

the latest in a series of initiatives by both eastern and western leaders with regard to the stationing of foreign troops in the countries of central Europe.

What is the position of the Government of Canada on this subject? More particularly, what is the position of the Government of Canada with regard to the continuing presence of Canadian forces in central Europe?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the decision the President announced last night was one that Canada had been consulted on. It is one that we had had the opportunity to discuss with President Bush and with others over some considerable period of time. It is one on which we congratulated the President prior to his making it public last evening.

We think it is a very strong indication of the quite excellent reactions, both in the east and the west, to developments over the last several months. It is a very healthy and positive sign.

The Government of Canada is part of NATO. We have always indicated and conveyed our intention to act in concert with our allies. We will be doing precisely that. The Minister of National Defence and the Secretary of State for External Affairs have had ongoing discussions in a number of important areas.

When something more is ready to be conveyed publicly, we will be happy to do it.

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, the leaders who have taken these initiatives and the countries that have taken these initiatives have done so on the basis that the Cold War is over. Yet the white paper of the Government of Canada is still extant and the government stands behind the Cold War rhetoric in it.

Does the Prime Minister not agree that the white paper of the Government of Canada is completely obsolete and completely outdated? When is he going to offer some initiatives for the defence of Canada for the Canadian people, and particularly for members of the Canadian Armed Forces whose moral has hit rock bottom?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman identifies the white paper which was written in 1984-1985 and enunciated in 1987. The facts of that day were accurate. I am sure, as much as we would all like to be able to look forward with clarity, the changes that have taken place in eastern Europe over the last six months were not anticipated by myself, by the Prime Minister or, I am sure, by the hon. member.

I would suggest to the hon. member that the actions taken by President Bush, by NATO and by the Warsaw Pact at a time when there is great instability in the world are lending to a stable reduction in arms, bringing security to the world and peace to Canada. We all hope it works. Patience and prudence at a time like this, I would suggest, is the best course for Canada and other NATO allies.

• (1500)

Mr. Speaker: There will be a single question from the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, followed by a single question from the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre.

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THALIDOMIDE VICTIMS

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. On January 18 of this year the War Amputations of Canada, in pursuit of its compensation claims for Canada's Thalidomide victims, met with the Department of National Health and Welfare, which indicated it would respond within two weeks. That deadline is today.

Thalidomide victims have been through a lifetime of disability and suffering. They deserve redress and they deserve a fair deadline for a response.

Could the Minister give the House today a definitive date as to when it would issue its definitive decision? Would the Minister assure the House that it would immediately conclude a compassionate and generous settlement with the Thalidomide victims of our country? Fairness delayed is fairness denied.

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, in December when I made an announcement to the House of Commons with regard to extraordinary assistance to haemophiliacs, those who