

I spoke a moment ago of Mr. Chester Ronning, and of the Commissioner's frequent visits to Hanoi.... If Hanoi has repeatedly observed that there is a Hanoi-Canada channel, it is only because Hanoi believes that Canada does have some influence in Washington. What other reason could there be for the way in which our emissaries have been received? What other reason could there be for the nature of the discussions that they have had?

I am not indicating to this House (and I hope that Hanoi will not suggest that I am) what these discussions have been. I have respected fully the confidence of the Government of that country to our emissaries, including Mr. Ronning. As I have said, if we do have a credibility in Hanoi it is because it is thought that as a friend of the United States we rightfully enjoy the confidence of the United States.... Should we retain any credibility in Washington... if we were to engage in consultations with the United States and at the same time follow courses of action that would inevitably destroy our right to their credibility and their confidence?...

So... we intend to carry out our responsibilities to the Commission, and we believe that this is the right course for us to follow. We note with satisfaction that this is the view of India and also of Poland. The Canadian Government has directed its efforts toward finding a basis on which the parties to the Vietnam conflict might be brought into direct contact. I have indicated some of the steps that we have taken in our endeavours in that regard.

The Canadian Government has held that a solution to the problem in Vietnam must be sought by political means. That is part of Canadian policy. We have made it clear that we look to negotiations to settle this problem. It seems important to us that any settlement of the present conflict should be such as to hold out a reasonable prospect of long-term stability in that area. This is because we think that the problem in Vietnam cannot be isolated from the security and stability of Southeast Asia as a whole. We regard the basis of the Vietnam problem as a political one.

As we see it... what is primarily at issue between the parties is the future political arrangements in South Vietnam. It is argued on both sides that the guiding principle should be the right of the people of South Vietnam to determine their own destiny. It seems to us that the best way of achieving this is to afford the people of South Vietnam an opportunity to determine, by the test of the free ballot, under what institutions and under what government they wish their affairs to be conducted. We believe that the best way in which the Canadian Government can bring its influence to bear on the Vietnam situation is by doing exactly what we have done....

On April 11, in the External Affairs Committee, I outlined four suggestions or ideas that are in keeping with the Geneva Accords; I suggested procedures for a cease-fire arrangement. I said at the time that I did not believe the climate was right for their acceptance; the reaction in Hanoi has been negative. Hanoi takes the position that there can be no parity of position between the parties, and that first of all there must be an acknowledgment that the United States, as Hanoi puts it, is the aggressor, and this notwithstanding the findings of the Commission in 1962.