

this party that the Prime Minister has not stated clearly, if there is a war tonight, whether or not we will be part of that war. It is unacceptable.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien: We said that military action is premature. We said that military action at this moment is unwise. It is very dangerous for long-term security in the Middle East and for the viability of the UN.

I would like to say to the Prime Minister that it is very, very easy to start a war, but it is very difficult to stop a war.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien: My view and the view of my party is that it is premature to have military action today. We have to ask the United Nations Security Council to review and to report to the world on the effects of the sanctions and the embargo in an official, non-partisan way. But as the international body that can pass judgment as to whether these sanctions are working. We have not seen any official report from the UN so far.

Of course, if there is no war, our forces should stay there. They are present to enforce the embargo and the sanctions and they should be there. But if there is war tonight, tomorrow, or the day after—the minute there is war—there is no more embargo. The embargo becomes a blockade and a blockade is an act of war. If faced with an act of war, we say on this side of the House that it is premature and that our troops should not be involved in a war at this moment—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien: —and our troops should be called back if there is a war, unless we decide to be in a war. But we have to have the time—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chrétien: After the cold war, we thought that we were entering into a new order in the world. We thought that military intervention would not occur because we believed that the international community could make sure that there would be no aggression tolerated and that the United Nations goals would be upheld. What is the fundamental principle of the United Nations? It is the peaceful resolution of disputes, not the initiation of wars.

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Military action, so soon after we decided to take the course of sanctions and embargo, endorses the view that military action can be an instrument of preference and of early resort and not, as it should be, of last resort.

Why this war? What are our national interests in this war? When I listened to the debate which took place in the United States over the weekend, the Americans were not talking about the United Nations, as I said earlier. They were talking about American interests. Senators and members of the House of Representatives spoke and they divided very closely on this issue. I am sure, if there had been no ultimatum and if the President had not put the position so squarely for so long, that it is probable Congress would not have acquiesced to the resolution presented to it.

I say that the national interests of Canada are very different from the national interests of the United States.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien: Our national interests have been peace-keeping, a voice for stability, and a voice for independence in war, peace, and stability. We have always said that embargoes, sanctions, and diplomacy are preferable to bullets. We have to look back at what has happened in our history.

• (1230)

I am very pleased that the Prime Minister referred to some previous Prime Ministers of this land.

[*Translation*]

When war broke out in Korea, we did get involved but under the flag of the United Nations. That is a basic distinction from the position now taken by the Prime Minister. The Security Council did not set up a United Nations contingent. It authorized countries to go to war with Iraq, but it did not ask any country to go to war with Iraq.

In 1956, when the Suez crisis took place, Mr. St. Laurent and Mr. Pearson, respectively Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, took a fundamental position which has guided Canada's international policy ever since. What did they decide? Surely it was not easy for Mr. St. Laurent to tell France and Britain that the era of empires was over, but he did. It was then that Mike Pearson advocated before the United Nations the theory which we have always followed, namely that Canada and the United Nations must be agents of peace, and it was the first force set up by the