

You are familiar with the tragic escalation of the war -- the hundreds of thousands of soldiers and innocent persons killed and maimed, the damage wrought on people in every sense -- socially, morally, economically and psychologically.

As the Commission could do nothing to halt hostilities the question was asked "why do we stay on with Canadians exposed to the hazards of war in both Hanoi and Saigon?" What possible Canadian or Vietnamese or humanitarian interest could we serve?

I can assure you that the Government had serious misgivings about staying on. We did so because we knew that ultimately the war must come to an end -- that it was unlikely one side or the other would obtain a clear victory, and that in these circumstances any peace supervisory machinery, however rusty, might be needed and needed quickly. If in this small way we could help to facilitate a settlement of the war, we were prepared to swallow our frustrations and keep on a skeleton staff which could spring to life, perhaps in a revised form, when a ceasefire was reached. There were other reasons. Canadian work in Viet-Nam was generally respected by all sides. All of the parties to the war indicated that they wanted us to stay on. They also wanted an international presence, symbolic of the old settlement, to remain intact.

That then was the situation when in the autumn of 1972 it became apparent that there was a real prospect that some agreement might be reached in Paris between Dr. Kissinger and Le Duc Tho. We had no wish to take part in another charade. And as soon as the possibility arose that Canada might be invited to participate in a new Viet-Nam Commission, we made it clear that if Canada was to agree to take part, substantial efforts would have to be made to try to ensure that the operational basis for the new Commission be workable and offer real prospects of being effective. We tried every means of attempting to ensure that our criteria would be taken into account by the negotiators in Paris, who were shaping the new supervisory body.

Some of the conditions that we felt were essential for the effective operation of the new Commission included:

--That the belligerent parties, the United States, South Viet-Nam, North Viet-Nam and the Viet-Cong should be bound by the same agreements which set out the role and procedures of the new Commission. This was one of the short-comings of the previous agreement -- neither Washington nor Saigon were parties to the 1954 agreement. The signatures of all of the belligerents were obtained in Paris.

--We sought a "continuing political authority" to which the Commission or any of its members could report and consult and which would assume responsibility for the peace settlement as a whole.

--We also made clear that Canada could not participate unless invited to take part by all of the parties concerned. This was obtained. All of the parties asked us to take part.

Our preliminary examination indicated that the criteria which we had proposed had contributed to some extent to the new Commission's terms of reference. But as it happened we had to make a decision either to participate or to decline before there was an opportunity for a thorough examination of the complicated documents embodying the agreement. However, as we did not wish to obstruct the