

Veteran Canadian Diplomat Sent On Mission To Hanoi

By JAMES NELSON
OTTAWA (CP)—"They're not making diplomats like Chester Ronning any more."
That was the comment of an associate and admirer here on the 71-year-old retired ambassador's unheralded trip to Saigon and Hanoi, on the government's instructions to sound out both South and North Viet Nam on the possibility of a negotiated settlement of the war.
After long service as Canadian ambassador to China and subsequently to India, Mr. Ronning retired to his home in Camrose, Alta., but came out of retirement to make the pilgrimage to the Far East he knows and among people he understands as few westerners do.
He is expected to report to Prime Minister Pearson and External Affairs Minister Martin this week and then apparently return to retirement.
Mr. Ronning speaks Mandarin

fluently. He was born in China of Lutheran missionary parents from Norway and spent his early life and schooling there.
WAS OCF LEADER
Then he amassed a variety of training and experience which gave him a breadth of interests seldom found in one man in the diplomatic corps. He is a bachelor of science graduate of Minnesota University and was a soldier in the First World War, a school teacher, a member of the legislature and OCF leader in Alberta, and an air force squadron leader and intelligence officer in the Second World War.
He is erudite and knowledgeable on many subjects. By no means a back-slapper, he is affable in a quiet way, completely without side or any sense of discrimination.
"He is one of the few people anywhere who has a feeling for and understanding of the peo-

ple of Asia," said a senior officer of the external affairs department.
"He's a tall, shambling, white-haired guy who gets along well with everybody. But in an argument, he's impressive."
"If we didn't have men like him around, there just wouldn't be any hope."
AIMS AT TALKS
The mission to Saigon and Hanoi was to see if there is any chance of getting negotiations started between the warring sides in the Vietnamese conflict.
During his years on active duty in the diplomatic service, his personal views were pretty much kept to himself and he spoke only the policy line of his government.
On retirement two years ago, however, he came out strongly in favor of recognizing the Communist regime in China.
He was Canada's ambassador in Peking from late in the Second World War until 1949, staying on longer than other Western diplomats when the Communists took over.
POSTED TO NORWAY
Then he was posted to Norway and, in 1957, to India where he maintained a diplomatic line

open to China through the Red Chinese mission in New Delhi.
When former prime minister Diefenbaker visited India in 1958, Mr. Ronning and the Indian government had arranged a program to the prime minister's taste, including tiger hunting. Mr. Ronning and Mr. Diefenbaker found that though their backgrounds differed widely, they had common ground in their love of Western Canada and the great outdoors.
But Mr. Ronning is impressive, too, in the diplomatic conference room. He was a key figure in Canada's delegation to the 1961 Geneva conference, which set up the control commissions in Laos, Cambodia and Viet Nam, on which Canada serves with India and Poland.



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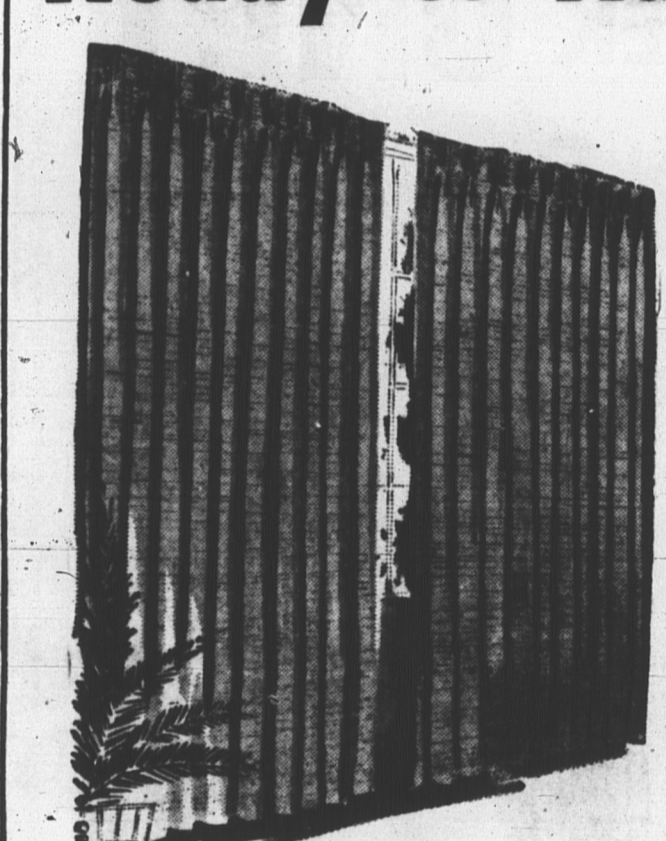
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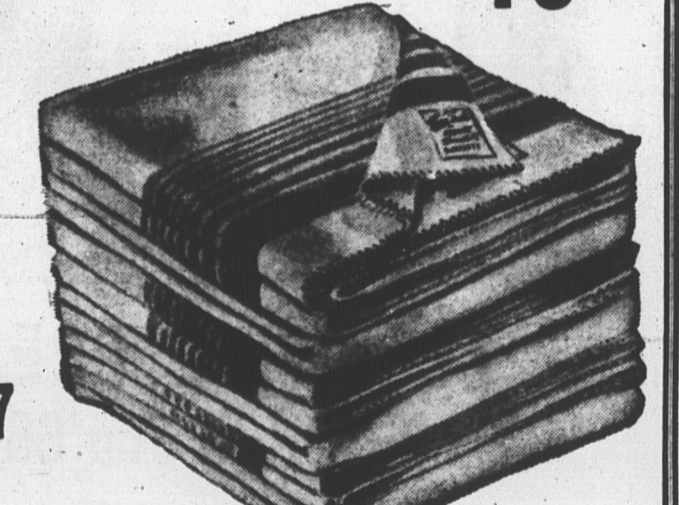
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