

Third, the past history of events in Vietnam and the tragic course these events are taking at the present time make it abundantly clear, I think, that there must be an assumption of responsibility by the international community in relation to any ultimate settlement in that area. What form that responsibility might take, whether it takes the form of guarantees or whether it takes the form of a continuing international presence, are matters to be settled in the course of negotiation. But I doubt if there can be any durable settlement in Vietnam which will not, in one way or another, involve international backing.

The problem of Vietnam has caused deep anxiety in Canada. It is only natural, therefore, that we should ask ourselves what part there may be for Canada to play in reversing the course of events in that area.

Of course, the ordinary diplomatic channels are available to us. We have used these and shall continue to use them vigorously to urge restraint on all concerned, to see if there is any contribution we can make towards preparing the ground for negotiations, and generally to prove any openings there may be for useful initiatives. Canada has no direct interests in Southeast Asia, and I think that may help to enhance the opportunities that are open to us.

Then there is our membership of the International Commission. I still think that the Commission, by its very presence, exercises a certain restraining influence on developments, though I should not want to put it higher than that. It is also just conceivable that, being composed as it is, the Commission could serve as a channel of contact if that were desired at any stage by any of the parties. Meanwhile, the Commission has a continuing responsibility to draw attention to any violations of the Geneva arrangements. It must carry out that responsibility objectively and impartially. And it must be concerned at all times to assess events in the balance of the total situation in Vietnam. This we have endeavoured to do and this is the direction in which we shall continue to apply our efforts so long as we think there is a useful part for us to play.

In the final analysis, of course, there may be limits to the influence we can bring to bear on an issue of this kind. These limits are inherent in the status of any middle power in the world today. But they do not in any way diminish our responsibility in a situation which is so pregnant with danger as the situation facing us in Vietnam and is threatening to set back much of the progress we have made over the past two decades towards arriving at acceptable norms of international conduct and co-operation. It is a source of regret to us that, for the time being at least, there is no clear prospect of the United Nations being able to play the part we should expect it to play in this situation. For it is a situation in which the interests of the international community are and will continue to be, deeply engaged.