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THE CONTINUING SEARCH FOR PEACE

Addressing the General Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Ottawa on September 28, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Paul Martin, described the situation in Southeast Asia and the Far East in general as "the most serious threat to world peace today". "We may have different opinions as to the responsibilities for this tragic situation," he said. "There can be no difference between us as to the urgent need to find a way towards peace." Each day the conflict in Vietnam lasted, the Minister went on, the risks became more serious and the harder it became "to find a just settlement taking into account the interests of all those involved". There could be little hope of bringing the Vietnam problem to the conference table "and, ultimately, to an acceptable solution", Mr. Martin declared, if such a solution were sought "at the total expense of one side or the other". "The question confronting those of us who have been trying to do something for peace "is" he added, "where to begin."

Mr. Martin then discussed, in the following words, the means by which a Vietnam settlement might be effected:

...We all wish, I am sure, that there was a role for the United Nations to play in this conflict. We have looked to the United Nations for 20 years to act for peace on behalf of the world community as a whole in conflicts involving international peace and security as the Vietnam problem so manifestly does.

We all know the reasons why the United Nations has not been able to intervene effectively in the Vietnam conflict so far. I am still hopeful, however, that the United Nations will contribute eventually to a peaceful settlement....

Ultimately, of course, the Vietnam problem must be solved by those directly concerned. Failing the use of United Nations machinery, it has seemed to us that the existing channels of diplomacy could best be used to bring about the talks amongst the principals which must take place if any accommodation of interests is to be reached.

We can be helpful perhaps, in trying to make such talks possible.

SPECIFIC EFFORTS BY CANADA

This has been the Canadian assessment of the situation confronting us in Vietnam. It is on this assessment that we have based various specific efforts to see whether anything can be done to reverse the course of developments in Vietnam.

We believe, for example, that the International Commission in Vietnam by its presence, its experience, and its long-standing contacts in both North and South Vietnam, may be able to play some part as a channel through which an exchange of views between the sides might be facilitated.

It may also be able, when the time is ripe, to provide the instrumentality through which a mutual reduction in the scale of hostilities could be arranged, either as a prelude to direct contact between the parties or as a parallel approach to the ending of this conflict.

It is important to note also that military activities in the Demilitarized Zone have recently focussed attention on that narrow strip of territory separating North and South. We believe that the Commission could play a helpful role here by creating conditions in which the parties, if they were prepared to do so, could disengage their forces.