

The other side of the picture is that there has been almost continuous failure on the South Vietnam side to deal with provocation from the North through their own political and military efforts. South Vietnam has had massive U.S. assistance, but we cannot overlook the fact that U.S. policies in Vietnam seem to have found no solid basis of support through a South Vietnam government of strength and popularity.

It's a confused and dangerous situation. The best solution, of course, would be to end foreign intervention and bring about a unified, independent, neutral Vietnam. But what chance has a unified Vietnam of becoming anything but a Communist Vietnam, not through popular decision but by Chinese imposition?

This is the basic problem that we must set beside the obvious danger that retaliation may escalate into war. So let us not oversimplify the problem, especially to justify easy criticism of U.S. policy.

On Monday of this week, the Government of India, through its Prime Minister, noting that there had been interference in Vietnam from many quarters and that one thing had led to another, appealed for "an immediate suspension of all provocative action in South Vietnam as well as North Vietnam by all sides". This is an appeal which I can heartily support, but, I add, only in its entirety.

The Indian Government also proposes negotiations through a Geneva-type conference to seek a peaceful and enduring solution. Technically speaking, such a meeting is not necessary, because the conference and agreement of 1954 made adequate provision for the independence of the various countries of former French Indochina. Nevertheless, if in the circumstances envisaged by the Indian Government, in which neither side would be exerting military pressure on the other, a conference of the kind indicated took place, the Canadian Government would be glad to take part in it as we did previously.

What are the alternatives?

(1) To let things go on as they are, hoping that the Viet Cong will eventually cease their attacks and that U.S. counteraction of the kind recently taken will not again be required.

A considerable amount of optimism is required to believe in this course.

(2) For the United States and the Vietnamese to use massive deterrent or retaliatory force against Communist bases in the North every time there is a Viet Cong attack in the South.