

REPORT FROM THE HILL



UN Interests

■ The third session of the 34th Parliament resumed on 16 September and continued until just before Christmas. Among the most tantalizing stories during the fall session was the suggestion that Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was in contention for the position of Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Prime Minister made it clear, however, in response to a query from Opposition Leader Jean Chrétien on 22 October, that he had not put his name on the official list of candidates. In that case, Mr. Chrétien inquired the next day, "why the name of the Prime Minister has not been withdrawn from this list" and what instructions Canadian diplomats abroad had been given in relation to his candidacy. To this there was no definitive answer until 28 October, when Mr. Mulroney instructed Yves Fortier, Canada's ambassador to the UN, to withdraw his name from any further consideration.

The United Nations was also the subject of a special debate in the House on a private member's motion introduced by Conservative MP Walter McLean. McLean is the Prime Minister's special representative on African questions and has for some years been a mainstay for Canada in New York during the UN General Assembly each fall. Mr. McLean moved on 19 September, "that the government promote a summit level meeting at the United Nations on global security, to examine ways of implementing and strengthening the United Nations peacekeeping and enforcement mechanisms." Among the other

speakers during the debate were PC MP Louise Feltham and Liberal MPs Warren Allmand and Christine Stewart.

The Soviet Coup and After

■ The House was not sitting at the time of the attempted coup in the Soviet Union on 19 August, but the Prime Minister immediately suspended the package of food aid and technical assistance that had only been restored to the Soviet Union a month before at the London economic summit of the Group of Seven leading industrialized countries. His initial show of resolve, however, was succeeded the following day by more cautious words from Secretary of State for External Affairs Barbara McDougall who, in a statement that drew sharp criticism from opposition party spokespersons, warned against precipitous action against the new Soviet regime and said that Ottawa would take a wait-and-see attitude to measure the transition of power. It was the principles of democratization that Mr. Gorbachev espoused rather than his reinstatement on which Ottawa was focussing, she said.

Following a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels on 21 August, however, Mrs. McDougall said Canada was fully in accord with NATO's condemnation of the coup and insistence on the restoration of Mikhail Gorbachev to power. Moreover, on 26 August, the minister announced the establishment of diplomatic relations with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, making Canada one of the first Western countries to do so.

The Coup in Haiti

■ On 30 September, External Affairs Minister McDougall strongly condemned the coup by rebel elements of the Haitian armed forces which ousted the

recently-elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. On 2 October, she attended an emergency Foreign Ministers' meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington, which produced a tough eleven-point resolution calling for cutting all aid to Haiti and otherwise isolating it politically and economically. She also took part in an OAS mission to Haiti on 4 October and met briefly with the coup leaders in an unsuccessful attempt to convince them to restore the Aristide government.

In the Commons on 1 and 2 October, Liberal External Affairs critic Lloyd Axworthy supported the government's condemnation. He referred to a speech the Prime Minister gave at Stanford University in California on 29 September, quoting him as saying that the advancement and promotion of human rights must overtake considerations of national sovereignty. Mr. Axworthy then asked whether Canada was asking either the UN or the OAS to intervene in Haiti. While not answering the question directly, the Prime Minister did say "We want the thugs who have usurped power in Haiti out and we want the democratically elected president back in." On 8 October, the Liberal critic asked again what options the government was pursuing. In his response, the Prime Minister quoted President Aristide as saying that military intervention would not be considered and that economic and diplomatic boycotts would be the strategy of the Haitian people.

Yugoslavia

■ The deteriorating situation in Yugoslavia also received the attention of the House on several occasions during the fall. On 18 September, Mrs. McDougall made it clear that the government believed it was time for the UN Security Council to consider the matter. In response to a question from Opposition Leader Jean Chrétien on 7 October, following

an attack by the Yugoslav federal military on the Croatian capital of Zagreb, Trade Minister Michael Wilson indicated that Canada supported all attempts to resolve the conflict, whether through the European Community (EC), the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), or some other institutional framework.

On 24 October, Liberal MP David Kilgour requested that the Speaker consider the granting of an emergency debate on the situation, following heavy shelling of Dubrovnik and the failure of an EC-brokered peace plan. The Chair refused, but called on all three parties to agree among themselves to hold such a debate. Later that day, NDP External Affairs critic Svend Robinson called on the government to condemn the attack on Croatia in the strongest possible terms and to impose with the EC sanctions against the Yugoslav government. In a supplementary question, he asked whether the government would support a UN peacekeeping force in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan to separate disputing Armenians and Azerbaijanis. In reply, Michael Wilson said that the government was discussing both matters with the EC and other partners to arrive at the most effective means of handling these conflicts.

However, on 28 October, Mrs. McDougall cast doubt on an economic embargo despite urging from Liberal External Affairs critic Lloyd Axworthy, saying it would hurt the people it is intended to help. She did agree with the Liberal critic on 1 November to raise the issue of a humanitarian airlift of goods to the besieged people of Dubrovnik with member states of the EC and the UN. □

— GREGORY WIRICK