

Government Orders

war conflict. The withdrawal would mean a victory for the bullies who are pursuing the policy of ethnic cleansing, an abhorrent, barbaric, repulsive, blood-chilling concept which the world community must continue to reject and deplore vigorously.

All Canadians abhor the notion of ethnic cleansing. We are strong believers in human rights. We promote human rights at home and abroad at every international forum. In Bosnia the human rights of people who have lived there for centuries have been trampled upon. The Government of Canada should not lead Canada into a retreat but rather continue to protect innocent people in Bosnia through the United Nations and with the help of like-minded nations also involved there.

These are the reasons why I would sincerely hope that the Government of Canada will continue maintaining its present role, the fine and unique role that our troops are performing these days in certain parts of Bosnia.

During this debate a number of arguments have been advanced in favour of withdrawal. I will mention a few but they are not very compelling. Some have said: "Oh well, this is a civil war. There is no reason for any of us to be there". This is an ethnic war. Bosnia as a state, as a cohesive society, hardly exists any more.

Then there are those who have said that the situation has reached a point where air attacks are the only answer. However, what happens after the air strike? What does the world community do after it has bombed? Has that been thought through as to the consequences of such a measure which basically would affect the civilian population? We are not talking here of large armies concentrated in visible and easily targeted points. We are talking about very interspersed forces that are very difficult to focus on and reach.

There are also those who have said that this is too large a financial burden. Well, can you imagine Canada saying to the world community, to France, the United Kingdom, the Scandinavians, the Netherlands and others, that we find this role too expensive for Canada, a nation with the reputation that we have of wealth, abundance and the capacity to be generously available to the world community? What a sham that would be.

There are those who have said that we should withdraw our troops from Croatia for six months. What would happen to the Bosnian population during those six months? Has that question been explored?

Then there are those who have said there is no peace to keep.

• (2010)

Evidently that is a point that one has to take into account because we are not at that point yet. Therefore the answer is true. There is no peace to keep at the present time, but there are tens of thousands of lives that can be saved. I rest my case on those considerations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member who just spoke for his clear and precise position on maintaining the troops now in Bosnia. I share his concerns when he asks if we can simply abandon a civilian population to people who want to carry out ethnic cleansing, as he said.

He talked about civil defence, but I would like to come back to the last part of his speech when he spoke of the financial burden. Yes, some people do wonder if we can still afford such a peace force. There is that strain of opinion, that questioning. In his argument, he did not point out that we could perhaps completely reorganize our armed forces so that a section of them, as the speaker before him said, would be specifically trained to keep peace and also restore peace. For this, perhaps an exhaustive study should be done on all the equipment we are using. Maybe the equipment we use on such missions could be more narrowly focused and specialized since the missions are increasingly difficult. For example, my colleague spoke just now about logistics; maybe we could become logistics specialists and let other countries provide other kinds of support, such as medical support.

For that, perhaps our government and all political parties should sit down around a table and define the positions or needs or specializations for these peace missions. The money saved by specializing could enable us to continue our peace missions without taking more from our fellow citizens. On this point, I would like the hon. member to tell me if he could agree with that line of thinking, and I know that he has followed peace missions for a long time. He is not afraid to say the exact opposite of the Prime Minister about maintaining peace missions. He definitely thinks that cannot be questioned. But perhaps to reassure our fellow citizens, could we consider together the possibility of reducing some of our military expenditures through specialization, as a way to keep our peace missions without raising taxes? I ask his opinion on this.

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, I am not an expert in military logistics and expenditures. I am only a politician. I thank the hon. member for Richelieu for his question, but I am not in a position to add anything to what I said before.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, since I am addressing this House for the first time outside question period,