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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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The Enduring Reputation of the Bertrand Russell War Crimes Tribunal, and Ho Chi Minh's Contribution to the Spectacle, 1964-1967

The author pays tribute to the extraordinary audacity of Bertrand Russell and Ho Chi Minh to create a transnational war crimes tribunal to try the United States government and some of its allies for crimes against the people of Vietnam and Laos through bombardment of innocent civilians, schools, hospitals, and villages. That the tribunal successfully held hearings in Stockholm, Denmark, and Japan stands testament to a massive global antiwar upsurge in the 1960s, and signposts the continuing relevance of war crimes trials.

Sixty years ago, Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), began collaborating with the British philosopher, mathematician and antiwar activist, Bertrand Russell, to bring the United States and its regional allies before the International War Crimes Tribunal to face charges of war crimes.¹ At the time, in 1964

Russell was 92 years old, sprightly and sharp witted, and 18 years older than Ho Chi Minh who was 74 and equally alert and in command of his Vietnam Workers Party as its chairman, and head of state.

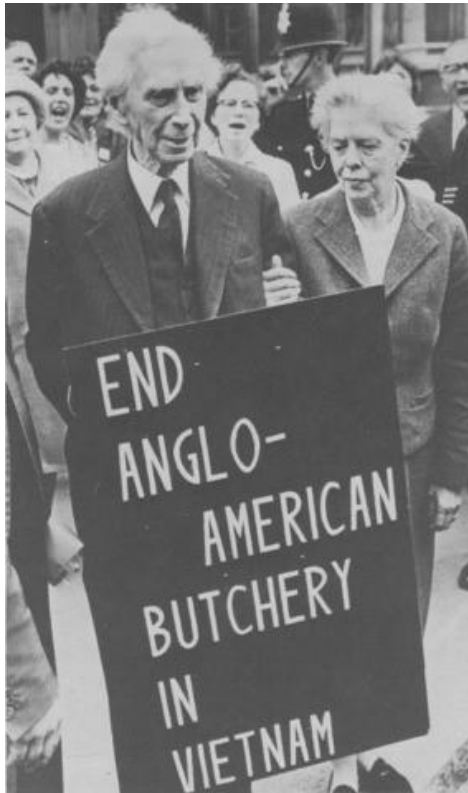
Soon after Russell created his two foundations—the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation and the Atlantic Peace Foundation—in September 1963, he began looking for funding. In January 1964, he wrote to Tran Viet Dung, the London-based representative of the Hanoi weekly, *Cuu Quoc*, requesting money to help run the foundations, and asking him to suggest the names of others who might support the foundations financially.² The Atlantic Foundation, a registered charity, was to conduct research necessary for the work of the BRPF, which was a limited company. Russell explained that these foundations were necessary because antiwar movements had “lived from hand to mouth” and had to beg “the press and film media for a crumb of publicity.”³ The BRPF aimed to investigate the causes of the Cold War, and pursue measures to diminish and eliminate the risk of nuclear and conventional war. UN Secretary-General U Thant endorsed the effort, which appeared

¹ Russell to Ho, August 17, 1963, Bertrand Russell Archives (BRA), 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61, McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada. Also see, Harish C. Mehta, *People’s Diplomacy of Vietnam: Soft Power in the Resistance War, 1965–1972* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020); Harish C. Mehta, “Restoring Agency to Informal Diplomats in Narratives of the Vietnam War,” *History Compass*, June 25, 2015; and Harish C. Mehta, “North Vietnam’s Informal Diplomacy with Bertrand Russell: Peace Activism and the International War Crimes Tribunal,” *Peace & Change* 37, no. 1 (2012): 64–94.

² Letter, Russell to Tran Viet Dung, January 3, 1964, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (December 1966), Box 10.5.

³ Statement by Bertrand Russell at Television Interview and Press Conference on Launching of Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation and Atlantic Peace Foundation, September 29, 1963, Peace (Bertrand Russell), Box 3, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library (LBJ), Austin, Texas.

to institutionalize the crusade for peace that Russell had been conducting for many decades.



Bertrand and Edith Russell demonstrating against the war outside the House of Commons in London on June 30, 1965. Photo by the courtesy of the Bertrand Russell Archive, McMaster University.

The sixty-year-old collaboration between Russell and Ho Chi Minh is a crucially important signpost of people's power speaking up against the use of excessive military force against civilians—and brings up the idea of the Civilian Enemy. The awareness of war crimes developed at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, a time when international humanitarian law, or the law of armed conflict, was written—even though the prohibition on excessive

military violence can be traced back many centuries.⁴ The Hague Conventions, adopted in 1899 and 1907, banned warring parties from using certain means and methods of warfare.

The laws against the use of excessive military power certainly exist, but most often they are not enforced. The Geneva Convention of 1864, and the four 1949 Geneva Conventions and the two 1977 Additional Protocols, aim to protect persons not—or no longer—taking part in hostilities. The Hague Law and Geneva Law identify several of the violations of its norms, but not all, as war crimes. There is not one single document in international law that codifies all war crimes. All the Member States of the United Nations have ratified the 1949 Geneva Conventions, but the Additional Protocols and other international humanitarian law treaties have not attained the same level of acceptance.

The Ho-Russell Partnership to Create the International War Crimes Tribunal

In November 1964, Russell asked Ho Chi Minh to become a financial sponsor of the BRPF, explaining that the funds would help the foundation to influence public opinion in the West, particularly in the United States.⁵ Ho Chi Minh believed the idea was a good one, but he argued that it would be inappropriate to have his name advertised on the foundation's letterhead as an official sponsor because the DRV's communism could become a liability in the foundation's work in the West. Russell replied that he recognized these dangers, and he assured Ho Chi Minh that he would publicly defend against any criticism the

⁴ "War Crimes," Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/war-crimes.shtml>

⁵ Letter, Russell to Ho, November 1964, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61; and Letter, Russell to Ho, December 30, 1964, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.

DRV's right to struggle against the American intervention. Ho Chi Minh still declined to become an official sponsor of the foundation, but at the very least, Russell managed to secure his financial support.⁶ Ho Chi Minh initially gave 20,000 NF (New Francs) to support the foundation's efforts to urge President Johnson to negotiate a settlement to end the war.⁷ In addition, he contributed 30,000 NF to help organize the war crimes tribunal.⁸ In total, Ho Chi Minh contributed 50,000 NF (equivalent to US\$10,200), and more than double that amount on financing the visits of the IWCT's investigators to Vietnam, which makes the DRV a significant contributor to the foundation and the tribunal.⁹ In comparison, Pakistan's President Ayub Khan contributed a total of 7,750 British pounds (equivalent to US\$21,700 at prevailing exchange rates in 1964-1966), to help Russell run the foundation's peace activism, and to publish its journal, *The Spokesman*.¹⁰ King Faisal Al Saud of Saudi Arabia

⁶ Letter, Russell to Ho, February 8, 1965, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.

⁷ Letter, Russell to Ho, March 3, 1965, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.

⁸ Telegram, Ho to Russell, August 2, 1966, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (December 1966), Box 10.5; and Letter, Russell to Ho, August 12, 1966, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (December 1966), Box 10.5.

⁹ For exchange rates, see International Monetary Statistics, International Monetary Fund, www.imfstatistics.org/imf Accessed on November 5, 2008. One US dollar was worth 4.902 French New Francs in 1965, and 4.914 French New Francs in 1966.

¹⁰ See, Pacific Exchange Rate Service, University of British Columbia, Sauder School of Business, <http://fx.sauder.ubc.ca/etc/GBPpages.pdf> Accessed on August 19 2009. One British Pound was worth 2.80 US Dollars from 1964-1966. Also see, Letter, Bertrand Russell to President Ayub Khan, August 14, 1964; Letter, Ralph Schoenman to High Commissioner of Pakistan in London, October 27, 1964, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Box 1.59; and Letter, A. Hilaly to Bertrand Russell, March 3, 1966, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Box 1.59.

made a one-time contribution of 1,000 British pounds in July 1965 to help the BRPF.¹¹ The ruler of Bahrain, Shaikh Isa bin Sulman al Khalifah, and President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia made small financial contributions in August and November 1964, respectively.¹²

Russell first broached the idea of a tribunal, not with the DRV as one might expect, but with the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLFSVN) because the South Vietnamese revolutionaries were the principal combatants in the struggle to liberate their homeland. In July and September of 1965, members of the NLF central committee, Ma Thi Chu and Dinh Ba Thi, and South Vietnamese journalist Pham Van Chuong, met several times with Russell's representative Ralph Schoenman, a leftist American, who was educated at Princeton University and the London School of Economics.¹³ At these meetings Schoenman conveyed Russell's idea of a war crimes tribunal, and the NLF agreed to cooperate and assist in the tribunal.

The NLF and the DRV welcomed the plan to form a tribunal. In February 1966, Schoenman met with Ho Chi Minh and Dong in Hanoi. They agreed that the foundation would create the International War Crimes Tribunal, and that the DRV would make available evidence in its possession, including exhibits of weapons used against the people of Vietnam. Witnesses and victims would also testify before the tribunal. Ho

¹¹ Letter, King Faisal Al Saud to Bertrand Russell, undated; Letter, Russell to King Faisal, January 6, 1966; and Letter, Hafiz Wahba, Ambassador, Saudi Arabia to Russell, July 16, 1965, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Box 1.59.

¹² Russell's papers do not mention the amounts contributed by Bahrain and Zambia. Letter, Personal Secretary, Ruler of Bahrain to Russell, August 4, 1964 to Russell, BRA, 650, Heads of State Box 1.57; and Letter, Schoenman to President Kenneth Kaunda, November 17, 1964, BRA, 650, Heads of State, 1.61.

¹³ Summary Report of Series of Meetings, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (December 1966), Box 10.5.

Chi Minh agreed to host investigating teams and furnish the necessary facilities in North Vietnam.¹⁴

In July 1966, Russell informed Ho Chi Minh that the IWCT would hold hearings in Paris the following year to put the United States on trial for the war crimes it had committed in Vietnam.¹⁵ Prominent personalities who had agreed to serve on the tribunal included the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, French feminist Simone de Beauvoir, former Mexican President Lazaro Cardenas, Italian social activist Danilo Dolci (the “Gandhi of Sicily”), Italian communist Lelio Basso, German playwright Peter Weiss, British historian Isaac Deutscher, and the American antiwar activist David Dellinger. Stokely Carmichael pledged to hold a meeting of the national council of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to support the tribunal.¹⁶

The tribunal’s organizers agreed to create five separate commissions to investigate the various legal and humanitarian dimensions of the war crimes: (1) Violation of international agreements; (2) use of experimental weapons such as toxic gas and chemicals; (3) bombardment of civilian areas such as sanatoria, schools, hospitals, and dykes; (4) torture and mutilation of prisoners; and (5) use of forced labor camps, mass executions, and genocidal actions against the population of South Vietnam. The commissions were to report to the tribunal until the war crimes hearings began in May 1967.

¹⁴ “Summary Report of Meeting between Ho, Pham Van Dong and Russell’s representatives,” BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (December 1966), Box 10.5.

¹⁵ Caroline Moorehead: *Bertrand Russell: A Life* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1992), 529.

¹⁶ Letter, Russell to Ho, July 20, 1966, BRA, 650, Heads of State, Vietnam (Democratic Republic), File 71, Box 1.61.

Russell's Campaign Against U.S. War Policies

Russell's frequent letters irritated the Johnson Administration in part because Russell did not restrict his complaints to the sole issue of Vietnam. In a letter to LBJ in December 1963, Russell urged the United States to improve relations with Cuba. He informed Johnson about the formation of his two peace foundations and asked the president to support them.¹⁷ Johnson's national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy, brushed Russell off with the comment that surely he would have seen from the president's public statements the strength and depth of his commitment to building peace.¹⁸ On January 6, 1964, Russell complained to Johnson about rumors in the *New York Herald Tribune* that the United States was planning to invade Cuba.¹⁹ The White House denied these allegations.²⁰

Nonetheless, Russell concentrated his efforts in trying to persuade the United States to seek a peaceful solution to the Vietnam question. Russell met and corresponded with David Bruce, the American Ambassador to Britain, in order to impress upon him the urgency of reconvening the fourteen-nation Geneva Conference on Vietnam. During their meeting in London on July 20, 1964 Russell complained that the United States was thwarting efforts to reconvene the conference.²¹ The

¹⁷ Letter, Russell to Johnson, December 21, 1963, Peace (Bertrand Russell), Box 3, LBJ Library.

¹⁸ Letter, McGeorge Bundy to Russell, January 8, 1964, Peace (Bertrand Russell), Box 3, LBJ Library.

¹⁹ Letter, Russell to Johnson, January 6, 1964, White House Central File, Name File, Russell, Bertrand, Box R 339, LBJ Library.

²⁰ Letter, Bromley Smith to Russell, January 27, 1964, White House Central File, Name File, Russell, Bertrand, Box R 339, LBJ Library.

²¹ "Impartial Report on Meeting of Bertrand Russell and Others with the United States Ambassador in London, Mr. David Bruce," July 20, 1964, BRA II, 320, World Affairs, Vietnam Correspondence (February 9, 1965), File 178, Box 9.55.

majority of the people of South Vietnam wanted to remain neutral and not aligned to either the United States or the Soviet Union, Russell insisted, but they were being blocked by the United States.²² Russell believed that “the destruction of the Geneva Agreements, the support of a dictatorship [in South Vietnam], the establishment of a police state, and the destruction of all its opponents were intolerable crimes.”²³ British Labour Party Member of Parliament William Warbey, who was present at the meeting, claimed that civilians in South Vietnam disliked the Ngo Dinh Diem regime and its successor. Ambassador Bruce reported these comments to the State Department, in keeping with his practice to routinely keep Washington informed about Russell’s activities.²⁴

In order to deny Russell publicity, the State Department advised the White House not to respond to Russell’s cables and letters to President Johnson. Though he rarely received a reply, Russell did not stop writing to the White House. In August 1964, Russell requested that the United States halt further attacks on North Vietnam because world opinion backed U.N. Secretary General U Thant’s request to reconvene the Geneva Conference.²⁵ The State Department advised McGeorge Bundy not to reply to Russell’s cables of October 1964 calling for amnesty for

²² Secretary of Defense McNamara believed that the NLF’s “public pronouncements of a neutral solution” were “pure propaganda.” He argued that American officials did not take “neutrality” seriously because Hanoi and the NLF would not permit a neutral South Vietnam to exist. See, Robert S. McNamara, James G. Blight, Robert Kendall Brigham, Thomas J. Biersteker, and Herbert Y. Schandler, *Argument Without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999), 101.

²³ Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, 1944-1969* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), 243.

²⁴ Cable, David Bruce to State Department, July 16, 1961, Berlin Crisis, Item No: BC02178, Digital National Security Archive; David Bruce Diaries, October 28, 1962, Cuban Missile Crisis, CC01623, Digital National Security Archive.

²⁵ Telegram, Russell to Johnson, August 6, 1964, National Security-Defense (EX ND 19/CO 230), Box 214, LBJ Library.

three South Vietnamese high school students who faced the death penalty for attempting to kill American officials. The department reminded Bundy that British professor P. J. Honey had already successfully countered Russell's earlier attacks on U.S. policy in Vietnam, which was much more effective in "deflating Russell's line" than official American statements.²⁶ Russell again wrote in November 1964, imploring Johnson to show compassion for the Vietnamese people.²⁷ In a strongly worded letter to Johnson in February 1965, Russell warned that the American bombardment of North Vietnam would be condemned at the United Nations, and would trigger worldwide protests.²⁸ The White House replied that his letter had been added to many other opinions received at the White House, obviously a snub implying that Russell was going to be ignored.²⁹

The International War Crimes Tribunal Starts

The effort to deny Russell publicity was only partially successful because the war crimes tribunal proved to be an irresistible topic for the mainstream media. On August 3, 1966, newspapers announced that a tribunal headed by Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre would try President Johnson, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and Secretary of Defense Robert

²⁶ Telegram, Russell to Johnson, October 29, 1964, GEN CO 312, 9.1.64, Box 83, LBJ Library; and Memo, Benjamin H. Read to McGeorge Bundy, January 21, 1965, National Security Defense (EX ND 19/CO 230), Box 214, LBJ Library.

²⁷ Telegram, Russell to Johnson, November 27, 1964, National Security-Defense (EX ND 19/CO 230), Box 214, LBJ Library.

²⁸ Letter, Russell to Johnson, February 9, 1965, National Security-Defense (GEN ND 19/CO 312, 2.24.65, Box 235, LBJ Library.

²⁹ Letter, Chester L. Cooper to Russell, February 24, 1965, National Security-Defense (GEN ND 19/CO 312, 2.24.65, Box 235, LBJ Library.



McNamara as “war criminals” for their policies toward Vietnam.³⁰ The judges would make their decision based on the testimony of hundreds of witnesses and complete scientific data on chemicals used in U.S. military operations.³¹

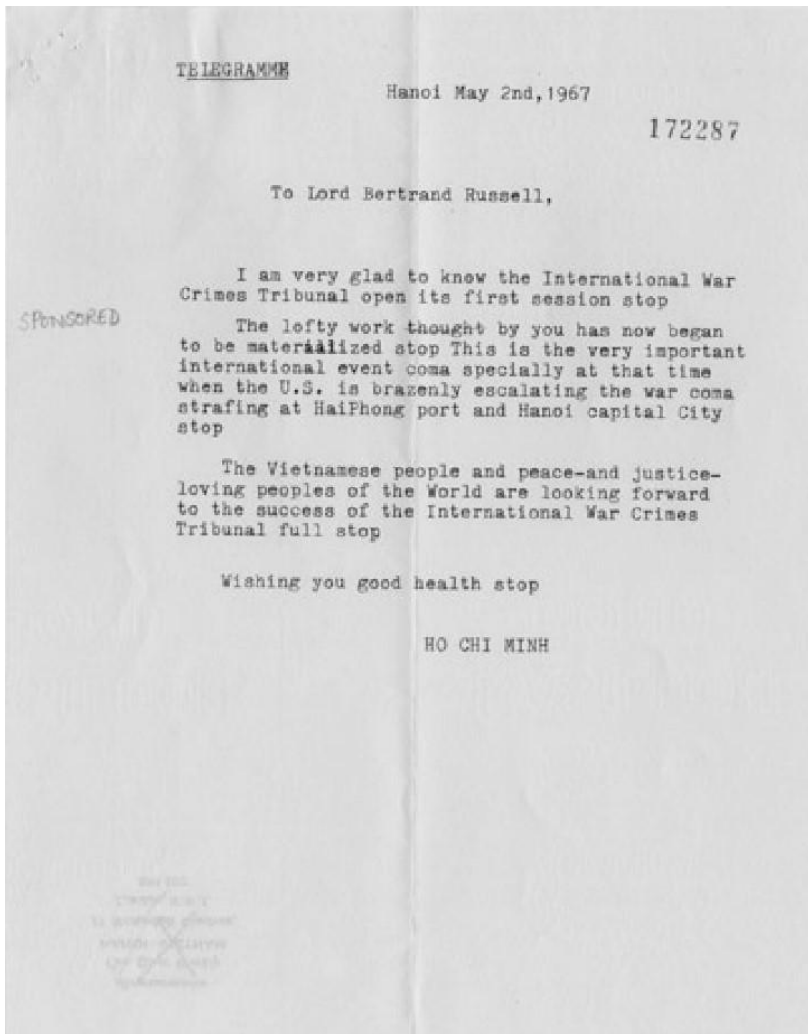
On August 25, 1966 Russell wrote a long and strongly worded letter to Johnson, arguing for the validity and credibility of the war crimes tribunal.³² By McNamara’s own admission, he pointed out, the United States had dropped more bombs on Vietnam than in Korea and the Second World War. Russell charged that the United States had used chemical weapons, poison gas, napalm, phosphorus, and fragmentation bombs against hospitals, schools, villages, and sanatoria. He remonstrated that the North Vietnamese had not bombed one school or village in the United States, or occupied any part of the United States. Because the Vietnamese air force could not possibly check the American bombardment of agricultural land, villages, and towns, the Vietnam War

³⁰ “Sartre on Panel Named to ‘Try’ U.S. Leaders,” August 3, 1966, *New York Times*. The tribunal included Russell as Honorary President, Sartre as Executive President, and historian Vladimir Dedijer as Chairman of Sessions. After dropouts and new additions, the tribunal members included: political scientist Wolfgang Abendroth, writer Gunther Anders, Turkish parliamentarian Mehmet Ali Aybar, American novelist James Baldwin, Italian parliamentarian Lelio Basso, writer Simone de Beauvoir, former Mexican President Lazaro Cardenas, SNCC chairman Stokely Carmichael, General Secretary of the Scottish National Union of Mineworkers Lawrence Daly, American activist and editor of *Liberation* David Dellinger, historian Isaac Deutscher, lawyer Haika Grossman, Philippine poet laureate Amado Hernandez, chairperson of the Cuban Committee for Solidarity with Vietnam Melba Hernandez, Pakistani Supreme Court lawyer Mahmud Ali Kasuri, Swedish author Sara Lidman, Vice-Chairman of the Japanese Civil Liberties Union Kinju Morikawa, former Students for a Democratic Society President Carl Oglesby, physics professor Shoichi Sakata, French mathematician Laurent Schwartz, and playwright Peter Weiss.

³¹ Telegram, Russell to Johnson, October 29, 1964, GEN CO 312, 9.1.64, Box 83, LBJ Library; and Memo, Benjamin H. Read to McGeorge Bundy, January 21, 1965, National Security Defense (EX ND 19/CO 230), Box 214, LBJ Library.

³² Letter, Russell to Johnson, August 25, 1966, White House Central File, Name File, Russell, Bertrand, Box R 339, LBJ Library.

was beginning to resemble the fascist aggression in the Second World War. Consequently, solemn proceedings were needed to weigh evidence of crimes committed by the United States against the Vietnamese people. Russell cited U.S. Justice Robert Jackson's comment at Nuremberg that crimes of such magnitude required the application of international law against the aggressor.



Ho Chi Minh welcomes the International War Crimes Tribunal in this telegram to Russell. Photo by the courtesy of the Bertrand Russell Archive, McMaster University.

Russell invited Johnson to appear before the tribunal in his own defense to answer the evidence and eyewitness testimony concerning the atrocities carried out on Johnson's instructions. Should Johnson be unwilling to appear personally, Russell requested him to appoint persons who would defend the actions of the U.S. government. Russell maintained that the tribunal drew legitimacy not only from its public mandate, and the eminence and international character of its members, but also from its solemn antecedent in the Nuremberg trials. Russell again quoted Justice Jackson: "If certain acts and violation of treaties are crimes, they are crimes whether the United States does them or whether Germany does them." Not surprisingly, the Johnson Administration ignored these demands as it considered the tribunal a farce on par with the Soviet "show trials" of 1936.

The U.S. Disinformation Campaign against the International War Crimes Tribunal

Nonetheless, U.S. officials worried about the trial's impact.³³ Beginning in July 1966, the U.S. government organized an extensive intelligence and diplomatic program to discredit Russell, the tribunal, and its staff, and to persuade tribunal officials to withdraw from the proceedings. The disinformation campaign was conducted by an interagency group headed by Undersecretary of State George Ball, and composed of officials from the Central Intelligence Agency, State Department, United States Information Agency, and Department of Defense.³⁴ The government also

³³ *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships, Part IV: July 1965–January 1968*, United States, Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 433.

³⁴ For more on the U.S. government's efforts to create propaganda, particularly the foreign initiatives of USIA, see Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989*;

explored legal avenues but decided that defamation action should not be attempted because any suit against those involved in the “mock trial would itself result in very unfavorable publicity” for the United States at home and abroad.³⁵ The disinformation campaign, which was conducted overseas, does not appear to be connected to COINTELPRO (Counterintelligence Program), a domestic surveillance campaign designed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to neutralize the American antiwar movement. But the spirit of the effort was the same, namely to discredit critics of America’s effort in Vietnam.³⁶

In early August 1966, George Ball met with McNamara’s assistant Adam Yarmolinsky, to discuss what to do about the tribunal. Yarmolinsky, who agreed that the tribunal “could hurt us a good deal in Europe and Asia,” suggested that a private U.S. lawyer defend the Johnson administration. Ball, however, did not want to dignify the tribunal with official American participation. He recommended that the U.S. government promote a “competing trial” through the International

Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2004); Alvin A. Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation: American Propaganda, Soviet Lies, and the Winning of the Cold War* (New York: Arcade, 1995); Leo Bogart, *Cool Words, Cold War: A New Look at USIA's Premises for Propaganda* (Washington, DC: American University Press, 1995); Walter L. Hixon, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York: St. Martin's, 1977); John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969); and *Propaganda and the Cold War: A Princeton University Symposium*, ed. John Boardman Whitton (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1963).

³⁵ *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships, Part IV: July 1965-January 1968*, 433.

³⁶ For more on COINTELPRO (or Counterintelligence Program), see, Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Cointelpro Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990); James Kirkpatrick Davis, *Assault on the Left: The FBI and the Sixties Antiwar Movement* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997); and James Kirkpatrick Davis, *Spying on America: The FBI's Domestic Counterintelligence Program* (New York: Praeger, 1992).

Committee of Jurists at the Hague. U.S. Embassy officials in Stockholm began exploring a plan to conduct a rival trial. Meanwhile, the interagency group directed the CIA to prepare dossiers on the various persons involved in the trial, as well as members and staff of the Russell foundation.³⁷

In late August, Ball told President Johnson that the interagency group was “quietly exploring” with British and French government officials what legal steps could be taken to “forestall this spectacle.” He added that the interagency group also planned to “stimulate press articles criticizing the ‘trials’ and detailing the unsavory and leftwing background of the organizers and judges.”³⁸

The State Department instructed U.S. ambassadors in Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, Senegal, Tanzania, and Zambia to warn the leaders of each country that “his name is being misused to circulate pro-communist, anti-American propaganda.” The ambassadors were also directed to explain that the Russell foundation “has been captured by a group of extreme left wingers of the pro-Chicom [Chinese communist] stripe,” including “American citizens who are using the ninety-four-year-old Russell’s name, perhaps without his full comprehension.”³⁹ Ball told Johnson that he would speak to the British Home Secretary about this issue. Ball also promised to ask Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas to press his friend, the cellist Pablo Casals, into withdrawing from the tribunal. Although Casals did not participate in the tribunal, it remains unclear whether he withdrew because of American pressure.

³⁷ Telcon, Ball and Yarmolinsky, Ball Telcons, August 5, 1966, LBJ Library.

³⁸ *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships, Part IV: July 1965–January 1968*, 434.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 434.

The announcement of the tribunal alerted defenders of Johnson's Vietnam policies. Morris I. Leibman, a senior partner in the Chicago law firm Leibman, Williams, Bennett, Baird, and Minow, who also served as a civilian aide-at-large to the Secretary of the Army, offered to defend the administration.⁴⁰ Dan B. Jacobs, a speechwriter to the Democratic candidate for governor of New York, feared that the Russell trial would become "a propaganda circus" that could have a negative impact in Europe, particularly among intellectuals. Jacobs and CIA official Cord Meyer proposed setting up a "small private project" to present the other side of the story. Under this plan, a small non-governmental project would be established to bring politicians from South Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and a few dissidents from North Vietnam to present the war from their perspective. The Russell tribunal, he argued, would be reluctant to refuse them the right to testify. If they were denied entrance to the proceedings, they could stand outside in the corridors talking to television reporters, or they could hold daily press conferences.⁴¹ The NSC rejected this proposal as ineffective. NSC official D.W. Ropa told Rostow in December 1966 that bringing politicians from South Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand to testify at the Russell tribunal would not be sufficient to counter the damaging impact of the IWCT. The plan to provide alternative witnesses would be ineffective, in Ropa's view, because the tribunal would be stacked with Russell's supporters. Instead, Ropa proposed that a seminar be held in the same city where the tribunal would be located, to bring together prominent Vietnamese officials who

⁴⁰ Letter, Morris I. Leibman to Walt W. Rostow, August 16, 1966, White House Central File, Name File, Russell, Bertrand, Box R 339, LBJ Library.

⁴¹ Letter, Dan B. Jacobs to William Connell, November 19, 1966, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, The Bertrand Russell 'Trial,' Box 191, LBJ Library; and Memo, William Connell to Rostow, December 2, 1966, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, The Bertrand Russell 'Trial,' Box 191, LBJ Library.

supported the United States' objectives in Vietnam. This seminar could "hopefully blunt the tribunal's propaganda edge."⁴² Ropa urged Rostow to request the CIA to develop a broader range of options using the expertise of the 303 Committee, a special interagency body created in 1964 to oversee covert operations. Most of the documents pertaining to the countermeasures against the IWCT have not yet been declassified, so the details of this project are unclear. The circumstantial evidence, however, suggests that the plan was somewhat successful.

In November 1966, three African presidents and a monarch who had been the sponsors of the BRPF resigned from the war crimes trial: Senegal's Leopold Senghor, Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda, Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, and Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie. Russell complained that these leaders had withdrawn because of "intolerable pressure" from the United States.⁴³ Russell claimed that one of the African leaders who had resigned had sent him a photocopy of a letter that Russell had sent to President Johnson at the White House, inviting him to appear before the tribunal, thereby establishing a connection between LBJ and the African leader. Russell argued this was "a piece of clumsiness which even the Central Intelligence Agency must have deplored."⁴⁴ At this time, Russell considered the CIA "a vast international agency of subversion."⁴⁵

Other signs point to White House interference in the establishment of the tribunal. The Pakistan government of Ayub Khan publicly condemned the war crimes tribunal, even though Khan had

⁴² Memo, D.W. Ropa to Rostow, December 12, 1966, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, The Bertrand Russell 'Trial,' Box 191, LBJ Library.

⁴³ Memo, State Department to Johnson, February 17, 1967, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, The Bertrand Russell 'Trial,' Box 191, LBJ Library.

⁴⁴ Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, 1944-1969*, 245.

⁴⁵ "A Communication," February 1966, *Frontier*, BRA II, 320, Box 9.50.

donated money to the Russell Foundation, and Indian President Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan disassociated himself from the campaign.⁴⁶ The Sicilian social reformer Danilo Dolci also withdrew as one of the 12 judges on the tribunal in November 1966, saying he would be busy with his work at home.⁴⁷

U.S. efforts to undermine the tribunal included attempts to influence the press. In August 1966, a State Department official approached a *New York Times* reporter to suggest running a story on Ralph Schoenman, an American citizen, in the hope of discrediting the foundation's staff. Schoenman's activism annoyed officials because he openly espoused anti-American and pro-communist views. Schoenman's activities were regularly reported in the American press: British authorities frequently arrested him for unlawful assembly, and the United States imposed travel restrictions on him following his visit to China in July 1963 to discuss Russell's plans to mediate the Sino-Indian border dispute.⁴⁸ In a colorful piece, the *New York Times* alleged that Schoenman harbored a "deeply neurotic hatred of his native land," and charged that his "controversial style may be classified as the Extreme Hysterical."⁴⁹ Alleging that Russell had fallen under the influence of Schoenman, the article argued that Russell must be held responsible for his words and deeds because Russell did believe Schoenman's views, and was not just "a mindless puppet."⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Memo, State Department to Johnson, February 17, 1967, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, The Bertrand Russell 'Trial,' Box 191, LBJ Library.

⁴⁷ "Dolci Resigns as War Crimes 'Judge'," November 16, 1966, *Daily Mail*.

⁴⁸ "U.S. Curbs Russell's Aide," July 24, 1964, *New York Times*; "U.S. Aide of Russell Arrested," February 1, 1965, *New York Times*; and "Russell Aide Detained at Airport by French," January 12, 1967, *New York Times*.

⁴⁹ *New York Times*, February 19, 1967.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Judging by the regular appearance of newspaper stories criticizing Russell, the Johnson administration's character assassination campaign appears to have partially succeeded. In January 1967, Joseph Califano, the special presidential assistant, sent Johnson a poem by Ogden Nash, "You are Old, Father Bertrand," in which the poet condemned Russell for the trial.⁵¹ The poem echoed the pejorative comments in many American newspaper editorials that Russell was both judge and jury even though the tribunal and its investigative teams were drawn from Nobel Prize winners as well as prominent literary figures, scholars, medical doctors, and chemists. A *New York Times Magazine* article by British journalist Bernard Levin, which severely criticized Russell, also appears suspicious. Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach sent President Johnson a copy of the article with the gleeful comment that the administration had provided the background.⁵² In his article, Levin criticized Russell for having "turned into a full-time purveyor of political garbage indistinguishable from the routine products of the Soviet machine." Russell had allegedly "sunk to defending—not just denying or minimizing, but actively defending—the atrocities of the Viet Cong in Vietnam."⁵³ Many American journalists enjoyed making fun of Russell. Writing in the *New York Times Magazine*, Levin denigrated Russell as "an old man in a hurry, who had left judgment, his reputation, and his usefulness behind."⁵⁴ C.L. Sulzberger ridiculed Russell soon after the opening session of the tribunal in

⁵¹ Memo, Joseph Califano to Johnson, January 12, 1967, National Security-Defense (EX ND 19/CO 312), 10.1.66, Box 223, LBJ Library.

⁵² Memo, Katzenbach to Johnson, February 17, 1967, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, LBJ Library.

⁵³ Bernard Levin, "Bertrand Russell: Prosecutor, Judge and Jury," February 19, 1967, *New York Times Magazine*.

⁵⁴ Bernard Levin, *New York Times Magazine*, February 19, 1967.

Stockholm: “If a medieval Moorish king died on the eve of battle, retainers would dress up his stiffened corpse, bind it astride a warhorse, and lead it against the enemy to encourage the troops.” Sulzberger asserted that “the relic of Bertrand Russell” was “led into battle as a totem from the extreme Left.”⁵⁵

Washington’s hand also appeared in the difficulties that Russell experienced in trying to find a location for the tribunal. The tribunal sessions could not be held in Paris, as originally planned, because the French government denied permission. President Charles de Gaulle told Sartre that the tribunal would not be allowed to meet in Paris because justice could only be dispensed by the state, and the IWCT intended to usurp that authority by issuing a verdict. Though de Gaulle did not mention it, it was clear that he did not wish to risk further deterioration of Franco-U.S. relations by offering Paris as a pulpit to the tribunal.⁵⁶ Next, Russell approached the British government about his plan to hold the tribunal in London, and to provide visas to North Vietnamese witnesses. Prime Minister Wilson, unwilling to cause offense to Washington, told Russell that not only would the one-sided character of the tribunal make peace-making efforts in Vietnam more difficult, but it was also not in the national interest to hold the tribunal in London.⁵⁷

The trial organizers finally turned to Stockholm, the Swedish capital, even though the Swedish government had indicated it was likely to refuse.⁵⁸ U.S. Embassy diplomats in Stockholm had warned Swedish

⁵⁵ C.L. Sulzberger, *Sacramento Bee*, May 17, 1967.

⁵⁶ Arthur Jay Klinghoffer and Judith Apter Klinghoffer, *International Citizens' Tribunals: Mobilizing Public Opinion to Advance Human Rights* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 121.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ “Swedish Note to Russell,” December 12, 1966, Agence France-Press.

officials that the tribunal would have an adverse effect on U.S.-Sweden relations and serve to harden Hanoi's position toward negotiations.⁵⁹ Despite these pressures, Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander agreed to allow the tribunal to be held in Stockholm after its organizers promised that the mock trial would be restricted to presenting the facts about American activities in Vietnam, and would neither assume the character of a courtroom nor accuse any private person of a crime.⁶⁰

The head of the tribunal, Jean-Paul Sartre, wrote to Secretary of State Rusk in May 1967 to remind him that Russell had not received a reply to his invitation to President Johnson and other U.S. officials to attend the hearings. Sartre invited Rusk, or his designated representatives, to testify because it would help the tribunal in arriving at the truth about the charges of war crimes in Vietnam.⁶¹ Rusk rejected these invitations with the sarcastic comment that he had no intention of "playing games with a ninety-four-year-old Briton." Sartre shot back that Rusk's effort to "ridicule a great old man" did no honor to the United States.⁶²

To counter the negative publicity generated by the Russell tribunal, the Swedish Free Asia Committee, a non-government organization, tried to organize a rival hearing in Stockholm on May 10,

⁵⁹ Cable, American Embassy Stockholm to Secretary of State, April 25, 1967, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, The Bertrand Russell 'Trial,' Box 191, LBJ Library.

⁶⁰ Sam Hall, Reuters, April 27, 1967; and "Swedish official view as to Russell's 'Vietnam war crimes tribunal'," Royal Swedish Government statement, April 26, 1967, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, The Bertrand Russell 'Trial,' Box 191, LBJ Library.

⁶¹ Letter, Sartre to Rusk, May 3, 1967, *Against the Crime of Silence: Proceedings of the Russell International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffel (New York: O'Hare, 1968), 25-26.

⁶² Jean-Paul Sartre, "Concerning Dean Rusk," *Against the Crime of Silence*, 36.

1967 that would include the testimony of ten to fifteen defectors from North Vietnam.⁶³ The U.S. Embassy in Stockholm aborted the plan, however, because it believed that the antiwar tribunal was already floundering and being ignored by the press. Any attempt to hold a counter-tribunal risked drawing more attention to the Russell tribunal. Also, U.S. officials did not believe that the Free Asia Committee had the ability to carry off the stunt in time. Instead of organizing a risky alternative tribunal, U.S. officials decided it would be better to ridicule the IWCT's proceedings.

As the International War Crimes Tribunal got underway in Stockholm from May 2-10, 1967, the State Department directed all diplomatic missions to portray the IWCT as a communist front. U.S. officials were also instructed to point out that many heads of state had severed their connection with the tribunal. In any case, the United States was not using any experimental weapons, including poison gas forbidden by international law.⁶⁴ Defoliating chemicals sprayed in Vietnam, the State Department claimed, were the same as conventional, commercially available herbicides and had no harmful effects on humans or animals. Napalm had been used sparingly in North Vietnam, and U.S. air strikes against North Vietnam were carefully restricted to military targets. Moreover, there had been no genocide by U.S. or other "free world" forces as the United States had not tried to exterminate the Vietnamese population or destroy the communist regime in Hanoi.

⁶³ Cable, American Embassy Stockholm to Secretary of State, May 5, 1967, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, The Bertrand Russell 'Trial,' Box 191, LBJ Library.

⁶⁴ Cable, State Department and USIA to various U.S. Government agencies, May 8, 1967, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, The Bertrand Russell 'Trial,' Box 191, LBJ Library.

The data shows otherwise. The U.S. military's use of herbicides in Vietnam began in 1962, expanded in 1965 and 1966, and reached a peak from 1967 to 1969—right when Bertrand Russell was conducting the International War Crimes Tribunal. The U.S. Air Force used herbicides extensively in Vietnam under its Operation Ranch Hand campaign to defoliate inland hardwood forests, coastal mangrove forests, and cultivated land, by aerial spraying from C-123 aircraft and helicopters.⁶⁵ Soldiers also sprayed herbicides on the earth to defoliate the perimeters of base camps and fire bases, and U.S. Navy riverboats sprayed herbicides along riverbanks. U.S. and Republic of Vietnam forces sprayed more than 20.2 million gallons of military herbicides to defoliate forests and mangroves between 1961 and 1971.⁶⁶

The Johnson administration's propaganda campaign was fairly successful in the United States where many daily newspapers questioned the one-sidedness of the IWCT and the integrity of the witnesses. *Time* magazine, for example, alleged that the tribunal members were not impartial because Russell had handpicked them.⁶⁷ While it is true that invitations to serve on the tribunal were sent out either by Russell or by the Russell foundation, tribunal members were fiercely independent and many had serious differences of opinion with key Russell foundation officials. They were not puppets whom Russell could manipulate.

⁶⁵ *Veterans and Agent Orange: Health Effects of Herbicides Used in Vietnam*, Institute of Medicine (U.S.) Committee to Review the Health Effects in Vietnam Veterans of Exposure to Herbicides (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 1994). The purpose of spraying herbicides was to improve the ability to detect enemy base camps and enemy forces along lines of communication and infiltration routes, and around U.S. base camps and fire bases. Spraying was also done to destroy the crops of the NLF and the DRV.

⁶⁶ J.M. Stellman, et al, "The Extent and Patterns of Usage of Agent Orange and Other Herbicides in Vietnam, *Nature* 422, no. 6933 (2003): 681–687.

⁶⁷ "Trial's End," *Time*, May 19, 1967.

Moreover, Schoenman argued that “the demand for impartiality or objectivity in the sense of *tabula rasa* does not exist. . . . The only impartiality which has any meaning in an inquiry or a trial is to be found in the evidence: how massive it is, how verifiable, and how accessible to others.”⁶⁸

Although some Americans spoke out against attempts to smear the tribunal, their messages were confined to less prestigious media outlets. For example, J.B. Neilands, professor of Biotechnology at the University of California, Berkeley, tried without success to get mainstream newspapers to print his article criticizing the American press for distorting and manipulating the news about the proceedings of the tribunal. His article finally appeared in the *Daily Californian* magazine in December 1967.⁶⁹ International views were more mixed. The British press, like its American counterpart, was critical of the tribunal, but French and Italian press coverage was more positive.⁷⁰ Most Western media, except the Scandinavians, denounced Russell and Sartre as “well-intentioned dupes of Hanoi.”⁷¹ While the two philosophers were caricatured in the Western press, they were portrayed as intellectual giants by Third World media.⁷² The French daily *Le Monde* carried the entire text of Sartre’s closing remarks at the Stockholm session, but

⁶⁸ *Against the Crime of Silence*, 8.

⁶⁹ “The Press and the International War Crimes Tribunal,” August 1967, BRA II, 373, IWCT Investigation Teams and Witnesses, Box 10.4; Letter, Russell to Neilands, September 7, 1967, BRA II, 373, IWCT Investigation Teams and Witnesses, Box 10.4; and Letter, Neilands to Russell, September 15, 1967, BRA II, 373, IWCT Investigation Teams and Witnesses, Box 10.4.

⁷⁰ Klinghoffer, *International Citizens’ Tribunals: Mobilizing Public Opinion to Advance Human Rights*, 132.

⁷¹ Tariq Ali, *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties* (London: Collins, 1987), 124-125.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 126.

most Western mainstream dailies ignored it. Media in India, Pakistan, Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, Algeria, and Egypt published lengthy extracts.

The Verdict of the International War Crimes Tribunal

Recognizing that the tribunal lacked the power to impose sanctions, the organizers decided that the tribunal would try to answer the following questions:⁷³

(1) Have the United States government and the governments of Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea committed acts of aggression under international law by sending their troops to fight in Vietnam?

(2) Has the U.S. Army used or experimented with new weapons, or weapons banned by law in Vietnam?

(3) Have these foreign forces bombed civilian targets such as hospitals, schools, sanatoria, and dykes?

(4) Have Vietnamese prisoners been subjected to inhumane treatment forbidden by law, and have there been unjustified reprisals against civilian populations?

(5) Have forced labor camps been created, and has there been deportation of the population, or other acts tending to the extermination of the population?

In his statement at the tribunal's session in Stockholm, Russell insisted that the tribunal would function impeccably, its investigations would be thorough, and its evidence undeniable. U.S. civil rights attorney Stanley Faulkner argued that the United States Army had breached its own Law of Land Warfare, issued by the U.S. War Department in 1956 defining war crimes and the culpability of individuals who participate in

⁷³ "Aims and objectives of the International War Crimes Tribunal," *Against the Crime of Silence*, 15. Also see, Laurent Schwartz, *A Mathematician Grappling with His Century* (Basel: Birkhauser Verlag, 2001), 407. Schwartz, a French mathematician, argues that "the tribunal proved clearly that the American objective was to kill as much of the civilian population as possible."

them. Faulkner claimed that the United States military was also in breach of the Hague Convention of 1907 which forbade the use of weapons calculated to cause unnecessary suffering.⁷⁴ Journalists such as Wilfred Burchett, Bernard Couret, and Tariq Ali, and medical doctors such as Abraham Behar, John Takman, Axel Hojer, Jean Michel Krivine, and Francis Kahn explained how aerial bombardment and chemical weapons had damaged the Vietnamese population. Investigators who testified at the tribunal included surgeons, biochemists, radiologists, doctors, agronomists, lawyers, sociologists, physicists, chemists, and historians. Their medical, scientific, and historical findings filled many trunks and filing cabinets.⁷⁵ The findings consisted of hundreds of thousands of feet of film showing the bombings and the use of chemical weapons, whose properties were revealed in meticulous detail.

After the Stockholm session of the tribunal, the Japanese branch of the BRPF conducted hearings in Tokyo from August 28-30, 1978. A twenty-eight member Japanese tribunal heard testimonies from thirty-six witnesses. It found that the United States had breached international law by attacking Vietnam with chemical weapons. It also found the Japanese government and Japanese business corporations guilty of acting as accomplices of the United States.⁷⁶

The second session was held in November 1967 in Denmark. Russell's supporters in Denmark were keen to host a session of the tribunal because they wanted to mobilize Danish citizens around a major human rights issue. Danish antiwar activists reasoned that the

⁷⁴ "International Law and the Military Draft: Testimony by Stanley Faulkner," *Against the Crime of Silence*, 91.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷⁶ "Findings of the Tokyo Tribunal," BRA II, 376, IWCT, General Correspondence with Vietnamese.

Stockholm tribunal had contributed to transforming Sweden into a humane society. Moreover, it was high time for Denmark to follow Sweden's example of acting independently of the United States.⁷⁷ The Danish government approved the tribunal, but shifted its location from the capital Copenhagen to Roskilde, a small town 30 km outside the city, to keep it low key and to avoid embarrassing publicity.

At the second session from November 20 to December 1, 1967 at Roskilde, American soldiers David Tuck, Peter Martinsen, and Donald Duncan testified that they went to Vietnam to fight communists, but became disillusioned when they discovered that Vietnamese civilians were the enemy.⁷⁸ At Roskilde, Russell's opening statement drew attention to the Stockholm findings, and asked that the Roskilde participants acknowledge that the concept of aggression covered all of the U.S.' crimes in Vietnam. Sartre observed that despite several invitations the U.S. government had refused to send a representative to the session.⁷⁹ The American playwright Carl Oglesby, a former president of Students for a Democratic Society, and a member of the IWCT, told the session that the Stockholm tribunal had played an important role in developing militancy among American youth. The tribunal, he believed, had shown Americans that their refusal to be inducted into the U.S. military was based on sound legal arguments because the American intervention in Vietnam violated international law. More important, the tribunal had served as a clearinghouse of information on the war, which

⁷⁷ Klinghoffer, *International Citizens' Tribunals: Mobilizing Public Opinion to Advance Human Rights*, 153.

⁷⁸ "Testimony and Questioning of David Kenneth Tuck;" "Testimony and Questioning of Peter Martinsen;" and "Testimony and Questioning of Donald Duncan," *Against the Crime of Silence*, 403-457.

⁷⁹ "Opening Address to the Second Session by Jean-Paul Sartre," *Against the Crime of Silence*, 315-317.

gave Americans a clear idea about the use of anti-personnel bombs used by U.S. forces.⁸⁰



Left to right, J. P. Sartre, Vladimir Dedijer, and Lawrence Daly.

Jean-Paul Sartre, Vladimir Dedijer, and Lawrence Daly at the Stockholm session of the International War Crimes Tribunal. Photo by the courtesy of the Bertrand Russell Archive, McMaster University.

The Roskilde session found Japan, Thailand, and the Philippines guilty of complicity in the aggression committed by the United States against Vietnam. By using Japan's land, naval, and air bases at Okinawa, and using Japanese technical facilities to repair U.S. air, land, and naval equipment, the United States had turned Japan, with the complicity of its

⁸⁰ "Greetings to the Tribunal from American Supporters: Address by Carl Oglesby," *Against the Crime of Silence*, 318, 323.

government, into an essential element in the war against Vietnam.⁸¹ Out of eleven tribunal members, eight found Japan guilty of complicity, and three agreed that Japan provided substantial aid to the United States government, even though they did not regard Japan as an accomplice in the crime of aggression. The complicity of Thailand was established by documents presented to the tribunal showing that the Thai government gave diplomatic help to the United States, and sent an expeditionary corps to Vietnam to fight alongside American forces. The use of Thai military bases made it easier and less expensive to launch air attacks against Vietnam. The government of the Philippines also gave access to military bases to U.S. forces, and sent troops to South Vietnam.

By unanimous vote the tribunal concluded that the United States had committed aggression against Laos. It found that the United States had used and experimented with weapons prohibited both by the Hague Conventions of 1907, and the U.S. Law of Land Warfare of 1956 which obliges armies not to use unnecessary violence for military objectives. The tribunal observed that U.S. forces had repeatedly breached the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which stipulate that prisoners of war must receive humane treatment. Even though the United States had signed this agreement, numerous American and Vietnamese soldiers testified that summary executions and torture were common, prisoners were thrown out of flying helicopters, and medical care was systematically refused to the wounded and ill who refused to provide information. In further violation of the Geneva Convention prohibition against rendition, prisoners held by the United States were handed over to the Saigon regime, which was known to conduct torture. The tribunal unanimously found the United States guilty of subjecting civilians to

⁸¹ "Summary and Verdict of the Second Session," *Against the Crime of Silence*, 643-650.

inhuman treatment prohibited by international law. The tribunal heard the testimony of three American veterans, some Vietnamese victims, and a report of the tribunal's investigative team in NLF areas that showed that in the course of American raiding operations thousands of inhabitants were massacred, villages were leveled, fields devastated, and livestock killed. The tribunal cited American journalist Jonathan Schell's report about the extermination by American forces of the population of the village of Ben Sue, and its complete destruction.⁸²

At the end of the session, the American activist David Dellinger emphasized that the United States had deliberately expanded its intervention in Vietnam beginning with "diplomatic warfare" at the Geneva Conference, conducting political infiltration, training puppets, organizing the counterinsurgency, training and leading Saigon troops, and finally sending American troops.⁸³ Citing the extermination of American Indians and African-Americans as a precedent, Dellinger insisted that a democratic society such as the United States was capable of committing genocide. Dellinger defended the legitimacy of the tribunal, and urged the United States to withdraw its forces from Vietnam.⁸⁴

Russell expressed satisfaction at the outcome of the tribunal, but he conceded that it had not been as big a success as it could have been primarily because the more prominent members of the tribunal were either unwilling or unable to devote much time and effort to it, and some

⁸² *Against the Crime of Silence*, 648.

⁸³ "Appeal to American and World Opinion read by Dave Dellinger," *Against the Crime of Silence*, 650-652.

⁸⁴ "Bertrand Russell's Final Address to the Tribunal," *Against the Crime of Silence*, 633-634.

of them even vacillated in their support.⁸⁵ Russell appeared to be referring to Stokely Carmichael, who was invited to serve on the tribunal but excused himself saying he did not have enough time. Nevertheless, Carmichael made a brief appearance at the Stockholm session.⁸⁶ Moreover, Russell was not pleased with Sartre's initial reticence to get involved owing to his own work in Paris, even though Sartre later took full control of the tribunal as its executive president.

Russell did not attend the tribunal's sessions that were held in Stockholm and Denmark in 1967 because he was too old to travel, leaving it to Schoenman to read his address at the opening session. Despite the support of Ho Chi Minh and others, the tribunal did not have sufficient funding. U.S. Embassy officials in Stockholm learned that many delegates had given up hotel rooms, and some were commuting from thirty miles outside Stockholm.⁸⁷ Despite these minor internal troubles, the peace foundation succeeded in drawing attention to the horrors of the American intervention in Vietnam.

The DRV played a crucial role by actively supporting, guiding, and financing the activities of both the IWCT and the BRPF. Russell was greatly assisted by Ho Chi Minh, who helped organize the visits of the tribunal's fact-and evidence-gathering teams to North Vietnam and the liberated areas of the south. Equally important were the efforts of the London-based representatives of *Cuu Quoc Weekly*, who helped Russell organize an international commission to investigate war crimes in

⁸⁵ Letter, Russell to Pham Ngoc Thach, September 27, 1967, BRA II, 375, Working Correspondence with Vietnamese (Dec. 1967) Box 10.6.

⁸⁶ Klinghoffer, *International Citizens' Tribunals: Mobilizing Public Opinion to Advance Human Rights*, 155.

⁸⁷ Cable, American Embassy Stockholm to Secretary of State, May 6, 1967, National Security File, Country File, Vietnam, The Bertrand Russell 'Trial,' Box 191, LBJ Library.

Vietnam, and enabled Ho Chi Minh to maintain close contact with Russell. Moreover, the heads of various DRV people's organizations coordinated anti-U.S. events with Russell and his staff. In these ways, Russell became one of Ho Chi Minh's closest allies in the West. Russell genuinely shared with Ho Chi Minh the belief that the United States was a threat to world peace. However, the North Vietnamese did not exercise any influence over the tribunal, and their one attempt to control the tribunal ended in failure as Russell himself objected to it.

Because Russell's efforts to convince the Johnson administration to withdraw from Vietnam fell on deaf ears, the tribunal became an important vehicle to publicize the damage the United States had inflicted on Vietnamese society. The Johnson administration's efforts to thwart the IWCT mostly failed, although U.S. officials did manage to persuade some foreign heads of government to withdraw their support from the tribunal, and the U.S. mainstream media did raise questions about the tribunal's credibility.

How the IWCT Showed the Way Forward

It was extraordinary that an ageing Bertrand Russell was able to jointly create the IWCT with Ho Chi Minh's assistance to break a new path to challenge the imperialist policies of a superpower by giving marginalized people their voice in an international forum and uniting them with antiwar activists in the West.⁸⁸ The IWCT's contribution was far-reaching, and went beyond borders in several ways: it had a widely resonating impact on global public opinion, and its scrupulous proceedings with attention to meticulous detail boosted the antiwar movement in the United States. The tribunal took centerstage at a

⁸⁸ Mehta, "North Vietnam's Informal Diplomacy with Bertrand Russell," *Peace & Change* 37, no. 1 (2012).



historical moment when even the United Nations was powerless to restrain the United States in Vietnam. Its proceedings were sober, fair-minded, and reflected the opinions of the vast majority of people opposed to war crimes.

When the Johnson Administration rebuffed Russell’s entreaties to convince it to withdraw U.S. military forces from Vietnam, the tribunal became an important vehicle to publicize the damage the United States had inflicted on Vietnamese society. Russell and Ho Chi Minh hoped that the tribunal would restrain President Johnson and lead the U.S. government toward peace talks with North Vietnam. It is difficult to demonstrate that the tribunal pushed the United States to hold peace talks, but it certainly lent a shoulder in the global effort to end the U.S. intervention.

The IWCT was a demonstrable success in that it damaged the image of the U.S. government abroad. Fearing adverse publicity, the Johnson administration attempted to sabotage the IWCT, but these efforts mostly failed. Without a doubt the antiwar movement owes an enormous debt of gratitude to Russell’s vision of creating a global tribunal that was fulfilled when, after his death in 1970, the IWCT germinated a whole range of tribunals that interrogated human rights abuses across the world.

The victorious North Vietnamese Communists honored Russell’s contribution by naming a street after the British philosopher, after they succeeded in reunifying the two halves of their country in 1975. Bertrand Russell Street in Tan Phu Ward of District 7 in Ho Chi Minh City is concrete evidence of the respect he receives in Vietnam and serves to memorialize his global antiwar activism. It symbolizes the road to peace and justice that Russell and Ho Chi Minh traveled on.

In this issue we publish the Rising Asia Distinguished Annual Lecture by Professor Tommy Koh, currently Emeritus Professor of Law at the National University of Singapore, Ambassador-At-Large at the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Chairman of the International Advisory Panel of the Centre for International Law at the NUS. His topic, “Will ASEAN Survive the U.S.-China Confrontation?” traces the formation and growth of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the three historical phases of U.S.-China relations, and his cautious optimism that ASEAN will survive the U.S.-China confrontation. He draws our attention to the risks to ASEAN’s cohesion because some member countries of the grouping have chosen sides. “I think that the Philippines is an American ally, and if I am not wrong, Cambodia can be considered a Chinese ally,” he states.

Professor Koh gives deep insights into ASEAN: that when the ten leaders of ASEAN meet by themselves, there is a consensus among them that ASEAN, as an organization must remain united and neutral. He explains that at a recent ASEAN Summit in Jakarta, the ASEAN Chairman, President Joko Widodo, said in a press conference that ASEAN is nobody’s ally, that ASEAN is not an ally of any great power. “I am therefore cautiously optimistic that ASEAN will survive the U.S.-China confrontation. Whether I am right or wrong, only the future will tell.”

In our research articles, Pfokrelo Kapesa, Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Allahabad, examines the topic, “The Politics of Reorganization: The Case of Jammu & Kashmir and Nagaland.” The Kashmir Reorganisation Act (KRA, 2019) which hived off the state into two Union Territories, triggered questions about the future of Article 371 A that guarantees certain special provisions for Nagaland. This author puts forward two arguments: first, at the right time and with political will, Article 371 A and the special



provisions for Nagaland can be revoked. Second, she explains that the Government of India (GoI) may not risk diluting or revoking the special provisions for Nagaland as its history and the central government's relations with Nagaland is closely linked to the Naga national movement. Moreover, the ongoing negotiations between the GoI and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim-Isak Muivah since 1997 are at an advanced stage and any radical changes may prove detrimental to the interest of the GoI.

The scholar Nicole Smith, who holds an M.A. in Sociology with a Double Degree from Bielefeld University in Bielefeld, Germany, and Bologna University in Bologna, Italy, investigates “The Blind Eye in Sino-African Relations: Social Trust and Business Scams.” She explains that the combustible state of Sino-African relations raises the need to study the concept of social trust between both Chinese in Africa, as well as Africans in China, by documenting and analyzing the proliferation of business scams. Nicole's paper shows that there are issues of corruption in two geographies, Africa and China, and with actors forming a quadrilateral of murkiness in their modus operandi. The quadrilateral of crime is significant particularly because China and African countries purportedly have a friendship that extends beyond their business dealings. This study explores reports of alleged fraud in African countries and in China pertaining to Chinese and African citizens. Based on an analysis of both Chinese and African media sources as well as global news sources, Nicole's study finds that cybercrime, visa fraud, and illegal mining are issues that need to be addressed to improve Sino-African relations.

The veteran arts administrator and film program manager, Siu Heng, who is a Member of the Hong Kong Film Critics Society, explores what he calls “The ‘Little Warm Spring’ in Hong Kong Cinema, or the

‘Hong Kong Localist New Wave,’ in the Wax and Wane of Civil Society.” Heng explains that Hong Kong cinema has always been bound up with the historical development of a crisis-ridden city. In the past decade, Hong Kong has experienced the rise and fall of civil society, from its rapid growth during massive civic movements to its disappearance following the Beijing government’s subsequent tightening of its grip over Hong Kong. Apart from some independent films that are now banned in Hong Kong and other large-scale co-productions with China that have lost touch with the city and its people, there is a facet of Hong Kong cinema consisting of medium- and low-budget films financed and produced locally for Hong Kongers, which this article calls “Hong Kong Localist New Wave,” providing rich texts for understanding Hong Kong cinema or even Hong Kong in general.

The scholar Xinkai Sun, a graduate student at Boston University, theorizes “*Spring and Time in Chinese Postwar Cinema, 1945-1949*,” tentatively proposing a new temporal approach to reexamine Chinese postwar cinema that fills the gap in conventional film categorization. Sun resituates Chinese postwar films in a historical context of a turbulent postwar society marked by uncertainty and trauma. Using Bergson and Deleuze’s theory on temporality, Sun’s paper interprets time as a medium of becoming, arguing that the classic progressive film, *Spring River Flows East* (1947), and the prestigious art film, *Spring in a Small Town* (1948), demonstrate more than one mode of cinematic temporality, embodying both linear rationalized time and dynamic duration. By turning the focus of analysis toward cinematic time, Chinese postwar films and their historical context cease to be alienated from contemporary viewers but interpermeate with viewers’ perceptions and engagement.



In *The Rising Asia Review of Books*, the University of South Dakota graduate student, Sneha Chakraborty, writes a literary essay on “‘The Tyranny of Niceness’ in ‘Lady Land’: Politics of Women’s Liberation in South Asian Fiction, 1905-2014.” In her article, she creates an alternative literary historiography to counter the excessive male-centric narratives that flood mainstream literary discourse. She argues that we often club together the experiences of all women under one broad category of “feminist caste.” In order to counter that, Sneha’s essay explores four distinct female literary characters in the fictional works of authors from West Bengal and Bangladesh to understand their individual struggles against patriarchal reminiscences, social hierarchization, and their journey towards individual freedom. The author aims to understand their different experiences as well as connect the common roots of oppression through the theoretical lens of *standpoint feminism*, a theory urging feminist social science to be practiced from the standpoint of women.

Associate Professor Salikyu Sangtam of Tetso College reviews *The Paradox of Agrarian Changes: Food Security and the Politics of Social Protection in Indonesia*, edited by John F. McCarthy, Andrew McWilliam, and Gerben Nooteboom (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2023). The book’s three key areas of investigation—falling poverty rate, high food insecurity indicated by high levels of stunting, and the social protection program—as well as the corresponding question “why rural poverty and nutritional insecurity persist despite the decline in extreme poverty,” implicitly direct our attention to the methodological problems in measuring social dynamics in terms of quantifying agrarian changes and social protection programs, specifically, and socio-economic and developmental changes, in general. It is interesting to note that such problems of falling statistical poverty

rate and an increase in food and nutritional insecurity are not exclusive to Indonesia. Rather these are common to several middle-income countries in the developing world. Despite attaining a high level of economic growth and development with a growing middle class in the past few decades, Indonesia has continued to confront the problems of widespread undernutrition and stunting. This corroborates the findings of this book as well as the conclusions of other studies where it has been established that low income and unemployment as well as children from the lowest wealth quintile are more likely to be stunted.

The independent scholar, Vinod Kumar Pillai, reviews *Revitalising ASEAN Economies in a Post-COVID-19 World: Socioeconomic Issues in the New Normal*, edited by Hooi Hooi Lean (Singapore: World Scientific, 2022). This volume is a compilation of serious research studies on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in seven ASEAN countries. Laos, Philippines and Myanmar are left out for reasons beyond the control of the editors. Each chapter puts down the timelines on the start of the pandemic and the subsequent developments surrounding the disease as well as measures by governments to control the spread. The impact of the disease, the lockdown and other measures on the economy are discussed, followed by policy prescriptions. There are additional chapters on the impact specifically on Malaysian tourism and Thai longan fruit. The editors acknowledge that this is not a comprehensive, exhaustive study. The data, analysis, and research pertains to 2020 and subsequent developments or insights on the impact of vaccines are missing. But the book does provide a valuable snapshot of the onset of the disease, government measures, public response, impact on the economies and policy prescriptions. As such, the book could be of interest to epidemiologists, economists, sociologists, public policy

formulators and any serious student of pandemics, particularly COVID-19, and also academics interested in Southeast Asian studies.

The independent scholar Mohini Maureen Pradhan reviews *Lion and Dragon Dance in Singapore* by Pauline Loh (Singapore: World Scientific, 2023). The reviewer highlights the dance forms' history, culture, adaptation, production, the past and present challenges, and its future. The dances help forge a sense of identity and preserve a culture going back to the previous millennium. In her book, Loh presents a comprehensive account of the origin of these dance forms in the 1850s, performed by troupes in Singapore since the 1930s, and how they became an integral part of the city-state's culture. Through sections on history, culture, and sport, the author locates the dance in the context of Singapore's modern society and contemporary events. The author discusses the continuity of the dance in the future through the cooperation of Chinese communities in the country and overseas branches as well.

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