

Canada shows more independence

U.S. and Hanoi are using Canada as a buffer

Two questions remain about Canada's role in the international observer team in Vietnam: Will we stay and should we have gone in the first place?

The Voice of Women, which opposed the possibility of Canadians joining a peacekeeping force, favors the present role, as defined by external affairs minister Mitchell Sharp. Andrew Brewin, New Democratic Party MP for Toronto-Greenwood, recently returned from a visit to north Vietnam with an optimistic report about that government's willingness to support the international commission.

But the Vietnam Mobilization Committee remains opposed to Canadian presence, claiming that only the interests of U.S. imperialism will be served. George Addison of the VMC said he expected Canada to continue the "fine role" it had played for the U.S. on the earlier international control commission.

VOW past-president Kay MacPherson said sources, including Brewin, indicated Hanoi was agreeable to Canadian participation in an

observer force. That, coupled with public demands by the Canadian government, caused the VOW to change its position. (Sharp had said Canada wouldn't participate unless asked to by all four parties and unless the force members carried only sidearms.)

MacPherson said VOW's main concern now is whether a truce force can influence Saigon's policy of imprisoning possible opponents of the Thieu regime.

"We can't see a way out of the situation. Who's to stop them (the south Vietnamese government)?" She suggested NLF troops in the south might take action to free political prisoners.

According to Brewin, Hanoi authorities are convinced of the usefulness of the international force. "They were willing, indeed anxious, that Canada should participate," he wrote in a special report to the Toronto Star. He didn't elaborate on why he thought the north Vietnamese welcomed the Canadians.

Joseph Starobin, a professor in political science at Glendon College, theorizes that the

north Vietnamese feel Canada is playing an increasingly-independent role from the Americans and can help isolate U.S. and south Vietnamese forces who might want to sabotage the truce. He suggested the Hanoi government was encouraged by Parliament's motion condemning further bombing of the north and the government's questioning of the truce agreement and the observer force's role.

Starobin was involved in contacts between the Americans and the north Vietnamese in Paris during 1969 and 1970. He had spent time in north Vietnam in the early 50's while working as foreign correspondent for the Daily Worker.

He said Canada should take a tentative but positive attitude toward the truce and a positive attitude toward reconstruction of Vietnam. MacPherson and Brewin also listed reconstruction as a top priority. Starobin hopes Canada can also help Hanoi to increase its foreign economic contacts.

"North Vietnam's positive attitude toward foreign economic assistance has been clear for some time," he said, citing recent contacts with Sweden and Japan. "They don't want to be completely reliant on Moscow and Peking."

But the VMC doubts Hanoi's attitude toward Canada is positive. Canada's acceptance on the observer force is viewed as a concession which the Vietnamese were forced to accept.

"They were hurting from the bombing and need a breathing space since Moscow and Peking aren't willing to back them in a nose-to-nose fight with the U.S.," said Addison.

"We don't have to support these concessions. We feel it is dangerous to their struggle to support another international commission."

Addison said the Canadian force will back the Thieu government in the interests of U.S. imperialism. He predicts that Canada's military involvement will escalate.

If the fighting had taken place in the USA

Statistics on war have a way of sounding like just so many numbers. This map was designed to help understand the magnitude of the Indochina War by showing what would have happened had an amount of damage equivalent to that done in the south of Vietnam been inflicted on the United States.

Figures from the south rather than either the north, Laos, or Cambodia were used for all projections because of the greater availability of data and because it is the country the U.S. ostensibly set out to protect.

The ratio of the south Vietnamese population to that of the U.S. is about 1:11.3, so for every south Vietnamese killed, wounded, or left homeless, 11.3 Americans would have met corresponding fates if the U.S. population had been as extensively affected. The resulting figures were then compared to the populations of states in the U.S. and those states with comparable populations were so marked on the map.

Since the land ratio is 1:55, fifty-five acres of defoliated land are projected for the U.S. to every acre defoliated in the south of Vietnam. The result is a proportional representation showing the impact of the war on the smaller country.

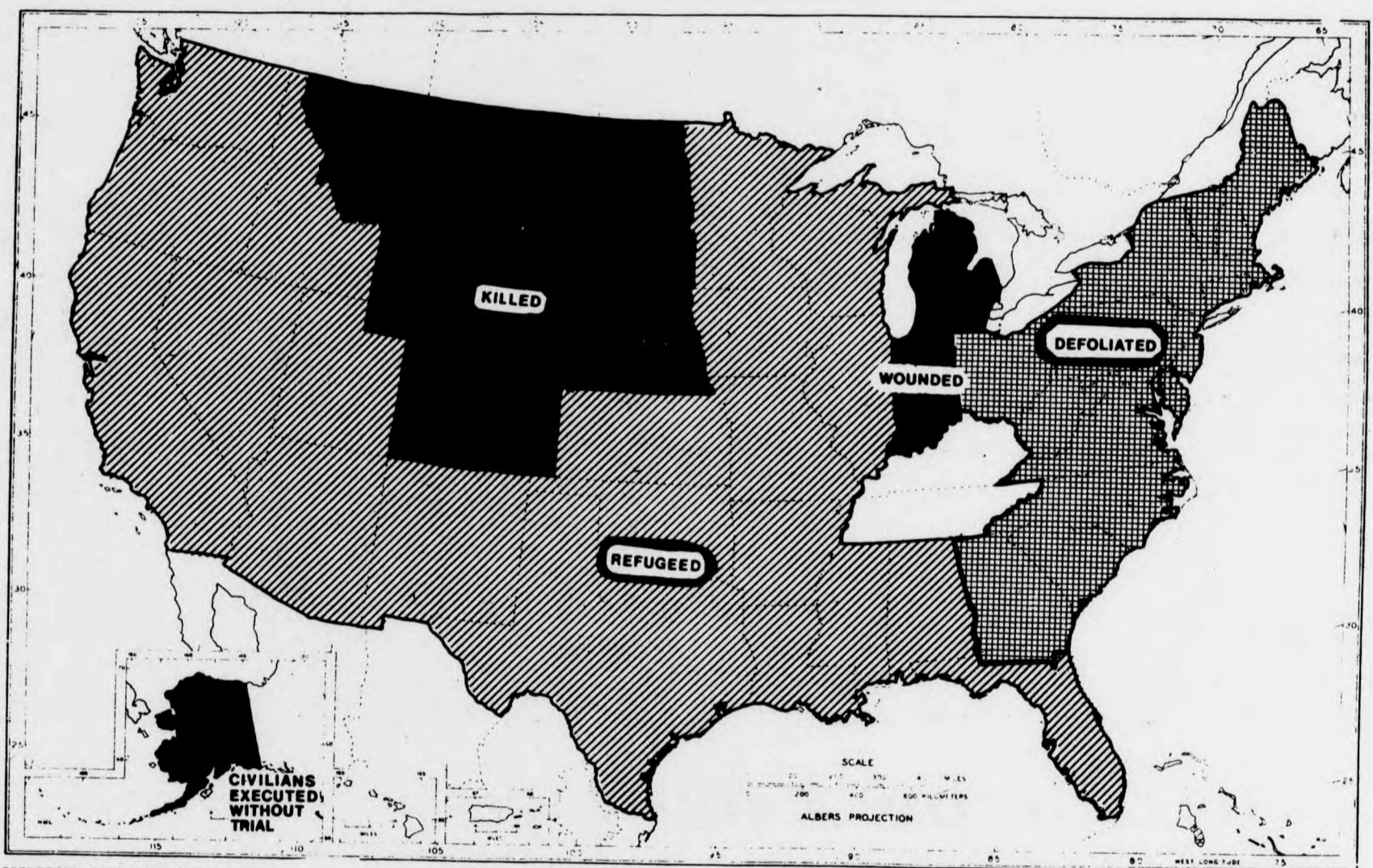
The data used is in itself staggering:

- Total civilian and military casualties for south Vietnam alone are 569,000 killed and 1,326,000 wounded; the U.S. equivalents are 6,432,000 dead, 14,985,000 wounded. These figures are based on U.S. government data.

- Forty thousand civilians were executed without trial under the Phoenix program (according to the Ministry of Information in Saigon). The U.S. equivalent, 452,000 equals the population of Alaska.

- Over 5 million acres — 12 percent of southern Vietnam — have been sprayed with defoliating chemicals. The U.S. equivalent: 434,000 square miles.

The map does not reflect,



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however, that in war, damage would be strategically inflicted to cripple the country most effectively, and forms of destruction would overlap. Unpredictable winds, for example, would blow defoliants into population centers resulting in deaths, illness, and birth defects (widespread in

Vietnam).

Though the map ratio greatly magnifies the data from south Vietnam, it does not include people affected in other Indochinese nations nor the losses the U.S. or its allies suffered. Even so, surprising implications emerge; for example, almost half the country's

population are refugees.

And, of course, the map gives only a partial picture of the war. Other statistics would have to be inserted to complete the profile; children orphaned, cities leveled, epidemics spread, people captured tortured or conscripted, and services disrupted in wholesale

fashion.

Yet no matter how many statistical parameters were added, this map must remain in some respects an arbitrary and unavoidably abstract way of conceptualizing the tragic weight of this war, which civilians and ordinary families are bearing.

Letters continued

63% withhold fees so who cares?

So 63 percent of York full-time undergraduates have not yet paid their fees, as compared with 40 percent at this time last year. So what?! I don't see Bill Davis or Jack McNie imploring us to pay our fees. In fact it seems to me from this small corner of the

world, that they don't even care.

But I care, and from the above figures released by John Becker it seems to me that a lot of other York students care also. They care enough to withhold a substantial amount of money, that's something for security-conscious generally apathetic middle-class students.

The fee hike is one policy of the Ontario government which I am solidly against. Not only do I not want to pay more money, but the hike violates everything I believe education should be.

My question is, what is the Ontario Federation of Students going to do now? On this issue, they have the support of university students all across the province. That is a

very powerful position. We were making publicity in early January but now it has all quietened down, and the government is likely hoping that we'll all get tired and one day with a sigh write out cheques for tuition. I don't want to do it!

It is my opinion that the Ontario government is a very powerful, public oriented machine. I think the only way to win this fight (and there's no point engaging unless you want to win), is to call a strike, but I mean an Ontario-wide classes strike. If we even threaten to close the universities by boycotting classes, Davis will be forced into having a look at this issue from our perspective. At the same time, OFS must communicate our position to the public.

I went on the last march to Queen's Park in November and, from my point of view, it accomplished next to nothing. McNie spoke to us all right but he didn't even seem to comprehend our point of view.

I think it is time to show our strength, the term will soon be over.

Where is the leadership? What is OFS doing? When is the next meeting? What position will John Theobald, as York's student president, present to that meeting?

And, what do the rest of York students think about this issue? Perhaps this newspaper can be used as a medium of exchange and consensus.

JANICE MCCLELLAND
McLaughlin College IV