

on the situation and to establish the support functions necessary for it to participate effectively.

If, on the other hand, as is more likely, peace is not established, we will be able to leave having made an all-out effort to continue to contribute to peace. We will have done everything possible, everything reasonable in an untenable situation to ensure that it was not our action which contributed to a lack of peace through the collapse of the ICCS. If at that point the ICCS should cease to be able to operate it would not make a lot of difference because at that point there would be no peace to supervise.

Mr. Speaker, I am highly conscious of the difficulties that confronted the government in making its decision and I am highly conscious of the pressures and the multitude of factors it had to take into consideration in making it. The government's position is to stay for a further 60 days, then to review the situation again, and if there is no improvement they will be out in another 30 days. That will bring them to the end of June, which is substantially the same position as our party has taken in terms of time span except that we say we should be out at that point without reservation and let another country take up the task.

The first point I want to make with respect to the minister's final position, that of 60 more days and then a review and then out in 30 if there is no improvement, is this: the minister said that unless there has been some substantial improvement or unless distinct progress has been made toward a political settlement we will withdraw. I want to know what the minister considers substantial improvement to be. What constitutes a substantial improvement and what, in the minister's opinion, constitutes definite progress toward a political settlement? We have twice set conditions in making our commitment to participate in the commission, in making our commitment to stay for 60 days, and now we are making a third set of conditions. At what point do we cease to be believable? What makes the minister think that the four former belligerents will take any more notice of our conditions this time than they did on the last two occasions? What makes the minister believe that those former belligerents, seeing his statement today, will not say, well, perhaps at the end of 60 days a little further arm twisting might persuade Canada to stay on again? These are very relevant considerations.

There is one final point to make. The minister said the resumption of large-scale hostilities or any action tantamount to a direct denial by the parties of their obligations under the agreement would, in the government's view, release Canada from further responsibility to the ICCS. That is a proper position to take, but I want to know whether in the minister's opinion a resumption of bombing by the United States would constitute such a denial by one of the parties of their obligation under the agreement. I believe it should be considered to be such denial by the government in its further actions.

• (1440)

I have one final point. Whatever we decide to do—whether the government successfully persuades the House that this is the position that Canada should take or

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we ultimately come to the conclusion that we should make a definite commitment to get out of Viet Nam in 90 days—the remaining time in Viet Nam should see Canada devoting much greater attention to, and involving ourselves much more directly in, the problem of political prisoners in that country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rowland: There is no possibility of peace in Viet Nam so long as many of the people who wish to be peacemakers are in prison. That should be a consideration that the government cannot put aside.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of my remarks about the statement made to day by the hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp), I would like to say that the text reached us only in English.

I want to remind the minister, as well as all his colleagues, that these statements must be published in both official languages so that all members can become acquainted with the message delivered by the minister.

If the government intends to continue distributing the text of ministers' statements only in English, it should at least see to it that the message of apology attached to it be in French. We could then find a little good will in the attitude of ministers who too often distribute the text of their statements in only one language.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, despite the lack of a French text, I was able to become acquainted with the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker, we have already stated the position of our party as regards the maintenance of the Canadian delegation within the ICCS in Viet Nam. We believe that as long as all Vietnamese wish that we remain, we are duty bound to remain as long as there is the slightest hope of an improvement of the situation in Viet Nam.

As a matter of fact, for the past 60 days, the Canadian delegation did not feel it was playing a worthwhile role.

Is it also true that thousands of cease-fire violations have occurred.

Mr. Speaker, people would have to be very naive to believe that a conflict which has been lasting for over 30 years is going to end overnight. Despite the good will of those involved, a spirit of vengeance and rivalry remain. Therefore, we have to be patient.

We agree with the government's intentions. We would have preferred a 90-day instead of a 60-day period because we know it is a matter of time and patience before this war is ended. However, if in addition to the 60 days suggested by the government we include the 30 days of grace to allow the ICCS to find a new member, the extension announced by the government corresponds to the one we have proposed.

The Canadian presence in Viet Nam, despite the difficulties and frustrations which result from such a situation, shows the whole world that Canada is not a Pontius Pilate and does not wash its hands of the hardships and conflicts of this world.