

In my conversations with Foreign Minister Lam and President Thieu, I raised the question of civilian prisoners in South Viet-Nam. I urged them to consider the weight of public opinion in Canada and abroad on this matter. Both told me that they had already released five thousand civilian prisoners on the occasion of the recent lunar new year celebrations, and that they had provided a list of over five thousand additional civilian prisoners to the other South Vietnamese Party for release in accordance with the Paris Agreement and Protocols. Both went on to contrast their record on this issue with that of the other South Vietnamese Party. They told me that of the large number of South Vietnamese civilians captured by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, only two hundred or so had been included in the list required under the Paris Agreement and Protocols.

In Laos, I had a long conversation with Prime Minister Prince Souvanna Phouma. He was naturally enough most concerned about what was happening in and to his own country. While he recognized that there was a direct and close relationship between the war in Viet-Nam and the use of Laotian territory for military purposes, his particular concern was to ensure a degree of international involvement in the future of Laos through the reactivation of the old tripartite ICSC in Laos. The two sides in the war in Laos have not yet agreed on the military terms by which the agreement will be implemented. It is this protocol to the Agreement which will determine the role of the Commission. Until the protocol has been agreed upon it will not be possible for the Government to determine how it will respond to the request that Canada should take part in a reactivated ICSC in Laos.

I should like at this point to report to the Committee that I raised the question of Mr. Lloyd Oppel with the Pathet Lao leadership in Laos where Mr. Oppel was taken prisoner and again in Hanoi. General Phoun Sipraseuth in Vientiane at first told me that Mr. Oppel's release was being delayed pending certain political developments in the situation in Laos. I minced no