

I should simply like to say that my Prime Minister, in the name of the Government of Canada, has indicated our willingness to attend such a conference.

Whether the path we select as the most direct route to that conference table bears a name derived from the Charter or from the Geneva Conference machinery matters less to my mind than our assessment of its likelihood of leading to an end to the war. For our part, the Canadian Government, which has a special interest and a special responsibility because of our membership in the International Control Commission, will, as in the past, continue to explore all possibilities of making use of that Commission or acting in conjunction with its Commission partners, Poland and India, to try to lead the parties to the conflict towards negotiations.

There is not the slightest doubt in my mind now that the first step in that direction will involve the question of the bombing of North Vietnam. It seems clear that all attempts to bring about talks between the two sides are doomed to failure unless the bombing is stopped. That is a matter of first priority if we are to start the process of de-escalation and to open the door to the conference room, as several representatives who have preceded me at this rostrum have pointed out -- in particular the Prime Minister of Denmark and the Foreign Minister of Sweden.

But we must not for a moment pretend that a halt in the bombing would in itself bring an end to the war. I believe it is now the first step. There are no magic formulas; there are no simple prescriptions for the settlement of problems as complex as the issues behind the hostilities in Vietnam. On April 11 of this year, in our Parliament, I made certain suggestions on how a start might be made on the road away from war by a progressive return to the cease-fire arrangement worked out at Geneva in 1954. I proposed then that the following steps might be taken:

First: as a first step towards disengagement, the bombing of the North might be terminated and the demilitarized zone restored to its intended status subject to effective international supervision;

second: a freezing of the course of military events and capabilities in Vietnam at existing levels;

third: the cessation of all hostilities between the parties, that is, a cease-fire; and, finally,

fourth: following the cease-fire, withdrawal of all outside forces whose presence in the area of conflict was not provided for at Geneva, and the dismantling of military bases.

I recognized then, as I have elsewhere, that there is no hope for peaceful settlement in appeals or proposals which place the total burden of responsibility for making essential concessions on only one side. That sort of approach is relevant only in circumstances of military victory and defeat.