

Government Orders

Mr. Bob Hicks (Scarborough East): Madam Speaker, two days ago I sat down and prepared a 20-minute speech to make on this occasion. I was then asked to amend it and make it into a 10-minute speech.

Before I could make that speech, war broke out, so I thought I would have to make another speech. But I looked this one over and really there is no difference. There is no difference between what I was going to say two days ago or yesterday and what I want to say now. The reasons have not changed. The reasons are the same, I feel, for us being where we are and engaged in this war. I would like to share some of those reasons with members of the House.

Most countries in the world hold to the concept that taking territory by conquest is unacceptable international behaviour. Most states operate by the principle that smaller independent neighbours have the right to exist. Most states also abhor the use or even the manufacture of chemical weapons. A great number of the world's nations, a growing number in the past two years, are dedicated to democracy, a free market economy, and the human rights for their citizens.

Then, there are the Saddam Husseins. The Saddam Husseins of this world are the bloody tyrants at home who cling to power through the use of terror and torture and are ruthless bullies and marauders among their weaker neighbours.

Last year at this time, the world appeared to be poised on the threshold of a new and promising era when we could finally say that the cold war had ended. Saddam Hussein brought myself and a lot of other people back to a hard, grim reality that this world remains a dangerous and volatile place, where petty dictators armed to the teeth with sophisticated conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction pose a serious threat to their immediate neighbours, and more and more to the world in general.

There is no doubt in my mind that the world is at a crossroads. Either we quickly and decisively continue to co-ordinate our response to these increasingly dangerous breaches of international peace, or we stand back and allow regional dictators to establish and abide by their own rules.

Since August 2, Saddam Hussein has had 135 days to withdraw from Kuwait. He used that time to take

hostages; pillage Kuwait; violate the people of Kuwait; threaten Israel, Saudi Arabia and any other country which condemned the invasion; and built up his military forces in Kuwait and Iraq.

Let me dwell for a moment on what Saddam Hussein has done in what he now calls Iraq's nineteenth province. Reports coming out of Kuwait and from refugees and departing hostages indicate that the invasion was followed by widespread looting, rape, and murder. Amnesty International estimates that 7,000 people may have been killed and that another 20,000 are missing. After crushing all but minor pockets of resistance, Iraqi forces began systematically dismantling Kuwait and removing equipment, food, luxury goods, captured weapons, et cetera, back to Iraq.

• (1530)

Eyewitness accounts of the conditions of detainees taken into Iraqi custody and later released also suggest the widespread use of torture. Scores of detainees are reported to have simply disappeared. The rape of Kuwait is all the evidence I need that we are dealing here with much larger issues than protecting oil supplies for the west or blindly going along with the Americans to help protect U.S. strategic interests in the gulf.

It is nonsense and intellectually dishonest for anyone to suggest that this is some sort of American adventure or some manifestation of U.S. imperialism. The British, Egyptians, the French, Syrians, the Dutch, Qataris, Australians, Pakistanis, Saudis, Soviets, Argentinians, Bangladeshis and forces from about 20 other nations are actively contributing to the international effort to get Iraq out of Kuwait.

The multinational response undertaken last evening underscores that the gulf crisis is much more than a threat against the security of nations of the west. Certainly, it is this, to be sure. But it is also a threat against moderate Muslim regimes across the Middle East and North Africa as well as to Israel, western Europe, eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, the United States and even Canada. Above all, it is a threat to the poorest nations of the world, which are much more dependent on gulf oil than the United States and much more vulnerable to hostile actions by their larger neighbours than are the wealthy industrialized nations.