S.O. 30

down a Soviet civilian aircraft. Imagine what would have occurred? To begin with, within days if not hours we would all know who gave the order. We would know whether it was the pilot, some local commander or the executive. If it was the executive, the Government would fall and be changed immediately. If it was a local commander or the pilot, he would be dismissed instantaneously. We do not know, Mr. Speaker, who ordered the Soviet strike. We do not know if it was the Kremlin, but if the order came from Moscow, what does this say about the people in charge and the system which allows such people to be in charge and to stay there? If the order came from some local military command which the Kremlin is now covering up, what does that say about Soviet military command structures and the ability of the western world to negotiate a believable arms reduction treaty, an enforceable treaty with such a group?

Deplorable as this act of murder is, Mr. Speaker, it does not bring us closer to the Apocalypse. But it does demonstrate that the road back from the abyss will be longer and slower than any of us want or many of us thought.

As the Hon. Member for York-Peel indicated, we must talk. We must not allow this incident to prevent us from talking. We must not allow it to prevent us from pursuing aggressively the road to peace, to disarmament. For that is the only hope for the salvation of mankind. But what we have obviously learned, if we choose to learn it, is that we are dealing with a system, a regime, whose standards, whose morals, whose character is quite different from anything we could comprehend. It means, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that the road to disarmament and perpetual peace is not going to be easy; it is not going to be short. It means, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that in the meantime we will have to maintain, and in fact in Canada's case enhance, our military capabilities. It means that far from taking a step away from involving ourselves in NATO in support of our democratic countries, we as a country must reinforce that commitment in recognition that a democratic country could never perpetrate such a heinous act, and that as long as there are dictatorships of the sort that are now in control of the Soviet Union, we who value democracy, freedom and human rights and who can never justify the wanton taking of innocent civilian lives under any circumstance have no choice but to maintain a position of vigilance and strength.

● (2140)

I believe the history of KAL Flight 007 is known to us. Perhaps more complete detail which we do not know is forthcoming.

The behaviour of the Soviet Union in first denying that there was an airplane, then denying that there was in fact any shots fired at it, finally being forced to admit that it did in fact shoot it down but claiming it had every right to do so, and more horrendously saying that they will do so again, is just and reasonable cause for the House to condemn a government that would allow this to happen and to pass a motion expressing that condemnation to be delivered to our counterparts, the members of the Supreme Soviet in the Soviet Union.

This is not the occasion for a partisan debate about Canada's defence policies or defence position, but I humbly suggest that this event will at least serve some small benefit to Canadians and the free world if we recognize it for what it is, learn the lessons from what has happened and act accordingly in the future. Perhaps we can save innocent lives in the future and save our democratic system. While it will take a long time, perhaps we will reach, through patient negotiation and waiting for the changes which must occur behind the Iron Curtain, that hopeful day in the future when peace is assured for all of us.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Lapierre (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be taking part in this emergency debate this evening, and to have an opportunity to express my disgust with the crime perpetrated by the Soviet Union some days ago. I feel that whatever our political allegiance, age or nationality, we were all dumbstruck when we heard the sad news and realized that respect for civilian lives had not prevailed among members of the Soviet army in the course of their monitoring of Russian air space. Mr. Speaker, not only did the Soviets commit this crime, they even had the nerve to deny the fact and subsequently to put the entire blame on the United States, and this while they had 269 deaths on their conscience, including 10 Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, after producing lies and denials and inventing a number of scenarios that were positively obscene, the Soviet authorities went so far as to say that in similar circumstances, they would take the same ruthless action.

I think Hon. Members could usefully reflect this evening on the seriousness of these events and on the ruthlessness of the authorities who committed a positively heinous crime against innocent victims, who want to use this incident to play political games, at the expense of the families of the victims, and who are shameless in their reprisal to confess before the international community to a crime that is among the worst in history that I am aware of, and one that has aroused the indignation of the free world at the intransigent attitude of the Communists.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great satisfaction that I listened earlier this evening to the comments made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen), who mentioned the measures he has taken on behalf of the Canadian Government, to lead the way in condemning this despicable deed.

Mr. Speaker, our colleagues on the other side of the House are urging us to continue our pressure tactics. I can assure them we shall persist in our endeavours until a full settlement has been reached. However, we also hope to lead the way among members of the international community in keeping the pressure on the Soviet authorities. At the present time, the Soviets are under pressure because of the events in Afghanistan and Poland, but unfortunately, as soon as such events are