



CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 67/20 A CANADIAN VIEW OF THE UNITED STATES AND VIETNAM

Text of a speech by the Prime Minister,
the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson,
in the House of Commons on May 24, 1967.

I believe that the purposes and objectives of United States policy in Vietnam were not aggression. I believe that the United States moved into Vietnam in the first place to help South Vietnam, at the invitation of the Government of that country, to defend itself against military action and subversive terrorism aimed at preventing the people of that part of Vietnam making their own decision as to their future development and political institutions, rather than having one particular solution forced upon them under the guise of a liberation struggle conducted in the interests of a totalitarian Communist regime in North Vietnam which has not allowed and does not intend to allow its own people any choice as to their social, economic or political system.

Mr. Bundy, who played an important part in these matters in earlier days as Adviser on Foreign Affairs to the President, has written these words: "United States policy remains based on the continuing conviction that we should be ready to do our full share to help prevent the Communists from taking South Vietnam by force and terror."

We may not agree with this policy, but I think those words are a rational explanation of the policy followed by men in the United States who are men of goodwill and as peace-loving as we are. I can understand their position in this regard. That does not mean a Government in Canada has to support or approve all the measures taken or all the measures adopted by United States forces in Vietnam, let alone by governments in Saigon -- and remember there have been more governments than one -- in achieving their purposes. And on occasions, when I have felt it necessary to speak publicly and not confine myself to diplomacy..., I have made this clear.

I have spoken publicly when I felt it was necessary to do so and might be of some value. Two years ago, in Philadelphia, I proposed a pause in the bombing for what I thought would be a helpful purpose, and later I think I was the only head of a Western government who publicly regretted the resumption of the bombing. I still regret it. I think it was a great mistake on the part of United States Administration at that time to resume the bombing in the circumstances in which it was resumed. But this does not mean and will not mean, in