



Statements and Speeches

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GROWING CANADA-ASEAN RELATIONS

An Address by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs*, to the Joint International Conference of the Canadian Council for Southeast Asian Studies and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, June 21, 1982

...This conference marks an important milestone for Canada in the further growth and enhancement of its links with Southeast Asia. The Canadian Council for Southeast Asian Studies has an active and distinguished record, now in its thirteenth year, in fostering and encouraging Southeast Asian studies in Canada. This meeting marks the first major Canadian conference of its kind to be organized as a collaborative effort in an Asian locale. Such an event can only be viewed as an important indicator that relations between Canada and Southeast Asia have come of age.

Southeast Asia has been, for thousands of years, a crossroad between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. It is a region where the great religions of the world have converged. Its fabled trade in spices and other resources was the object of centuries of colonial rivalry. Its natural resources and strategic position in more recent times have brought to the region the attention and involvement of the super-powers of the twentieth century. It remains today the scene of great power rivalry and engages the interest of China, the USSR, the USA and Japan.

In the context of this legacy, Canada's early links with the Southeast Asian region were modest indeed. In the 1920s trade missions were opened in Singapore and Batavia, later to become Jakarta. Although a consulate general was opened in Manila in 1949, our first diplomatic post in the region was opened in Jakarta in 1953. Ties with Malaysia and Singapore began with the Commonwealth connection, subsequently supplemented by the evolution of our aid program under the umbrella of the Colombo Plan.

The end of the first Indochina war in 1954, marked the beginning of Canada's participation in the international efforts to find a lasting peace in the troubled Indochinese peninsula. While the Canadian participation in the International Control Commissions did not bring peace to Indochina, we persisted for almost 20 years in these efforts because we believed that we had a contribution to make in upholding a painfully achieved peace and in advancing the cause of stability in the political turmoil of the region at the time. One long-range result of this Canadian presence in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos was the sense of involvement of a whole generation of foreign service officers to Southeast Asia. At one point, as many as 30 per cent of the whole External Affairs officers corps had served in Indochina. The experience acquired in Southeast Asia by External Affairs subsequently very much kindled

*Delivered on behalf of the Secretary of State for External Affairs by Mr. W.T. Delworth, Assistant Under-Secretary, Asian and Pacific Affairs.