

*Special Debate*

middle, the UN forces. But in the case of Bosnia, it is far more than that. It is humanitarian. It is a matter of helping people to survive.

So can we just decide to withdraw? Of course not. We know perfectly well we cannot. The government knew this. The government thought that by starting this debate, it would necessarily get the support of the opposition.

However, although we cannot do otherwise, we are aware that the government has failed in several respects, in that it does not put its cards on the table and give us a chance to make informed decisions. In a democracy, people want to make informed decisions. They want to know why, because they want to choose the best option. In this case, we have no option.

From the military point of view, we know what would happen if we left right away. We know that in Croatia, it would be a signal for all-out war. People are just waiting for a chance to attack each other. And of course in Bosnia, the Serbs would try, and they would probably succeed in settling their differences with the Bosnians, in ways we can well imagine.

• (1855)

Without the presence of tv cameras and without UN forces, we can imagine the kind of atrocities that would take place. It would be total war, a war that would not be contained, that would spread to the Balkan powder keg towards Greece. We know that the Greeks sympathize with the Serbs and have done so for centuries, and that the Serbs might depend on the support that the Greeks might be tempted to give them. The Turks support the Bosnians.

Finally, there are any number of reasons why we would see an incredible explosion of hostilities with all the consequences this might have for relations between the major powers. What would be the position of the Soviet Union if there was an outbreak of armed conflict of this magnitude? We can assume this would make international tensions even worse tense. In other words, we are trapped.

What we would like to see is for the government to commit itself, with the help of the opposition who would be glad to oblige, to identifying certain criteria before getting into this kind of trap, and second, to setting conditions for the renewal of the mandate. I think the government should set certain conditions. It has already said that it would not agree to have the arms embargo withdrawn. I think the government has already adopted this as its policy, and we support that policy. I think one of the conditions would have to be that the embargo must be maintained, because on the American side, there is a strong movement in favour of lifting the embargo.

Second, it must ensure that ceasefires will last. Ceasefires tend to have a very short life expectancy in that part of the world. There have been dozens and dozens of cease-fire violations. We

must be able to set certain conditions. The UN will have to agree to identify more specific mandates. We must have a better idea of what we are going to do. To what extent can we reciprocate and in what way?

We have to know more about this, especially in connection with air strikes. For instance, does General Smith have the authority to carry out the threat he made recently without any input from Canada? Can they go ahead with air strikes without consulting the Canadian government? The answer would seem to be yes, in certain instances. It appears that, for reasons of defence, for example, General Smith is at liberty to launch air strikes. This is less clear in the case of offensive action, in which Canada apparently has some say, if only for reasons of defence, which we understand, in order to protect the lives of the peacekeeping force.

This means that things can escalate. We know very well how the Serbs will react to air raids on their positions. It is the people in the area who will pay. Who is going to be there? Our soldiers. There is also the whole question of morale in the Canadian armed forces as a backdrop. We will talk about this again in the House.

It seems to me the Canadian forces are going through a crisis. It seems to me that these peace missions have severely taxed their ability to meet these challenges. We might be tempted to think that, for the military, these missions are exotic tours of duty in faraway lands. Some might think that since apparently they do not have to engage the enemy, it is not an unpleasant business. We realize, however, that these missions are very hard and, perhaps, harder psychologically than traditional missions, because there is no clear objective, because these people often do not know why they are there and because they must remain impassive in the face of totally incomprehensible, uncivilized and unacceptable behaviour.

I think the Minister of National Defence should say more in this respect to the House. I am sure he has reports on morale in the Canadian forces, and I believe it is in the interest of all of us in this House to be informed of the constraints and of the actions that need to be taken in this area.

Therefore, the opposition's response, the one the government expected, the one it forces us to give, is yes. A very conditional yes. A yes that comes with lots of questions and doubts. Not a very happy yes.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

• (1900)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, at the outset I would like to advise you we will be splitting our times—