

S.O. 30

To compound this deplorable act the Soviet Union, Mr. Speaker, far from acknowledging its guilt, far from stating that a grotesque inhumane error in judgment—if indeed it was an error—took place, has had the moral offensiveness to suggest that if such a flight should take place again in the future it will take the same action again.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that while it is true that nothing now can be done to adequately repay the families of those affected—surely in the community of nations, if the principles for which the United Nations was created mean anything, there is a serious moral obligation on the Soviet Union to acknowledge its own moral culpability, and we, I say to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen), must continue to pursue that.

It is very easy in politics to become totally cynical. It is particularly easy, I suppose, in international politics, where the complexity of human life is all too abundant, to become even more cynical. However, I say, because I believe it profoundly, that at times—and it should happen more often—morality has a role to play in international politics, in the international relations of human beings as they are gathered collectively in states, and this is one of those times. The Soviet Union must not be allowed to simply cynically hope that this issue will disappear. I repeat, the Secretary of State for External Affairs on behalf of the people of Canada must be persistent in his demand that the Soviet Union acknowledge moral wrongdoing. That is the least that can be done for those ten Canadians and the hundreds of others who have lost their lives.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada must continue to pursue the claim which has already been made by the Canadian Government for financial compensation to the families of those affected. Once again, we must not simply sit back and allow the cynicism of the Soviet Government to prevail here in the expectation that soon the world will go back to sleep and forget all about this atrocity.

● (2010)

In addition to these follow-up actions on the part of the Government of Canada that I am suggesting on behalf of my colleagues tonight, Mr. Speaker, the Government, both for the United Nations and for the Civil Aviation Conference which is taking place by chance this week in Montreal, should work on some important additional proposals whose purpose should be to ensure the international safety not only of Canadians but of all people who wish to fly from one part of the world to another.

For example, Mr. Speaker, proposals are needed for an international open skies agreement, the purpose of which would be to provide international monitoring services for flights to help ensure that they stay on course, and for binding agreements among the participating nations concerning the safety of passengers should departure from course actually take place. As well, an international agreement ought to be pursued, the purpose of which would be to ensure that any nation wishing to join the family of international aviation must

first provide the commitment to not attack civilian aircraft under any pretence whatsoever.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, in my comments so far I have not, except by passing reference, spoken about what the Government has done so far. I have suggested that there is follow-up which would be appropriate in the case of moral condemnation and the demanding of financial compensation. In addition I have made two suggestions I think are important, indeed relevant, to be pursued at the international level, and pursued quickly.

I want to emphasize the morality of what is at stake here. I am aware of the complexity of getting agreement on matters that relate to international bodies, whether it be the aviation authorities or the United Nations to which I said my proposals should be referred, and certainly that is difficult to pursue, but I want to stress that in the final analysis it will not matter much. No international agreement really counts with regard to national behaviour unless the nation in question wants to make it count. That is so fundamental. All kinds of agreements have been designed with varying degrees of effectiveness, and that is why they should not be dismissed, intended to head off regional conflicts or promote co-operation in a whole variety of fields, and to ensure that irrational and inhumane conflict between nation states does not take place. But if a nation state chooses at any point to go to war, it tears up unilaterally an international agreement and nothing can be done about it. A nation state can take any of the wonderful agreements entered into very solemnly at the United Nations and at a given point, if it so decides that it is in its national interest to disregard such agreement, it can do so because there is no authority which can stop it.

Therefore, in making what I think are practical proposals, relative courses of action for the Secretary of State for External Affairs to pursue, I want to conclude by coming virtually full circle to the moral point I made at the outset. That is, the fundamental immorality of the Soviet action. Nothing can excuse the kind of action taken by that pilot. I ask Members of the House to put themselves in the position of flying an aircraft, not just contacting a civilian plane on radar, because those with flying experience well know that the pilot was close enough to visually identify that civilian aircraft. He acted on authority; there is no doubt he had the command, and whatever one thinks of his individual morality, and I sure do not think much of it at all, the morality beyond him is what counts in the Soviet state today. We have to get world opinion mobilized to make very clear that those who run modern societies have to be concerned about human life; that you just do not snuff it out because of a violation of your air space and you think that some spying device might have been present on a plane.

We have to tell the Soviet Union that it is unacceptable to so act, and I would suggest that this is precisely the role for morality in international politics. At times even a great power like the Soviet Union, which in this case has acted quite