

Let us first of all look at the 1954 settlement. I have already mentioned how the anxiety of most of the major powers to achieve a cease-fire led to a situation in which little weight was given to the clearly stated position of the State of Vietnam. The conference, by ignoring the position of the government which claimed to speak for the non-Communist community of Vietnamese, and by projecting nation-wide free elections in 1956, had set forth an objective which was certain to pose problems --- unless of course the State of Vietnam collapsed in the interim. The political objectives of the governments representing the two communities of Vietnam were in direct conflict, and this became more and more evident in the months following July 1954. Furthermore, the Government of the State of Vietnam, instead of collapsing, as many observers of the time expected it to do, consolidated its position and, by so doing, achieved the ability to resist in practice the political settlement which it had opposed throughout the Geneva Conference.

The political environment in Vietnam, therefore, was inherently unstable. The mandate of the International Commission, however, related not to the political settlement but to the supervision of the Cease-Fire Agreement. The history of the Commission's work in this field is fairly clearly set out in the various reports it submitted to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference between 1954 and 1965. In summary, I think it is fair to say that the Commission was reasonably successful in its task of supervising and facilitating the disengagement of forces, and their regroupment in the two zones of Vietnam. Both the French high command and the People's Army of Vietnam had an interest in implementing the cease-fire provisions, and as a result the Commission was able to act effectively and constructively during the early stages. On the other hand, when the interests of the two sides diverged, and when the Commission tried to supervise effectively aspects of the Cease-Fire Agreement which one side or the other felt interfered with its national objectives, the International Commission found its supervision interfered with, evaded or thwarted. The agreement, for example, provided that in both zones the democratic freedoms of the population were to be guaranteed and that no reprisals were to be taken against persons for their activities during the hostilities. North Vietnam submitted innumerable complaints to the Commission alleging reprisals against persons in South Vietnam who were "former resistance workers". The South Vietnamese Government complained that North Vietnam was carrying out subversive activities in the South, and that the Commission would not be permitted to investigate allegations of reprisals until it took some action against North Vietnam for the alleged subversion. In neither North nor South Vietnam was the Commission ever able to ensure that "democratic freedoms" were extended to the populations. Similarly, despite the build-up of the North Vietnamese army in the period immediately following the cease-fire, the Commission was never able to detect the entry of a single piece of military equipment into the country. Violations of the Cease-Fire Agreement occurred in both North and South Vietnam and, although the Commission could from time to time report to the members of the Geneva Conference on at least some of these violations, there was no way in which pressure could be effectively brought to bear on the governments concerned to force them to remedy the situation. Indeed, because the Commission was dependent on services and facilities extended to it by the governments concerned, it was severely handicapped even in its attempts to investigate possible violations.