

Canada; action by Canada itself, for instance, in the visit that Mr. Blair Seaborn made in June, 1965. But, for none of these, other than the visit of Mr. Blair Seaborn, did the mediators know in advance that it would have access both to the government in Saigon and to the government in Hanoi. It must not be forgotten in appraising the role of the Commission that it has direct access to both capitals in the two belligerent areas in the regrettably divided country of Viet Nam. We have of course for some time been supporting in general terms the re-convening of the Geneva Conference. In fact, about a year ago we specifically urged that the Geneva Conference be recalled. Britain herself, as one of the co-chairmen has urged the Geneva powers to meet.

Recently the British Prime Minister discussed this matter with Mr. Kosygin when he suggested that they both might agree to calling a Geneva Conference.

However I should like to make clear that we are not now proposing the calling of a Geneva Conference. We hope the time will come when this will be practicable and possible. I want to make as clear as I can that the proposal we have made for a use of the Commission should not be regarded as an effort to call or persuade the two chairmen of the Geneva Conference to call an immediate conference. We are not pressing such a move at this time because we are certain that such a call in present circumstances would not produce results. Also, we do not think that this is the right approach for the Commission powers at this stage. A reconvened Geneva Conference is and remains, of course, the end result of the development we hope to be able to set in train, but it is not the first step. Indeed, I would be afraid, if we tried to make it the first step, that we are more likely to exhaust than to establish such influence as we may be able to have with the parties principally concerned in the Viet Nam conflict. I have made this clear in talks that I have had with particular parties concerned. Certain propositions have now been put forward on both sides with respect to a settlement of the Viet Nam conflict. There are the four points of the government of Hanoi, the 14 points of the government of the United States, and the four points of the government of South Viet Nam. In a sense this represents the beginning of a process of negotiation. But such a process can be carried only so far by way of public pronouncements. The gap between the positions, particularly of the United States and of the government of North Viet Nam, is still very wide and something will have to be done to narrow it. There is also a barrier of distrust and suspicion that will somehow have to be overcome.

● (11.30 a.m.)

It has seemed to us that this is something which could be pursued cautiously and discreetly by the Commission powers. We are not thinking at this stage of anything other than a good office exercise. The object of such an exercise would be to try to bring about conditions in which the parties themselves might find it possible to engage in direct discussions as a prelude to formal negotiation. In essence, therefore, what we have in mind is an unblocking of channels which, in the absence of such action, are likely to continue to remain closed.

I have already indicated, in general terms, that we have had a series of exchanges about a possible Commission initiative along these lines with India and Poland who are our partners on the Commission. We have put our