

I have already referred to the troika structure of the Commission, which was designed to reflect what were assumed to be the three main blocs - Communist, Western and "neutralist". Our experience since 1954 has not led us to believe that this type of control mechanism is well suited to international peace keeping. If the assumption is made that two of the three members of the troika will automatically assume the role of advocate for their respective "sides", it is obvious that an intolerable burden will be placed on the third member, which is cast in the role of an arbiter. In effect, that third member is expected to assume the full responsibility for every decision which is taken by the peace-keeping agency and to accept, as a result, the foreign-policy implications of such decisions as they apply to the arbiter itself. In a situation such as exists in Vietnam, where, as I have said, Canada has consistently attempted to act objectively and to support findings against either side if they are substantiated by impartial investigation, the burden on the third country is reduced to some extent, but not, unfortunately, to the point where it can act without any reference at all to the implications of its own national position. We have encountered difficulties in our position too. I think it is generally assumed that Canada was named to the International Commission to represent Western interests. If this were understood and accepted by all parties, it would be possible, in theory at least, to act accordingly. Indeed, it would simplify the task. On the other hand, given Canada's role as a major participant in UN peace-keeping operations, it is impossible for us, in a situation such as Vietnam, to play the role of a special pleader for any one party without cutting across our broader goal of strengthening the United Nations as an impartial and objective agency for the settlement of international disputes.

I have touched on the contribution to the failure in Vietnam which was made by the 1954 settlement itself and by the weaknesses of the supervisory agency. There were in addition, however, broader international factors which contributed to the deterioration of the situation. In 1954 the cold war between Communism and the West still existed in Europe and, only one year after the cease-fire had been achieved in the bitter Korean war, an atmosphere of hostility permeated Asia. In this environment it was probably inevitable that in Vietnam -- as in Germany, China and Korea -- the two communities should become the protégés of the major powers representing the ideological, political and military division of the world at that time. The conflicting objectives of the two Vietnamese communities thus became the objectives of the Soviet Union and China on the one hand and of the United States and other Western and Asian countries on the other. The line at the 17th Parallel, which had created North and South Vietnam in 1954, had not been envisaged as a permanent frontier, any more than had the lines between the two Berlins, the two Germanys, or the two Koreas. Nevertheless, the commitment of the prestige of the major powers to the protection of the two Vietnamese states made unification of the country impossible, and made the 17th Parallel as sensitive a dividing-line as the others.

The story of the succeeding years was best summed up by a majority report of the International Commission issued in mid-1962. The Commission, following examination and investigation of South Vietnamese complaints going back to 1955, informed the foreign ministers of Britain and the Soviet Union, acting as Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954, that "armed and unarmed