

I should now like to give a full account of the nature of our Commissioner's mission to Hanoi during the time he was in Vietnam in 1964-65. In the spring of 1964 following a meeting between the U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk and the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Lester B. Pearson and the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Hon. Paul Martin, the Canadian Government agreed that the new Canadian Commissioner on the I.C.C. in Vietnam might be instructed to probe what was in the minds of the leaders in Hanoi and help to dispel any misunderstanding they might have as to the future course the United States intended to follow, that is, that the Americans were not thinking of pulling out of Vietnam and were prepared to increase their commitment there if this were considered necessary.

Canada's motive in agreeing to this special mission for the Canadian Commissioner was to try to promote a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Vietnam. Thus the Canadian Government considered it entirely consistent with, and indeed reinforcing, our role in the I.C.C. I should like to emphasize that the Commissioner acted at no time as a direct representative of the United States Government or President but only as a part of a Canadian channel of communication. It was clearly understood of course that messages to be conveyed in this way would be passed via Ottawa, that Canada did not associate itself with the content of the messages and that Canada would be free to add its own comments to any message passed in either direction. Our only commitment was that there would be faithful transmission of messages in both directions. The Canadian Government's purpose in agreeing to participate in this channel of communication was to provide an opportunity to reduce misunderstandings between the United States and North Vietnam and was founded on a strong desire to ensure the return of peace to Vietnam and to South East Asia. This position was understood by both the Americans and the North Vietnamese throughout.

In the course of his tour of duty in Vietnam, Mr. J. Blair Seaborn, who was the Canadian Commissioner at the time, made six visits to Hanoi. Not all of these were occasioned solely by his special mission. Canadian members of the I.C.C. maintain contact on a regular basis with the authorities of both South and North Vietnam. On his first two visits to Hanoi the Commissioner was received by the North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong on June 18 and August 13, 1964. During his first interview with the North Vietnamese leader Mr. Seaborn explained his mission and the Canadian Government's purpose which was to establish the Canadian Commissioner's credentials with the North Vietnamese as an authoritative channel of communication with the United States. At the same time, he conveyed the first