

Special Debate

one-third of Croatia by Serb forces will become a permanent situation.

When one looks at a map for the areas controlled by the Serbs, one sees how it prevents north-south and east-west communications and transportation in Croatia. Croatia cannot economically develop as long as this situation continues. There is a tremendous sense of frustration.

When President Tudjman called for an end to the mandate, he was not speaking for himself. It was a unanimous decision passed by the Parliament of Croatia. Because of international pressure the Croatian government has agreed to back down.

• (2135)

An agreement was reached with Mr. Tudjman and the Vice-President of the United States, Al Gore, in Copenhagen. That agreement has not been implemented in a mandate. There is no agreement as things stand now for a new mandate. That is why the government a bit amiss when it asks the House for advice to renew that mandate. Right now no mandate exists.

The agreement reached in Copenhagen has not been finalized in an agreement that would allow a new mandate to be implemented in Croatia. In part what we are discussing here could very well be beside the point. The Croatian government has given until the end of May to reach this agreement. I understand the condition will continue as it is now until the end of May.

No agreement exists right now that would allow Canadian troops to stay in Croatia. Hopefully something can be achieved by the end of May. If it can be achieved, I urge the Canadian government to allow our Canadian troops to remain there for humanitarian purposes in the hope and prayer we all share, that peace can be achieved in that part of the world. Our prayers are with them.

The Deputy Speaker: I trust colleagues will agree to let the pages leave.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can safely say every member of the House respects and honours our peacekeepers serving around the world. We all know the story of Lester B. Pearson inventing the concept we now call peacekeeping. Not all of us know Canada has participated in every United Nations military effort since Korea.

All this brings us to the debate at hand about the future of Canadian peacekeepers in the former Yugoslavia. Since the beginning of the conflict Canada has been an active participant helping end conflicts there. Through our partnerships in NATO, the organization for security and co-operation in Europe, and the international contact group in Yugoslavia we have sought ways to bring safety to that troubled land.

Canada has contributed almost \$60 million in humanitarian aid through various international and non-governmental organizations. Our presence in Bosnia and Croatia has helped save the lives of countless thousands of people. Our aid programs have helped to alleviate the sufferings of those trapped in these conflicts.

Many Canadians are questioning our role in the former Yugoslavia, whether we are even needed there. I believe we are needed there. We must stay there.

As has been said, 2,100 Canadians are serving as peacekeepers and monitors today in the former Yugoslavia. As part of our commitment to NATO, Canada is obligated to help protect the western European security. In keeping that commitment we are at the forefront of NATO expansion and we are helping prevent the Yugoslavian crisis from spilling over into other parts of Europe.

There is always a potential for peace. There is still a potential for peace in the former Yugoslavia. However, for that peace to exist there must be an end to the continual fighting among the various factions. Our humanitarian efforts are helping people realize they can get along in the spirit of co-operation and mutual understanding.

Our peacekeepers are there to prevent acts that might be destructive to any sense of understanding. After all, it was an assassin's bullets on the streets of Sarajevo that sparked the first world war.

• (2140)

If our peacekeepers can prevent such a pivotal action from taking place, they must remain there to make sure this peace comes eventually. Our presence is necessary.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for allowing us to continue the debate this evening.

I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Canadian men and women who serve in our armed forces. They have received a lot of criticism of late, much of it unjustified. They have for many decades conducted themselves professionally, effectively and with bravery. Lest we forget, they have done us all proud. Some from the PPCLI come from my riding of Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, and I am deeply gratified to those people specifically.

The views I am going to express are those of my own. They are not held by my caucus. Although there is much on which we agree, on the bottom line of whether we should pull out of Bosnia and Hercegovina and Croatia we disagree. I do not think we should and I will give the following explanation.

Let us first understand what our troops are doing there. For over three years under UNPROFOR they have enabled the