

'The forgotten war is far from over'

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Canadian Council of Churches offices on St. Clair Avenue in Toronto when Sharp announced Canada's withdrawal of peacekeepers.

While the committee's *raison d'être* was the release of political prisoners, it spent a good portion of its time with the policies of the Canadian government toward Vietnam.

Canadian author and journalist Charles Taylor said in his book, *Snow Job* "It might be different if we practised what we preached.

drummed up business around the United States and distributed their annual catalogue, Canadian Defence Commodities, which Walter Stewart aptly described as a kind of Warmonger's Shopping Guide."

Sharp, who until Aug. 1974, held the external affairs department portfolio, adroitly dodged the issue of prisoners while Canada was involved in the ICCS force but by the end of 1973 was confronted by an all-party deputation of House members and Senators. The group demanded he take the

it would not do any good to go to the UN, why bother?

"We want, in short, to be effective," Sharp said. "Loud, visible and dramatic protests have not proven to be the best way of assisting those that we wish to help in these cases."

Instead, Sharp and his diplomatic corps took the quiet diplomacy approach to the prisoner problem, approaching representatives of the Thieu government at least eight times in camera. As a result, not one prisoner was released.

MacEachen has made no statement about what he wants the Canadian government to be doing about the political prisoners' plight.

However, two statements from Ottawa might be indicators of a change. Ivan Head, a key personal aide to Trudeau, let it be known he would like to see Canada lean a bit more to the moral left internationally.

Trudeau said he hoped his new foreign affairs would at least get him criticized for doing things instead of not doing things. All that, of course, must be balanced against the evidence in the Pentagon Papers and elsewhere that Canada has been running errand-boy for the U.S. in Indochina for a number of years.

Meanwhile, Canada has done nothing since Sharp's hand-wringing, and the prisoners still rot in jail. The forgotten war is far from over.

Singing was crime

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Vietnamese "but also to the world's conscience."

Persecution against pacifists is based on Thieu opposition to the peace agreement, said Lap. The treaty called for a reconciliation between the PRG and the Thieu government which some writers said could have been aided by the pacifist front.

Since such reconciliation might lead to the downfall of the Saigon government, Thieu has denied the validity of the treaty and arrested members of the third force.

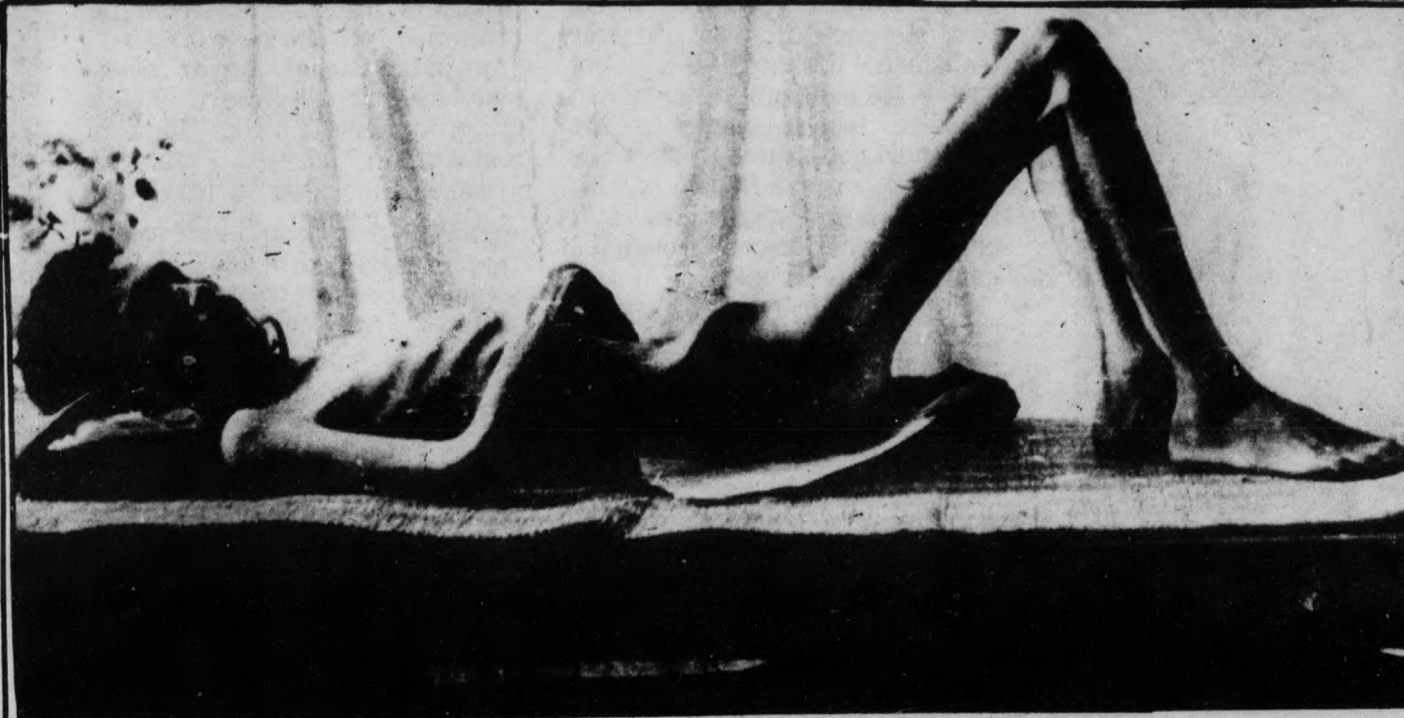
Thieu has carried on "cultural warfare," according to Lanh, and had Vietnamese works confiscated. Writers and artists have been persecuted rather than allowed nationalist—and possibly anti-American—feelings to develop.

The government has levied a heavy tax on publishing and closed several Saigon newspapers. Writers and artists have been arrested without charge or warrant and imprisoned without trial. Other trials were conducted by the interior ministry rather than the justice department.

He said those innocent were beaten until they were forced to plead guilty, those guilty of pacifism were beaten until they gave information and those who didn't give up were beaten until they died.

Lanh said U.S. civilian authorities still work with the Thieu government and said he saw several Americans working in Vietnamese prison. He went through a session of "strategic interrogation" with a U.S. advisor. Such questioning was aimed at finding out the methods and techniques organizations used against the government while "technical interrogation" has the short term purpose of determining the location of fellow students in the movement.

Most prisoners, Lanh said, were "guilty only of (having) an aspiration for peace."



This man was released from Con-Son Prison in 1973.

Canada bent over backwards during the peak years of the war to cash in on the fast bucks to be made on defence contracts from the United States.

"As they dropped their bombs on North Vietnamese towns or seared southern villages with their rockets and napalm, said Taylor, "American planes were often guided by Canadian-made Marconi Doppler Navigation Systems and used bombing computers built in Rexdale, Ontario.

Nor were all the profits left to private industry: "Canadian Arsenals Ltd., a Crown corporation, sold small arms fill for artillery shells, mines, bombs, grenades, torpedo warheads, depth charges and rockets.

Canadian government salesmen

prisoner issue to the United Nations human rights commission.

The head of the deputation, Andrew Brewin (NDP-Greenwood), later said in a speech in the House of Commons: "We do not wish to interfere in the internal affairs of another country, but there is no doubt that where there is a consistent pattern of gross violation of human rights — and that condition certainly exists in South Vietnam — then the international community has a right and an obligation to intervene, not indeed by military methods but by making clear what world opinion is. Even the most authoritarian governments are sensitive to world opinion."

Sharp's response was that since

Meanwhile, a letter-writing campaign organized by the international prisoners committee in Toronto was piling up more than 3,000 letters in Ottawa.

Sharp was forced to start answering questions like: Why doesn't Canada send aid to North Vietnam since it has recognized it diplomatically? Why doesn't Canada give diplomatic recognition to the PRG which is a co-signatory with Canada in international conference to ensure the Jan., 1973 accords? Why is Canada supporting Thieu who runs these prisons?

Sharp's answers were diplomatic masterpieces which unfortunately did not do much for anyone in Con Son with bamboo underneath his finger nails.

According to Sharp, Canada was not sending aid to North Vietnam because the North Vietnamese had not asked for it; Canada

would not recognize the PRG because it had already recognized Thieu's government and Canada has a policy of recognizing only one government per country and Canada is only giving Thieu 'humanitarian' aid, not military supplies.

Nonetheless Sharp was always quick to tell anyone who asked that he was "deeply concerned" over the issue.

In August, 1974, he was replaced by Allan MacEachen, one of Trudeau's Liberal cronies who is a sometime small-l liberal.

"Why torture?" is no longer asked

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cases a person is put in a tank of water and the tank is beaten, a process which can cause severe internal injuries due to the shock waves.

There is now a common saying in Vietnam: "If you are not a Vietcong, we will beat you until you admit you are. And if you admit you are, we will beat you until you no longer dare to be one."

Another torture involved electric shocks, in particular to genital areas, used frequently with a hand generator and electrodes attached to assorted parts of the

body.

Some techniques were reserved specifically for women: gang rape by police and guards, burning breasts with cigarettes, putting an eel in a woman's underwear, letting lizards loose over the naked body, shoving a bottle in the vagina.

Amnesty International commented "From the many accounts available it seems clear that in many instances torture has become no more or less than a matter of habit. The question 'Why torture?' is often no longer asked."