

Before taking you on a conducted tour of Canadian policy in Indochina and the Middle East, I would like to begin by saying how pleased I was to receive this invitation -- in the first place you have invited me back to my home town -- secondly, I would like to congratulate the organizers of this lecture series. Questions of foreign policy and diplomacy must often seem remote from the lives of young people. In fact, the successes or failures of foreign policy touch the daily lives of most Canadians. Negotiations with the United States, Great Britain, Japan and other countries on a wide range of questions -- oil policy, pollution, duties on cars, wheat sales abroad, air transport routes and so on have a very real impact on our standard of living, the prospects and direction of our national growth -- and on our freedom of choice. The freedom of movement we are able to secure for Canadians travelling or learning in other countries -- all affect the quality of our life. This is the sort of thing that our external relations are all about -- and I believe that this lecture series has served to provide a better understanding of that role.

Contrary to popular mythology this work, or most of it, is by no means glamorous and certainly some of the least glamorous and most difficult of Canada's assignments abroad have been our roles in Indochina and in the Middle East.

Such tasks are undertaken not because there will be direct benefits to the Canadian standard of living but because as a stable and comparatively prosperous and developed member of the international community we accept our share of responsibility to that community. At least we share it when we believe we can be useful (and that is sometimes the rub). To the extent that they contribute to our national security and well being, these activities also serve Canada's self interest. Canada has participated in two major undertakings of this nature in the past 14 months. These are, of course, the ICCS and UNEF.

But as you know, our participation in Indochina has a much longer history -- indeed it reaches back 19 years to the Geneva Conference of 1954 which established a peace settlement following the defeat of French forces at Dien Bien Phu. And, if I were to graphically illustrate the record of Canadian participation in Indochina since that time, I think the result would resemble a game of snakes and ladders -- with this difference. There would be more snakes than ladders.

The Geneva Conference was called by the great powers -- Great Britain, the United States, Soviet Union, France and China to establish a peace settlement which might prepare the way for free elections and the eventual peaceful reunification of North and South Viet-Nam. An international supervisory group was despatched to Indochina with the responsibility to report -- and in this way, it was hoped, to deter -- violations of the ceasefire. It was intended that a commission supervise free elections. This body was known as the International Commission for Supervision and Control and was composed of Poles, Indians, and Canadians.

Free elections for all of Viet-Nam were never held and the ceasefire was not observed. Although there was some limited success in the early years, the international commission became a failure. This was not because Canada shirked its responsibilities as a member of the Commission, but because the adversaries in Viet-Nam repeatedly and violently broke the terms of the international agreement.