

persuaded that we are concerned only with the shortcomings of the North and are prepared to overlook or to defend similar misdeeds by the South. If occasion should offer, it would be of interest to ask Menon to give specific examples of instances in which we have defended alleged breaches of the agreement by the South without reasonable grounds for so doing.

We gather from the tone of this and other messages that your relations with your Indian colleagues may be under considerable strain as a result of your efforts to secure control of the Hanoi airport. As you will know from our several messages on the Soviet airlift, we are anxious to press this matter as far as possible. Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that the Soviet airlift is only one in a long series of problems dealt with by the Commission, and that there are likely to be others in the future for which we will require Indian support if the Commission is to function effectively. We would not, therefore, wish you to press the Gia Lam control to the point where your relations with Mr. Menon are seriously threatened or where Canada runs the risk of being permanently isolated. We must rely on your judgment as to how far you can go in continuing to strive for our objective without risking a serious break with the Indians.

You will have seen from our telegram Y-24 of January 19 to Delhi† that we thought it best not to criticize the Chairman, an approach which might well have only antagonized Indian officials, but rather to find out if the Indian Government knew what had been happening in Saigon, and whether they were prepared to re-assess the problems facing the Commission. We hope to hear that this has had some effect.

Relations with the United States and the United Kingdom are important too, particularly when Indochina is so much under public and official view and when the success or failure of the Vietnam Commission may be quoted as an argument for or against re-activating the Laos Commission. One aspect of these relations is the requests made to us by the State Department to press forward in the Commission on measures to stop illegal imports into and through Vietnam. Another is the practice of exchanging information with US and UK missions in Saigon.

It is a practice that has been followed for a good many years and is an important part of our role in Indochina. It is, of course, important that in discussions with representatives of other governments, members of the Canadian delegation should reflect Canadian policy. We were surprised to learn from a report originating in London that a senior member of the Canadian delegation was said to have described the Commission meeting of January 10 as “thoroughly unsatisfactory” and had gone on to comment unfavourably about the usefulness of the Laos Commission if it were to operate in a similar way. I am sure you will agree that comments of this sort, tossed off in the stress of the moment, are untimely, and may be dangerous since they are frequently reported and play a part in moulding the views of senior officials of other governments. While it may be natural to give expression to personal feelings at times of stress, this tendency should be avoided since such expressions can be distorted and may, when reported, prove detrimental to Canadian interests. I am sure I can count on you to caution all members of the Canadian delegation about the continuing need for discretion and responsibility in any conversations they may have with foreign representatives.

Finally, I am asking that you report as fully and frequently as your busy days allow. Once or twice we have learned from other capitals of developments in the Commission before your own reports arrived. I mention this not only because of our interest in keeping closely in touch, but because we might, in the light of reports, be able at times to make suggestions.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

N.A. ROBERTSON