

Laos and Cambodia. Nowhere in our foreign policy is our concern for the stability of Asia more manifest than in these peacekeeping commitments which, when they were established 15 years ago, were pioneering ventures with few precedents if any to guide them. In agreeing to undertake this assignment, Canada was furthering no national interest in the narrow definition of the term. Our hope was that we might be able to contribute to the process of re-establishing stability. Our continued participation in the Commissions reflects the interest of successive Canadian Governments in precisely the same objective. This commitment has not been an easy one. Measured in terms of foreign service manpower alone, an astonishing 34 per cent of the officer strength of my Department has served in one or more of the three Commissions. In this and other respects, our responsibilities in that part of the world have been enormously demanding. They have also been discouraging and disappointing and clearly devoid of the results intended. The dangerously expanding hostilities of the sixties in Vietnam have demonstrated that the objective is as far from being met as it was 15 years ago. It may be even more remote, for it will take time for the passions of war to subside and the scars to be healed.

We hope the discussions now in progress in Paris are part of an irreversible process, the final outcome of which will be what Southeast Asia so badly needs - a stable and durable political settlement, fair to the legitimate interests of those involved, unjust to none and above all mutually acceptable to everyone. That may be a tall order. It is not unrealistic in the sense that anything short of an adequately defined and workable political settlement would only invite a tragic repetition of the events which flowed from the basic flaws of the settlement made in Geneva 15 years ago. In the re-establishment of peace, and in ensuring that new political understandings are carried into effect, there may well be an important role for international guarantees and an international presence designed to moderate the situation and to help re-establish a working measure of confidence between those so recently in armed conflict. It is impossible to say at this stage whether Canada might make an effective contribution in such a context. Much would depend on whether we were asked to play such a part by all those directly involved. It would also depend on whether the tasks to be carried out, and the means available for doing so, gave such an assignment a realistic potential for a worthwhile contribution. I do not intend to sound unduly negative or pessimistic, or to imply that Canada is seeking to avoid all forms of commitment or involvement simply because they may prove frustrating or difficult. Far from it. What does concern me, however, is the need to avoid unproductive commitments which tend to freeze problems rather than help solve them.

Conclusion

Let me, in conclusion, take a brief look ahead at Asia and the Pacific as a whole. I foresee a Pacific area where what are at present the more economically-developed countries - the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand - will continue to expand trade among themselves and will also co-operate with the developing countries to encourage greater trade, investment and aid. Much of this will occur in the private sector, but, in so far as Canada is concerned, where government action is appropriate, we intend to adopt a constructive approach which reflects our role as a Pacific nation. We have in Canada a long tradition of interest in the Pacific. The rapid economic development of Asia and the Pacific, the increasing understanding of its importance to world peace and stability and the greater awareness of Asia's contribution