

position to Britain and the Soviet union as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference. I have also taken the opportunity personally to discuss the matter with the Secretary General of the United Nations, with Secretary of State Rusk and, through others, with the government of South Viet Nam and the government of North Viet Nam.

Our exchanges with India and Poland must necessarily remain confidential. I think I can say that one common point in their initial reaction had to do with the timing and the circumstances in which any Commission initiative might stand a chance of being acceptable to the parties on the ground. That was one of the considerations we had in mind when we decided to ask Mr. Chester Ronning, a distinguished former member of our foreign service, to pay special visits to Saigon and Hanoi early last month. I know that the members of the committee will not expect me to go into details about his mission, or his future participation. It must be apparent that this is a significant assignment.

On these visits he had a full opportunity of discussing with senior personalities in both capitals their views of the present Viet Nam situation and the possibility of the Commission powers playing some part in opening up avenues which might ultimately lead to a peaceful settlement of the conflict. You will appreciate that it would not be helpful for me at this stage to disclose the contents of the discussions which Mr. Ronning had on his visits to Saigon and Hanoi or even the possibilities which they may help to open up. All I would like to say is that the results of these visits have in no way seemed to me to foreclose a Commission role in the right circumstances. In the meantime we are continuing our exchanges with India and Poland in response to their own indications that they would like to see these discussions carried forward.

Turning to another aspect of the Viet Nam problem the significance of the meeting in Honolulu between U.S. and South Vietnam leaders was that it laid the groundwork for a comprehensive program of social and economic reform in South Viet Nam. All of us recognize, I think, the very great problems which the implementation of a program of this magnitude poses in any developing country. These problems are bound to be even greater in a context of continuing armed conflict and in circumstances where positive results can so easily be negated. Nevertheless, we believe that the renewed emphasis that is now being placed on the social and economic aspects of the problem in Viet Nam is the right emphasis. It is calculated to contribute to a more stable and progressive society in which the ordinary Vietnamese may be able to feel that his interests are actively engaged.

Recent developments in South Viet Nam have underlined once again what I regard as the crucial problem in that country, which is that of achieving a stable political basis. This is not a problem that is confined to that country; it is a problem in many of the new countries which lack the resources to meet the mounting aspirations of their people for a better life. But it is aggravated in South Viet Nam by the disruption which has been caused by subversion and armed conflict.

It is my understanding that the tenor of much of the current protest in South Viet Nam is to the effect that only a broadly based civilian government will provide a basis on which the South Vietnamese can be expected to take the