

Government Orders

dians, who expect this House to make a decision based on democracy and solidarity.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Saskatoon—Dundurn wish to respond?

[English]

Mr. Bodnar: Mr. Speaker, because that was not a question but primarily a comment by the hon. member I have nothing further to add.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi): Mr. Speaker, I have a comment and a question.

I am somewhat surprised by the remarks the hon. member has made, especially when he talked about withdrawing from Bosnia, while several of his colleagues have told us that withdrawing would mean abandoning the people, who would then starve. It would also cause a crisis in neighbouring regions, with everything that entails. The aggressors would have won and it would mean rape and famine for an entire population.

Am I to understand that the member who just spoke will not support in his caucus a government position which should be first to ensure that Canadian troops are safe and second to help Canada live up to its reputation as a champion of peace on the international scene?

So, the member will be against giving this House the assurance that the Canadian peacekeepers will not be unilaterally pulled out of the former Yugoslavia.

[English]

Mr. Bodnar: Mr. Speaker, we have debated the question, exchanged ideas and listened to all other hon. members who have given their views with respect to these matters.

The purpose of the debate is to exchange and to formulate ideas. Hopefully if the hon. member has further comments with which he can convince other members on the other side of the House as to why his position is more favourable perhaps he can be convincing. That is the reason we are here today.

I can indicate that some of the comments, such as those made earlier today by the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre were convincing. If the the hon. member who has just posed his comment has further comments that may be convincing I ask him for them.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard): Mr. Speaker, the situation of our Canadian UN troops in the former Yugoslavia is worrisome. Mr. Boutros-Ghali said last weekend that he was thinking of using air strikes to free a Canadian contingent stationed in Srebrenica. Obviously, the UN troops' mission is in jeopardy.

• (2055)

Since 1947, Canada is the only country to have participated in all UN peacekeeping missions. This participation has made Canada's presence felt throughout the world. Our peace missions are recognized. They contribute to Canada's international prestige. We have become leaders in the art of keeping peace in the world.

[English]

For that matter if we go back a few years ago, members will recall that Mr. Lester B. Pearson was the recipient of the 1957 Nobel prize for the promotion of peace.

The first Canadian involvement in a peacekeeping contingent goes back to 1947 in the Kashmir but it was not until 1956 at the time of the Suez Canal crisis, at the initiative of the Canadian government, that the peacekeeping operations began as we know them today.

On that occasion the then minister of external affairs, Lester B. Pearson, proposed sending troops under the United Nations flag in order to permit the orderly retreat of belligerents from the canal zone. Since then Canadians have never missed a single peace mission.

In 1988, a second peace Nobel prize was awarded to the United Nations international force. At home we pay tribute to our troops. In the fall of 1992 during a monument unveiling ceremony by the Governor General, Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn, the monument was named the Reconciliation.

[Translation]

Until this latest mission in Bosnia, we had lost 80 lives. Our soldiers have often had to live in frightful conditions, but they have managed to carry out their mission. This time, the former Yugoslavia is at war. Will we suffer more loss of life in a single mission than in all the previous ones? Our men and women now have to undergo armed attack without the ability to react. Their families and their children are worried about them. A climate of fear and uncertainty is setting in. They are witnesses to a war, they are not allowed to use their weapons and they stand by powerless as people are massacred. Can we call this a peace mission?

Nevertheless, the UN troops' intervention in Bosnia is important. Canada faces a dilemma. We cannot accept depriving these people of our humanitarian aid and we cannot send our troops on a peace mission in a country at war. We cannot keep peace if there is no peace. We cannot restore peace against the will of the Serbs, the Croats and the Muslims. In this context, Canada is in the best position to help set new rules for peacekeeping. Our action to date has been preventive and it must remain so. We are there to maintain the peace; we represent the peacekeeping forces.

In some incidents during this war in Bosnia, tension was so high between these peoples and the line between legitimate defence and provocation was so thin that action taken by our