



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

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A REVIEW OF THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Statement to the House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs on April 4, 1966, by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin.

When I came before the Committee on June 10, 1965, I gave a detailed account of the developments which had led up to the situation at that time in Vietnam. I said I thought it was difficult to form a judgment of that situation without examining in its proper historical perspective the problem in Vietnam. I believe the situation is no less true today than it was a little less than a year ago. I know there are interpretations other than that which the Canadian Government has placed on the course of events in Vietnam. Indeed, a great deal of the discussion and dissent which have developed in relation to Vietnam have focused on the history of the conflict itself. I think, however, that no useful purpose would be served by going again over the ground which we covered last year, but in that context I wish to make two comments.

First, I would like to remind the Committee that while there are differences over the antecedents of the present conflict in Vietnam, the assessment which the Government has formed on this subject is an independent assessment resting on a long record of firsthand Canadian experience in Indochina. Secondly, if our foreign policy is to have any impact on the present situation, I believe we must now cast our thinking forward rather than backward. I also believe we are unlikely to achieve anything useful by a policy of denunciation, which is sometimes being urged on the Government by those who take issue with our position.

What we must do is to map out a course which we regard as right and realistic, which takes account of the facts as we know them and which has some prospect of contributing to a peaceful settlement. And this is what we have been trying to do.

There is one matter with which I should like to deal before giving the Committee some indication of recent developments in the Vietnam situation. This is the matter of Canadian participation in the International Commission in Vietnam.

Members of the Committee will recall that this was the only issue on which the House divided when the estimates of the Department of External Affairs were considered on February 8. I do not pretend -- and I do not suppose anyone would pretend -- that the Commission is in a position, in present