

because of these considerations for Canada and other countries that we cannot deny the importance of this conflict in Vietnam 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 Vietnam. We 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 Vietnam 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 Indochina 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 Vietnam 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 Vietnam. 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 Vietnam 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.

Then there is the matter of sending Canadian troops to Vietnam. We have made it as clear as it can be made that we should not regard such a course as being compatible with our responsibilities on the International Commission in Vietnam. This is far from being the frivolous argument some