

The Canadian Government has attempted on a number of occasions to explore, with its Commission colleagues India and Poland, the possibility that the Commission might play a useful role in bringing the opposing parties closer together. So far it has not been possible to achieve this objective. Nevertheless, we recognize that Canadian participation in the Commission provides us with a special opportunity to maintain a dialogue with the parties most directly involved in the war. Mr. Chester Ronning, the former Canadian High Commissioner to India, has made two visits to Hanoi as a special representative of the Canadian Government, and his visits were of great assistance in interpreting and clarifying the position of the North Vietnamese Government. The Canadian Commissioner to the Vietnam Commission visits Hanoi frequently, and is able to have full and frank exchanges with the authorities there. During my visit to Europe last autumn, I explored the problem in depth with the Governments of Poland and the Soviet Union. I have maintained continuing consultation with all parties and personalities who are in a position to bring their influence to bear on behalf of peace in Vietnam. Canada has, of course, fully supported the constructive initiatives which have been taken by other nations of the world.

The fact that our efforts to contribute to the search for a peaceful settlement in Vietnam have not borne fruit is not, in my opinion, a reason for abandoning them. The present conflict must be brought to an end; a key must be found to open the door to an honourable negotiated settlement. We shall continue in our efforts to find that key.

Many attempts have been made to create circumstances in which talks or negotiations leading to a cease-fire, and opening the way to a lasting settlement, might begin. None of these attempts have succeeded, but they have made it possible to assess in some detail the positions of the two sides and to delineate fairly precisely the action required to roll back the level of hostilities to a point where discussion becomes possible. I recently suggested that the 1954 Cease-Fire Agreement, which concentrated on arrangements for a cease-fire and a disengagement of forces, contained the objectives which we are seeking today. It seems clear that, in existing circumstances, an overnight cease-fire cannot be expected. On the other hand, a progressive reapplication of the 1954 cease-fire terms would not only help to create a favourable climate for discussions between the two sides but, by enabling the two sides to engage in a step-by-step de-escalation, would itself create a certain momentum in the movement towards negotiations.

I should envisage the process being carried out in four stages. The first step would involve restoring the demilitarized character of the zone on either side of the 17th Parallel and a reactivation of those provisions of the Cease-Fire Agreement which prohibit the use of either North or South Vietnam for the carrying out of hostile acts against the other. In my view, this step would have to include the bombing and any other military action against North Vietnam. The second stage would involve freezing the course of military events in Vietnam at its existing level. Both sides would undertake not to engage in any military activities which differed in either scale or pattern from existing activities; it might also involve a prohibition on the reinforcement of military personnel and equipment into North or South Vietnam from any source. The third stage would involve the cessation of all active