

With this group, a number of official advisers and 34 journalists, we set off from Ottawa a week ago Tuesday on a journey of 22,000 miles.

Our first major stop was Tokyo. I was anxious to discuss Viet-Nam with my Japanese colleague, Mr. Ohira, particularly as I felt the Japanese absence from the Paris Conference deprived those meetings of important and influential counsel. On arrival at Tokyo I was agreeably surprised to learn that the Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Tanaka, also wished to see me. Both the Prime Minister and his Foreign Minister urged Canada to remain on the Commission despite the frustrations which they acknowledged. Their message was essentially "don't disturb the arrangements by withdrawal -- peace is too fragile". This was to be the prelude of advice which was consistently given to me by almost every political leader with whom I spoke during our visit.

From Tokyo we flew to Saigon arriving a week ago today. My first call was on the Foreign Minister, Tran Van Lam. Later that day I attended a reception given by Ambassador Gauvin. You probably saw press reports describing that reception as a "diplomatic coup". It was, I believe, the first time that all of the parties to the Agreement, including the principal representatives of the Viet Cong, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and the four ICCS representatives had all come together under one roof in Saigon.

The following day after a thorough briefing by the Canadian delegation, we visited the compound of the old ICC where the civilian component of the new Commission is working. We were able to see for ourselves the deplorable physical conditions under which Canadians have worked in Saigon for almost two decades. Later that day I had discussions with President Nguyen Van Thieu and visited the military component of the Commission at Tan-Son-Nhut.

Our pace was already gathering a brisk momentum which was not to slacken until our departure from Hanoi three days later.

Saturday morning we flew to the regional headquarters of Can-Tho. Can-Tho is in the key Mekong Delta area, long and bitterly fought over as the rice bowl of Indo-China. This was a fascinating and illuminating experience. We received an excellent briefing from Canada's External Affairs and Military representatives and had discussions with members of the Joint Military Commission, as well as with Polish, Indonesian and Hungarian members of the Commission.

Land in the Mekong area is still hotly contested. The delta is quilted with leopard spots. We learned that since the cease-fire came into effect in January, some 7,000 incidents had been reported throughout South Viet-Nam. Some of these involved large-scale operations, possibly up to divisional strength. But from all of these incidents came only 31 requests for investigation -- and from these requests only two reports have emerged. The Commission's frustrations are very real indeed.

To illustrate some of the difficulties faced by the Canadian members, I would like to give you an example of a minor incident. A report was received that a vehicle had been blown up while travelling along a road in the area. After considerable difficulties within the Commission, agreement was finally reached to investigate. Canadians, who examined the site, concluded that the vehicle had been destroyed by a mine and, as the road is well travelled, also concluded that the mine must have been placed after the cease-fire took effect. The others agreed that it was a mine, but two members insisted that the mine must have been placed before the cease-fire.