

Oral Questions

Mr. Trudeau: The Hon. Member for Prince Edward-Hastings—

Mr. Hees: The wrong riding. It is Northumberland.

Mr. Trudeau:—should realize that I was not even aiming at him, Madam Speaker. He is too small fry to occupy my time—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, on the subject raised by the Leader of the Opposition, I want to assure him that the statements made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs and other Ministers who have commented on this subject still remain the view of the Government. I was not intending to change those statements in any way.

“Accident” means something that happens.

An Hon. Member: You are an accident, Pierre.

Mr. Trudeau: It is something tragic which happened—

Mr. Shields: Like you.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, “accident” comes from the Latin *accidere*, which means “to happen”; it can be a disaster. It comes from *ad-cadere*, which means “to fall down”. That is what the Korean plane did, it fell down.

An Hon. Member: By itself?

Mr. Trudeau: I think it is an accident that the Korean pilot put that plane over Soviet territory. I think that was an accident. I do not think it was done by design. Therefore, an accident did happen, Madam Speaker.

● (1420)

The Government took the lead in expressing its outrage about that happening. It took the lead and, since then, the Leader of the Conservative Party has been trying to catch up in showing his indignation.

When the Secretary of State for External Affairs declared the 60-day boycott, he consulted me. I said, “That is a policy and you should do it now, before waiting for the lead of other countries”, which we did. We took—

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: We took the lead in bringing it before the Security Council at the United Nations. We took the lead in bringing it before ICAO in Montreal. We are still continuing that boycott, whereas most of the European nations have interrupted their boycotts. I do not think the Government has to state that it did not show the proper amount of indignation and outrage at this happening. Still, the House knows that we adopted, in the House, a resolution which the Soviet Union has refused to receive. The Government presented a note which the Soviet Union refused to receive. What do we do now, Madam

Speaker? Do we go on shouting, or do we start war, or do we tell the western farmers that they should not sell their wheat to the Soviet Union? What does the Leader of the Opposition propose?

Some Hon. Members: Bravo!

Mr. Mulroney: The Leader of the Opposition proposes to get a very straight answer from the Prime Minister, even though that is difficult in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

USE OF WORD “ACCIDENT” BY PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Brian Mulroney (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, on September 12 in this House the Secretary of State for External Affairs called the tragedy “an unjustified act of murder”. That was the position of the people of Canada as well. There is a world of difference between the word “accident”, as the Prime Minister, with his semantics, knows, and “an act of murder”.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: I want to know from the Prime Minister whether this was an egregious slip of the tongue that he made—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mulroney:—or whether he is privy to new information, of which none of his Cabinet is aware, that he would care to share with the House, which has caused him to so characterize such an important international incident.

Mr. Lalonde: You have changed positions ten times.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the Soviets themselves admitted that they shot down the airline. No new information that I can bring will say that they did not shoot it down. It was characterized as murder by the Secretary of State for External Affairs. I said I accepted it, and I was party to the decision which the Secretary of State made. That was a month ago. We have still not had any indication from the Soviets that they will pay compensation. We still have a heating up of the war, the cold war, which has now been going on for a while, and it is getting dangerous, Madam Speaker.

I think that, for my part, I will not get anything out of the Soviets in terms of describing that murder anew. I want to speak of the event, which was disastrous, and which I believe brought the world closer to the brink of disaster. It is the view of myself, of my Party, and of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, that at this stage we will not get more from the Soviets by treating them as murderers. We might get some de-escalation in the cold war by treating them as human beings.