

the Geneva Conference in 1954 and, it was hoped, would bring peace not only to Vietnam but to the Indochinese area as a whole. These arrangements have always been fragile as far as they related to Vietnam; they are now very near the point of collapse.

There has, of course, been criticism of the Commission for having stood by while this dangerous situation we are facing in Vietnam today was taking shape. I must say quite frankly that this criticism seems to me misdirected. It leaves out of account the very limited mandate within which the Commission has had to operate. It was set up to supervise, not to enforce, the terms of the Geneva arrangements. This was done on the assumption that the parties to these arrangements were prepared to abide by their undertakings. Where those undertakings were being breached, as turned out to be the case, all the Commission could do was to make known the facts and their long-range implications.

I should be the first to concede that the Commission has not always done that as effectively as we should have wished. I have myself had occasion, recently, to refer to the frustrations that have attended our participation in the work of the Commission. Still, taking a dispassionate look at the activities of the Commission as a whole, I should say that it has had a restraining influence on the situation, without which the arrangements contemplated at Geneva might well have collapsed even more quickly and more drastically than, in the event, they did. I should also say that the Commission has played -- and is continuing, in this present situation, to play -- an important role in focussing international attention on the course of developments in Vietnam.

Our presence in Vietnam over these past ten years has enabled us, I think, to arrive at a pretty objective analysis of what has been happening in that country. Nevertheless, it is sometimes suggested that we are taking the position we have been taking because, in the final analysis, we are bound to support the views and policies of the United States on a crucial issue of this kind. As far as I can see, that suggestion bears little relation to the facts.

Of course, we can never be wholly unmindful of the very heavy responsibility which rests upon the United States by virtue of its position in the world. But this has never prevented us from formulating our policies in terms of Canadian interests and on the basis of Canadian assessments. Nor has it prevented us from freely expressing our views where these have differed from those of the United States. I need only refer to trade with Communist China or the maintenance of relations with Cuba as important issues of policy where there have been, and continue to be, genuine differences between us.