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THE OUTLOOK FOR PEACE IN VIETNAM

In a statement to the House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs, on April 11, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Paul Martin, reviewed the situation in Vietnam. He concluded by saying that he could not "assess the prospects in the short term any too hopefully" because, up to now, the "simple formula" to bring the two sides together had "eluded all those who have tried". The Minister assured the Committee that the Canadian Government was committed to continuing its search for a peaceful solution to the conflict in Vietnam.

Extracts from Mr. Martin's address follow:

...The first point which I think needs to be made...is that Canada has no direct national interest to assert or maintain in Southeast Asia. Nor do we have any formal military or other commitments there. If we have been drawn into that part of the world, it has been solely as citizens of the wider world community. What we are doing in Southeast Asia is twofold: we are there on a peace-keeping mission on behalf of countries which do have a direct national interest in that area; and we are also there as a contributor to the collective effort to meet the rising expectations of the people in that area for a better life.

COMMISSION RESPONSIBILITIES

Second, there are responsibilities which we have in Vietnam as members of the International Commission. We have endeavoured to carry out these responsibilities with fairness and impartiality and we will continue to do so. I would be the last to deny that the course of events in Vietnam has in some important respects overtaken the mandate of the Commission. But there is agreement among all the

parties that, as the representatives of the Geneva powers, the Commission cannot simply wash its hands of the situation. There is also agreement that the Commission will have a role to play in the context of any final settlement and, quite possibly, in helping to pave the way for it. Because of these opportunities which are potentially open to the Commission, I believe I can say that it is the unanimous view of the three Commission powers that we are justified in maintaining our presence in Vietnam, notwithstanding the anomalies and the frustrations of the present situation.

Third, apart from whatever role Canada may be able to play as a member of the International Commission, we have tried to use our national influence in promoting the course of peace in Vietnam. We have done this on the basis of our close relations with the United States and the access we have to the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Hanoi as well, of course, as the Government of the Republic of Vietnam in Saigon. I do not want to exaggerate the influence which a country like Canada can command in a matter of this kind, which has engaged the power and prestige of at least three of the great powers. Nor do I want to hold out any promise to the Committee that our efforts will turn out, in the end, to have been of more than marginal usefulness. But there is one thing of which I am sure and it is this: if our efforts are to be of any avail, they must be deployed within the limits of what the situation suggests is realistic. They are best directed towards arriving at some common denominator which the parties themselves are prepared to accept as reasonable. We will neither bludgeon nor shame the parties into accepting a course of policy which they regard