

Vietnam as being designed to prove, symbolically as much as anything else, that Canada supports a coalition of other states.”¹³⁵

The exceptional welcome which Canadians gave the “boat people,” whose plight happened to occur at a time when human rights had a high profile in international affairs, has had a marked effect on Canadian policy. At the time, Flora MacDonald, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, departed from the usual low-key Canadian style of intervention when she took a strong stand at the United Nations Geneva Conference on Refugees, which the Secretary General convoked on 20 July 1979. Despite Kurt Waldheim’s efforts to ensure that participants would confine their remarks to the humanitarian aspects of the problem, the Minister accused Vietnam several times of being largely responsible for “this flagrant, this continuing, this outrageous violation of human rights.”¹³⁶ No other Western delegate made a speech which criticized Vietnam so strongly.¹³⁷ On her return MacDonald told a press conference that she had met the Vietnamese Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Phan Hien, in Geneva and that she had emphasized to him that Canada had reached the end of its patience as far as this affair was concerned.¹³⁸

During the whole of 1979, Ottawa not only emphasized the humanitarian aspect of what was going on in Indochina but it also took some political initiatives. A few months before, the Canadian representative to the Security Council had declared that “The peoples and governments of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos must be given *more sympathy than remonstrance*.”¹³⁹ They must be helped to develop the political framework within which they will be able to live in peace and security.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Kim Nossal, “Les sanctions économiques et les petits Etats: le cas de la “punition” du Vietnam par le Canada,” *Etudes internationales*, vol. XVIII, no. 3. September 1987, page 541.

¹³⁶ Flora MacDonald, “Crisis in Southeast Asia: Humanitarian and Political Aspects Can’t Be Separated,” *Statements and Speeches*, Ottawa, no. 79/12, Geneva, 20 July 1979, page 2.

¹³⁷ *International Canada*, July-August 1979, page 185.

¹³⁸ *La Presse*, 23 July 1979.

¹³⁹ Author’s emphasis.

¹⁴⁰ W.H. Barton, “Canada reminds the Security Council of its Southeast Asian Responsibilities,” *Statements and Speeches*, Ottawa, no. 79/1, New York, 24 February 1979, page 2.