

April 4, 1966

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

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APPENDIX "E"

Ottawa, February 28, 1966

His Excellency
Ho Chi Minh,
President of the Democratic
Republic of Vietnam.

Dear Mr. President,

I have read with interest your letter of January 24 which was addressed to Canada as a member of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam.

You will not expect me to share the interpretation of the nature of the problem in Vietnam and the origins of the present conflict which is set forth in your letter. I do not believe, however, that it would serve any useful purpose at this time to dwell on our differences, other than to note that they exist.

What concerns me, as it does the people of Canada, is the tragic toll in human suffering and the threat to international peace which the continuation of the conflict in Vietnam involves.

I am convinced that the use of force is not an acceptable means of attaining political objectives in the world as it is constituted today. That is why Canada has urged all parties to the conflict in Vietnam to pursue a course of negotiation. It is in this direction that we see the prospects of a fair and lasting settlement which will take account of the freely expressed aspirations of all the people of Vietnam.

For these reasons I have been deeply disappointed by the failure so far of all efforts to promote unconditional discussions on Vietnam. I have carefully studied the positions which have been put forward by the main parties to the conflict. While these positions are still very far apart, I believe that they show some common elements on which a foundation of peace can be built.

It is not for Canada to prescribe to the Vietnamese people how they shall order their political life and institutions. That is for the people of Vietnam themselves to decide freely when the time comes. But the present course of developments in Vietnam is a source of legitimate concern to the international community and it is my firm hope that it can be reversed before all avenues to a peaceful settlement are closed.

In your letter you refer to the obligations which the members of the International Commission for Supervision and Control have in the serious current situation in Vietnam. As a member of that Commission Canada has at all times endeavoured to carry out its obligations in a spirit of objectivity and impartiality towards the facts as we know them. I can assure you that we will continue to do so to the best of our capacity.