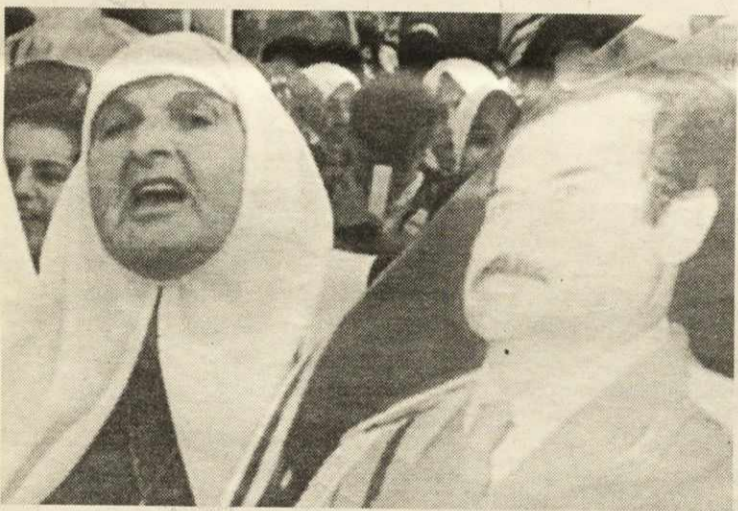


FOCUS

Hunger & poverty as instruments of war

Svend Robinson on Iraq



continued from page 1

the embargo which Robinson said have "used hunger and poverty as instruments of war" — a direct contradiction of the Geneva and UN Charter accords, which condemn the use of starvation and malnutrition as warfare.

The embargo prohibits import of anything that can be of "dual-purpose" for use in military devices — a list which includes such materials of war as toilet paper, children's potties and pencils — "because of the lead content of graphite."

Under the UN's Aid Resolution, commonly known as the 'Oil-for-Food' program, by selling a fractional portion of their oil supply Iraq is afforded aid by the UN — amounts to \$0.25 day for each Iraqi. Poverty and mass hunger have been imposed upon a nation ravaged by bombing, with extensive targeting of civilian infrastructure.

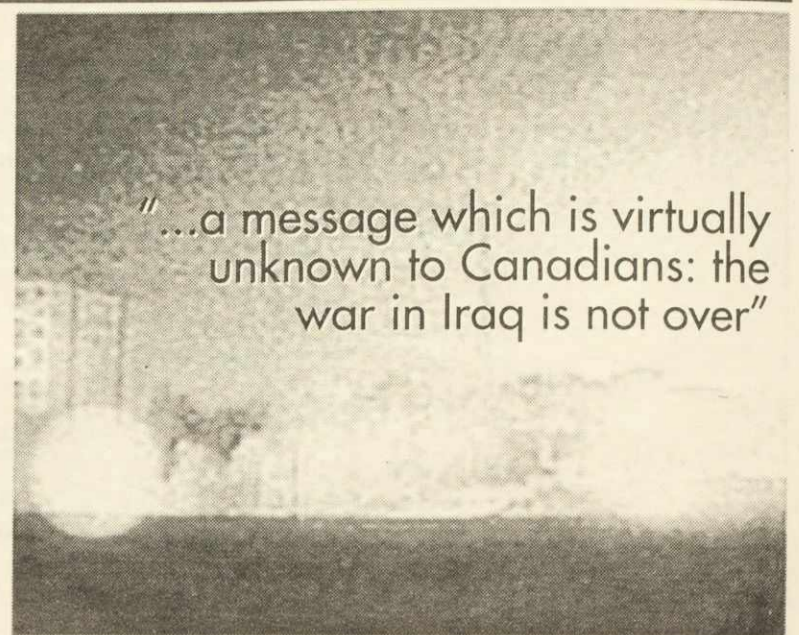
"I was returning to a situation of collapse; not just of physical infrastructure, but the whole social and intellectual infrastructure as well," Robinson said.

Because only three percent of funds are allocated to education and with a ban on all types of books and journals prohibited for import, it is the "intellectual genocide" that is so destructive, said Robinson, adding that it will take generations for Iraq to recover from the total annihilation of the intellectual integrity in Iraq.

In his January 2000 Delegation Report on Iraq, Mr. Robinson notes that "it is often forgotten that in 1990, despite the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq was one of the most advanced countries in the Middle East in economic, social and cultural rights."

Today it is a system in ruins, unemployment is epidemic, inflation is skyrocketing, and the average salary is US\$5 a month. When added to appalling cancer rates and massive numbers of congenital deformities — 165 this past year in a single tiny clinic in Basra — due to thousands of tonnes of depleted uranium in bombs that have been rained down on Iraq. Bombing that continues, in the 18 months between May 1998 and January of this year, some 22,000 "combat missions" were flown in southern Iraq alone.

Robinson acknowledged the clarity of the situation is such that once Canadians truly know what our government is party to in Iraq, they will demand change. Because the debacle transcends political agenda and nationalist tendencies,



"...a message which is virtually unknown to Canadians: the war in Iraq is not over"

the issue is about fundamental human rights on the base level. Being in support of the removal of non-military sanctions in Iraq does not mean you are for Saddam Hussein, Robinson emphasized, because clearly the sanctions do not affect the ruling class, let alone the ruler.

While imposed in practice by the UN, de facto legislation of the sanctions is controlled by the US and, to a lesser degree the UK, essentially because the power-brokers have the UN Security Council "in their back pockets." In today's global economy, to irk the US would be to commit economic suicide; consequently, veto-power members France, Russia and especially China, who are itching to join the WTO, make scant little noise.

Originally scheduled to speak at the Dal Law School on Wednesday night, Robinson was forced to postpone last minute as the critic vote on the government's proposed Clarity Bill — which deals with secession logistics — arose in the

House of Commons. Adjunct Dal professor and medical Dr. Shiela Zurbrigg stepped in aptly in Robinson's absence, illustrating the essential truths that she encountered in her tour in Iraq, which is the most recent delegation to visit. Dr. Zurbrigg testified before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade in Ottawa on Tuesday, an initiative under Robinson's recommendation that will have delegation members and experts shed light on the catastrophic impact of the sanctions. It is a critical first step in a saddening "conspiracy of silence."

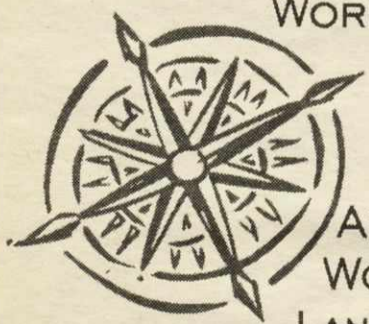
Cutting the afternoon short in a dash to catch a plane back to BC, Svend Robinson left a parting thought, in the face of a series of questions about the feasibility of having the sanctions lifted by the US, courtesy of Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

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