

I cannot predict how much longer the present pause in the bombing of North Vietnam will last. I can assure the House that our views in this regard have been made known in a way which we believe, in the circumstances, to be the most effective way of presenting our point of view. What has happened in conjunction with this pause was an effort by the United States to seek peace.

In the short run, there may well be an intensification of the level of military activity in Vietnam. I should hope that, even at this hour, we could avoid that possibility and that we should have some positive indication from Hanoi, as a result of the efforts that have been made during the course of the last weeks to try and bring about negotiations with the North consistent with the offer to negotiate that has been made.

It is clear that the Geneva Agreement is regarded by the parties as a suitable point of departure for any future settlement. I should not want to suggest to the House that there is formal agreement between the parties on this particular formulation. The Government of North Vietnam holds that its four points contain the essence of the military and political provisions agreed to at Geneva and must be accepted publicly by the United States before any political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be envisaged. What I am concerned to do is to state the minimum common ground on which there appears to be agreement and from which negotiation would necessarily have to proceed.

There would also seem to be agreement between the parties that there should be a withdrawal of foreign military forces and a dismantling of foreign military bases in Vietnam. This is again a minimum formulation. The Government of North Vietnam would regard this as a prior condition to any settlement. For its part, the United States has made it clear that it wants neither a continuing military presence in South Vietnam nor bases in Southeast Asia. But it has also made it clear that this is on condition that there is peace in the area.

So far as the internal affairs of South Vietnam are concerned, there is agreement on the basic proposition that these must be settled by the people of South Vietnam themselves without any foreign interference....

I have said that we are not one of the belligerents in this regrettable conflict. We regret that the United Nations is not capable of serving the function for which its Charter provides. That is not the fault of a country like Canada or the fault of any one member of the United Nations. This is a situation involving grave issues and the Government has had to consider, in its assessment of the problem, the consequences in Asia which in the fullness of time could well provide the same effects as attended the end of the Second World War.

I believe that our relations with the Soviet Union are now on a much firmer foundation. I believe that the threat of conflict between the Soviet Union and the West has very considerably receded. However, we are now faced with a dangerous situation in Asia. Canada, as a member of the International Commission, is doing its utmost to discharge its