

I think the North Vietnamese point of view is well reflected in a statement issued by the Chinese authorities in Peking on July 3 last. The following extract is relevant to this matter:

"U.S. imperialism long ago completely violated the Geneva Agreements and broke the line of demarcation between South and North Vietnam. It has now further broken this line by its bombing of the capital of the heroic Vietnamese people. The United States must be held responsible for all the serious consequences arising therefrom. With the breaking of the line of demarcation by the United States, the Vietnamese people have ceased to be subject to any restrictions."

This is a significant statement. The House will note that it refers twice to the demarcation line which, however temporary it was designed to be, was laid down in the Geneva Cease-Fire Agreement of 1954. The statement appears to argue that, so long as this Agreement has not been superseded by a permanent settlement of the whole Vietnam question, that line must to all intents and purposes be regarded as a de facto political boundary between North and South Vietnam, and must be respected as such.

This interpretation of the provisions of the Geneva Agreement is, I think, one which Canada, as a member of the International Commission in Vietnam, is bound to take seriously. It is also, I think, an interpretation which lies at the root of the whole position of the Government of the United States as regards the matter of support and sustenance which the Government of North Vietnam has afforded to the insurgency in the South. I regret to say, however, that it is only partially accepted in the statement from which I have read to the House. For, having placed due emphasis on the inviolability of the line of demarcation between South and North Vietnam, the Chinese statement goes on to say that "all support and aid rendered by the North Vietnamese people to South Vietnam are within the sacred right of the Vietnamese people". It is this evident inconsistency which is the crux of the problem we are facing in Vietnam and to which we must address ourselves if there is to be any prospect of a peaceful and lasting settlement of the present conflict.

What is the position of the Government of the United States? It is in the following terms, as they have been given to us. The United States is prepared to stop the bombing of North Vietnam at any time as part of a mutual reduction of hostilities on both sides. They regard the military activities of North and South Vietnam as forming part of a single problem. If the North Vietnamese were prepared to respect the demarcation line in terms of the assistance they are providing to the insurgency in the South, the United States, for their part, would be prepared to match such a move by halting the bombing of targets in the North which are associated with that assistance.

This, then, is the impasse as I see it. There is a relation between this matter of bombing and whatever moves it may be possible to make towards an eventual settlement....