

Oral Questions

is making. But first of all I would like to make it perfectly clear that on this side of the House we do not like Noriega.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (1440)

Mrs. Stewart: However, Canada has always supported the fundamental principle of non-intervention as enshrined in international law and the UN charter.

In response to questions regarding Canada's position on the invasion of Panama, the Secretary of State said intervention by force in Panama by U.S. forces is a dangerous precedent. My question is to the Prime Minister.

Do we or do we not support the principle of non-intervention without exception? If we make an exception for the U.S. now, how can we expect to be credible when, in the future, some other country invades a sovereign territory on the same pretext?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think it is quite vital on this important matter that the House recognize the unusual circumstances that exist in Panama.

There are some 12,000 Americans in Panama by right of treaty. Those people have been directly threatened by a declaration of war by General Noriega that was then followed up by the murder of one of those troops and threats against the wife of that person.

As a student of affairs in Latin America, the hon. member would know there have been extensive efforts made to try to resolve this question by negotiation. Those efforts failed.

When I spoke this morning to the President of Venezuela, he made the point that one of the reasons that this action occurred was because Venezuela, and for that matter Canada, and other nations involved in the Organization of American States who sought to resolve the problem by negotiation were unable to resolve it. It could not be resolved by that means.

We had a situation where there were Americans in Panama by right of treaty. They were threatened. War had been declared against them.

My statement was very clear. We believe that that kind of intervention creates a dangerous precedent. It should only be resorted to when all else fails and when the circumstances are unique. The circumstances were unique. All else had failed. In those circumstances we think it was a justified action for the President and the Government of the United States.

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, the minister responds with his justification, good intentions for the U.S. invading Panama but can I remind him that the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Canada is a new member of the OAS and has an important voice both in that forum and at the UN. Both organizations are convening emergency meetings today to address Panama. Will Canada make it clear that at these meetings we will abide by the principle of non-interventionism?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, at those meetings we will abide by the policy that has been enunciated by the Government of Canada today in the aftermath of those events and, indeed, by principles that have been enunciated by former governments of Canada.

Let me quote from *Hansard*, October 25, 1983, as reported at page 28311. The Right Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau responding to a question stated:

—there were American nationals there. The United States was certainly entitled to attempt to protect those nationals.

That had to do with a situation where the nationals were not present by right of treaty, as they were present by right of treaty in the circumstances in Panama. That happened in a situation where there were not the extenuating circumstances of extensive attempts to try to resolve this situation by negotiation, extensive attempts that had failed.

A number of countries that are members of the Organization of American States have responded to these events. The Foreign Minister of Costa Rica earlier today said, as we had, that they regretted the actions but that they would not enter into condemnation. There are other members of the Organization of American States as, indeed, there are countries around the world that are not about to take this opportunity simply to condemn the United States perhaps for other reasons.