

into effect early this year. The Viet-Nam ICSC, long since reduced to a token presence, lost any remaining credibility when Saigon asked the Indians to leave in response to New Delhi's gesture in raising the status of its Hanoi representation.

The fact that the Canadians had stuck around through two decades of increasing hostilities made them obvious candidates for supervision of the new ceasefire. As it became clear that Canada would be invited to resume this role, the Canadian government began working out the kind of set-up that would be acceptable if Canada was to take on the new burden.

In response to soundings by the US government, the Canadian government formulated and communicated a set of minimum conditions for Canadian participation. The new Parliament was brought up to date on these developments as soon as it assembled. The government was conscious that after the past disillusionment nothing could be undertaken without the support of the opposition and the public at large.

In a series of statements, Mr Sharp placed on record Canada's attitude to the new role it was being asked to play in Viet-Nam. Canada was willing to participate in the new peacekeeping operation provided, first, that the effort lay within Canada's capabilities, second, that it held the promise of success and, third, that all the belligerent parties wanted Canadian participation.

In token of Canadian impartiality, the very statement in which Mr Sharp announced Canada's readiness to participate contained a condemnation of the renewed American bombing of the Hanoi-Haiphong area that had interrupt-

ed the ceasefire negotiations. Mr Sharp was speaking to a government resolution deploring the bombardment. At the same time Mr Sharp made clear that the government had not lost sight of North Viet-Nam's continued military intervention in the affairs of South Viet-Nam, and, in particular, the almost routine attacks against civilians.

As the world's most active peacekeeping power, Canada was well equipped to take on the new role. Canadian civilian and military personnel were on their way to Viet-Nam within 72 hours of the government's decision to accept the formal invitation to participate. The first contingent took off from Montreal the very day—27 January—the Agreement on Ending War and Restoring Peace in Viet-Nam was concluded in Paris.

Rather than insist that its conditions be fulfilled to the letter, the Canadian government had decided to go ahead and set a 60-day term on its participation in the ICCS with the option to withdraw if the new truce proved unworkable. This realism turned out to be entirely warranted.

IN HIS earliest statement to the House of Commons, Mr Sharp had acknowledged an obligation to Canadians "...to ensure that Canada's contribution could be a real and effective one, and to ensure that Canada's attempt to contribute to peace not be reduced once again to impotence as it has been in the supervisory arrangements in Indochina that emerged from the 1954 and 1962 Geneva conferences." What the External Affairs Minister called "the ultimate condition" was that "...the provisions for the operation of the new organization, when taken as

a whole, should be workable and offer real prospects of being effective..." Furthermore, "...all the present belligerent parties... should be bound by the agreement." Lastly, and this was a condition which the February international conference on Viet-Nam in Paris failed to meet, there should be a "continuing political authority" which would assume responsibility for the Viet-Nam settlement as a whole, to which the ICCS or any of its members would have access through reports or consultation. Another condition, which was to prove tragically inoperative, was that the ICCS have the freedom of movement and observation within the demilitarized zone and in South Viet-Nam proper, necessary to a proper exercise of its function.

Enlarging on these points right after the Paris agreement, Mr Sharp told the House of Commons that Canada's preconditions were not mere gestures of reluctance: "they were the product of long and sometimes bitter experience, and they were an effort to point the way toward effective international observation and reporting." As he said, Canadians were "going to make this commission work, if it can be made to work." Frustration, inactivity and ineffectiveness had been forced upon the Canadians in Viet-Nam before; "If they are forced upon us again, we are determined that it will again be no fault of Canada's." But if they were, then "we shall decide to withdraw". At this date (1 February), Mr Sharp was able to report that "So far, cooperation between the members of the ICCS (Canada, Indonesia, Poland and Hungary) has left nothing to be desired."