

*The Address—Hon. Paul Martin*

are perfectly capable of arriving at an independent assessment of that situation without having recourse to false credentials. The question we must surely ask ourselves is this: Can we ignore the challenge of the aggression by these communist liberation fronts in Asia?

Were we able to ignore the situation in Europe 20 years ago? I am not saying that the situation in Europe now is comparable with that existing at present in Asia. Undoubtedly there is a détente in effect between the west and the Soviet union in Europe. I am talking about the situation in Asia where a different state of affairs prevails, but where there are some comparisons to the history of the immediate post-war period in Europe. No one will deny that mistakes have been made in Asia and I think some have been made by the United States. But there is, it seems to me, a parallel between the situation in Asia and that in Europe following the end of the war.

● (3:20 p.m.)

We must ask ourselves what the failure of United States efforts in Asia would mean to us as well as to that country. We must ask ourselves what it would mean to India, to Thailand, to the island countries, the Philippines, New Zealand and Australia. We must ask ourselves what it would mean to many countries in Asia and Africa which, although critical of the United States, would be deeply concerned over a communist victory in Viet Nam. I ask what would be the concern of the Soviet union in these circumstances. I must ask the house whether Canada's real interests would be promoted by a United States defeat. I must ask the house what such a defeat would mean by way of encouragement to an aggressive brand of political action. It is because of these considerations for Canada and other countries that we cannot deny the importance of this conflict in Viet Nam to us all. I have given the house my assessment of the conflict. I shall now turn to the policy which we have thought it right for Canada to follow in relation to this conflict.

In the first place, there is our membership on the International Commission. The house is well aware that this has been an increasingly frustrating commitment. The circumstances facing the Commission today bear little resemblance to those envisaged when the Commission was given its mandate. Nevertheless, we have thought it right to maintain a Canadian presence in Viet Nam. We

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

have done so because the Commission still has a function to perform in bringing its objective judgment to bear on the facts of the situation, because the Commission continues to maintain, at least in symbolic form, the validity of the Geneva Agreements on which, all the parties seem to agree, any fresh settlement of the Viet Nam conflict must be constructed, and because the Commission may still be able to play a part in the context of such a settlement, if not to serve as a channel of contact between the parties themselves.

The charge is sometimes made that Canada has failed to act impartially in discharging its responsibilities on the Commission. This charge, in my judgment and on my examination and on the advice of my officers in whom I have the fullest confidence, men who have served Canada in Indo-China for 11 years, has no basis in fact. I reject it without any hesitation. We have acted impartially in relation to all the facts and all the evidence which has come before the Commission. Contrary to what is sometimes asserted, we have been associated with findings against South Viet Nam as we have been associated with findings against the North. We subscribed to the Commission's Special Report of June 1962 because it represented a balanced presentation of events in Viet Nam. We also appended a minority report to the Commission's special message of February 1965, not because we disputed the findings of the majority, but because it was our view that there were other factors which it was legitimate to include on the basis of all the evidence available to us at that time. In all this, I think, we need make no apology to our Commission partners for the way in which we have interpreted our responsibilities on the Commission.

To my knowledge, for example—and I state this not by way of criticism but by way of fact—our Polish colleagues on the Commission have never found occasion to support a finding against North Viet Nam and have frequently refused even to participate in an investigation where such a finding was likely to be the outcome. Yet it would be found that Canada as a member of the Commission did not hesitate where this was called for to criticize the actions of the government in the South. The Commission has no authority to criticize any state not a signatory of the Geneva agreement but the implications are there for everyone to read and there was no reservation made in the Canadian position with regard to the Commission's report of 1962.