

plague the Middle East. Mr. Perez de Cuellar took to Baghdad a proposal which was very close to the Prime Minister's. That proposal was rejected by Saddam Hussein -- another door he slammed shut, another opportunity he spurned. How he must wish today that he had chosen a different path.

Canada's efforts were exhaustive. And so were the efforts of others. The world truly gave peace a chance. But Saddam Hussein forced the world to war.

And so, on January 16th, after the long pause for peace, Canada, along with 28 other members of the United Nations, began to do by force what could not be done by diplomacy.

Canadians are a peaceable people. We do not fight wars at will. For some countries, war is a national pastime, a permanent preoccupation. That is not our preference. It is not our practice. And it is not our principle.

Let me be clear what this war was not about.

It was not about oil. Certainly, oil played a role in Iraq's brazen calculus of aggression. Saddam Hussein's aggression had an effect on oil prices -- a devastating one for countries which depend on spot prices. And surely no one can now be sanguine at the thought of 40 per cent of the world's oil becoming another hostage for Hussein to manipulate. So oil is a factor. But oil is not a principle.

Canada did not put the lives of its men and women at risk for the sake of a few cents a litre.

Nor was this a war about democracy. Kuwait is not a democracy of the Canadian sort, although there were signs before August 2nd that it was moving in that direction. It is possible that Canadians would not choose the system Kuwaitis had. But that is not the point. Peace is not the province of the privileged who are lucky enough to be democracies. Peace is a universal right. Aggression is a universal wrong. The Charter of the United Nations and the entire structure of international law is based on those fundamental principles. Indeed, in the absence of adherence to these principles, building democracy becomes almost impossible.

Finally, Canada was not at war to defend the interests of others. Neither was Australia or Argentina, Syria or Senegal, Britain or Bangladesh, or any of the wide array of nations of the Coalition.

The principle we are defending is not a foreign principle. It is a Canadian principle. It is the principle that aggression cannot be tolerated as an exercise of state power. It