

CANADA — SUPPORT FROM THE SIDELINES

Ever since the Agreements were signed in Paris on 27 January 1973, Canada's attitude, not only to this settlement but also to its consequences, could be summed up by the single word "skepticism." Canada, more than any other country, had considerable experience serving on a variety of peacekeeping forces and commissions. Its role in the International Commission for Control and Supervision (ICCS) after 1954 was an endless source of frustration and disagreement. Canada found itself in a situation where it was clear that Poland did not intend to denounce any violations of the 1954 agreement and where India made no attempt to hide its sympathy for North Vietnam. The Canadian government found itself obliged to serve US interests even though there were many points of policy on which Canadian leaders held views at variance with those prevalent in Washington.³

In the late fall of 1972, when it seemed possible that there might be a cease-fire in Vietnam, Canada was dismayed to discover that the US had agreed with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam that yet another international supervisory commission should be set up consisting, this time, of Hungary, Indonesia, Poland and Canada. In the end, however, no agreement on a cease-fire was reached in October, and this allowed Canada, which was in the midst of a federal election, to defer any decision. Finally, on 27 January an agreement was signed and as foreseen Canada was asked to become a member of the Commission, along with the three other countries noted above.

Once again Canada found itself taking on a role which it had in no way sought. Embarrassed by the turn of events — for it did not want to be held responsible for any breakdown of this fragile settlement by refusing to participate in the Commission — Ottawa also found it

³ There are several works and articles dealing with Canada's role in the ICCS, see among others Paul Bridle, "Canada and the International Commissions in Indochina, 1954-1972," *Behind the Headlines*, vol. XXXII, no. 4, October 1973, Toronto: CIIA; James Eayrs, *Indochina: Roots of Complicity*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983; Douglas A. Ross, *In the Interests of Peace: Canada and Vietnam 1954-1973*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.