

Such an international agency designed by the UN and under the control of the UN would go far to improve the facilitation and execution of the task of our soldiers and our country in undertaking the assignment by the UN.

I will sum up by stating how proud I am of our Canadian troops. I am pleased to see how well they participated in the Gulf War, our sailors, soldiers and airmen.

In the future I can see that as a major task for the Canadian forces as we extricate ourselves from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and possibly NORAD and focus our resources on UN operations.

• (2255)

[Translation]

**Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount):** Mr. Speaker, before getting into the subject of the debate, I would like, in this first speech in this Parliament, to thank the voters of Saint-Henri—Westmount for their confidence.

[English]

With the enormous challenges facing Canada and the world, I am very privileged once again to represent Saint-Henri—Westmount in this House of Commons.

[Translation]

The question we ask ourselves today is whether Canadian soldiers should remain in Bosnia. Ultimately, this decision must be made by the government, after consulting our allies.

To begin, I would like to mention that many reservists from several regiments in my riding have served in Bosnia and many are still there. These soldiers belong to the Royal Montreal Regiment and the Maisonneuve Regiment, among others. I wish to point out their courage and their desire to serve the cause of peace and I hope that they return safe and sound from their mission.

Earlier today, the Minister of Foreign Affairs told us about some of the factors that the government will consider in making its decision.

I believe that in the final analysis, there are good reasons for continuing our humanitarian mission. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Red Cross have both confirmed that aid is arriving in spite of the difficulties. People who would have died without protection and international aid are still alive today.

The international effort has also successfully prevented the conflict from spilling over into the neighbouring republics of Macedonia and Kosovo. Canada also has a long-term commitment to peacekeeping and international institutions like the United Nations.

### *Government Orders*

We contributed, we tried to contribute to European security when we took part in two world wars, in NATO and in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Since Canada's decision will probably influence other countries, we must ask ourselves if the international community has a role to play in Bosnia. I believe so, Mr. Speaker, for the reasons I just mentioned.

Future peacekeeping missions will probably experience problems similar to those in Bosnia. Since Canadians have played a leading role in developing peacekeeping, we surely have a role in finding solutions for these problems.

[English]

The Minister of Foreign Affairs said that one of the questions we must address is whether the danger to our troops outweighs the benefits of the mission. Like all Canadians and all members of this House, I would not want our troops to be exposed to needless risks and certainly they need to be able to defend themselves.

There is uncertainty about the rules of engagement and command and control. But I would like to suggest that these are questions that should be debated in perhaps a more expert forum than on the floor of the House, in committee. The ultimate decision as to when the risks or the dangers outweigh the benefits must be left to the government and the military.

Another important question we must address is whether there is a reasonable prospect for progress in the peace process as the minister mentioned. As I have said, one of the reasons for remaining in Bosnia is our desire to contribute to European security. I think Canadians would insist that there be a clear link between our role as peacekeepers and a place at the table. In fact Canada has had problems in getting the Europeans to the table. I understand it has been difficult even getting information about what is discussed at Geneva, let alone getting some input.

• (2300)

The House of Commons and the government should insist that our military role be accompanied by a diplomatic one. The international community has made serious mistakes in dealing with the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. One such mistake was the recognition of Croatia without considering the position of its Serbian minority which made up anywhere from 12 to 20 per cent of the population. While a ceasefire has been established in Croatia the threat of renewed war looms large.

Bosnia also was an ethnically heterogeneous republic. Although some Bosnians lived in ethnically distinct areas, most did not. History and intermarriage had created an ethnic jigsaw puzzle. The Europeans, followed by the international community at large, also recognized Bosnian independence without considering the objections of its Serbian minority. Similarly, various attempts to broker peace between the parties have