

The attitude of the leaders in South Viet-Nam was considerably more direct. They had no illusions that the ICCS would be able to perform in the manner envisaged in the Agreement and Protocols. Nor did they dispute our suggestion that the Commission was not a vital or integral part of the Agreement itself since if the Parties wished to apply the Agreement, they could do so without reference to the ICCS, and if they did not wish to honour the Agreement, the ICCS could not oblige them to do so. I explained very frankly to the Vietnamese, both in the South and in the North, that the composition of the Commission rendered it virtually impossible for it ever to make a report that would be unfavourable to the DRVN or PRG side while because of our desire to be objective, it was quite conceivable that we should find ourselves supporting a report detrimental to the RVN position.

The South Vietnamese leaders recognized this but claimed that as long as we were present to bring all points of view into the public domain we were helping their cause. They also laid great stress on what they called the political settlement. They said that they were concentrating their best efforts on the conversations now taking place in Paris with the PRG to set up the joint National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord which is, in turn, to make preparations for the holding of an election which would determine the political future of South Viet-Nam. I was told by President Thieu that it was in this area that he would seek his ultimate solution. If this failed, it would not be for want of trying on his part.