

We have always held the view that the bombing of North Vietnam was, and indeed remains, the key element in this dangerous military and diplomatic impasse. We have made that view known more than once in Washington and at least once in public in the United States. We have also made clear our belief that the bombing is unlikely to stop merely as a result of denunciatory declarations or appeals. Nor is any practical impact going to be made by an oversimplified and unrealistic prescription for peace which places on only one side the full burden of responsibility for making essential concessions.

I should like to hear a statement from Washington to the effect that bombing will stop, and I should like to hear a statement from Hanoi that, if the bombing stops, the infiltration of troops into South Vietnam will stop. There are indications that this is the direction of United States policy statements. If there is any fear on the part of North Vietnam, Communists in North Vietnam, in Peking, in Moscow or anywhere else that the United States will not withdraw from South Vietnam after peace negotiations have begun, or perhaps brought to an end, I should like it made crystal clear that the United States has no intention of remaining in South Vietnam. I believe that to be the case . . .

... What I am trying to point out . . . is that, if the suspicion that the United States is going to stay indefinitely in Vietnam can be removed, and if these powers can be convinced that the United States is there for one purpose — to support a government which it considers to be the victim of aggression, the situation might improve. If these people can be convinced that, once this aggression (as the United States and South Vietnam see it) has stopped, and once peace talks have started, the process of withdrawal will begin, that South Vietnam is not going to be a base for the United States, as I believe the United States does not wish it to be, and that the people, as a result of peace talks, will have the opportunity of deciding their destiny for themselves as a neutral power, if they so wish, I am sure the results will be beneficial.

I think it is important to remove any fear. We have discovered this fear in all the talks and discussions we have had with Communist representatives. They say that the United States have not moved into the area with the forces they have, with the facilities they have brought in, with the work that has been done there—the building of harbours, and all that sort of thing—unless the United States are going to stay. If that fear could be removed, it would be a great step forward. There must be the removal of this fear if there is to be peace. The people of the area must also have the chance to vote freely as to what they want to do, and under what regime they want to live. If we could remove these fears, I think we would progress a long way on the road to peace. But that is a very big “if” indeed.

I do not think there is anything more I can usefully add at this time, except perhaps to repeat what the Secretary of State for External Affairs said the other day. In the talks we have had recently, and through his visit to Moscow and Poland, we have found little for encouragement in so far as