armed forces are not used for objectives which have nothing in common with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter or with the intentions of States which would like to use such forces for the protection of their security. Conversely, the contravention of those provisions gives the imperialist Powers a completely free hand, by turning the United Nations forces into an instrument for securing their narrow interests to the detriment of the small nations. In other words, there is and can be no way of using armed forces on behalf of the United Nations in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter other than that of strictly observing the Charter.

If we picture the situation which would arise if the General Assembly were authorized to take binding decisions on the maintenance of peace and security, it is clear that such a state of affairs would be precisely in the interests of the Powers which have long been seeking to achieve that objective.

It will be recalled in that connexion that in 1950, under pressure from the United States, the United Nations adopted the notorious "Uniting for Peace" resolution, under the terms of which measures for the maintenance of peace with the use of armed forces could be taken by the General Assembly also. And when it is considered that at the twenty-first session of the General Assembly certain Powers

again attempted to sanction the conduct of United Nations peace-keeping operations by the General Assembly and this time also to turn over to the Assembly the financing of such operations, then surely the small countries should be put on their guard by the stubborn efforts of the Powers concerned to shatter the Charter, which regulates the use of force on behalf of the United Nations.

This fact shows that the Powers which are seeking to breach the Charter by the application of pressure have still not given up their attempts to impose on the General Assembly decisions convenient to them and aimed against the independence and sovereignty of the smaller States. If they were to succeed, the United Nations, so far as the use of armed forces is concerned, would become an instrument in their hands by using which they could re-establish the colonial and neo-colonial order in regions in which colonialism has been defeated. Is not it a fact that voices are being heard in the United States arguing that the United Nations flag should be used to cover up United States aggression in Viet-Nam? To give the General Assembly such functions would be dangerous to many independent States in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and to the world at large.

That is precisely where the proposals on peace-keeping operations made by Ireland and Canada at the twenty-first session of the General Assembly are leading us. They are a continuation of the attempts already made to revise and breach the most important provisions of the United Nations Charter which regulate the use of force on behalf of the Organization.

It is of course gratifying to note that the majority of the States Members of the United Nations have demonstrated their high sense of responsibility for the future of the Organization and have not taken the lead of those who have sought to push the United Nations on to a course of violating the Charter of the Organization.

At the same time the Soviet Government would like to point out that the use of the machinery for the maintenance of international peace and security, as prescribed in the United Nations Charter, is of particular importance in protecting the interests of newly independent States.

The principle that the permanent members of the Security Council must be unanimous in taking decisions on questions relating to the maintenance of international peace is important not only for the Soviet Union which is capable of defending itself against any external danger, and not so much for the Soviet Union as for the newly independent States which are not yet firmly established. The Soviet Union cannot agree to the Charter being undermined - and it cannot agree that

questions relating to the use of force on the behalf of the United Nations should be referred for decision by a mechanical majority of votes in the General Assembly - mainly because the imperialist forces can use this procedure in their own interests. The right of veto in the hands of the Soviet Union is an important guarantee of the independence and sovereignty of smaller States. The Arab and other independent States know from their own experience how, in the Security Council, the Soviet Union opposes attacks by the imperialist States on newly independent States.

If the rule of unanimity among the permanent members of the Security Council did not exist, the imperialists could without any difficulty use the United Nations for crushing the national liberation movements of peoples. This is exactly what happened in the Organization of American States when the United States of America succeeded in obtaining authorization from a majority of States members of that organization for United States aggression against the Dominican Republic. It is also a fact that the existence of the principle of unanimity in the Security Council prevented United Nations support being given to Portuguese colonizers who had been thrown out of Goa. Similarly, the existence of this principle prevented the Security Council from taking a decision directed against Indonesia.

When speaking of the possibilities of using force on the behalf of the Organization, we cannot fail to take into account the nature and character of the United Nations itself, as they are reflected in its Charter.

The United Nations was founded in 1945 as an organization for co-operation between States with a view to maintaining international peace and security, preventing and removing threats to peace, suppressing acts of aggression, promoting the peaceful settlement of international disputes, developing friendly relations between States and achieving international co-operation on economic, social and humanitarian matters.

Realizing that the question of the use of force on behalf of the United Nations is one of the main questions relating to the Organization's activities, and that the responsibility which the United Nations assumes in this respect is particularly great, the authors of the Charter strictly regulated the Organization's actions in this field.

As is known, in accordance with the Charter, decisions of all kinds relating to the dispatch of United Nations troops can be taken only by the Security Council with

the agreement of all its permanent members. This constitutes a reliable guarantee that armed forces employed on behalf of the United Nations will not be used in the narrow interests of any State or group of States. If, let us say, there was no rule in the Security Council requiring unanimity among its permanent members, and if the application of peace-keeping measures was decided by a majority of votes, then an attempt by some permanent members of the Security Council to use armed forces against the interests of other permanent members could in practice mean only one thing - namely, war.

Of course, no international inter-governmental organization can or should initiate a new war, and thereby dig its own grave.

The founders of the United Nations clearly realized this as long ago as 1944-45 when they drafted the United Nations Charter and when, having made enormous efforts to discover a mutually acceptable solution, they found a way out by giving the permanent members of the Security Council the right of "veto".

This is the only correct and only possible solution in the conditions which actually exist in the world. The experience of the United Nations itself shows very clearly that violations of the Charter in matters connected with the use of armed force on behalf of the Organization - including matters relating to the financing of such a force - cannot fail to lead, and do in fact lead, to situations in which operations of this kind are used for purposes that have nothing in common with the objectives and principles of the Charter, and actually damage the Organization itself.

There is yet another important aspect of this question. If decisions on the question of using armed forces on behalf of the United Nations are taken by the General Assembly, this implies that the military operations concerned would be conducted, not under the direction of the Security Council and its Military Staff Committee - as prescribed in the Charter - but under the direction of the United Nations Secretariat. It is not difficult to imagine what consequences this might have, and indeed the consequences which it has had, when such attempts have been made. And quite regardless of the person who holds the office of Secretary-General. Even the most authoritative and impartial figure cannot settle problems which should be settled by States themselves and by their Governments, guided by the Charter.

Everyone will remember, for instance, how disastrous it was for the Congo that, as a result of efforts made by the Western Powers, the direction of United Nations operations in that country was removed from the Security Council and handed over to

the United Nations Secretariat. As may be seen from the book by Mr. O'Brien, former United Nations representative in Katanga, all matters relating to the Congo were thereafter dealt with in the United Nations by the so-called "Congo Club", which consisted of United States citizens grouped around Hammarskjold on the Secretariat staff. In those circumstances, as O'Brien points out, it was the United Nations Secretariat itself that took the shameful decision which transformed the United Nations forces in the Congo into actual accomplices in the murder of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, at whose request the troops had in fact been sent to the Congo. As a result of similar violations of the United Nations Charter in the course of operations in the Congo, foreign monopolies proved to be the only force which gained anything from the Congo tragedy.

The experience of the Congo serves as a solemn warning that it is not by violating the Charter, which governs the use of force on behalf of the Organization, that one can seek protection from aggressors and violators of the United Nations Charter.

With all these circumstances in mind the Soviet Government is firmly convinced that the provisions of the United Nations Charter governing the use of force on behalf of the Organization are a reliable guarantee of the interests of the newly independent States and of all peace-loving countries, and that any attempt to revise them might have very dangerous consequences. For that reason, on the question of United Nations armed forces too, the Soviet Union has been and still is advocating measures to strengthen the effectiveness of the Organization in the safeguarding of international peace and security, based on the strict observance of the United Nations Charter and the utilization of the possibilities inherent in the Charter. This position was outlined in the memorandum of the Government of the USSR dated 10 July 1964 regarding certain measures to strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations in the safeguarding of international peace and security.

No one who is genuinely prepared to help in strengthening the United Nations machinery for the maintenance of international peace, as provided for in the Organization's Charter, can deny that the implementation of these proposals would be of great positive value. As is known, the Soviet Government's proposals envisage, first, that the newly independent States should be invited to participate to the greatest possible extent in the Security Council's work on the preparation and

conduct of United Nations peace-keeping operations. Implementation of these proposals would make it possible for a large number of these States to participate in the work of the Security Council's Military Staff Committee, in the general strategic direction of a United Nations force created for a given purpose, and in the operational command of this force. These States would also play an important role in the regional bodies which the Military Staff Committee might set up for different regions of the world.

In the Soviet Government's proposals, there is also a reference to the need for an appreciable increase in the Security Council's readiness to take rapid and effective action.

This could be achieved, in particular, by concluding the agreements provided for in Article 43 of the Charter, which define the procedures under which contingents are placed at the disposal of the Council by States, and also by having States undertake, in accordance with Article 45 of the Charter, to hold certain contingents immediately available for placing at the Council's disposal. The possibility of implementing these important provisions of the United Nations Charter without delay is evident from the well-known statements made at the end of 1964 by the Governments of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the People's Republic of Bulgaria, which both declared that they were ready to place contingents of their armed forces at the Security Council's disposal and to conclude the relevant agreements with the Council.

As is known, the Soviet Union's proposals point to other possibilities inherent in the United Nations Charter for strengthening the Organization's machinery for the maintenance and restoration of international peace. In particular, the proposals envisage a wide range of possible methods of financing for the Security Council to choose from, when it has to take a decision on the financial aspects of this or that operation. The Council may, for instance, decide to charge the costs of a given operation to the aggressor, to apportion them among States Members of the United Nations, or to cover the costs by voluntary contributions or payments made by the parties directly concerned, etc.

Thus, in regard to efforts to promote the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Charter - and, in particular, the provisions relating to such an important field of the Organization's activities as the maintenance of international peace and security - the Soviet Union is second to none.

In stating its willingness to co-operate with States Members of the United Nations in this respect, the Soviet Government in turn expects that its proposals in this connexion will be given due consideration by States Members of the Organization.

At the same time, the Soviet Government deems it necessary to stress once again that the Soviet Union will oppose any attempts to revise the provisions of the Charter relating to the use of armed force on behalf of the United Nations, or to the terms on which such operations are financed.

The Soviet Union will not be able to remain a detached observer of breaches of the United Nations Charter, which would enable certain Western Powers to impose upon the General Assembly decisions likely to impair the basic interests of Member States of the United Nations. If Member States of the United Nations were to embark on that course, a situation would arise in which the Soviet Union would be obliged to reconsider its attitude to United Nations activities.

In expressing these considerations regarding one of the most important aspects of United Nations activities, on which the very fate of the United Nations largely depends, the Soviet Government hopes that the Governments of Member States of the United Nations will give careful attention to these considerations and will take positions in keeping with the United Nations Charter, with the interests of maintaining and strengthening the United Nations and with the interests of peace.

Moscow

16 March 1967.
