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ADMISSION OF NEW MEMBERS: VIETNAM

Statement by Mr. J.W. Holmes, Assistant Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, in the Special Political Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, January 29, 1957.

I should like to explain briefly the position of my Delegation on the resolutions before us.

Canada, along with India and Poland, as members of the International Supervisory Commission for Vietnam, have special responsibilities for seeing that the Geneva agreements of 1954 are carried out in the states of Indochina. I need not describe these responsibilities in detail because they have been clearly set forth by the distinguished representative of Poland in a very well-reasoned contribution to this discussion. Like our colleagues from India and Poland, I believe that no good purpose would be served by our taking positions here which would reflect in any way upon our impartiality.

Canadians have, during their close association with Vietnam in the past two and a half years, developed great respect and affection for its people in all parts of the country. We want to continue to the best of our ability to help them maintain the peace which they have so sorely needed and we want to assist them to reunification, freely and peacefully achieved. We regret that this has not yet taken place, but we realize that the healing of such deep wounds cannot be accomplished in a hurry or by forced methods. Nor do we share the view that responsibility for continued division rests solely with one side. The problems of Vietnam, like the problems of all countries which have been divided by war and painful change, are complex, and it is the special responsibility of those of us who are charged with the task of aiding the process of reunification to seek to understand those complexities, rather than to increase tension by oversimplifying its causes.

Because of our admiration for the people of Vietnam, we are anxious that they should take their rightful place in the United Nations at the earliest possible opportunity. They have an ancient and distinguished civilization of their own, and they have absorbed and applied in remarkable fashion one of the great civilizations of Europe, a factor which has helped create a special bond between Vietnam and Canada. We have welcomed here with special pleasure this year our good friends from Cambodia and Laos, whose countries we have likewise come to know intimately and from which we have learned a great deal. Vietnam likewise has much to contribute to this body and it is in the interest of the United Nations that the day of its entry should be sooner rather than later.

Whether the unification of Vietnam and its entry into the United Nations - the objectives we all have in mind but which are not necessarily compatible at the same time - would best be served by either or by none of the resolutions before us seems to me a question on which there can be reasonable differences. For the special reasons mentioned above, my Delegation thinks it best



not to commit itself, and we shall abstain, therefore, on the resolutions involving Vietnam. I have not argued the case for abstention as a general principle for other delegations but merely as one which seems best for us. It is not quite the same position as those adopted by our colleagues from India or from Poland, but I imply no censure on them. The positions they have adopted seem to us equally compatible with our mutual responsibilities. I have made this clear because in our view the tripartite international commissions have had a remarkable degree of success in securing the peace throughout Indochina and we are most anxious not to disturb our collaboration within the Commission. We have had our differences and we have had our frustrations, but we have proved that the transition from war to peace can be achieved if countries with much to divide them have the will to work together in international bodies of this kind. We trust that our work in Indochina will soon be ended, but we think that what has been done there might have charted courses which the United Nations could well study for future reference.

There is one aspect of the Canadian position on applications for membership which I should like to clarify. At the Tenth Assembly we were authors of a resolution proposing admission of a large number of countries. From this number we excluded those countries about which a problem of unification arises: This formula, it will be recalled, was used solely as a means of defining the applicants which, under the circumstances existing at that time, we proposed to sponsor. Everyone knows the reasons which then existed for drawing up such a restricted list. We had no intention of creating a principle of permanent validity. The division of a country is and always will be an important factor in the consideration of applications for membership. We do not, however, subscribe to a theory that countries which are divided, or parts thereof, should never under any circumstances be admitted to membership.

There is one other point I should like to make. It seems to my Delegation that the arbitrary linking together of Korea and Vietnam in one resolution is, to say the least, unfortunate. I agree with the distinguished representative of Pakistan on his objection to the use of the word "simultaneous". There is no reason why action of any kind on one of these countries should wait upon appropriate action on the other. Whatever similarities there are between these two unhappily divided countries, there are many differences also. It would serve no useful purpose to attempt to describe their differences, but I might merely point out that members of the United Nations have very special reasons for viewing with scepticism the credentials of the Government of North Korea for membership in this organization.

It has been suggested that those of us who promoted the admission of so many new members last year have committed ourselves to a doctrine of universality and that this doctrine means that every applicant should be admitted. I can assure you that Canada has never accepted such an argument. We have argued for making the United Nations as universal as possible and representative of many points of view and forms of government, whether we like those forms of government or not. To suggest, however, that we should admit every authority which asks to come in, without assuring ourselves that this authority has some substantial basis for legitimate existence is to carry things much too far. I doubt very much if any member of the United Nations could face with equanimity the consequences of such a policy - or lack of policy.



For this reason therefore, my Delegation cannot support the Soviet resolution. Insofar, however, as it refers to Vietnam, we are forced to abstain from voting, in accordance with the explanation which I have made.

In regard to the resolution introduced by India and Syria, I share the doubts of the Mexican representative and look for clarification.



