

# A suggestion for Canadian foreign policy in its defense of human rights

by Gregory Hamara

In analyzing how Canada views the conduct of human rights in other countries, a cynic would be tempted to recall a long-forgotten conversation between a journalist and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau following his state visit to the Soviet Union in 1971. The reporter asked Mr. Trudeau whether he had raised the issue of Ukrainian dissidents with Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev. Mr. Trudeau responded: "I didn't feel like bringing up any case which would have caused Mr. Kosygin or Mr. Brezhnev to say, 'Why should you put your revolutionaries in jail, and we not put ours?'"

Four years later, Mr. Trudeau, with leaders of the United States and 33 European countries gathered to ratify the Helsinki Accords on European Cooperation and Security. Suddenly Mr. Trudeau's comments of 1971 were no longer entirely viable. Basket III of the accords called upon signatory states to guarantee their citizens, among other things, the right to self-determination, free trade unions and religious freedom. And, perhaps equally important, the accords provided for a systematic review of those guarantees -- an opportunity for the signatory states to examine each others' compliance with the Helsinki provisions.

Canada's participation in the review talks -- first in Belgrade in 1977, and again, three years later at the now stalled Madrid talks -- reflects the manner in which this country has traditionally approached the issue of international human rights.

To properly understand Canada's policy on human rights, it is necessary to examine the development of Canadian foreign policy in the post-World War II era. Except for a fleeting three or four years following the war when this country was generally recognized as a major power (in the conventional sense of military and economic strength), Canadian foreign policy officials correctly calculated the extent to which Canada could expect to influence world events -- especially in an international atmosphere clouded by increasing Soviet-American tensions.

Officials charted a course by which influence would be best exerted by acting in a collective fashion along with other like-minded nations. The most obvious manifestation of this principle was Canada's participation in the early development and growth of the United Nations.

In terms of national security, Canada's interests were best served by inclusion in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; and later, in partnership with the United States in contributing to con-

tinental defense.

Likewise, Canada has contributed successfully in "de-empirizing" the Commonwealth, so that the present organization is merely a skeleton of its former self. Commonwealth conferences over the past quarter century have increasingly discussed the myriad of social and economic problems confronting many of its member states, especially those from the Third World.

Thus, the thrust of Canadian foreign policy over the past thirty-five years has been to institutionalize and multilateralize many of our dealings with the outside world. To appraise Canada's perception of the abuse of human rights elsewhere, it is essential to look at the world through a prism influenced by the dictates of global events beyond our direct control.

This approach rarely allows for unilateral action -- regardless of the degree of repression in other countries. To take a solitary position is simply contrary to the methods we have helped establish in easing human rights abuses.

One exception was the performance of former prime minister John Diefenbaker at the 1961 Commonwealth conference, when he called upon South Africa to either dismantle apartheid, or leave the organization. Yet even in this instance, Canada was

attempting a bold stand, confident of broad support of co-members.

The crystalization of Canada's policy towards violation of human rights abroad is best exemplified by its participation in the Helsinki process. Despite a thorough understanding of the abridgement of human rights in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (due, in part, to the steady lobbying of the government by expatriates), Canada has chosen the painstakingly slow process of institutionalized confrontation with the Soviet bloc. The Western alliance's impotence in dealing with the recent crackdown of civil liberties in Poland calls into question the effectiveness of the strictly institutional approach. Rhetoric currently reverberating from Madrid does little to secure the release of imprisoned Solidarity activists and sympathizers.

And, in all probability, imprisoned they shall remain, for the ideological differences which colour East-West perceptions of the nature of human rights allow little room for the accommodation of Western-style human freedoms. Talks, reviews and consultations ad nauseum, as Moscow and Washington wrestle to keep their allies in line.

Would Canada be any more successful in planting the seed of human freedoms if it suddenly jumped off the Western bandwagon? Probably not. This coun-

try could consider shifting its preoccupation from the increasingly volatile forum of Helsinki (where our efforts appear inextricably bound to the American-Soviet game of one-up-manship), to less-publicised, but equally abhorrent conditions elsewhere.

Conditions within many Central and South American nations quickly come to mind. Despite an eagerness to join other international bodies, Canada has historically refrained from embracing the Organization of American States, on the grounds that it simply flagshipped American interests in hemispheric affairs. Perhaps, in the interest of softening the hardline approach of many Latin American regimes to human rights, Canada would be wise to join the organization as a counter-weight to American support for these governments. Canada would not necessarily be a lone dove in this pursuit. Acting in concert with moderate states such as Mexico and Venezuela, it is not beyond the realm of the possible to exact change in countries more vulnerable to outside pressure than the nations of the Soviet bloc.

A possible alternative. But the question remains, of course, whether Mr. Trudeau would be willing to raise with the leaders of El Salvador, Chile and Argentina the issue of incarcerated "revolutionaries?"

## Monthly contraceptive also applicable to men

by Pardis Khavari

Nearly two to three weeks ago, one morning when I was anxious to make it to the library as soon as possible, the announcer of a local radio station started a commentary on new research conducted in California, research on a new contraceptive used once in a month rather than 28 times. To his absolute dismay and sorrow the new medication has yet to be reassessed by FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration) before it will be available to the general public. This will take nearly three years' time.

What a pity!?! That incident only had the effect of raising my blood pressure. However, when last week's Gazette also featured an article "Birth control on a monthly plan", the author telling each and every female reader: "...Prepare yourself for the packet

of pills that will be half the size (of the old ones) and will last a whole year", she effectively triggered a whole train of negative thought in my mind. I desperately wanted to believe that my guesses were wrong.

By digging out some papers previously studied and spending several hours of a Saturday afternoon in the library, to my discontent I proved my unprofessional guess very much correct.

Since approximately 1968 Dr. S.S. Yen and his co-researchers were intrigued by and actively involved in studies of the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis with specific references to the hormones associated with these glands.

The Journals of Clinical Endocrinology (and Metabolism) for the years 1968, 71, 72 and 74 provide a short list of several studies

on the Luteinizing hormone and specifically its releasing factor (synthetic and/or natural) in males and females. "Estrodial may be regarded as an important gonadal steroid in the regulation of hypothalamic-pituitary unit in men as well as in women" (Yen *et al* 1974). This is only a sample of the statements which appeared in the studies of these researchers.

From 1974 up to present there have been enough papers on this research to occupy a subject heading in the "Index Medicus" as a contraceptive for females. On the other hand, one quick look indicates that there is a great lack of male contraceptives, even simple physical means. In addition the research projects in this area are so few and far between that it makes one wonder about the so-called objectivity of scientific research. There are some

new developments such as the articles of Tcholakian *et al* 1978 or Heber *et al* 1980. But as far as male contraception is concerned there's "a long way to go, baby!"

The lack of male contraceptives would not matter so much, were it not for the clear evidence of severe side effects of existing oral contraceptives for women. Here are just a few points:

- The Journal of Medicine, Oct. 1981, mentions the carcinogenic effect of the pill (site-specific)
- The New England Journal of Medicine 1981 mentions the cardiovascular side effect of the pill
- The Urology Journal in the last six years has mentioned kidney and bladder failure resulting from oral contraceptives
- High blood pressure and blood clots, weight gain, morning sickness, water retention and depression are taken for granted.

If I recall correctly, at the time of the discovery of the birth control pill and its introduction to the market the only known side-effects were weight gain and water retention which could be corrected by diet. And I believe the discoverer never experienced any of these side effects. Of course the problems of medical complications for women who suffer from alcoholism or women who smoke were considered statistically insignificant. Talk of it!?! And who will say the side effects of this new wonder pill, which is already being experimentally administered, are less, and stand by it?

Sadly, even if several psychologists were to prove by scientific

means that marriages and other sexual relationships based on the sharing of pleasure and responsibility for birth control, would lead to longer lasting relationships and a more contented life, decrease social diseases such as mistrust, loneliness, and Saturday-night-blues syndrome, lots of people will still shrug their shoulders and turn their noses up at the finding. (I bet most of them will not be of the female gender.)

Therefore I cannot help but conclude that even though the article that appeared in the previous issue of the Gazette was seemingly objective, it only presented half the argument. Furthermore, my objection in general is to those researchers that divide humans into two groups: the specimens, on the one hand, and the researcher, on the other.

This article has not been written in defence of any particular ideology, religious and/or secular movement such as the women's liberation movement. It is only the opinion of a concerned individual. In my opinion, scientific objectivity and human conscience are the two leading elements that keep our researchers from causing drastic and irreversible damage to the human race. An eager and informed people may also be able to eliminate the chance of occurrence of any mistake in future. The best possible way to improve on the scientific discovery will be the objectivity of every individual toward the findings of the inhabitants of the "Ivory Tower".

## Dal photo to display artistry

Photographs depicting everything from "psychedelia to the sublime", the artistic offerings of Dal Photo, will be on display March 3rd for your viewing pleasure.

The 16 members of Dalhousie's photography department - most of them students - have been working overtime in their darkroom preparing a photo exhibition which will open March 3rd in the McInnes Room, then hit the road in a tour organizers hope will last into late summer.

Dal Photo members have prepared between 100 and 150 photo-

graphs for the exhibition, which includes black & white and colour prints, and a slide show coordinated by Mark Childerhose.

Representatives of Dal Photo will be on hand to answer questions about the exhibit and photography in general.

Photo director Chris Hartt hopes to see a lot of students out at the exhibit, which he sees as a rare opportunity for Dal Photo to display their art. "Up until now we've only had our photos up on our own walls and the ill-fated foray into the Grawood," he said.

After opening in the McInnes Room the exhibition is scheduled to travel to the Dalhousie Arts Centre, the Faculty Club, and the Maritime and Micmac Malls.

Dal Photo members come from all faculties at Dalhousie. Their office in the student union building is equipped for both studio and darkroom work.

The department is responsible for photographs required for any student union operation, with a major commitment to the Dalhousie Gazette and Pharos Yearbook.