

*Government Orders*

such an analysis before intervening in the former Yugoslavia, our approach might have been better planned.

However, the same cannot be said of our Prime Minister who, during his trip to Europe, made public comments about the advisability of withdrawing our troops from Europe. At the local level, in ridings like mine where some 15 young servicemen and women are participating in the peacekeeping effort in Bosnia, his statement made people hope for a swifter return of their sons and daughters but fear for their safety. On the national and international level, it prompted everyone to question the firmness of the Canadian position.

In my opinion, that move marked a departure from the Canadian diplomatic tradition, which helped create Canada's image as a peacekeeping nation. That kind of gesture would also prevent us from learning lessons from the Yugoslavian crisis in order to better react to such conflicts in the future.

I think we should search for comprehensive solutions like those put forward by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra. I may even suggest a few myself, such as the creation of a multinational force that could deal with that kind of situation in a permanent fashion with a crisis centre, thus avoiding a piecemeal approach.

Many of the soldiers deployed overseas in these situations are members of the reserves. The Senate committee on foreign affairs studying the issue was wondering whether the training given to reservists, which tends to focus on offensive actions, qualifies them to intervene in such operations.

● (2000)

It is important, perhaps strategically, for Canada to establish a mission specialized in logistics, dealing especially with transportation, equipment, everything that facilitates the military operation itself. It is in fact an area where we have acquired considerable expertise.

I also learned in today's debate that the Minister of Foreign Affairs regularly tables clear and detailed reports on our involvement in international missions. That seems very appropriate to me.

Finally, as the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra showed us in his presentation, we must educate our soldiers about the history, culture and traditions of the countries where they must intervene. The peacekeepers deployed in Somalia, not necessarily the Canadians, were clearly in need of such training. It is important for our peacekeepers to know what they are getting into.

Those were the comments I wished to make on the speech delivered by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra. I would have liked him to elaborate a bit further on the kind of solution that could be applied in the former Yugoslavia with its complex

ethnic mix. If possible, I would like him to tell us the kind of solution he envisions.

**Mr. McWhinney:** Mr. Speaker, those are excellent suggestions.

The multinational force is closer to the letter of the charter, section 43, chapter 7. Unfortunately, this excellent suggestion is not often followed by the United Nations.

Clearly, political training for our soldiers should be recommended to the Minister of National Defence. It is the lack of political sophistication that really hampered their effectiveness. It would be an excellent suggestion to make to our defence minister.

[English]

**Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport):** Mr. Speaker, as you will probably know, Bosnia was a beautiful part of the world, rich with culture, endowed with natural resources, producer of excellent wines, abundant with historical sights, the meeting place of Christian and Muslim architecture where minarets and church towers punctuated the skyline of cities, towns and villages.

Today that Bosnia no longer exists. Its civilian population lives in terror, famine and mourning.

Today in this Chamber we have been asked by the government to think about Canada's role as a peacekeeper and in particular about Canada's role in Bosnia. Here are my thoughts on our role in Bosnia.

It seems to me that the Government of Canada should continue the role of our armed forces in Bosnia while continuing to press for a political solution in Geneva.

Why do I say that? I say it for a number of reasons. Canadian troops in Bosnia these days are providing humanitarian relief. They are offering the most civilized role any military force can provide. They are ensuring survival and life protection, quite in contrast with the conventional role played by the military throughout centuries.

The withdrawal of our Canadian troops from Bosnia would mean in essence abandoning the civilian population to its fate of starvation and possibly death. Our withdrawal would mean that other nations whose troops are part of the United Nations effort in the former Yugoslavia may follow our example if we were to withdraw. Women, children and the elderly would run the risk of being wiped out or becoming another wave of refugees seeking a homeland elsewhere. Withdrawal would mean creating a crisis in adjacent regions. International security could be put in serious danger in the Balkans.

● (2005)

From the relatively contained problem in Bosnia, the danger of spreading is high with very serious security implications and even the possibility of laying the foundations for another world