

Statement

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Déclaration

Secrétaire
d'État aux
Affaires
extérieures

91/59

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT BY

THE HONOURABLE BARBARA MCDOUGALL,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,

ON THE SITUATION IN YUGOSLAVIA

IN THE EMERGENCY DEBATE IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

**OTTAWA, Ontario
November 18, 1991**

Mr. Speaker, one week ago today, only several hundred yards from this chamber, Rabbi Reuven Bulka, Honourary Chaplain of the Royal Canadian Legion, speaking at the Remembrance Day ceremonies, commented that "the opposite of war is not peace. Peace is only a state of not being at war. The opposite of war is harmony."

Yugoslavia was been in a state of uneasy peace for many years, but harmony has eluded it and has never developed in this region. In the past few months, the world has witnessed in horror the deterioration of this fragile situation into a state of all-out war.

Let me express first of all, that Canada's heart goes out to those who are personally suffering in this situation.

In addition, for the world community, the challenge is two-fold: first, to stop the terrible bloodshed and death and the malevolent destruction of the cities and villages; and second, following the cessation of hostilities, which must inevitably occur, to establish the conditions for mutual trust that are essential for a state of lasting harmony in this region.

These are not easy tasks.

The roots of this conflict reach deep into history, and the base human desire for revenge and retribution has increased rather than diminished over time.

It is tragic that when an unprecedented era of freedom and justice beckons all the people of Europe, Yugoslavia has descended into a cycle of intolerance, inflexibility, death and destruction.

The Honourable Member for Winnipeg South-Centre has called upon this Government to take immediate and decisive action to put an end to the bloodshed. We could not agree more with the sentiments and objectives expressed by the Honourable Member. On this point there is no reason or time for debate. The feelings are universal.

However, the Honourable Member opposite has also made the point that the measures taken by Canada and the European Community (EC) thus far are "too little, too late." On this point, I must, with respect, differ from the Honourable Member for Winnipeg South-Centre.

I am sure that the Member knows and remembers that one of the benefits of being in government is having the opportunity to change things for the better. But he also knows that one of the frustrations of being in government is recognizing a problem of being unable to solve it alone. Such is the case in this desperate crisis in Yugoslavia.

I would like to have a formula that would convince the parties to drop their weapons and negotiate a fair and lasting settlement. But the politics and the emotions of this region defy any such straightforward solution.

Consider, for a moment, the complex ethnic interrelationships in the region:

- o Sixty-six per cent of the people of Serbia are Serbian, but in one part of its territory -- the province of Kosovo -- 90 per cent are Albanian.
- o In Croatia, 75 per cent of the people are Croatian, but fully 12 per cent are Serbian.
- o The ethnic mix is even more complex in Bosnia-Hercegovina, where 44 per cent of the people are Slavic Moslems, 31 per cent are Serbs and 17 per cent Croats.

Establishing peace and stability in a region of such entrenched ethnic tension is not easy. But I want to assure the House and the people of Canada that we have not backed away.

From the outset, Canada has been outspoken and clear. We seek for all the peoples of Yugoslavia a peaceful, comprehensive and negotiated settlement that protects minority rights; ensures no unilateral or forceable changes of borders; and provides for appropriate financial and legal arrangements among the constituent parts.

We have worked through established international mechanisms to make our views known to the Yugoslav government and to the peoples of Yugoslavia.

Right from the beginning of the crisis, Canada has played an active role in efforts by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) to contribute to a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

We fully support the CSCE's declaration that differences within Yugoslavia must be resolved by peaceful negotiations consistent with the Helsinki principles of the CSCE and that territorial gains or changes within Yugoslavia brought about by violence are unacceptable.

However, the CSCE was unable to act effectively in the spring because a number of countries (among them -- at that time -- the U.S.S.R.) were loath to see it move on a conflict within the borders of a member state. The member state of Yugoslavia was also uncertain. So the torch was passed to the EC to try to settle this conflict.

We made sure that this effort was in the context of the larger CSCE responsibility and that Canadians participated in the observer teams sent to Yugoslavia by the EC, along with Poland, Sweden and the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic.

But the larger effort was being carried out at the Hague Peace Conference under the Chairmanship of Lord Peter Carrington. We have supported those efforts as being the lead activity and continue to support Lord Carrington.

The UN Charter requires an initial regional effort before a matter goes before the Security Council. The question is, "How long can these efforts be made and made again, while the killing obscenely goes on, before some more resolute action is required?"

Once again, there is not a simple or superficial answer.

First, the Prime Minister and I have condemned, at every step, the violence and the intolerance in the country that have led to the escalation to all-out war.

Second, we have been among the leaders to engage the world community in recognizing the potential fall-out from this tragic crisis.

Canada was the first country to request a meeting of the United Nations Security Council on the Yugoslav situation. The reason that Canada did not speak to that motion is that the rules of the Security Council did not permit us to, despite repeated requests. Our view is that the Yugoslav crisis poses not only a human tragedy of enormous proportions but also a direct threat to international peace and security in the area.

The collapse of an effective governing authority exacerbates the potential for civil strife and further endangers the peace and security of neighbouring countries.

This call for action on the part of the Security Council has been resisted by some of its members who believe that the tragedy of that country remains an internal matter and that Security Council action would constitute interference in its internal affairs. Unfortunately -- despite our own pleading, despite our own lobbying, despite our own work with each and every member of the Security Council, including the permanent five and the rotating members -- that view has been held by one permanent member, China, which has a veto.

We agree that this is outmoded thinking and that it is deeply damaging in the circumstances. We do have some basis to hope that China will soften its stand, but in the meantime there is little that we can do except to try and continue to make the case, as we do daily.

The situation also poses a direct challenge to the principles enshrined in the Charter of Paris and the aspirations of all participating countries in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

We have called for the establishment of a peacekeeping mission and have indicated that we are ready to contribute resources to such a mission. Last week, both the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav presidency and Croatia have, at last, called for the UN to send peacekeepers, though they are not in agreement over some vital issues of where the warring forces will be separated.

The UN Secretary-General's special envoy, Cyrus Vance, and the Under-Secretary-General responsible for peacekeeping are now in Yugoslavia to see what can be done. Our monitors remain there in co-ordination with the European Community, who is the one that is directing the monitoring process and is the one who makes the decisions on where members of the monitoring mission go.

Such a peacekeeping effort could have several roles, some of which have been alluded to earlier tonight: first, the supervision of a ceasefire and the disengagement of rival forces; second, basic protection for the security of minority groups in the republics; third, assistance in the distribution of humanitarian aid and the return of displaced persons to their homes; fourth, the supervision of relief for blockaded army camps and a general monitoring of the activities of the Yugoslav army; fifth, the reconfirmation of existing borders within Yugoslavia; sixth, assistance in the re-opening of crucial road and rail networks; and, finally, the establishment of confidence-building measures at the grassroots level between the rival factions.

Once again, these are steps that Canada has urged in every forum. It is a large order, but it does follow the concept of moving from peace to harmony.

Canada stands ready and willing to contribute to such a comprehensive peacekeeping mission, and we have been from the beginning.

But, even to contemplate peace, the leaders of the parties to this conflict in Yugoslavia must be brought to the bargaining table for genuine discussions.

This necessity presents a difficult dilemma for countries outside the conflict -- how to force the issue without further hurting the people who are already affected.

As in other areas of conflict, Canada has sought to use economic and political levers for peace in an even-handed way, while at the same time providing humanitarian assistance to the victims of the violence.

When the crisis began, I instructed my Department to refuse systematically to issue any permits for the export of arms or other military goods to Yugoslavia. Canada has thus not only supported UN Resolution 713, but, indeed, moved in advance of it.

The Prime Minister and I have written to the leaders of the parties involved in the crisis urging them to end the violence and pursue a negotiated settlement. I have met with the Foreign Ministers of Yugoslavia and Croatia and will take every similar opportunity to do so in the future.

The Prime Minister and I have also regularly discussed these issues with our friends and allies in various forums.

Our Government continues to receive calls for recognition of those republics that have unilaterally declared independence and knows this is a sensitive point.

We shall continue to resist such pressure, because we believe, along with Members of the EC, the CSCE and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), that recognition of republics that wish to leave Yugoslavia should be given only within the framework of a general agreement. I have discussed this personally with both Cyrus Vance and Peter Carrington.

Recognition of Croatia and Slovenia at this time would signal the end of the negotiation process and would leave force and violence to settle the issue. It would also jeopardize the fate of other republics and minorities who have called for other kinds of arrangements for Yugoslavia.

We steadfastly believe that the first requirement for any political solution is peace in the region. Canadians are participating in the international ceasefire monitoring mission, as I pointed out, that was mandated by the CSCE and led by the European Community.

Canada will continue to do what it can in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe to serve the cause of peace.

Also, Canada has fully supported peace efforts by the European Community. The EC has played a leading role in this crisis because it has more influence than anyone else on the Yugoslav Republics, several of which are seeking membership, or have at least expressed the hope of membership, in the Community. So the Community, it is believed, has some leverage.

Earlier this month, we joined the European Community in announcing a package of sanctions designed to apply pressure to the various factions in Yugoslavia. Specifically:

- o we suspended Canada's general preferential tariff treatment to Yugoslavia;
- o we put Yugoslavia on the area control list, which means that any export to Yugoslavia now requires an export permit;
- o we announced that all applications concerning Yugoslavia made under the Program for Export Market Development and the Renaissance Eastern Europe Program would be refused; and
- o we suspended trade promotion and trade support measures to Yugoslavia.

We have welcomed the European Community's call for additional measures to strengthen the arms embargo and for steps to be taken to introduce an oil embargo.

We have acted with our hearts as well.

We have moved early ourselves to provide assistance to victims. Our first step was to provide the International Committee of the Red Cross with a contribution of \$250,000 in support of its programs in all regions affected by the crisis.

On November 8, we went beyond this. The Prime Minister announced from Rome that Canada would make an additional \$1 million available for humanitarian relief. Funds will be provided for the Canadian Red Cross to purchase emergency relief and medical supplies for the International Committee of the Red Cross to use in Yugoslavia, and the Canadian Forces will provide air transport to move those supplies into place.

I will announce the details of this effort within the next few days. In the meantime, NATO countries are giving active support to the efforts of the UN and the Red Cross.

While the tragedy in Yugoslavia unfolds many thousands of miles away, there are thousands of Canadian families who are directly affected.

For the many Canadians of Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian descent, the events are not simply video images on television screens. They are family, friends and special places, and personal memories.

I know, Mr. Speaker, without being out of order, that many of them are here to hear us today and that many of them will be watching at home. Each day, the pictures of war score direct hits on their hearts and their peace of mind, as well as on those of all other Canadians.

Since the beginning of this crisis, the safety of Canadians has also been on our minds. We have advised by letter all registered Canadians in Croatia to leave zones of conflict.

All Canadian missions are in a position to provide Canadian visas to Yugoslav nationals, and locally engaged staff in our Consulate General in Zagreb continue to operate the Mission and offer assistance to Canadian citizens in Croatia.

But we must also comfort and support the Canadians here at home who have families and friends in the area of conflict. They live peacefully in our neighbourhoods among us, with people of all races and creeds from every corner of the world.

They work side by side with people whose families arrived here three or four hundred years ago.

They value peace, freedom, order and equality of opportunity for members of their families and the people of their communities, as well as those in their homelands.

They tolerate diversity, differences of opinion or political affiliation because they live in our country in a generous society and a tolerant one.

They value the harmony that is the cornerstone of our society.

We ask them to help us. They are involved emotionally and otherwise. We ask them to help us in calling for leaders in all parts of Yugoslavia and its component states to stop shooting and to come together at the table.

We can impose strict sanctions. We can condemn violence and plead for peace, we can meet around the clock in our various forums and we can pass all of our resolutions, but the people of Yugoslavia must themselves find that harmony that is crucial to their future.

That is neither an avowal of failure nor an unwillingness to do everything in our power to support peace efforts and to provide relief. It is a note of caution, however, for Canadians who think that there are quick and simple answers even as we are searching for those new answers.

We pledge to make every effort to assist the people of Yugoslavia. When those opportunities are there, we will seize them and we will search them out. We also seek an immediate peace. One more death, one more injury, one more building is one too many.

But we do pray for that harmony; we search for it. We join with our allies, and we join with our fellow Canadians in seeking it.