



CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 73/1 CANADA VIEWS VIETNAM PEACE PROSPECTS

A Statement by the Secretary of State
for External Affairs, the Honourable
Mitchell Sharp, in the House of
Commons, January 5, 1973.

The Canadian people, this House and the Government have for many years now been distressed by the continuation of hostilities in Indochina and by the suffering that events there have wrought upon all those concerned. As I said on December 17 last, when the negotiations between the United States and North Vietnam appeared to have broken down, the Canadian Government deeply regretted that the negotiations had not yet reached a successful conclusion. We welcome the fact that those negotiations have resumed this week.

In the interval, however, we were shaken by the large-scale bombing in the Hanoi-Haiphong area. We found it very difficult to understand the reasons for that bombing, or the purpose which it was intended to serve. We deplore that action, and we have communicated our view of it to the United States authorities. When, at the end of December, the United States Government decided to stop the bombing in the Hanoi-Haiphong area, we welcomed that. We said so to the Government of the United States, and we expressed our hope, as friends and neighbours, that the bombing would not resume.

That bombing, terrible as it is, is the only part of a larger situation which deeply troubles the Canadian people, and which equally concerns the Government. There continues to be a high level of hostility and violence on both sides in Vietnam, and we deplore that as well. We have not lost sight of North Vietnam's continued military intervention in the affairs of Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam and, in particular, the abhorrent disregard for innocent human life displayed in the almost routine attacks against the civilian populations of those countries.

It is, I think, more than a pious hope to say that the issues which have led to a generation of conflict in Vietnam, and, indeed, in all of Indochina, should not be resolved by violence; they should be resolved by negotiations. To all those who believe that, it is distressing to observe the violence which continues while negotiations take place, and to contemplate the possibility that the continuation of such violence could endanger the progress of negotiations. Since 1965, when the bombing of North Vietnam began, Canadian Governments have consistently taken the view that resort to force in this form was counter-productive in the Vietnam context.