

Mr. CHURCHILL: I would just say, Mr. Chairman, that as there may be some difficulty about meeting tomorrow, and as there will be an intervening ten-day period it would be better to have the complete statement on this and the other two topics. Then, when we come back after Easter we can take them up one at a time.

The CHAIRMAN: It does appear to be the wish of the majority that Mr. Martin should continue with his statement.

Mr. MARTIN: When I came before the committee on June 10 of 1965 I gave a detailed account of the developments which had led up to the situation at that time in Viet Nam. I said I thought it was difficult to form a judgment of that situation without examining in its proper historical perspective the problem in Viet Nam. I believe the situation is no less true today than it was a little less than a year ago. I know there are interpretations other than that which the Canadian government has placed on the course of events in Viet Nam. Indeed, a great deal of the discussion and dissent which have developed in relation to Viet Nam have focused on the history of the conflict itself. I think, however, that no useful purpose would be served by going again over the ground which we covered last year, but in that context I wish to make two comments.

First, I would like to remind the committee that while there are differences over the antecedents of the present conflict in Viet Nam, the assessment which the government has formed on this subject is an independent assessment resting on a long record of first hand Canadian experience in Indo China. Secondly, if our foreign policy is to have any impact on the present situation, I believe we must now cast our thinking forward rather than backward. I also believe we are unlikely to achieve anything useful by a policy of denunciation which is sometimes being urged on the government by those who take issue with our position.

What we must do is to map out a course which we regard as right and realistic, which takes account of the facts as we know them and which has some prospect of contributing to a peaceful settlement. And this is what we have been trying to do.

There is one matter with which I should like to deal before giving the committee some indication of recent developments in the Viet Nam situation. This is the matter of Canadian participation in the International Commission in Viet Nam.

Members of the Committee will recall that this was the only issue on which the House divided when the estimates of the Department of External Affairs were considered on February 8. I do not pretend—and I do not suppose anyone would pretend—that the Commission is in a position, in present circumstances, to do justice to the mandate with which it was charged by the Geneva powers in 1954. That is not in any way the fault of the Commission which was set up to supervise a cease-fire and not to control an armed conflict. Nevertheless there are—and there will continue to be—a number of good reasons for maintaining the Commission's presence in Viet Nam. Some of these reasons I will be prepared to deal with in interrogation; some of them I will not be able to discuss.