

March 3, 1983

It was late April or early May of 1964. I had been back in Ottawa less than two years after my three years in Moscow, about six years away from Canada, and was happily handling Soviet and Eastern European matters in the old European Division. The children were settling well into their schools, being re-Canadianized. Carol had just had an operation and was not yet back to full strength. Not the time one looked for a posting.

A call from Personnel, or was it Arnold Smith, one of the Assistant Under-Secretaries, my former boss as Ambassador in Moscow? They were looking for a new Canadian Commissioner to head our delegation to the tri-partite International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam, replacing Gordon Cox, due out in a few months' time. (They were always looking for a Commissioner for one of the three Indo China Commissions, because they only stayed in place for a year to a year and a half). I had just the qualifications they were looking for -- vague mumblings about knowledge of Communist countries, reasonable fluency in French, good solid reputation -- and of course it would be my first Head of Post Assignment. Never mind that I knew nothing about Asia. That could be learned. Hints, too, that there might be some interesting developments over and above the ICSC work, which had become pretty sterile and soul-destroying despite valiant efforts by several Canadian Commissioners to give meaning to a cease-fire agreement and a supervisory structure which no one took seriously.

In those days at least in External, you didn't turn down a posting proposal without pretty good reason. Moreover, a lot of us obviously had to become members of the Indochina club willy-nilly, so best to get it over with. If the family stayed in Ottawa in our new house, I'd only have to stay ^{only} a year in Saigon, and that would pass quickly. Yes, I'd take it.