

I think it should be clear ...that withdrawal does not represent in any way a shrinking away from international responsibilities. We do not withdraw from responsibilities because we may think a task is thankless, dangerous and difficult - but we do when it has become futile. There is certainly no question of giving in to the view that prevailed in the '30s - retreating into what we then mistakenly regarded as our fire-proof house.

It was originally decided that Canada would remain in the Commission until June 30 so that a replacement could be found. In conversations which I had recently with Dr. Kissinger, he emphasized the importance of the discussions which he is now having with Mr. Le Duc Tho in Paris. Naturally we are anxious to give these discussions every chance of success and we would certainly not wish to do anything which might complicate them by introducing what could be too short a deadline for agreeing on a replacement for Canada in the Commission.

It was in recognition of this situation that I indicated, that subject to the wishes to the parties to the agreement, Canada would stay on for a period beyond June 30 but not later than July 31.

...I am not confident but I can only hope that the Canadian decision may stimulate recalcitrant members into more constructive activity. It is our hope that our successor, whoever that may be, may be able to use our withdrawal to constructive advantage.

Many Canadians have expressed concern about reports of the treatment and continued incarceration of civilian prisoners in Viet-Nam. A number have suggested that the Commission and the Canadian Delegation in particular have been complacent or negligent with respect to this problem. These views are put forward on the assumption that Canada or the ICCS as a whole has either responsibility or authority to inquire into conditions of detention or press for the release of civilian detainees. In fact, the Commission's mandate for civilian detainees is very limited and very closely defined.

The sole authority which the Commission or any of its members has is to observe the return of Civilian detainees after the two South Vietnamese Parties have agreed to their return, and to examine the lists of persons being returned. The ICCS also has the obligation to visit the last detention places of such persons being returned. If the Parties choose not to release these people, or if they choose not to provide lists of civilians in detention, the Commission is powerless.

Notwithstanding our humanitarian instincts, we have to recognize that we are dealing with sovereign states in areas of their jurisdiction. If we intruded too far we could easily destroy whatever potential utility the Commission may still possess in this domain. Nevertheless, while I was in Saigon I took the opportunity to raise with President Nguyen Van Thieu and Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam the question of detained Vietnamese civilians