

In the light of these reactions, the Secretary-General apparently decided that an adaptation of his proposals might be able to overcome the difficulties which the parties evidently had in accepting them in their original form. Accordingly, he discussed with representatives of North Vietnam in Rangoon and subsequently formulated in writing on March 14 an adaptation of his original proposals on the following lines: As a first step, there would be a general stand-still truce by all parties to the conflict; the parties directly involved in the conflict would then enter into preliminary talks, with or without the assistance of the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954 and the members of the International Commission, the purpose of such talks being to reach agreement on the terms and conditions for reconvening the Geneva Conference; these preliminary talks would be followed by the holding of the actual conference, with the participation of all those who are actually fighting and with the object of returning to the essentials of the original Geneva settlement.

These revised proposals were accepted in their essentials by the United States. In signifying their acceptance on March 18, the United States pointed out, however, that they would expect the Government of South Vietnam to be appropriately involved throughout the entire process envisaged by the Secretary-General. They also implied that a stand-still cease-fire could not be automatically brought about without prior discussion either directly by the two sides or through some other channel. The note indicated that the United States, for its part, was prepared to enter into such discussions without delay.

While I have not seen the reply made to the Secretary-General's proposals by the Government of North Vietnam, I understand that these proposals did not commend themselves to that Government to the extent that they appeared to place the United States and North Vietnam on the same basis, whereas it is the contention of the Government of North Vietnam that a distinction must be drawn between the United States as the "aggressor" and North Vietnam as the "victim of aggression".

It is my understanding that the Secretary-General still stands by the proposals he put forward on March 14. I also understand that he would not wish his more recent public comment on a speech by Senator Joseph Clark to the National Convention of Americans for Democratic Action to be regarded as representing a new proposal or appeal. In view of the great dangers inherent in the continuation of the present conflict, however, the Secretary-General appears to have concluded that it might be necessary for his own proposals to be given at least initial effect by a unilateral initiative on one side or the other. And it was presumably with these considerations in mind that he gave his personal endorsement to Senator Clark's suggestion that the United States give a unilateral undertaking to put a stand-still cease-fire into effect and thereafter to fire only if fired upon.

As regards our own position, I would like to say only this. We have maintained all along that the settlement of this conflict will require concessions on both sides. I believe that this is a view which is widely shared, regardless of how the rights and wrongs of the Vietnam conflict are interpreted.