

Oral Questions

time. That is a very difficult thing to do and a rather offensive, in a sense, or unpalatable thing to do when human life is involved. But it has to be done, and we will be undertaking consultations and discussions with family members before we will make a lump sum demand upon the Soviet Union. We intend to do that, and we know that that will be done by other countries as well.

I believe it will take some time and considerable effort to secure results because of the unsatisfactory attitude which the Government of the Soviet Union has taken as a result of this particular incident.

Mr. Stevens: As the House knows, the Minister referred to the contents of the note, and as a rule it is taken for granted that the tabling of the note will be forthcoming.

APPLICATION OF CANADIAN-SOVIET PROTOCOL ON CONSULTATIONS

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, I would like to direct my second question to the Prime Minister who will recall that on May 19, 1971, he signed a Canadian-Soviet Protocol on Consultations with the Government of the U.S.S.R. in which was included Clause 2 that seems to contemplate the type of incident that has occurred. It indicates that, without delay, there shall be an exchange of views between the two countries on what might be done to improve the situation. Would the Prime Minister indicate whether any steps have been taken under the provisions of that protocol with respect to consultation with the Soviets to determine what in fact transpired, and why the incident occurred?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member will know that the then Acting Prime Minister, the Minister of State for External Relations, in the very first gesture of response by this Government asked the Soviet chargé d'affaires precisely to embark upon consultations and to explain the circumstances of the tragic happening. The other gestures taken by the Secretary of State for External Affairs in dealing with Soviet authorities both here and in Moscow have precisely been doing that, asking for consultations, asking for explanations, asking for reparation, and taking some measures of our own.

REQUEST FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, again my question is directed to the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that obviously these consultations have not been taking place, would the Prime Minister indicate if, in his view, the terms of the agreement have in fact now been broken? Second, would he consider referring this agreement and related agreements to the Standing Committee on External Affairs of the House so that there can be a meaningful review of what exactly, first, the Government of Canada has done with respect to this matter and, second, what the Soviet reply has been?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, as the Soviet Union replies from time to time, the Secretary of State for External Affairs or the Acting Minister in his place will be happy to inform the House of the exchanges. It is clear from the earlier answers of the Minister that thus far we have not had an explanation which we deem satisfactory, and on the subject of reparations we have not had a satisfactory answer either.

RESPONSIBILITY OF SOVIET UNION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister on the same subject. The Soviet Union has taken a long time even to acknowledge responsibility for this barbarous act.

Mr. MacEachen: They have not done that yet.

Mr. Broadbent: The Secretary of State for External Affairs is saying that they have not done it yet. My understanding is that they have acknowledged that they shot down a plane.

My question, to either the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for External Affairs, concerns the question of guilt. Could either inform the House as to whether or not the Soviet Union has in any way acknowledged up to this point moral responsibility for this act and, if not, what kind of follow-up action does the Government plan to take to bring forward such acknowledgement?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, up to the present the Soviet Union has not accepted moral responsibility for its action; it has not accepted any responsibility. It has clearly evaded accepting any responsibility. It has clearly transferred the entire responsibility for this event on to the shoulders of the Government of the United States. That is one of the most depressing aspects of the Soviet response. Not only have they failed to acknowledge any responsibility, but they have served notice on the world that they will repeat the incident if necessary. I regard that as a very retrograde statement by the Soviet Union in a context when they ought to be acknowledging responsibility and admitting to the world their guilt in this particular instance.

● (1440)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT POSITION ON COMPENSATION ISSUE

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, it was precisely in the context of the knowledge that we on this side of the House have had up to this moment, that the Soviet Union had not acknowledged its guilt, that I posed the question that I did. I therefore want to ask the Minister another question in this context. Since the Government has demanded compensation and has said to the Soviet Union that it must acknowledge its guilt, but the Minister has told the House the Soviets are not going to do it, what serious expectation does