

Government Orders

Judging by the history of the last century, each of the three communities nurtures historic grievances against the two others. It is not for us to allocate blame. But there is no denying that in 1992 and 1993 a concerted strategy was methodically implemented which reminds us in many ways—I say this with great sadness because, like the majority of people in the west, I thought we would never again witness such barbarity—which reminds us of what other peoples, including the Serbs themselves, suffered at the hands of Hitler's troops.

And all this occurred in a region only a few hours away from Venice by car.

We must remember this today and remember also that this is the judgment of the whole international community. The Europeans recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina's independence on April 6, 1992; the United States followed suit the day after and Bosnia was admitted to the United Nations on May 22, 1992. The majority in a legitimate country was attacked by a national minority receiving substantial help from a neighbouring country. This majority should have enjoyed the protection of the United Nations charter, but such was not the case.

The recognized representatives of Bosnia have asked repeatedly for international help, but to no avail. What is the difference between Iraq annexing Kuwait and the Bosnian Serbs annexing a substantial portion of a recognized country?

The United Nations did not vigorously come to Bosnia's aid, but it did name the aggressor. On May 30, 1992, the Security Council imposed a commercial, oil and air embargo on Serbia and Montenegro. On October 9, the Security Council excluded Serbian aircraft from Bosnia's air space, and on December 1, the Human Rights Commission in Geneva used for the first time the term "genocide" and condemned the policy of ethnic cleansing applied by the Serbian leaders in Bosnia and Croatia. That is as clear as one can get.

It would not be fair to say that the United Nations have been totally indifferent. They have managed to take control of the airport at Sarajevo in order to use it for transporting humanitarian aid. The 30,000 or so peacekeepers have deployed throughout Bosnia manage, despite being harassed by the different factions, in transporting part of the aid destined for Muslim or Croat towns besieged by the Serbs and in some cases by the Muslims, thereby affording them a partial but indispensable relief. And six Muslim enclaves are under the protection of the United Nations. Thus, in Srebrenica, 150 Canadian peacekeepers stand between the 45,000 people who are crammed into the town and the hostile Serbian environment.

But the United Nations protection forces have spoken out. They say they are incapable of carrying out the missions they are assigned for lack of sufficient means. On the other hand,

negotiations between the warring factions are bogged down; peace seems more remote than ever. Therefore, should we stay?

[*English*]

The easy thing would be to throw our hands up, pack up our bags and leave but this is not the way Canada earned its well deserved reputation abroad as a steady peacemaker willing to walk the extra mile in the name of peace.

Admittedly we are testing uncharted waters but we are in a new world. We rejoiced at the end of the cold war. The world is now in a state of flux and it would be unseemly of us to give up at this juncture.

France in Bosnia has shouldered a heavier burden than Canada and has paid the price with 18 dead men and 269 wounded. France seems willing to stay. It is going too far to say that there is no peacemaking whatsoever in Bosnia. There are six protected Muslim enclaves surrounded by Serbs with nothing standing between them and the Serbs but peacemakers. The peace is kept even if it is a peculiar kind of peace.

• (1130)

There have been 150 Canadians who have preserved 45,000 Muslims in Srebrenica from the ghastly treatment meted out to so many Muslims.

Now what will happen? This is the question we have to ask. What would happen if all peacekeepers left Bosnia? We should never forget to answer this question. First, the enclaves would be submerged in a very short time with the exception probably of Sarajevo. Second, the Serbs would be targeting more strategic towns and villages in the hope of breaking the backbone of the Bosnia resistance. Third, the Croats in central Bosnia would have to run for their lives. In short it would be all out war and all out ethnic cleansing.

The men in the peacekeepers act also as our eyes and our ears on the field. They justify and complete the other measures which have been carried out by the international community. Suppose they all leave at the end of their present mandate which expires at the end of March. We would have to suspend the arms embargo against Bosnia. Not doing so would be cold blooded cruelty. However, then how could we justify keeping operation Deny Flight which forbids Bosnian skies to the Serb air force?

It would really be all out war with the very real possibility of sucking in, in a much deeper fashion, allies from both camps such as Russia and Turkey who are already in the backstage. Then the Balkans would then really live up to their history.

In fact all these measures have been enacted to scale down the level of Serb aggression. As far as they go they are intended to protect the Bosnian Muslims. To turn our back on one of these measures, namely the UN forces on the ground, is to begin the unravelling of the whole patchwork. It is not an idea that is well thought out.