

# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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## THE CRUCIAL ISSUE OF VIETNAM

**Statement by the Honourable Paul Martin,  
Secretary of State for External Affairs,  
in the House of Commons on January 25, 1966.**

...I trust ... that there will be an opportunity soon for the House to undertake a broad review of foreign affairs. Today, I thought I should like to confine my statement on behalf of the Government, to the crucial issue of Vietnam. No issue has so much preoccupied public opinion in Canada or the members of this House in recent months. No issue has aroused greater misgivings or greater uncertainty about where the right course for Canada lies. Probably no issue has cast a darker shadow on the prospects of peaceful accommodation and peaceful co-operation in the world.

The policy of the Government in relation to the Vietnam problem is now a matter of record. It was stated before the External Affairs Committee on Wednesday and Thursday, June 9 and 10. If I restate it today, it is because I regard it as right to do so at the outset of this new Parliament and in the light of recent significant developments in the situation.

In our view, the situation in Vietnam needs to be viewed from three separate perspectives. First, there is what I might call the perspective of internal dissent in South Vietnam. This is something we must expect in any new country where the people live on the margin of subsistence. It exists because the process of social and economic transformation that is the basis of any significant development is bound to involve dislocation and disruption. It exists in greater degree in a country like South Vietnam because of the intervention from the outside. This, in turn, has made it impossible for successive governments in that country to lay a recognizable basis for political stability.

But let us not on that account equate that outside intervention with the desire for social and economic change. Let us remember that long before the conflict in South Vietnam erupted into open hostilities it was the agents of change -- the administrators, the teachers, the public health workers and others like them -- who were the prime targets of terror. Let us remember that, whatever the change of government in Saigon, and there have been many,