

by Alex Norris
Canadian University Press

At ten o'clock on a cloudy March morning, Archie Campbell, head of the Overseas Division of External Affairs' Defence Programs Bureau, welcomes me to the second floor of the Ottawa Congress Centre.

Three hundred and eighty of Canada's top "high technology and defence manufacturers" have gathered here at government expense to meet with Canadian trade commissioners from around the world. The trade commissioners are advising the business people on how to increase their sales overseas.

The conference is not open to the public or the press. Peace activists protesting the participation of trade attaches from countries known for their systematic human rights violations have made organizers especially wary of outsiders.

But someone has decided that a Quebec business reporter and I should be given a quick tour of "Hi-Tec '86". Apparently we are the only two members of the press to have expressed an interest in seeing the conference this year. And Campbell has been assigned the job of giving us the tour.

Campbell is a pleasant, soft-spoken man, balding, bespectacled. Before showing us through the conference, he sits us down in the reception area to give us a briefing, and I ask him if I might obtain a copy of the list of firms participating in the conference.

"Oh no," he says apologetically. "You see, we've had a problem in the past with the protesters. We don't want them to get a hold of the list, so we're not giving it out to anyone outside of the conference."

"If the protesters were to get that information," Campbell explains, "they'd just misinterpret it."

But when the business reporter asks to see the list, Campbell pauses for a moment and then decides her request is reasonable. He scurries off to a computer terminal on the other side of the reception area.

With Campbell gone, the business reporter turns to me. She appears over-worked and anxious to file a quick story. "Not very dynamic, is he?" she complains.

There's a pause, and then she asks if I am with "the protesters." "I understand their point," she explains, "but we're in difficult economic times right now. These days you have to think about jobs."

Campbell returns with a long computer print-out listing the firms represented at the conference. Some of Canada's most prolific arms exporters are on the list — companies like Litton Industries, Garret Manufacturing Ltd., Bristol Aerospace, and Canadian Marconi. At the conference, they'll get the chance to meet with trade representatives from South Korea, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, and Chile — countries named by Amnesty International for extensive human rights abuses, such as torture, political killings, and the imprisonment of dissidents.

Canada is expected to sell about \$2 billion in military goods this year. Eighty percent of that, according to Murray Thomson, co-founder of Project Ploughshares, an independent peace research organization, will go to the United States, with the remainder split evenly between other NATO countries and the Third World.

Those figures may seem impressive, but they pale in comparison with those of the world's largest arms merchants — the U.S., the U.S.S.R., France, Britain, West Germany, Italy, and Israel — which account for more than 70 percent of global military exports.

Still, Canada is a significant arms exporter. Ernie Regehr, Project Ploughshares research director, says Canada belongs to a second tier of arms exporters which includes countries like Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Sweden. While not among the biggest exporters, those countries still do a brisk business in arms sales.

Canada has had one of the world's more restrictive policies governing arms exports, but John Lamb, executive director of the Canadian Institute for Arms Control and Disarmament, says that policy "has begun to drift."

"It's become gradually more elastic and less

graphics: Stephen Pandke

Canada arms the third world

restrictive over the last seven or eight years," he says. Even before then, according to the review of World Military and Social Expenditures, published yearly by a Washington-based research group, Canadian arms were ending up in the hands of repressive regimes.

A 1980 study conducted by the review showed that \$100 million worth of Canadian arms had gone to Third World governments with "the poorest human rights records" in the five preceding years.

More recently, Canadian arms sales to Indonesia have come under fire by Project Ploughshares. Indonesia has recently bought military vehicles from Levy Auto Parts Company of Toronto and ammunitions from Valtcartier Industries of Montreal, according to the organization. Meanwhile, Indonesia has been embroiled in a bloody war in the former Portuguese colony of East Timor. Amnesty International says that since the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975, about one-third of the territory's population has been killed.

Canadian law forbids the export of military goods to continue currently waging wars. But the Canadian government does not recognize the 200,000 dead East Timorese as victims of Indonesian aggression. In a letter dated July 30, 1985, A.G. Vincent, director of the Southeast Asia Relations Division of External Affairs, wrote that "we do not consider that the situation in East Timor warrants a suspension of arms sales to Indonesia."

Regehr says sales to countries like Indonesia are wrong in principle. "they bolster the overall capacity of unjust regimes to maintain themselves in power."

Lamb adds that purchases of military goods harm Third World countries in a number of other ways. Such purchases, he says, soak up resources that could be used for social and economic development. And they often increase the power of the military, thereby stunting political and democratic development, fostering corruption and encouraging despotism.

Thomson compares arms exports to the drug trade. "They debase the supplier and bankrupt the receiver," he says.

Moreover, says Regehr, exports of Canadian arms to countries with poor human rights records undermine Canadian credibility at international negotiations aimed at controlling the arms sales of the major powers. Without negotiated international agreements, says Regehr, the world arms trade will remain "essentially out of control."

Regehr says the present uncontrolled world trade in arms has made possible more than 100 wars with more than 20 million combat deaths since World War II.

When Archie Campbell takes me on a stroll through the interview booths in the main area of the conference, I see Genevieve des Rivieres, Canada's trade commissioner from Santiago, Chile, deep in discussion with an industry representative.

I ask Campbell if I might have a word with her, but he says apologetically, that Ms. des Rivieres is all booked up for the morning. So are Donald Cameron, Canadian trade commissioner in Indonesia, and John Cheh, his counterpart in South Korea.

However, I am permitted a few minutes with Warren Maybee, Canada's trade representative in Cairo.

While Egypt is by no means the worst human rights violator at the conference, it's clear that

Campbell is going to continue steering me away from trade attaches brought in from the more "controversial" countries.

Does Mr. Maybee, I ask, have any ethical qualms about promoting arms sales to Egypt? After all, the country is located at one of the world's most volatile flashpoints, and it has been cited by Amnesty International for a good number of human rights violations.

Maybee's smile weakens and Campbell looks uncomfortable, clearing his throat repeatedly and glancing at his watch. He tells me it's time to get going.

Federal government assistance to arms manufacturers exporting to the Third World is increasing, according to Lamb. For instance, since 1979, Canadian embassy defence attaches have been told to find opportunities for military sales to each country where they are stationed, he says. As well, the onus of proving whether or not a military export is harmful has shifted from the exporters to the government regulators. Moreover, both Liberal and Conservative politicians and upper level bureaucrats, he says, are wavering in their commitment to regulation of Canadian arms exports.

Lamb attributes this "drift" to lack of public pressure. "During the Vietnam War, the public was particularly sensitive about the military, and the climate was very difficult for those promoting arms exports to the Third World," he says.

"As that perception has changed, it's become easier for those wanting to export (arms) to do so."

In March of last year, the government's export regulations were amended, resulting in the deletion of a phrase prohibiting Canadian arms exports to "regimes considered to be wholly repugnant to Canadian values, especially where such arms could be used against civilians."

When NDP MP Nelson Riis raised the issue in the House of Commons in November, External Affairs Minister Joe Clark assured him that the provision had not been deleted in order to facilitate arms sales to Chile. Dave Adam, chief of the department's Export Controls Division, said the phrase had been deleted because it created "confusion" for Canadian exporters and government officials.

But External Affairs spokesperson Denis Co-meau now attributes the deletion to "an administrative error." He says a provision dealing with human rights violators will be put back into the restrictions after department officials complete their internal review of Canadian export policy.

Regardless, it should still be possible for Canadian exporters to pursue arms sales in countries with poor human rights records if new provisions restricting such sales are interpreted by the External Affairs Export Controls Division as liberally as the previous regulation, under which arms sales to Indonesia and Pakistan were allowed.

And, in any case, Canadian manufacturers can circumvent federal restrictions by selling military hardware to go-betweens in places like the United States, Israel, and Brazil, who in turn export arms to human rights violators. For instance, Ottawa Ploughshares member Jon Segal says helicopter engines manufactured by Pratt & Whitney Canada of Montreal have been sold to Guatemala. The engines are sold to the United States for use in the Bell 412 helicopter, which in turn is sold to the Guatemalan government. Amnesty International says that the Guatemalan government regularly practices torture and extra-

judicial killings ("a pseudonym for murdering citizens who get in the way," says Segal).

A similar arrangement, according to Segal, allows Bristol Aerospace Limited of Winnipeg to supply helicopter engines to El Salvador, whose government is presently embroiled in a bloody civil war with nationalist and leftist guerrillas and, says Amnesty International, is violating human rights on a regular basis.

Perhaps Segal's best example of how Canadian military goods can end up in the wrong hands is found in Canada's export of T-33 jets to Bolivia, a country noted not only for its frequent human rights violations, but also for its extreme political instability. According to Segal, Canadair has sold at least 14 T-33 jets to Bolivia since 1974. And on November 5, 1979, these jets were used by the Bolivian airforce "to fire machine gun and rocket salvos in strafing runs over a crowd of civilians" in the capital city of La Paz, he says.

After leading me out of the conference hall, Archie Campbell agrees to answer a few questions about "Hi-Tec '86."

We're in a more crowded part of the reception area now. Business people and civil servants are leaning back in their padded chairs, sipping coffee, and chatting amicably. Over their chatter, an announcer's voice booms out about the technical merits of the latest in Canadian military technology.

One new product allows for "easier tank repairs in the field." Another is "coated with an infrared reflective camouflage paint... providing the best possible protection against all types of visual and adjacent infrared sensors."

The accompanying video display shows tanks and armoured personnel carriers rumbling through the jungle on a wall-sized screen.

Throughout our chat, Campbell stresses "the growing importance of the civilian sector" at the high-tech conference. It doesn't seem to bother him that 10 of the countries represented by Canadian trade representatives at Hi-TEC '86 have been cited by the review of World Military and Social Expenditures for their "frequent official violence against citizens," or that every major Canadian arms manufacturer has been invited to the conference.

He says "it's not necessarily the case at all" that arms "intended for the defence of a country against outside regimes" will be used against civilians.

Asked if there isn't a greater possibility of this occurring in countries like Indonesia and Chile, Campbell says that "if the equipment has a significant chance of being used against civilians they (Canadian manufacturers) would not get an export permit."

And when confronted with the fact that export permits have been issued for arms sales to Indonesia, Campbell says he's "not aware" of such permits being issued.

That evening, federal international Trade Minister James Kelleher, Conservative MP for Sault Ste. Marie, gives a speech to participants in the conference.

The Hi-TEC conference, he says, is only one of many ways the federal government assists "high-tech and defence" exporters. Kelleher explains how other federal programs, such as the Defence Industry Productivity Program and the Program for Export Market Development assist Canadian arms dealers.

After boasting that Canadian military exports to the U.S. "reached a level of 1.6 billion in 1985, an increase of 20 percent," Kelleher tells his audience about his government's other "priority countries for defence and high-tech product exports." He proudly announced that he's met with ministers in eight Pacific rim countries, including Indonesia and South Korea, to promote the sale of Canadian "defence and high-tech products."

"We will continue our efforts," Kelleher tells the business people and civil servants, "to increase market access, improve trade competitiveness and help you do more effective international marketing. But it is really up to you and your companies to develop your own export priorities and initiatives."

In doing so, the minister tells the assembled arms dealers, "you are acting on behalf of all Canadians, including your shareholders."

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