

While there is no denying the seriousness of the situation, I would not like to leave the impression that nothing has been achieved or that our presence has been of little or no value. No one will deny that the present situation, however unsatisfactory or short of the condition of peace which everyone hopes for in Vietnam, is nevertheless an enormous improvement over the situation that existed before the peace agreement was signed on January 28. To begin with, American and Vietnamese prisoners of war are being released. Shortly, the last United States forces in Vietnam will have departed. The ICCS has had its role to play in these developments and, if it did nothing else, this would have justified its existence. In addition, the four parties are in contact, and perhaps more important, so are the two South Vietnamese parties, not only in Saigon and other areas but, more importantly, at the political level in Paris.

The agreement as it has been carried out falls short of what we desired, although I am not at this stage prepared to say by how much or how this short-fall will affect further Canadian participation. The facts as I have given them to you are now being studied by my colleagues and me and we will very shortly be bringing our decision to Parliament for consideration. I hope that by now no one in this country or elsewhere is under the impression that it is our function to bring peace to Vietnam. Many have tried, but it is now clear beyond doubt that only the Vietnamese themselves can establish peace in their troubled country.

I should also mention that, in all three countries that I visited, I informed the government leaders I met of Canada's willingness to provide economic development assistance and that we would be prepared to discuss the modalities, including the question of bilateral and multilateral assistance, at any time they considered convenient. In all three capitals, my interlocutors agreed to pursue this matter with us at a mutually convenient time.

I would not like to conclude this summary of my tour without mentioning the kindness and hospitality with which we were met by the governments in Saigon, in Laos and in Hanoi. The warmth of the welcome made it clear that, whatever our position in respect of the role of the ICCS might be, in bilateral terms, Canada is well regarded by the statesmen with whom I spoke. Thank you.

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