

any side in this struggle. Whereas, obviously, some of the other members of the International Commission feel that's what their job is.

The South Vietnamese leaders acknowledged this. However, they said that the important thing was to bring all points of view into the open. They also attached importance to the Commission's presence in connection with the political settlement.

In the North the political leaders replied to all of our suggestions by referring to us the terms of the agreement. They regarded this as sacrosanct and like their counterparts in the South declared they intend to abide by the agreement.

I asked Prime Minister Pham Van Dong of North Vietnam which he regarded as having the highest priority, his country's desire for peace or the reunification of Vietnam as a whole. He replied that the question of priorities did not arise as strict observance of the agreement would lead to peaceful unification.

It was clear from these conversations that both the North and the South are expecting quite different, and in some ways contradictory, results.

In my conversations with Foreign Minister Lam and President Thieu, I raised the question of civilian prisoners in South Vietnam. I urged them to consider the weight of public opinion in Canada and abroad on this matter. Both told me that they had already released 5,000 civilian prisoners on the occasion of the recent lunar new year celebrations, and that they had provided a list of over 5,000 additional civilian prisoners to the other South Vietnamese Party, that is, the Viet Cong, for release in accordance with the Paris agreement and protocols. Both went on to contrast their record on this issue with that of the other side. They told me that of the 60,000 South Vietnamese civilians missing and presumed captured by the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, only 200 or so had been included in the list required under the Paris agreement and protocols. This will give you some idea of the flavour of the situation or of the atmosphere.

If I appear to be passing out a lot of bouquets it is not to be diplomatic -- but because they are more than justified. I was enormously impressed and proud of the efficiency and dedication of our people in Indochina -- both civilians and military. Many of them are working 16 hours a day, seven days a week, in appalling conditions. Their challenges and frustrations would be daunting on a weekly basis. Theirs are daily. The problems are not only those of a political and military character. Just as often they are administrative. It was soon abundantly clear to me that, had it not been for these Canadians, it is doubtful that the ICCS would have been in any position to be even potentially effective.

I would not like to leave you with the impression that nothing has been achieved and that this enormous effort has all been in vain. However unsatisfactory we find the present situation, it is an obvious improvement over the situation that existed before January 28. Prisoners of war on both sides are being released. Very soon the last American forces in Vietnam will