

*The Address—Mr. Pearson*

The right hon. gentleman seems a little worried about what went on. I find it very difficult to please him in these and in other matters. Perhaps that is an objective which I would never be able to achieve; but if I do not talk about these things in public, in the House of Commons or outside the house, about these matters of immediate international danger and concern—if the government does not express itself on these matters—we are criticized as being a satellite, a mouthpiece of the United States of America.

But if we do speak out publicly, as we should on occasion, and only when the occasion seems to require it, then, Mr. Speaker, we should do that with responsibility and restraint and we should not, I suggest, be accused of interference in the affairs of another country; because what is going on in Viet Nam at this time is the concern and the affair of every country in the world, and particularly of the neighbours and allies of the United States of America.

So that there may not be any misunderstanding of what I did actually say, I will put on the record just a few paragraphs, and I do not think they need any interpretation. I said on Friday night, and I discussed this matter with the President on Saturday:

The dilemma—

And this is an acute and agonizing dilemma in Viet Nam.

—is acute and seems intractable. On the one hand, no nation—and particularly no newly-independent nation—could ever feel secure if capitulation in Viet Nam led to the sanctification of aggression through subversion and spurious "wars of national liberation."

On the other hand, the progressive application of military sanctions can encourage stubborn resistance, rather than a willingness to negotiate. Continued intensification of hostilities in Viet Nam could lead to uncontrollable escalation.

I discussed the conditions, what I thought to be the conditions for a settlement, a discussion which is going on throughout the world at the present time, and in my speech on Friday night I asked the question:

What are the conditions for such a settlement. First, a cease fire, then negotiation.

Aggressive action by North Viet Nam to bring about a communist "liberation," (which means communist rule) of the south, must end.

Only then can there be negotiation. I went on to say this:

There are many factors which I am not in a position to weigh. But there does appear to be at least a possibility that a suspension of such air strikes against North Viet Nam at the right time—

I put those words in my first statement and they did not represent a change in anything

I said on Saturday to anybody, to the President or to the press. I said:

—a suspension of such air strikes against North Viet Nam at the right time might provide the Hanoi authorities with an opportunity, if they wish to take it, to inject some flexibility into their policy without appearing to do so as the direct result of military pressure.

If such a suspension took place for a limited time, that the rate of incidents in South Viet Nam would provide a fairly accurate way of measuring its usefulness and the desirability of continuing it. I am not, of course, proposing any compromise on points of principle, or any weakening of resistance to aggression in South Viet Nam. I merely suggest that a measured pause—

A phrase which seems to give the right hon. gentleman a certain amount of amusement.

—a measured pause in one field of military action at the right time might facilitate the development of diplomatic resources which cannot easily be applied to the problem under existing circumstances.

It would at the least expose the intransigence of the North Viet Nam government.

Then, Mr. Speaker, I spent some time developing what I considered to be a positive approach to this whole problem of southeast Asia—what could be done through the United Nations to raise the standard of living of the people, the poor people in that part of the world, what could be done even while the fighting, while the conflict was going on. I reminded my listeners that for some years now the United Nations has had a project in that part of the world, called the Me Kong basin project, which is being very helpful to the people of that area within the limit of its resources, and which has not been interfered with by any government in that area.

I added that if this program could be dramatically increased at this time—and the 21 countries that are involved in it could do more—and it could be pushed forward by a conference in which all the countries of that area would meet under the auspices of the United Nations, and for which the Secretary General could at once make the preparations—if that could be done it might be the best way to create an atmosphere which would make peace possible in that part of the world. Why, Mr. Speaker, the amount of money being spent within a week on military action in Indochina at the present time would be enough for the project for years.

Now, this is not going to be easy, and it may not be possible in present circumstances, but I thought it was worth mentioning and I hoped the authorities at the United Nations