

Oral Questions

Now, according to yesterday's Ottawa *Sun* the same situation is developing here in Canada.

Our Minister of Justice should consider getting tough with criminals and stop musing about his intent to further harass and intimidate the millions of decent Canadian citizens who own or wish to own firearms.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN PEACEKEEPERS IN BOSNIA

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Everyone was relieved to learn of the release of the 16 Canadian peacekeepers who had been taken hostage last Thursday by Serb forces near Visoko in Bosnia.

However, this news was tempered by the simultaneous announcement that Serb tanks were advancing on Gorazde and that the shellings of the Muslim enclave were intensifying.

Has the minister obtained sufficient assurances that Canadian peacekeepers in Bosnia are safe, in particular their colleagues who relieved them at the checkpoint in Visoko where the hostage-taking incident occurred last Thursday?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I know that all members of this House were extremely happy to hear the wonderful news over the weekend that, following negotiations, the Canadian soldiers were finally freed.

I can tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition that Canadian soldiers and those from other countries serving under the UN flag face difficult situations while on duty, particularly when the warring factions do not respect the peace agreements that have been negotiated.

May I remind this House that in several regions of the former Yugoslavia, peace agreements have been brokered and UN peacekeepers are maintaining peace and order. Unfortunately, agreements are being violated in certain regions and problems have arisen. That is why we are stepping up our efforts to secure peace among all factions throughout the former Yugoslavia.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, can the minister give us a status report on the situation in Gorazde where Serb shellings have intensified and Serb tanks have rolled into the city? Can he tell us if the UN has finally been guaranteed the safety of the helicopters used to evacuate the wounded?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the situation is changing by the hour. According to the latest information we received, an agreement in principle had

apparently been reached with the Bosnian Serbs and relative peace was to return to that part of the country.

I cannot tell you what the situation is at this precise moment. Intensive negotiations are continuing. However, I can tell the House that the United Nations Security Council will be meeting this afternoon to discuss the situation and that this morning, NATO ambassadors were briefed on the situation in Bosnia.

• (1420)

Obviously, our goal is to get all warring factions to come to an agreement and to accept a peace plan for all of the territories of the former Yugoslavia.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, does the minister not recognize that the advance of Serb tanks on Gorazde and the violation of the ceasefire by Serb artillery forces could jeopardize the peace process?

[*English*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that we have seen very risky operations on the part of the Bosnian Serbs. There is a genuine effort involving the participation and the co-operation of the Croats, of the Muslims, in order to make some progress toward peace.

Representations have been made at the highest levels with the involvement of the Russian representative, the American representative and also obviously the representative of the United Nations.

We are doing our utmost to convince the Serbs it is in their own interests to be part of these peace negotiations. We hope they will understand it is in the interest of everybody, including themselves, to come to the table and negotiate a total peace settlement for the entire ex-Yugoslavia.

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[*Translation*]

PUBLISHING

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The issue of *MacLean's* magazine published today contains new revelations on the Ginn Publishing deal, this time implicating the current Minister of Finance.

It says that the minister participated in a meeting with his colleagues from Industry and Heritage before the government authorized the sale of Ginn Publishing. The minister, through his Nellmart Ltd. holding, owns three cinemas in Vancouver and leases them to Famous Players, a Canadian subsidiary of Paramount Communications.

Does the Minister of Finance confirm that he participated in the meeting over this deal with his colleagues from Heritage and Industry on February 16, two days before the government authorized the sale of Ginn Publishing to Paramount, even