



War and Peace-Keeping in Cyprus and Vietnam

[FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH A CANADIAN OFFICER]

Cyprus 1974: "Two Canadians were killed in those days, both by small arms; and nineteen were wounded, mostly by mortar fire. We were in the middle. It was by no means boring."

Cyprus 1966: "They had agreed to evacuate a position which was, in fact, over the cease-fire line. They did withdraw that afternoon but then reoccupied the place that night. The UN did get a little hardnosed and said, 'no way.' One of our companies was warned that they would occupy the position and we were set to go in, but at the last minute they withdrew and everything settled down again."

Vietnam 1966: (After the French left Vietnam in 1954, the UN set up an international commission. As time went by and the uneasy peace became an all-out war in the sixties, the mission became obsolete. Canada was also, briefly, part of the international team that monitored the aftermath of the peace agreement at Paris in 1973.)

"The ICC [International Control Commission] was on its last legs when I got over there, and that was my first experience with real frustration

— it was more than obvious we were just marking time. The terms of reference were real in 1954, but by 1966 they'd lost all relevance. The main job of the team was to inspect the harbour installations for war-like imports. The whole place was one massive, great military base. There were thousands of ships coming in and unloading weapons. Our team left the villa at nine o'clock every morning and drove down to the old French docks, a quarter of a mile from the new military docks. There was a white cross painted on the road, between the warehouses and about 60 or 70 feet from the edge of the quay. We could see about 150 feet of the actual docks and across the river where there was a school. There was room for only one ship and this was usually an old British tramp from Hong Kong, unloading food. We could only report what we could see from that cross. We'd go back in our vehicles, and as we drove we'd pass the big, new docks, jammed with ships, and we'd pass five-ton trucks loaded with 105 shells on the road, but we could not report a single thing we saw once we'd departed from that white cross."