

Is the government aware that Canadian missionaries or others are held prisoners in Viet Nam, Cambodia or Laos? What has the government done in this respect, and what does it intend to do in the near future? If necessary, has Canada contacted Indonesia, Hungary or Poland or will it do so?

These are questions that arose in our minds and also in the minds of a good many Canadians.

We are willing to fulfil our international role and participate in the peace effort, but we want to accomplish our noble duties with the considered responsibility of an autonomous country, knowing why and to what we are committing ourselves.

We do not want Canada to go once more through what it has experienced on the International Control Commission since 1954 or what it has experienced in Cyprus.

The reputation and image of Canada abroad require an enlightened and utterly lucid decision.

• (1420)

[English]

While we rejoice in the achievement of a cease-fire members of the House will note that we feel it necessary to raise several questions as to the terms that would govern Canadian participation in any peacekeeping effort in Indochina. Our party takes the position that not only should Canada be prepared to co-operate with the international community in helping to secure a peace but that we owe it to ourselves and to our brethren across the globe to ensure that our participation be effective and sufficiently potent to guarantee some measure of success. There can be little doubt of our country's direct responsibility to participate in any peacekeeping effort. There can be less doubt about our right as a nation to insist on firm and clearcut conditions to our participation.

Essential to our effective participation is a clearcut position on the part of the minister that this parliament and the people of Canada be taken into the government's confidence with regard to the exact way in which our forces might participate. There is no room for anything aside from an open and honest discussion as to the best way for Canadians to discharge their international responsibilities.

It is clear to me, Mr. Speaker, that we have an opportunity to once again activate the middle power role in world affairs authored by the Hon. Howard Green—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Wagner: —and so brilliantly put to work by the late Right Hon. Lester Pearson.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bell: You laughed too soon.

Mr. Wagner: We must avoid the pious platitudes and naïve hopes that can characterize, all too often, the international efforts that never fully succeed. Our posture must be clearcut and direct. We will have a job to do. We are prepared to do our job. We demand the right to ensure that we can do the job properly. I know that the minister

Viet Nam

shares with all members of the House the desire for effective participation and successful organization of our peacekeeping effort. I urge him to deal with strength and wisdom in determining the conditions under which Canada will lend its helping hand. In this way members of all parties in the House can join in endorsing and supporting a very necessary and significant gesture on the part of our nation in the interest of a better and more peaceful world for us all.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, the conscience of the whole world has been deeply troubled by the long war in Viet Nam. The whole world can breathe a sigh of relief because this long, bloody, brutal and tragic war is now apparently about to be ended. We are concerned with Canada's contribution to ensure that the peace there is a lasting peace. We can say proudly that Canada has always been ready to make a contribution to assist the world through providing peacekeeping forces and through its efforts in respect of reconstruction in parts of the world devastated by war.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brewin: Therefore we welcome the statement the minister has made. We have been good members of the world community. Although there have been many, many difficulties and many, many doubts, we cannot turn down now the opportunity presented to us to contribute to the maintenance of a stable peace in war-torn Viet Nam.

I am glad, however, that the minister has made it clear that he will look very cautiously into the documents, the conditions and the terms in respect of our contribution. I am glad we are to go there as observers only. I know that the parties there, certainly those with whom I have been in touch recently in North Viet Nam, do not want a military force. What they want is observers to ensure that the peace will be kept but not to make peace themselves nor to intervene in any military sense of the word.

I am more than happy to see that Canada proposes to participate in the reconstruction of both North and South Viet Nam. They have been sorely ravaged in one of the most brutal wars in our history. We should do our part in an effort to build up this wounded country.

The minister mentioned one condition which we think is of the utmost importance. It is absolutely vital that there should be an international authority to whom the members of the commission may report. We suggest that the best possible authority in this regard should be the United Nations or its Security Council.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brewin: I am pleased to see the minister applaud because I really believe the United Nations exists for the purpose of being able to aid in situations like this. It is the expression of the world's conscience, and unless we can build the United Nations we will never have an effective world community.

We in this party are quite determined that no Canadian force should go overseas in any capacity whatever without the approval of this parliament. As I understand the minister's proposal, it is that the matter will be discussed