

in the atmosphere of urgency which surrounded the conference, it was perhaps inevitable that the effective decisions concerning cease-fire arrangements should be negotiated by those in effective control of the armed forces engaged in the war, and that the position of the State of Vietnam concerning partition should have received so little attention during the efforts being made to separate and regroup the forces of both sides as quickly and as expeditiously as possible.

If this had been restricted to the cease-fire agreement which was ultimately signed by representatives of the French Union Forces and the Communist "People's Army of Vietnam", the implications probably would not have been serious. Arrangements, however, were also considered for the final political settlement, which envisaged general elections being held within two years to bring about the unification of Vietnam, even though no agreements were signed to this effect, and although the State of Vietnam explicitly dissociated itself from the projected arrangements.

With the wisdom of hindsight, we can see how the dragon's teeth were sown. But in July 1954 there was a general sigh of relief throughout the world. The war in Indochina, with all its attendant risks, was over. Attention turned to the immediate tasks of the cease-fire agreements and to the arrangements for carrying them out. It was apparent that in the tense international atmosphere of the time, and in the wake of a bitter war, the peace-keeping role of the International Commissions would be vital.

Canada, although it had been represented at the Korean Conference, had not played any direct part in the negotiations on Indochina. The Government was aware that the composition of the International Supervisory Commissions had been one of the important points of disagreement between the Communist and Western delegations, but it had no reason to anticipate the invitation which was extended to India, Poland and Canada after the cease-fire agreements had been negotiated and signed. Acceptance of the invitation was not an easy decision. Canada was geographically remote from Indochina and had no traditional interests in the area. The settlement had been reached outside the United Nations, and that organization would not be involved in the supervisory function. Canada had not had a voice in creating the terms of reference under which it was now being asked to operate. Finally, we were very aware of the deep cross-currents surrounding the Geneva Conference and recognized that the International Commissions themselves might be caught in the middle of any breakdown of the settlement.

Nevertheless, despite our reservations, and despite our recognition of the responsibilities and difficulties which membership in the Commissions would entail, Canada accepted the invitation. Canadian foreign policy was firmly committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes, and it was clear that the effectiveness of the cease-fire reached in Geneva would to some extent depend on the supervisory arrangements. It was true that the United Nations was not involved but at least an international presence had been provided for. It was possible to hope that this presence might place some restraints on the big powers whose interests were so directly engaged in Indochina, and that the Commissions would exert a general stabilizing influence on the region.