

*Special Debate*

been problems, but overall we should look at the achievements on the peacekeeping side.

Our troops are very close to Sarajevo. Our troops are in one part of the former Yugoslavia which covers all three belligerent areas. Our troops are the only ones covering that delicate and sensitive area. Our troops are playing a primordial and important role in terms of peacekeeping. They are performing a role of humanitarian aid which was so effectively described by the member for Bonavista—Trinity—Conception that I need not repeat it. However, we must bear that in mind.

[Translation]

The second question I asked myself was is our contribution significant? We are but one of 35 countries in the former Yugoslavia and have contributed 2,000 soldiers to the 43,000 troops stationed there.

● (2005)

The Leader of the Opposition said that he was not proud of the contribution our troops have made. Like the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I personally am proud of our troops' accomplishments in the former Yugoslavia. I am proud of their humanity and proud of their professionalism.

The other night I saw on television a young sergeant who had an enormous responsibility. Day in, day out, with unparalleled devotion, intelligence and professionalism, this peerless soldier resolved issues and extremely difficult problems.

I am convinced that the regiments who will replace the troops there now, such as the 22nd Royal Regiment from Quebec, will serve in the tradition that it has maintained for the duration of its long and glorious history.

Therefore, I reject the Leader of the Opposition's statements. I reject the statements of the hon. member for Verchères. I believe that this is not a partisan issue and that this debate should rise above any inappropriate partisanship. We should be examining these serious issues from the viewpoint of the well-being of our troops and our country.

[English]

Let me ask the question: What would the consequences be of a withdrawal at this time? We know this is a tense situation. We have read what Lord Owen has said about the difficult situation that prevails there at the moment. What would the effect be of our withdrawing our troops at this time? What would the effect be on the other UN troops there? Think of the demoralizing effect that would have on them. Think of the effect on the belligerents.

We, along with our allies, took extreme umbrage at the suggestion by the leader of Croatia that UN troops should be removed from Croatia. We told him that UN troops must be kept

there because it is a tinderbox which is likely to explode into uncontrolled war if UN troops are withdrawn.

Having exercised that influence on the leader of Croatia, are we to withdraw those troops? Are we to create the very situation of ethnic cleansing and problems that we have seen in the past? I ask myself what the effect of withdrawal would be. I suggest that it would be a precipitating event in creating a crisis.

The member for Red Deer does not seem to be taking that into account. He is suggesting that we can steal away in the night like a Turk with bag and baggage, that no one will miss us and there will be no consequence of that. There will be a consequence. If we try to steal away we may create the very situation of war which will make it impossible for us to withdraw in an orderly way. On top of that, we will leave exposed in the former Yugoslavia the magnificent Mounties who are serving there in a civilian way which is truly an extraordinary example of Canadian devotion.

Last, is it in our global and general interests to be in the former Yugoslavia until a more orderly withdrawal may be organized? It is true, as the member for Red Deer may say, we have done our share. There is no one in the House who would say that we have not done our share. I dare to say there is nobody among our allies who would say we have not done our share. I am sure there is no one in the civilian population of the ex-Yugoslavia who would not say that the Canadian troops have done their share.

The question is not that. The question is whether or not our general interests are served by our staying there and continuing to do our share, continuing to help the people of ex-Yugoslavia and continuing to help the cause of peace as it is to be developed. I would suggest that the effect on our allies would be extremely devastating if we were to leave at this time. Our European allies are counting on our being there.

When we consider issues of global security and foreign policy we must never divorce one issue from another. Does anyone in this House not doubt the fact that one of the reasons we have been so successful in dealing with the Europeans over the issues on the Grand Banks is precisely because we are in Yugoslavia and because we are a force in Europe? Our European friends cannot turn to us and say: "We can treat you the way we want to".

● (2010)

We are making a contribution in Europe. We are helping the Europeans solve their problems. We are helping solve world peace in our own interests but in their interests as well. That makes us a force in world affairs. It gives us a force in dealing with them in every other sector. We must never forget that. That