

We have only just received the documents which embody the agreement between the United States and North Viet Nam. There has been no time to study them carefully, as they will have to be studied. A first look suggests that the conditions and considerations which we communicated to the parties have to some degree contributed to the terms which have been agreed on for the establishment of a new commission.

These are complicated and important documents. It will not be possible to say how far they meet our conditions until they are carefully studied. We already know that an immediate answer to that question will not be possible, if only because we are dealing with documents which have so far been initialed by only two parties. They will not be signed by all four parties until Saturday of this week, only hours before the agreement envisages an international presence on the ground.

In short the situation is this: the government is faced with a choice. It can accept, with whatever reservations are necessary, the role the parties have defined. We are capable of doing so. But this would mean committing Canada to full participation before we knew with any certainty to what extent Canada's conditions are met.

At the other extreme, we could refuse to participate because we do not yet know to what degree those conditions are met but to do this would risk our standing in the way of an end to the fighting which all Canadians ardently desire to see ended.

The government has concluded that both these extremes are unacceptable. It has therefore decided that when the documents have been accepted by all four parties and when all four parties have clearly invited Canada to take part, the government will then confirm that Canada is ready to take part initially. This initial participation will be consistent with the position announced November 2 last.

Canada will be prepared to serve on this limited basis for an initial period of 60 days; Canada will be prepared, during that period, to do what it can to discharge the obligations which would flow from full membership in the new commission.

A full and formal reply to the invitation for full membership, however, will have to await a number of things. First, it will have to await a very thorough study and analysis of all the agreements and of the full nature of the parties' commitment to the agreement. It will also have to await the lessons of our experience of participation in the initial stages. It is no secret to anyone that we have serious doubts about what we are being asked to undertake. Our more formal decision will have to await our judgment of the degree to which our doubts turn out to be justified in practice. We will form that judgment in the initial period of participation, and our full reply to the invitation will be given, with whatever reservations we may find necessary, before the end of that 60 day period.

Meanwhile, let there be no misunderstanding about what Canada will be doing in Viet-Nam. We will not be there to keep the peace ourselves; that is for the parties to the ceasefire. What we can do is observe how the parties are fulfilling their obligations under the cease fire, and report upon this. From time to time, we may be able to help them through