

February with proposals that would have given the ICCS the reporting authority which we considered necessary to its success.

In the meantime, we had concluded that the other truce-supervisory arrangements, as laid down in the agreement, left some doubt as to whether the Canadian criteria could be met. As I have said before on all possible occasions, this is no criticism of the agreement or of those who negotiated it. It is undoubtedly the best agreement that could have been negotiated in the circumstances and the results have, in spite of all, turned the course of world events in a new and more hopeful direction. Our reservations, therefore, are based simply on a Canadian appreciation that the task as outlined was not one well-suited to Canadian methods and the Canadian temperament. In the final analysis, we recognized, however, that what mattered most was the element of good faith on the part of all concerned, and this could only be judged by trying to make the machinery work. It was for this purpose that we agreed to serve for an initial period of 60 days — to which an additional 30-day grace period was added to enable the parties to find a substitute in the event that we decided not to continue. That 60-day period ends on Thursday.

After returning from Paris, I concluded that it would not be possible to reach a well-founded decision without having seen for myself the conditions in which the ICCS, and particularly our delegation, was operating, or having spoken directly with the leaders of the governments most directly concerned. I had, as the House knows, had several contacts with the U.S. Secretary of State on this subject and was well aware of the views of his Government. I wanted to have the views of others as well.

Accordingly, on March 13, a group of representative Canadians...left for a trip that was to put me in touch with both Vietnamese governments, the Government of Laos, as well as some leading personalities of the so-called Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam and of the Pathet Lao movement. It was a very intense indoctrination into the facts of life in the ICCS and the attitudes and policies of the governments most directly con-

cerned. I think all those who went came back with at least one impression in common: that is, that the ICCS was not performing the tasks assigned to it under the cease-fire agreement. I am also quite confident that most of my travelling companions would agree that this was in spite of the best efforts of the Canadian delegation to make it work. We have heard it from a sufficiently wide variety of sources to accept it as a matter of fact that, had it not been for the energy and ingenuity of the Canadian delegation, even the setting-up of the various bodies required by the agreement would not have taken place as soon as they did.

Although our visit left most of us with misgivings on the operation and success of the ICCS in carrying out its assigned tasks, we also had brought home to us that in some quarters this was seen as of very little consequence. We have been well aware for some time that not everybody shares Canada's concept of truce observation and supervision. There are other points of view, with which we do not quarrel. We were also well aware that some of the interested parties, at least, and many other countries such as Britain and Japan, were of the view that Canada should continue to serve on the ICCS regardless of whether it measured up to our standards. In all honesty, I must say frankly that very few countries believed, in spite of our efforts to make our position known, that there was a real possibility that Canada would opt out of the ICCS.

My trip to Vietnam has, I am sure, convinced some that we were indeed prepared to take this step if, in our judgment, the whole arrangement was unworkable and was not serving the cause of peace in Vietnam. This had at least one salutary result in that we began to hear less about everything being lovely in Vietnam and that the ICCS had the potential of becoming a really vital force in keeping the peace in Indochina. Instead, we began to hear somewhat more convincing arguments that there was a totally different but equally vital role that bore no relation to our previous experience and is nowhere hinted at in the text of the agreement and protocols. Roughly stated, this is to provide an international presence as an indication of the continued involvement of the world

community in the Vietnam situation. Although the ICCS may not be necessary for the purposes of carrying out the agreement, its absence would be taken as an indication that the agreement lacked world support and consequently our withdrawal could become a further destabilizing psychological factor in a situation already very unstable.

There are two things I would like to say about this so-called psychological role. The first is that I am not convinced that the ICCS does play such a part in the thinking of the Vietnamese. The second is that I do not believe that Canada and Canadians can be expected, over any protracted period, to play this part. So far as the North Vietnamese are concerned, I formed a clear impression that they regard the texts of the agreement and protocols as untouched. They undoubtedly have their own interpretation of precisely what each article means and this interpretation adds up to either a peacefully reunified Vietnam or one whose reunification by force would be justified on the grounds that the other parties had not "scrupulously adhered to the agreement". Needless to say, some of the other parties do not share this point of view.

By the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, the agreements are seen as an opportunity to remove the North Vietnamese, if not from their territory at least from the negotiating tables, and to give to them an opportunity to deal with their fellow South Vietnamese of the Provisional Revolutionary Government direct across the table without intervention from the North. The Government in South Vietnam believes that in a relatively short period of time it will know whether this possibility holds any prospect of leading to a negotiated settlement in South Vietnam. It remains to be seen if this is a realistic aspiration.

It is no part of the responsibility of Canada as a member of the ICCS to judge the relative merits of these two positions. But it is now clear, as it was not two months ago, that all the Vietnamese parties will need a little time to demonstrate the feasibility of their solutions — not to bring them about, just to demonstrate feasibility. Once confidence has been established, and if there has been some movement