

*Government Orders*

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the voters of my riding of Témiscamingue for having trusted me enough to send to Ottawa the member who will come to be known as the youngest one elected to serve in this Parliament.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Brien:** Like several of my colleagues, I too have members of the Canadian forces living in my riding, including some of those presently taking in part in peacekeeping operations in Bosnia. I have listened carefully to the hon. member for Davenport and the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra who spoke before him. Does the member for Davenport agree that we should be more actively involved in conflict resolution at the political level, as his colleague from Vancouver Quadra seemed to indicate, or does he think it would be better for Canada not get involved at that level, but simply to maintain peacekeeping forces in Bosnia?

• (2015)

Basically, what I want to know is should we play a major role in terms of resolving the conflict, beyond military action?

**Mr. Caccia:** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member for Témiscamingue for his question. My impression is that Canada already plays a good role, a major role as a nation 27 million strong which is highly respected around the world. I think that the Liberal government will do a good job representing the aspirations and hopes for peace that all Canadians share from coast to coast.

**Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf):** Mr. Speaker, the House has been debating Canada's role in UN peacekeeping operations for a number of hours now. Obviously, it is an important question and there are many aspects to consider.

Of course I want to focus on the role and mission of our peacekeeping forces, but I would also like to take a closer look at their presence in Bosnia.

Since the mid-1950s, our peacekeepers have earned a reputation for Canada as a very humanitarian nation. You will recall that it was on the initiative of the former prime minister, the Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson, that Canadian peacekeepers, working under the auspices of the United Nations, undertook their very first peacekeeping mission.

Peacekeeping has since become the cornerstone of Canadian diplomacy. Many other countries have also patterned themselves on us when sending peacekeepers on missions throughout the world.

Canada's decision to make a name for itself on the world scene as a peaceful, humanitarian country has earned it a reputation which generally means that we are greeted as friends when we travel abroad.

Over the years, Canada has therefore maintained a tradition wherein it holds an altruistic view, namely a view of peacekeepers as carriers of the humanitarian torch and missionaries of

peace. Quebecers and indeed all Canadians are proud, and justifiably so, of having made a major contribution to peacekeeping in the world.

I would mention that the tradition of the peacekeepers reflects a fundamental value held by the people of Quebec and of Canada. We are a peace-loving people, imbued with a keen sense of tolerance and democracy. We value human life a great deal and we are sensitive to human suffering. It is very natural for us to want to help those in need.

I know this House would agree that the role of our peacekeepers in maintaining peace and alleviating human suffering has reflected the very profound, historic values of Quebec and Canada.

The war in Bosnia has blurred the traditional role of our peacekeepers. They cannot keep the peace when there is no peace to keep. Whereas in the past our peacekeepers were called upon to maintain a brokered peace, this time, they find themselves in the midst of a conflict between factions which seem to see no advantage in settling their dispute. So, what are our peacekeepers doing in such a nightmare?

• (2020)

[*English*]

This question interests me for more than one reason. Indeed, approximately 80 per cent of all Canadian and Quebec soldiers actually deployed in Bosnia do come from the Valcartier CFB which is home base of the French speaking 22nd Royal Regiment part of which is in my riding of Portneuf just west of Quebec City.

Those almost 2,000 soldiers lived either on the base or in one of the surrounding areas. I personally know families that have a parent actually in Bosnia. I am therefore even more sensitive to their anguish.

[*Translation*]

As I was saying, I take a particularly interest in this issue, especially since many of these soldiers are from my riding. I personally know families who have a relative in Bosnia, and I truly share their fear. I also know that these families, because they correspond with their relative, are aware of the importance of the humanitarian aid provided by our peacekeepers in Bosnia.

It is therefore important that this House correctly define the rationale for our involvement in Bosnia and in other international peacekeeping operations. We must ask ourselves the true question about our peacekeepers in Bosnia, namely: what is their mandate? It is certainly not the traditional one of helping to maintain peace, because the factions there are still engaged in all-out war.

So then what is their mission? Do we expect our peacekeepers to bring peace to the area? Mr. Speaker, even if this were what is asked of them, how could they possibly bring a peace which the warring factions have currently no use for?