

*Government Orders*

look at the situation in some parts of the world where suffering is widespread, not just Bosnia but Somalia and elsewhere, I think it would not take much for our people to support a more active role by the UN in peacekeeping operations than has traditionally been the case.

[English]

**Mr. Morris Bodnar (Saskatoon—Dundurn):** Mr. Speaker, first of all I wish to congratulate you and all the others in the House. That way I can simplify it. It has been mentioned many times over and over.

I wish to take this opportunity as well to thank the voters of my riding of Saskatoon—Dundurn for electing me to this House of Commons. Saskatoon—Dundurn comprises a large part of the city of Saskatoon, a city that we affectionately call the pearl of the prairies. The electorate represents all strata of society and are a true mosaic of cultures, creeds, nationalities and religions. I am proud to represent them as their member of Parliament.

The question that is before us today is obviously a very serious one. Canadian soldiers in Bosnia are in more than just a peacekeeping role. It has been mentioned many times over that they are in a war zone where they are neither aggressors nor combatants. This is a very difficult and extremely dangerous role.

A country has crumbled because of religious and ethnic problems. The citizens of Bosnia have rejected the peaceful methods that Canadians have embraced for years of parliamentary debate. Instead they have embraced the gun and the bomb as their means of communication. As well, as the nation has crumbled the peace process sponsored by the European communities and the United Nations seems to have crumbled. It appears that the different leaders have lost control over their military leaders. This is shown by the fact that every time a truce has been drafted it is broken before the ink has dried on the document. The leaders who appear to be intoxicated with power show the problems of a quest for political power over the value of human life.

However, it is not our job here today to name aggressors or to point fingers. Our primary question is the safety of Canadian military personnel stationed in the former Yugoslav republic and that is the only reason that we are here. It has become clear to many that a military solution to the situation in Bosnia is no longer feasible. What is needed now is a political solution. However, the quest for power and nation building seems to destroy all hope of achieving a political settlement without the intervention of the world community.

We have seen the world community intervene at a number of different times. The European community peace negotiators, the Vance—Owen peace negotiations and the current negotiations in Geneva have all proved fruitless. Ceasefires are signed, ceasefires are broken. Peace plans show hope only to have one party

walk away at the last moment. The situation seems bleak at present, bleak of ever reaching a political settlement.

• (2045)

We must be careful to balance this against the needs of the 2.75 million people that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees says depend on the humanitarian aid as their sole source of food. This is a weighty question.

We must sit here to balance the lives of 1,800 Canadian personnel versus an estimated three million innocent citizens. However the problem does not stop there. It is estimated that once a peace agreement is signed, if one is ever signed, they will need two times the number of troops they have now in the former Yugoslav republic to monitor the peace accord and to disarm the belligerents.

Therefore by staying, are we just getting ourselves into a project that will turn into another Cyprus where we were for 25 to 30 years? I think the chances of a peace agreement at this time are slim.

I wonder if it would make any difference if today we were speaking in the House had the situation a few weeks ago been one of guns being shot not over our soldiers' heads but at a lower position. If we had dead personnel would we be speaking any different today? I suggest we would be.

I must join with the member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre and say that we should withdraw for now and reassess our position.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix):** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debate on Bosnia since 10 o'clock this morning. I have heard words like democracy, solidarity and peace. I think the fact that we welcomed Father Jean—Bertrand Aristide in our gallery yesterday heightened the awareness of every member of this House because, since this morning, the words democracy, solidarity and peace have popped up in practically every speech.

After meeting with President Aristide, the Minister of Foreign Affairs talked about a "man democratically elected by the population of Haiti". Mr. Ouellet reiterated Canada's wish to see democracy restored in Haiti and President Aristide rapidly reinstated in his post. He said: "Together we will go to the Security Council; it is a concrete step we must take to restore democracy."

Democracy, solidarity and peace—words that have been heard all day and in practically every speech made by members of this House—must be preserved in Yugoslavia, Haiti, Bosnia and Canada. These great democratic principles must guide today's statements and tomorrow's actions.

• (2050)

In closing, we, as members of this House, will have to take a position as soon as possible because the people in Bosnia and our fellow citizens in Quebec and Canada are awaiting our decision. I am convinced that our decision will reassure Cana-