

*Message to Hanoi by Canadian Official*

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 of a series of messages from the United States government. Mr. Seaborn reported to the North Vietnamese that United States policy was to see to it that North Viet Nam contained itself and its ambitions within the territory allocated to its administration by the 1954 Geneva agreements. He added that United States policy in South Viet Nam was to preserve the integrity of that state's territory against guerilla subversion. He stated that the United States had indicated that it was not seeking military bases in the area and was not seeking to overthrow the communist régime in Hanoi. The commissioner informed the North Vietnamese Prime Minister that the United States considered itself fully aware of the degree to which Hanoi controls and directs the guerilla action in South Viet Nam and that the United States held Hanoi directly responsible for that action. He also made it clear that the United States considered the confrontation with North Vietnamese subversive guerilla action as part of a general confrontation with this type of violent subversion in other lesser developed countries. Therefore, the United States regarded its stake in resisting a North Vietnamese victory in South Viet Nam as having a significance of worldwide proportions. The commissioner mentioned examples of United States policy of peaceful coexistence having benefited communist régimes, such as Yugoslavia and Poland. The commissioner also reported that American public and official patience with North Vietnamese aggression was growing extremely thin and he feared that if the conflict in the area should escalate, which he did not think was in anyone's interest, then the greatest devastation would result for the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam itself. Mr. Seaborn reported that he was convinced that Pham Van Dong understood the importance and the context of the message he conveyed, and the seriousness with which the United States viewed the situation in Southeast Asia. To that extent it was judged that the initial purpose of this first contact has been successfully accomplished.

The second visit, despite its timing, was not occasioned by the incidents of August 2 and 4 in the Gulf of Tonkin and the air strikes against North Vietnamese territory on August 5. These occurred after Mr. Seaborn had arranged to travel to Hanoi on August 10 on commission business. On August 8 the Canadian government agreed to relay to Mr. Seaborn a further message from the United States government repeating many of the points made in the previous message and making clear that, "if the DRVN persists in its present course it can expect to suffer the consequences". This message was based on the talking points which were published in the *New York Times* on June 13, 1971. This message was transmitted to Pham Van Dong on August 13, 1964. Despite its severity the Canadian government believed that because of its importance and in the interests of peace it should be transmitted faithfully in accordance with our undertak-

[Mr. Sharp.]

ing to the United States. According to our commissioner's report, the North Vietnamese premier was clearly angered by it and said that if war came to North Viet Nam it would come to the whole of Indochina. Nevertheless, he said he wanted the Canadian channel kept open. Neither the United States nor North Viet Nam, however, took any initiative to make use of it in the following weeks.

The commissioner's third trip to Hanoi on regular commission business was planned for November, 1964, but we were asked by the United States government to delay it to permit the preparation of a further message to the North Vietnamese. This message which was relayed to Saigon on December 3 had nothing to add to the earlier messages beyond the statement that "the time is ripe for any message Hanoi may wish to convey", and the commissioner was instructed by the Canadian government to deliver passively so passive a message. It was conveyed, therefore, to the head of the North Vietnamese liaison mission for the ICC. This was the only North Vietnamese official whom Mr. Seaborn saw during this third visit from December 10 to 18, 1964. There was no response to the American invitation for communication from the North Vietnamese and in January, 1965, the State Department told us that it was unlikely that the United States would have anything to communicate to Hanoi "in the near future".

American air attacks on North Viet Nam began in February, 1965, following a major communist assault on American facilities at Pleiku, and on February 27 Mr. Seaborn was instructed by the Canadian government to go to Hanoi to discuss a new message with the North Vietnamese Prime Minister. He went on March 1 but Pham Van Dong would not receive him and the commissioner saw Colonel Ha Van Lau, the head of the liaison mission, on March 4. At that time the commissioner conveyed to him the substance of a general statement of United States policy and objectives which was also being made available to the North Vietnamese government through the United States Embassy in Warsaw. Mr. Seaborn concluded following this meeting that the North Vietnamese were unlikely to use the Canadian channel of communication with the United States.

On May 28, 1965, following the suspension of bombing from May 12 to 17, the United States asked if the Canadian government would instruct Mr. Seaborn to pass a further message to North Viet Nam saying that "the United States continues to consider the possibility of working toward a solution by reciprocal actions on each side", and seeking clarification of whether American recognition of North Viet Nam's "Four Points" of April 8 was regarded by Hanoi as a pre-condition to any discussions. Mr. Seaborn went to Hanoi for the fifth time on May 31 and saw both Ha Van Lau and North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh. I apologize for my Vietnamese pronunciation. He reported his impression that the North Vietnamese were not interested in talking to the United States at that time. The fact that Mr. Seaborn had seen the North Vietnamese Foreign Minister