

*Special Debate*

toward a peaceful settlement and that Canadian participation is helping to move in that direction.

I will be very interested to hear the views of members opposite. Unfortunately I will not be able to stay for the entire debate. My parliamentary secretary is here, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who will be taking notes and taking part in the debate.

I want to assure hon. members that once we have the views of the members this evening, they certainly will be taken into account. The government will address the views expressed in the debate tomorrow morning. We will have something more to say on the matter of the deployment at some point tomorrow.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I think that we can all congratulate ourselves for the fine job our Canadian soldiers did in Bosnia and Croatia.

Having said this, I do not think we can be so proud of what the Canadian government did and above all of what it failed to do during these peacekeeping missions, since the situation is far from rosy in Bosnia and Croatia as the UN's mandate expires and as we draw near to the end of a very important ceasefire in Bosnia.

On the diplomatic level, the situation is at a standstill, the stalemate remains to be broken and the efforts of the contact group have been relatively unfruitful. Therefore, compared with last year, it is a dead-end situation which has dragged on. There is not even a hope on the horizon of resolving it peacefully.

On the military level, the situation is hardly any better, it is even worse than it has ever been and, recently, the situation rapidly deteriorated once again. We know that over the past four days or so, there have been no fewer than a dozen confrontations in Bosnia, mostly orchestrated by the Bosnian government. It is attacking strategic positions in the hopes of gaining more leverage in negotiations, and of course the Serbs are retaliating. There have been 12 to 14 battles over the past four days.

The Serbs, quite recently by the way, have opened up artillery fire on four positions in protected areas, in contravention of all of the existing agreements. Last Sunday, Bosnian Serbs called for a general mobilization, which will certainly not relieve any tension in the area. At the same time, the new general of UNPROFOR, Rupert Smith, who is from Britain, threatened air strikes against Serb positions if they shell neutral zones. The Serbs issued a reply, of course: they would consider all peacekeepers stationed there as enemies if NATO were to attack their positions.

• (1845)

We know that the Serbs are serious when they make threats of this kind, since they took and held hostages, around fifty Canadian peacekeepers, the last time we used air strikes.

In reality, we are faced with, on the one hand, the Serbs, who have decided to wage a war of attrition, mostly against peacekeeping missions. The Serbs know that we are there temporarily, that it is costing us, that public support for a peacekeeping presence in the former Yugoslavia may wane, that one day we will have to leave, and that, from that moment on, they will have the Bosnians' blood. They, who have been fighting for centuries, know that they have all the time in the world and that it is essentially only a matter of time.

So they say let the hands of time keep on turning, in the end, it is the Serbs who will prevail. After spending so much money, unfortunately also after wasting so many human lives, the Allied Forces of the UN will have to withdraw, probably in humiliation, and leave the area for the Serbs' taking. Their calculation is quite obvious. They do not negotiate or they negotiate only when threatened by an immediate air strike. As soon as the heat is off, before the coalition can regroup, they return to their former positions, they violate ceasefires, they attack protected zones. It is an never-ending cat and mouse game.

As for the Croats, now that the mandate is about to expire, they have all kinds of demands: that the mandate be redefined; that units be split up—apparently, the UN is about to agree to this demand—so that, instead of a single UN force, there would be three contingents, one in Macedonia, one in Bosnia and one in Croatia, under a diversified command which could be a UN general co-ordinating operations. But they also have demands regarding the contingents. Although we are currently unable to carry out the missions entrusted to us, although there are not enough troops to do all the tasks that are assigned, they want to reduce contingents from 12,000 to 5,000 troops. We are negotiating with people who need our presence to keep the peace, who need enough people to achieve the desired results.

All this after nearly two years of presence if not more and for us, Canadians, \$314 million in expenditures, 10 soldiers killed during operations, not to mention those who have recently committed suicide—we do not know too much about this, but we can assume that some suicides are linked to the operations conducted over there or feared by those who do not want to go.

This is the context in which the government is inviting the opposition parties to participate in a debate, but a debate on what? The motion calls for the House to take note of the April rotation of Canadian forces. What does that mean? Does it mean that it has already been decided that there will be a rotation? Will the government claim today that no decision had been made