

only in legalistic terms. We have never looked at it that way. We have never thought of the Commission as possessing a role purely on the basis of powers extended to it under the Geneva Agreement of 1954; nor, on the other hand are we thinking of any fresh mandate being conferred on the Commission either by the Geneva powers acting collectively or by the Soviet Union and Britain acting jointly in their capacities as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference.

We have informed the Soviet Union, we have informed the United Kingdom Government, we have informed other governments of our views as to the role that the Commission might assume, but we have not thought it was necessary to get their authority for making our suggestion. What we have had in mind is something modest and informal; we continue to believe, however, that our proposal has potential merit. Our proposal was really in the nature of a good-offices assignment, which would be undertaken not necessarily by the Commission as such but by the three Commission powers acting as sovereign nations, which have been associated with the Vietnam problem for the past 11 years, and which have established a fair record of co-operation between them. It is our view that the knowledge and experience of the Vietnam problem of the three Commission powers and the ready access they command to all the interested parties would make the Commission powers a particularly suitable group to carry forward the search for peace in Vietnam. This is the common objective of the three members of the Commission.

There have been notable attempts made to try and bring about peaceful negotiation in Vietnam. Attempts made by the British, by a good-offices body of the Commonwealth, by individual intermediaries, some publicly known and some not, by concerted action on the part of a group of countries, including Canada -- action by Canada itself, for instance, in the visit that Mr. Blair Seaborn made in June 1965. But for none of these, other than the visit of Mr. Blair Seaborn, did the mediators know in advance that it would have access both to the Government in Saigon and to the Government in Hanoi. It must not be forgotten, in appraising the role of the Commission, that it has direct access to both capitals in the two belligerent areas in the regrettably divided country of Vietnam. We have, of course, for some time been supporting in general terms the re-convening of the Geneva Conference. In fact, about a year ago we specifically urged that the Geneva Conference be recalled. Britain itself, as one of the co-chairmen, has urged the Geneva powers to meet.

Recently the British Prime Minister discussed this matter with Mr. Kosygin when he suggested that they both might agree to calling a Geneva Conference.

However, I should like to make clear that we are not now proposing the calling of a Geneva Conference. We hope the time will come when this will be practicable and possible. I want to make as clear as I can that the proposal we have made for a use of the Commission should not be regarded as an effort to call or persuade the two chairmen of the Geneva Conference to call an immediate Conference. We are not pressing such a move at this time, because we are certain that such a call in present circumstances would not produce results.