



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 65/4 Excerpts from an Address by the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Board of Evangelism and Social Service of the United Church of Canada, Toronto, February 18, 1965.

In the past week or so we have all, I think, been disturbed by the turn of events in Vietnam. These events cannot, of course, be assessed in isolation. They represent the culminating point in a series of developments going back at least a decade. I think it is particularly important that these developments are understood in Canada because they affect us through our membership in the International Commission which was set up in 1954 to supervise the cease-fire arrangements in that area.

There has, I know, been some criticism of the role of the International Commission from time to time. While I would be the first to admit that it has not always functioned in the way in which the Canadian Government has believed it should, we must remember that Canada is only one of three members. While we can press and, indeed, have pressed, our partners to agree with us, we have not always succeeded. Our efforts have been directed towards highlighting the problem of subversion in South Vietnam, which is the basic difficulty in the situation. We have been prepared to co-operate with our partners and to compromise on detail in reviewing this crucial problem, but we have not been prepared to compromise in our assessment of its fundamental importance.

To those who maintain that the Commission has been ineffectual in preventing the development of this dangerous situation in Vietnam, I can only say that the Commission was never intended to be an enforcement agency; it has no powers to coerce the parties into taking or desisting from action. Its sole function is -- as its title implies -- to supervise. If the parties to the Agreement are not prepared to implement its terms, if they are not prepared to co-operate with the Commission, the Commission itself can only report these defaults in the hope that its reports may influence the policies of those concerned with the situation in Vietnam. Beyond this, I believe that the presence of the Commission has served as a restraining influence and as a force tending towards stability.

In its special report of June 1962, the International Commission in Vietnam, after careful analysis of a large number of South Vietnamese complaints, came to the conclusion that armed and unarmed personnel, arms, munitions and other supplies, had been sent from North Vietnam into South Vietnam with the object of supporting, organizing and carrying out hostile