

on such a scale in Viet-Nam that Canada could plausibly plead, if it wished, that continued operation of the ICCS was pointless. But to withdraw from it would be represented as defeatist. Accordingly Mr Sharp embarked on an on-the-spot survey of the situation. He left Ottawa for Saigon on 13 March, taking with him three other MPs and senior External Affairs Department officials.

In his tour of Indochina, Mr Sharp met the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. Reporting on this trip to the House of Commons on 21 March Mr Sharp said all the parties to the conflict had wanted Canada to stay on in the ICCS. As against this, the Canadian contingent on the ICCS had pointed out that there had been some 7,000 violations of the ceasefire since January which had produced only 31 requests for ICCS investigation. Out of all this the ICCS managed to make just two reports.

Six days later the External Affairs Minister announced the government's decision: Canada would stay on for a further two-month period—till 31 May—and thereafter, unless things had improved considerably, withdraw on 30 days' notice. That is, Canada would be out of the ICCS on 30 June unless by the end of May there was a substantial improvement in the situation or some signs of an imminent political settlement between the two South Vietnamese parties.

Among the impressions Mr Sharp had gathered on his trip to Indochina was that the governments not directly involved wanted the ICCS to remain to provide an international presence and token of the world community's continuing concern. One of the



A Bedouin with toothache is examined by a sergeant in the Royal Canadian Dragoons serving on the former Egypt-Israel frontier.

effects of Mr Sharp's trip had been to apprise these governments that Canada was in earnest about quitting the ICCS unless things improved. Previously they had urged Canada to stay on with the argument that any international presence was better than none, however ineffective. On the basis of their long peace-keeping experience the Canadians had little time for this argument.

About the new twist in the argument, Mr Sharp had this to say: "I am not convinced that the ICCS does play such a part in the

thinking of the Vietnamese...I do not believe that Canada and Canadians can be expected over any protracted period to play this part."

What kept Canada from exercising its option to quit after 60 days—even though, as Mr Sharp said, it could make out a good case for doing so—was the conviction that the parties to the conflict needed time to demonstrate the feasibility of their solutions to the Viet-Nam problem. To pull out at this point might have disturbed things.

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