

and as something which would of itself help to create a favourable climate for such discussions.

If there were any merit in an approach on these lines, I could envisage it being carried out in four stages.

The first step should involve some degree of physical disengagement of the parties. This might be accomplished by restoring the demilitarized character of the zone on either side of the 17th Parallel by the withdrawal of all military forces, supplies and equipment from that zone, by enforcing a prohibition against any artillery action across the zone, and by barring any overflights of the zone except for purposes of impartial supervision. At the same time, it would be necessary to reactivate those provisions of the cease-fire agreement which prohibit either North or South Vietnam to be used for the carrying out of hostile acts against the other. In my view, this would, in equity, have to include the bombing and any other military action against North Vietnam, whether actually undertaken from South Vietnam or from some other point of origin.

Second, I think it would be necessary to freeze the course of military events in Vietnam at its present level. This might entail undertakings on both sides not to engage in any military activities which differed, in either scale or pattern, from the activities which are currently being engaged in. It might also entail the practical re-application, as from an agreed point in time, of those articles of the Geneva Cease-Fire Agreement which prohibit reinforcement of troops or arms, munitions and other war material into North or South Vietnam from any source or quarter.

The third stage of such an approach would logically involve the cessation of all active hostilities between the parties, whether on the ground, at sea or in the air.

The fourth and final stage would complete the process of return to the cease-fire provisions of the Geneva settlement. At that stage, provision would have to be made for the liberation and repatriation of prisoners, for the withdrawal of all outside forces whose presence in the area of conflict was not provided for at Geneva, and for the dismantling of military bases or their conversion to peaceful purposes.

I have been concerned to sketch out one line of approach to ending the present conflict which seems practicable to me and which, in addition, has behind it the sanction of the Geneva arrangements to which both sides have said that they continue to subscribe.

Any such approach, however, would clearly have to be acceptable to the parties concerned. I want to be perfectly frank with the Committee and say that, on present evidence, I am not very optimistic on that score. For, while it is true that both sides are prepared to subscribe to the objective of a return to the Geneva arrangements, I am not so sure that they are at one in their interpretation of what that objective implies or as to the means by which it can best be achieved. In particular, of course, we cannot be