



CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 67/19

CANADIAN VIEWS ON VIETNAM

Text of a speech by the Honourable Paul Martin,
Secretary of State for External Affairs, in the
House of Commons on May 23, 1967.

When, a year ago last January, the Secretary-General and I discussed the question of Vietnam, I was persuaded by his argument that the settlement of this problem must be within the framework of the Geneva Conference. Regrettable as it was, the United Nations, the Security Council or the General Assembly, could not be expected to deal effectively with this problem because of the absence from its membership of particular countries involved. From that moment on we sought, as I have reminded the House time and time again, to impress upon India and Poland the desirability of constituting the three members on the Commission into a body that might have as its prime purpose the narrowing of the gap between the parties, based on the fact that this instrument has a readier access to Hanoi and to Saigon than any other instrument. We have not been able to persuade all the members of the Commission of the importance of this proposition, although both Poland and India have recognized the potential role for the Commission in this situation.

We did not limit our efforts only to our role as members of the Commission, but on two occasions we sent Mr. Chester Ronning as a special emissary of the Government of Canada to Hanoi, to Saigon and to Washington for the purpose of seeing whether or not he, in the name of the Government of Canada, could make any progress in delineating the distance between the parties and seeing whether or not a formula could be reached which might at least bring about preliminary discussions between the parties involved in this war....

I stated that this Government was concerned about the course of events in Vietnam. For 20 years now, since the end of the Second World War, the world community has tried to build a system of international law and order. It is part of that system to settle disputes by peaceful means. We regret that in Vietnam recourse has been had to military means to deal with what is essentially a political problem. We are naturally concerned about the tragic toll in human suffering and destruction which this conflict is bringing to the Vietnamese people and to their country. We are also concerned that the longer the conflict continues the more difficult it will be to overcome suspicion and distrust on both sides. The longer the conflict continues the greater, of course, are the risks that it may expand, by inadvertence or deliberation, into something more serious. Accordingly, we have urged restraint in those areas and in the way which we thought was the most effective.