

Mr. Speaker, there is not very often unanimity in this House, even on questions of international policy, but I think that this is one of those occasions in which the House of Commons of Canada speaks, if not with one voice, then certainly with one purpose and one conviction and that is to send the clearest possible signal to the leadership of the Soviet Union and to the Baltic peoples that Canada, each and every one of us, each and every Canadian, opposes absolutely the crackdown that has begun to develop in the Soviet Union against aspirations and governments which have a legitimacy in the Baltic States.

The hard question for us, and one that I think we cannot answer tonight, is what exactly and practically the people and Government of Canada can do to reverse these developments. We are all determined to seek the reversal and to find ways that are available to us within the limits we face, as a government with obligations and restrictions in the family of nations.

Everyone, every Canadian, I believe is shocked by the brutal and unwarranted use of military force against the people and democratically elected governments of the Baltic States, last week in Lithuania and yesterday in Riga, Latvia. We condemn such appalling and reprehensible behaviour and we call upon Soviet President Gorbachev to do the same.

No one can remain unmoved by the vigilant and peaceful struggle of the peoples of the Baltic States to regain their independence. Their future is bound up in that of the new international order we are trying to create, whether that is in Europe or in the Gulf. For that reason this debate is important. It is important also to make it clear to the leaders of the Soviet Union that whatever our preoccupations with a war in which Canadian lives are at stake in the Gulf, those preoccupations will not allow anyone to get away with a crackdown of the kind that is beginning, that is all too evident now in the Baltic States.

I want to commend the excellent work of the Member for Scarborough Centre who presides over an ad hoc committee of members of Parliament on the Baltic States. They have been concerned, committed and tireless in their efforts on behalf of the Canadian Baltic communities and the people who come from there.

Canada's support for the Baltic States has been unwavering. We recognize their de jure independence. We have never accepted their forcible annexation. We support the right of their peoples to determine their own future. The question for us is what practical help can we offer now.

I have just had the great privilege of meeting, in my capacity as a parliamentarian, with Vice-President Ivans of Latvia who came up particularly to see me tonight and is on now