

A Vietcong General Assesses U.S. Soldier

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, March 15 — Lieut. Gen Tran Van Tra, the chief Vietcong delegate to the truce commission, said tonight that "Americans were good soldiers, but they fought the wrong war."

"They did not have the ideals our soldiers had," he added.

General Tra, a slight, intense man in a plain, baggy green uniform, spoke with newsmen at a reception this evening for Mitchell W. Sharp, Canada's Minister of External Affairs, who is on a

fact-finding tour in Vietnam. General Tra, considered the Vietcong's top military officer, had not previously spoken with newsmen since his arrival in Saigon six weeks ago.

Laughing and relaxed, General Tra said that the goal of last year's major Communist offensive "was to reach a political settlement and force the Americans out of Vietnam." Asked where the Vietcong's capital in South Vietnam was, General Tra smiled and said, "There are some things I cannot tell

you."

General Tra, who is believed to have been the architect of the Communists' Tet offensive in 1968 said he had been disappointed to find that Saigon had lost much of its charm. "The trees are gone, and the city has somehow lost its Vietnamese character," he said.

Asked how the Communists always seemed to know when and where B-52s bombers would strike, the General replied: "It is our country, the trees and the leaves are ours, we know everything."

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Laughing and relaxed, Tra said that the goal of last year's major Communist offensive "was to reach a political settlement and force the Americans out of Vietnam." Asked where the Vietcong's capital in South Vietnam is located, Tra simply smiled and said, "There are some things I cannot tell you."

Tra, who is believed to have been the architect of the Communists' 1968 Tet offensive, said he had been disappointed to find that Sai-

gon had lost much of its former charm. "The trees are gone, and the city has somehow lost its Vietnamese character," he said.

Although U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker stood chatting with Canadian officials next to Tra, the two former antagonists did not greet each other. Saigon's foreign minister, Tran Van Lam, also avoided speaking with Tra.

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