

### Viet Nam

than the elections of other totalitarian states of whatever colour. One of the tragedies of the American presence in Viet Nam in recent years has been the American support of government leaders who are obviously out of tune with the genuine needs of the people in South Viet Nam.

I say that we should enter this job in the International Commission for Control and Supervision with absolute neutrality. I want to say to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) that from reading about it one must conclude that Canada's role in the old ICC was one of which we cannot be proud. This is not to attack any individual on the ICC, but back in 1967 Canadian journalists, such as Gerry Clark, Tim Ralfe and others, were reporting that Canadian members of the ICC were acting in a completely biased, one-sided way in contacts with the United States authorities. Indeed, there was some suggestion that they were deliberately making themselves conduits for the American authorities in Viet Nam. That was not the role we should have played in the old ICC. I want to make it clear that my colleagues and I say that under no circumstances should the Canadian delegation in the present International Commission act in any way other than as a completely neutral group serving the interests of peace and the interests of all parties to the agreement on Viet Nam. It will be a betrayal of our role if our present delegation, or any member of it, senior or junior, acts in the way in which Canadian members of the old ICC are alleged to have acted. That is my first point.

• (1640)

I have a great deal of scepticism about the agreement, as I have already said. It is extremely ambiguous on points that one hoped would not be ambiguous. I took out of my files and examined again very fleetingly a copy of the Geneva Accord of 1954 that led to the establishment of the ICC. It provides for free elections, and the present agreement contains provision for free elections. I must say my blood ran a little cold when I saw precisely the same sort of ambiguity, precisely the same lack of precision as to how and when the elections will take place. There is precisely the same lack of precision as to who will conduct the elections, under what circumstances and by what instrument; there is precisely the same failure in the present agreement to set out the conditions of peace in clear terms as there was in the accord of 1954. One is afraid that this time it may fail, as it did the last time. The fears are there, Mr. Speaker. The ambiguity about the future of Viet Nam is very disturbing. There is terrible ambiguity and lack of precision in the agreement. Also, there is a certain lack of honest intention in the agreements and protocols with respect to civilian political prisoners, a subject with which my colleague, the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) will deal in more detail. I will therefore not take the time of the House in discussing this point.

Some parts of the agreement, however, are fairly clear. There is a clear undertaking that there shall be a cease-fire, that the warlike activities are to end, or should have ended last Saturday.

**Mr. Sharp:** All the parties agree.

[Mr. Lewis.]

**Mr. Lewis:** All the parties have agreed to that. The agreements are clear on that point. There is to be no more fighting. The agreements also provide clearly that the parties in Viet Nam are not to receive weapons additional to those they now have and that any new weapons or armaments are to be substituted on a one-for-one basis. One of the duties of the commission in which we are interested is to see that that is done.

I and my colleagues therefore turn our attention to this very simple point, to this basic point: will the cease-fire agreement be kept? Will the fighting end everywhere in North and in South Viet Nam? If the fighting ends in a day or two, I think there will be a role for the International Commission to play. If the fighting does not end for some time, and I am not putting any time limit on my remarks, it will become clear that the International Commission cannot function. That is why we greeted with pleasure the government's announcement; it had sense enough to put a 60 day limit on our participation in this force.

I think it is important for hon. members of the House to know that the 60 days provided for Canada's participation in the commission coincides with the 60 days during which all foreign troops are to be withdrawn, and the 60 days during which military and other prisoners are to be exchanged. If things go as they ought to, by the end of the first 60 days of Canada's involvement in this commission, the American and other forces in Viet Nam should be gone. By then the prisoners ought to be exchanged and the Vietnamese people could then begin to keep the peace among themselves. As I said earlier, that, to me, would be the immense accomplishment of the agreements which established the International Commission. Once the Vietnamese people are left alone to decide their own destiny the help of the international community will become possible on a basis on which it was not possible so long as the war was, essentially, a war between the United States and parts of the Vietnamese people.

Our concern must be a twofold one. First, there is the safety of Canadians who are there; second, there is the avoidance of Canadian involvement in anything other than the specific tasks for which this commission has been established. I deliberately did not say "force" as the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner) did. I am sure he does not disagree with me. I do not regard this as a force. No one in his senses thinks that 1,160 men, some military, some civilian and some support, from four countries, could possibly constitute a peacekeeping force. Half a million men probably could not do the job; certainly, 1,160 men cannot do it.

I think it is important to point out to the people of Canada that what we are participating in is not a peacekeeping force. If that were the suggestion, certainly, we would not support it in view of the conditions that now obtain in Viet Nam. We are merely participating in an observer force and it will try whatever moral suasion can accomplish, as I see it. We hope that the presence of observers from four countries, two of them generally sympathetic to the north and two generally sympathetic to the democratic group—and I do not say with the South Vietnamese government because I am not for President Thieu—may have some kind of moral influence on the