

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)

Anti-Copyright



## After Pinkville

Noam Chomsky

1 January 1971

Noam Chomsky  
After Pinkville  
1 January 1971

Retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020 from [chomsky.info](http://chomsky.info)  
*Bertrand Russell War Crimes Tribunal on Vietnam*, 1971. This  
essay appeared in the 1 January 1970 issue of the *New York*  
*Review of Books*.

[usa.anarchistlibraries.net](http://usa.anarchistlibraries.net)

On 15 October 1965, an estimated 70,000 people took part in large-scale anti-war demonstrations. The demonstrators heard pleas for an end to the bombing of North Vietnam and for a serious commitment to negotiations, in response to the negotiation offers from North Vietnam and UN efforts to settle the war. To be more precise, this is what they heard if they heard anything at all. On the Boston Common, for example, they heard not a word from the speakers, who were drowned out by hecklers and counter-demonstrators.

On the Senate floor, Senator Mansfield denounced the 'sense of utter irresponsibility' shown by the demonstrators, while Everett Dirksen said the demonstrations were 'enough to make any person loyal to his country weep'. Richard Nixon wrote, in a letter to the *New York Times*, that '... victory for the Viet Cong... would mean ultimately the destruction of freedom of speech for all men for all time not only in Asia, but in the United States as well' – nothing less.

In a sense, Senator Mansfield was right in speaking of the sense of utter irresponsibility shown by demonstrators. They should have been demanding not an end to the bombing of North Vietnam and negotiations, but a complete and immedi-

ate withdrawal of all American troops and *matériel* – an end to any forceful interference in the internal affairs of Vietnam or any other nation. They should have been demanding not merely that the US adhere to international law and its own treaty obligations – thus removing itself forthwith from Vietnam; but they should also have exercised their right and duty to resist the violence of the state, which was as vicious in practice as it was illegal in principle.

In October 1967 there were, once again, mass demonstrations against the war, this time in Washington and at the Pentagon. A few months earlier, still larger, though less militant, demonstrations had taken place in New York. The Tet offensive, shortly after, revealed that American military strategy was ‘foolish to the point of insanity’.<sup>1</sup> It also revealed to the public that government propaganda was either an illusion or a fraud. Moreover, an international monetary crisis threatened, attributable in part to Vietnam.

In retrospect, it seems possible that the war could have been ended if popular pressure had been maintained. But many radicals felt that the war was over, that it had become, in any case, a ‘liberal issue’, and they turned to other concerns. Those who had demanded no more than an end to the bombing of North Vietnam and a commitment to negotiations saw their demands being realized, and lapsed into silence.

These demands, however, had always been beside the point. As to negotiations, there is, in fact, very little to negotiate. As long as an American army of occupation remains in Vietnam, the war will continue. Withdrawal of American troops must be a unilateral act, as the invasion of Vietnam by the American government was a unilateral act in the first place. Those who had been calling for ‘negotiations now’ were deluding themselves and others, just as those who now call for a cease-fire

---

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Warnke as quoted by Townsend Hoopes, see *New York Times*, 28 September 1969.

continuing mass actions across the country. Otherwise the administration can ride out the storm and continue as before to systematically demolish the society of South Vietnam and Laos. It is difficult week after week, month after month to sustain a high level of protest against the war. As American society becomes more polarized and the true, familiar Nixon emerges in the person of Mitchell or Agnew, as the threat of repression becomes more real, it will be hard to maintain the kinds of resistance and protest that the Vietnam catastrophe demands. As the reports of massacres and automated murder become routine, the impulse to respond by violence may become more difficult to stifle, despite the realization that this can only have the effect of bringing the mass of the population to 'ignore resultant atrocities'. Continued mass actions, patient explanation, principled resistance can be boring, depressing. But those who programme the B52 attacks and the 'pacification' exercise are not bored, and as long as they continue in their work, so must we.

that will leave an American expeditionary force in Vietnam are not facing reality.

As to the bombing of North Vietnam, this had always been a side-show, in large measure a propaganda cover for the American invasion of the South. The US government could not admit that it was invading South Vietnam to protect from its own population a government that we had installed. Therefore it was rescuing the South Vietnamese from 'aggression'. But then surely it must strike at the 'source of aggression'. Hence the bombing of North Vietnam. This, at least, seems the most rational explanation for the bombing of North Vietnam in February 1965, at a time when no North Vietnamese troops were in the South, so far as was known, and there was a bare trickle of supplies.

To be sure, those who are 'in the know' have different explanations for the bombing of North Vietnam. Consider, for example, the explanation offered by Sir Robert Thompson, the British counter-insurgency expert who has been for many years a close adviser of the American army in South Vietnam – a man who is, incidentally, much admired by American social scientists who like to consider themselves 'tough minded, hard-nosed realists', no doubt because of his utter contempt for democracy and his relatively pure colonialist attitudes. In the *Guardian* of 19 May 1969, his views are explained as follows:

He also condemns the bombing of the North. The US Air Force in 1965 was having great budgetary problems, because the army was the only one that had a war on its hands and was thus getting all the money. 'So the Air Force had to get in, and you had the bombing of North Vietnam ... the budgetary problems of the Air Force were then solved.'

In his *No Exit From Vietnam* (1969), he explains more graphically the attractiveness of air power:

One can so easily imagine the commander of the Strategic Air Command striding up and down his operations room wondering how he could get in on the act. With all that power available and an enormous investment doing nothing, it is not surprising that reasons and means had to be found for their engagement. The war was therefore waged in a manner which enabled this massive air armada to be used round the clock. ... In this way the war could be fought as an American war without the previous frustrations of cooperating with the Vietnamese.

Or consider the explanation for the bombing of the North offered by Adam Yarmolinsky, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, 1965–6, previously Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense. According to his analysis, the strategic bombing of North Vietnam ‘produced no military advantages except for its putative favourable impact on morale in the south. But [this step] was taken, at least in part, because it was one of the things that the US military forces were best prepared to do.’<sup>2</sup>

So North Vietnam was flattened and impelled to send troops to the South, as it did a few months after the bombing began, if the Department of Defense can be believed.

Since the bombing of North Vietnam ‘produced no military advantages’ and was extremely costly, it could be stopped with little difficulty and little effect on the American war in South Vietnam. And so it was, in two steps: on 1 April 1968, when the regular bombing was restricted to the southern part of North Vietnam, and on 1 November, when it was halted. At the same time, the total American bombing, now restricted to Laos and South Vietnam, was increased in April and increased again in

---

<sup>2</sup> *No More Vietnams?*, R. Pfeffer (ed.) (Harper & Row, 1968).

It remains to be seen how long Japan will be able to fend off economic intervention of a sort that is increasingly turning Western Europe into a dependency of American-based multinational corporations, those ‘US enterprises abroad [which] in the aggregate comprise the third largest country ... in the world – with a gross product greater than that of any country except the United States and the Soviet Union’.<sup>43</sup>

It is not likely that the population of the empire – the ‘integrated world economy’ dominated by American capital, to use the technical euphemism – will remain quiescent, willing indefinitely to complement the industrial economies of the West. Seventy-five years ago, shortly before the American invasion of the Philippines in a war that was, apart from scale, rather like our present war in Vietnam, the Philippine nationalist José Rizal castigated his countrymen because they were ‘like a slave who asked only for a bandage to wrap the chain so that it may rattle less and not ulcerate the skin’. Those days are past. Those whom Marx called ‘the slaves and drudges of the [bourgeois] order’ are no longer satisfied with a bandage to wrap their chains, and their discontent will lead to turmoil and violent repression, so long as we consent.

What can we do to affect the events that are to come? First, we must not make the mistake of placing trust in the government. The large upsurge of anti-war sentiment can be an effective device for changing national policy if it is sustained in

---

area, see John Dower, ‘Occupied Japan and the American Lake’, in *America’s Asia*, M. Seldon and E. Friedman (eds.), (Pantheon, 1970). He presents material in support of the analysis of ‘critical Japanese commentators’ that ‘Japan was to be developed not only as a military base against China and the Soviet Union, but also as an industrial base supporting the counter-revolutionary cause in Southeast Asia’, a policy that was opposed not only by Russia but also by virtually all the members of the Far Eastern Commission. See also his essay on the US-Japan military relationship in the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, October 1969 (see note 8 above). For still earlier background, see Gabriel Kolko, *Politics of War* (Random House, 1968).

<sup>43</sup> Leo Model, *Foreign Affair*, July 1967, quoted in Magdoff, op. cit.

Still more revealing is the stated purpose of the US military commitment to the Philippines. Selover reports Lieutenant-General Robert H. Warren's admission that the commitment was designed partly 'to maintain internal security and stability and, thereby, make our own activities over there more secure'. Senator Symington put it succinctly, with General Warren's reluctant assent: 'In other words we are paying the Philippine Government to protect us from the Philippine people who do not agree with the policies of the government or do not like Americans.' Pentagon officials admitted in the hearings that 'the only real threat that the Philippines faces ... [is] ... internal subversion'. The threat is related, perhaps, to the fact that, for most of the population, living standards have not materially changed since the Spanish occupation.

It is this 'Communist threat' that we have been combating in Vietnam, where, as has frequently been noted, Vietnamese communism threatens the new order that we have been trying to construct in Asia with Japan as junior partner, linked to Asia by essentially colonial relationships. As President Eisenhower expressed it:

One of Japan's greatest opportunities for increased trade lies in a free and developing Southeast Asia... The great need in one country is for raw materials, in the other country for manufactured goods. The two regions complement each other markedly. By strengthening of Vietnam and helping ensure the safety of the South Pacific and Southeast Asia, we gradually develop the great trade potential between this region ... and highly industrialized Japan to the benefit of both. In this way freedom in the Western Pacific will be greatly strengthened.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> 4 April 1959, quoted in Harry Magdoff, *The Age of Imperialism* (Monthly Review Press, 1969). On early American post-war policy in this

November. By March 1969 the total level of bombardment had reached 130,000 tons a month – nearly two Hiroshimas a week in South Vietnam and Laos, defenceless countries. And Melvin Laird's projection for the next twelve to eighteen months was the same.<sup>3</sup> The redistribution (and intensification) of bombing and the largely empty negotiations stilled domestic protest for a time and permitted the war to go on as before.

We can now look back over the failure of the 'peace movement' to sustain and intensify its protest over the past four years. By now, defoliation has been carried out over an area the size of Massachusetts, with what effect no one has any real idea. The bombardment of Vietnam far exceeds the bombardment of Korea or anything in the Second World War. The number of Vietnamese killed or driven from their homes cannot be seriously estimated.

It is important to understand that the massacre of the rural population of Vietnam and their forced evacuation is not an accidental by-product of the war. Rather it is of the very essence of American strategy. The theory behind it has been explained with great clarity and explicitness, for example by Professor Samuel Huntington, Chairman of the Government Department at Harvard and at the time (1968) Chairman of the Council on Vietnamese Studies of the Southeast Asia Development Advisory Group, ultimately responsible to the State Department. Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, he explains that the Viet Cong is 'a powerful force which cannot be dislodged from its constituency so long as the constituency continues to exist'. The conclusion is obvious, and he does not shrink from it. 'We can ensure that the constituency ceases to exist by "direct application of mechanical and conventional power"... on such a massive scale as to produce a massive migration from countryside to city', where the Viet Cong constituency – the rural

---

<sup>3</sup> For detailed analysis based largely on Defense Department sources, see Gabriel Kolko, *London Bulletin*, August 1969.

population – can, it is hoped, be controlled in refugee camps and suburban slums around Saigon.

Technically, the process is known as ‘urbanization’ or ‘modernization’. It is described, with the proper contempt, by Daniel Ellsberg, a Department of Defense consultant on pacification in South Vietnam, who concludes, from his extensive on-the-spot observations, that ‘we have, of course, demolished the society of Vietnam’, that ‘the bombing of the South has gone on long enough to disrupt the society of South Vietnam enormously and probably permanently’; he speaks of the ‘people who have been driven to Saigon by what Huntington regards as our “modernizing instruments” in Vietnam, bombs and artillery’.<sup>4</sup> Reporters have long been aware of the nature of these tactics, aware that ‘by now the sheer weight of years of firepower, massive sweeps, and grand forced population shifts have reduced the population base of the .....’<sup>5</sup> so that conceivably, by brute force, we may still hope to ‘win’.

One thing is clear: so long as an organized social life can be maintained in South Vietnam, the NLF will be a powerful, probably dominant, force. This is the dilemma which has always plagued American policy, and which has made it impossible for us to permit even the most rudimentary democratic institutions in South Vietnam. For these reasons we have been forced to the solution outlined by Professor Huntington: to crush the people’s war, we must eliminate the people.

A second thing is tolerably clear: there has been no modification in this policy. Once again, as two years ago, there is mounting popular protest against the war. Once again, a tactical adjustment is being devised that will permit Washington to pursue its dual goal, to pacify the people of South Vietnam while pacifying the American people also. The first of

---

<sup>4</sup> *No More Vietnams?* For further discussion, see my article in the *New York Review*, 2 January 1969 and my *At War with Asia* (Pantheon, 1970), Chapter 1, Section 3.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Pond, *Christian Science Monitor*, 8 November 1969.

nessmen and our statesmen in past years allowed the Philippines to become a complete economic dependency of the United States to a greater degree than any single State of the Union is economically dependent on the rest of the United States.<sup>39</sup>

Since then, there has been little substantive change in what UN Ambassador Salvador Lopez called the classic colonial economy of the Philippines. To be sure, we have bequeathed them the blessings of democracy. As Tillman Durdin accurately describes this legacy of half a century of colonial domination: ‘Filipinos view elections as a confirmation of the power of the wealthy business and landed interests who back both parties but usually pick the winners before Election Day and quietly give them the most support. In this case they picked President Marcos.’<sup>40</sup> And in gratitude, the Filipinos have helped us in our war in Vietnam, in the manner explained in a recent report of the Symington subcommittee. William Selover summarized this report in a recent *Monitor*:

The hearings showed, for example, that the US taxpayer has been paying for the Philippine troop commitment in Vietnam. It has also shown that, without this payment, the Philippines would not have sent a single man to help the US in Vietnam. ... Administration officials admitted paying the Philippines some \$40 million to send the troops to Vietnam.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Rupert Emerson, in J. C. Vincent (ed.), *America’s Future in the Pacific*, 1947.

<sup>40</sup> Commenting on the recent elections, *New York Times*, 16 November 1969. For some discussion of Philippine politics, see Onofre Corpuz, *The Philippines* (Prentice-Hall, 1966).

<sup>41</sup> 28 November 1969: ‘From the hearings it is learned that the US paid South Korea and Thailand as well to send their troops to Vietnam in a show of solidarity.’ This was somewhat more expensive. According to *The Times*, 1 December, the bribe to Thailand amounted to a billion dollars.

considered, but also that of conquest by default, by pressure, by persuasion, by subversion, by “neutralism”<sup>38</sup>

In May 1950, Acheson announced that economic aid and military equipment would be sent to the French in Indochina ‘in order to assist them in restoring stability’. Not long after, the State Department explained our support for French imperialism in Indochina in these terms: ‘... the fall of Indochina ... would be taken by many as a sign that the force of communism is irresistible and would lead to an attitude of defeatism.... Communist forces there must be decisively conquered down to the last pocket of resistance’ – in the name of French imperialism<sup>39</sup>. The ‘much-needed rice, rubber, and tin’ were also cited as a justification for our support for the French in their ill-fated effort to reconquer their former colony. Upon their failure, we took over management of the enterprise directly.

In 1955 the Communist threat was defined, very perceptively, in an extensive study of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation and the National Planning Association, *The Political Economy of American Foreign Policy*, a study that involved a representative segment of the tiny *élite* that largely determines foreign policy, whoever is technically in office. The primary threat of Communism is the economic transformation of the Communist powers ‘in ways which reduce their willingness and ability to complement the industrial economies of the West’. Communism, in short, reduces the ‘willingness and ability’ of underdeveloped countries to function in the world capitalist economy in the manner of the Philippines – to take a classic Asian example – where:

Their economy has for nearly half a century been deliberately geared into that of the United States to an extent which caused Mr McNutt, in testifying as High Commissioner, to say that ‘our busi-

---

<sup>38</sup> Cited by Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia and the Cold War 1945–1966* (Wiley, 1968), p.102.

these tasks has not been accomplished too well. The second, to our shame, has been managed quite successfully, for the most part. Now, we hear that the burden of fighting the war is to be shifted away from the American infantry to the B52s and fighter-bombers and a mercenary force of Vietnamese. Only a token force, of between 200,000 and 300,000 men, backed by the Pacific Naval and Air command, will be retained, indefinitely, to ensure that the Vietnamese have the right of self-determination.

At a recent press conference, Averell Harriman explained that the North Vietnamese cannot believe that we really intend to abandon the huge military bases we have constructed in Vietnam, such as the one at Cam Ranh Bay (*Village Voice*, 27 November 1969). Knowledgeable American observers have found it equally difficult to believe this. For example, as long ago as 27 August 1965, James Reston wrote in the *New York Times*:

US bases and supply areas are being constructed on a scale far larger than is necessary to care for the present level of American forces in fact, the US base at Cam Ranh ... is being developed into another Okinawa, not merely for the purposes of this war, but as a major power complex from which American officials hope a wider alliance of Asian nations, with the help of the US, will eventually be able to contain the expansion of China.

The phrase ‘contain the expansion of China’ must be understood as code for the unpronounceable expression: ‘repress movements for national independence and social reconstruction in Southeast Asia’.

Premier Eisaku Sato, in a speech described by American officials as part of a joint Japanese-American policy statement, announced that we are entering a ‘new Pacific age’ in which

‘a new order will be created by Japan and the United States’ (*New York Times*, 22 November 1969). His words, one must assume, were chosen advisedly. To perpetuate this new order we will need military bases such as that at Cam Ranh Bay, which can play the role of the Canal Zone in the western hemisphere. There we can base our own forces and train those of our loyal dependencies.

We will no doubt soon proceed to construct an ‘inter-Asian’ army that can protect helpless governments from their own populations, much as the Brazilians were called in to legitimize our Dominican intervention. Where popular rebellion is in progress, these forces can gain valuable experience. Thus a senior American officer at Camp Bearcat in South Vietnam, where Thai units are based, explains that ‘they are infusing their army with experience they could never get in their own homeland.... They are coordinating their own piece of real estate’. And a Thai colonel adds: ‘If my country ever has the same subversion, I’ll have to fight there. I want to practice here’ (*New York Times*, 3 December 1969). Surely Reston was right in 1965 in speculating about our long-range plans for the South Vietnamese bases, from which our ‘token force’ of a quarter of a million men will operate in the 1970s.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> On 10 December 1969, after this article was written, Reston returned to the question of Cam Ranh Bay, stating that it was now ‘an air and naval base which is the best in Asia’, and that it has been a ‘fundamental question throughout the Paris negotiations’ whether the US is willing to abandon it ‘and many other modern military bases’. He raises the question whether the US would withdraw all troops or only all ‘combat forces’, a plan which ‘could leave a couple of hundred thousand Americans in Vietnam to maintain and fly the planes and helicopter gunships and continue to train and supply and help direct the Vietnamese’.

There is no indication of any serious intention to withdraw all forces or to abandon the bases. As Joseph Kraft has reported (see p. 49) the American refusal to commit itself to the principle of complete withdrawal is one of the factors blocking progress in Paris.

ford to lose the war and is therefore stuck here almost no matter what Saigon does. The US might dare, it is reasoned, to abandon the Thieu regime within a year or so, but it would never dare to destroy the South Vietnamese Army. If President Thieu links his destiny inextricably to that of the Army, then, he may figure that the US cannot depose him.<sup>35</sup>

Thus the current political developments confirm, once again, the failure of the American military to create a workable Quisling regime in the manner of the Russians in Czechoslovakia or the Germans in much of occupied Europe. The consequences of this situation are summarized adequately by Jacques Decornoy:

‘Under these conditions, a military solution may be a task for several decades, supposing, that is, that there still remain Vietnamese to fight and Americans to accept a conflict without end and without hope.’<sup>36</sup>

Twenty years ago the People’s Republic of China was founded. Just a few months earlier, Dean Acheson had formed a committee to reassess American policy in Asia, now that China was ‘lost’. The committee was to operate under this instruction: ‘You will please take it as your assumption that it is a fundamental decision of American policy that the United States does not intend to permit further extension of Communist domination on the continent of Asia or in the south-east Asia area...’<sup>37</sup> Acheson made his thoughts more precise, shortly afterwards, when writing on the Soviet threat: ‘It is not only the threat of direct military attack which must be

---

<sup>35</sup> Pond, 6 November 1969.

<sup>36</sup> *Le Monde diplomatique*, November.

<sup>37</sup> Memorandum from Acheson to Philip Jessup, cited by Gabriel Kolko, *Roots of American Foreign Policy* (Beacon Press, 1969), p. 95 (see note 10, p. 82 below).

old Diemists, several of whom were Can Lao members'. Thieu has been able to find no political base apart from the generals and the northern Catholics – essentially a reconstruction of the Diem regime.<sup>32</sup> One of the Hoa Hao factions recently left Thieu's party in protest 'against the intensification of military control of the government in recent months – and the President's continuing refusal to deal seriously even with the member groups of his own alliance'. Its leader asserted that the President's coalition 'cannot do anything good for the country'.<sup>33</sup> A report on the non-Communist opposition in South Vietnam quotes Pham Ba Cam, a Hoa Hao leader: 'It's not very healthy to be in the opposition in Vietnam. If you want to learn about the status of the non-Communist opposition, go to Con Son [offshore prison island]. That's where you'll find the largest gathering.'<sup>34</sup> As Pond reports, 'President Thieu's decision to organize an Army/Catholic party – at this time and in this manner – sets the course for increasing isolation of the Saigon regime'. It is a decision 'to maintain the narrow interests and power of the existing military oligarchy as long as possible'.

This narrowing of the base of the Saigon regime reflects the political realities of South Vietnam. It also reflects a rational political judgement on the part of General Thieu:

As Vietnamese sources analyse President Thieu's thinking, he is calculating that the US cannot af-

---

<sup>32</sup> *Monitor*, 6, 8, 14 November 1969. Miss Pond has been one of the few correspondents, over the years, to give any serious attention to Vietnamese political and social life. In the past, her analyses have proven quite accurate. For additional corroboratory information, see D. Gareth Porter, 'The Diemist restoration', *Commonweal*, 11 July 1969.

<sup>33</sup> John Woodruff, *Baltimore Sun*, 25 October 1969.

<sup>34</sup> Terence Smith, *New York Times*, dateline 24 October 1969. The scale and character of forceful repression of dissent in South Vietnam have been amply reported. See, for example, Herman and Duboff, *op. cit.*, and references therein.

Who can complain about a quarter of a million men, a force that can be compared, let us say, with the Japanese army of 160,000 which invaded North China in 1937, in an act of aggression that scandalized the civilized world and set the stage for the Pacific phase of the Second World War? In fact, counterinsurgency experts like Sir Robert Thompson have long argued that the American forces were far too large to be effective, and have advocated a 'low-cost, long-haul strategy' of a sort which will now very likely be adopted by the Nixon administration, if, once again, the American people will trust their leaders and settle into passivity.

As American combat troops are withdrawn, their place, it is hoped, will be taken by a more effective force of Vietnamese – just as Czechoslovakia is controlled, it is reported, by fewer than 100,000 Russian troops. Meanwhile, the war will no doubt be escalated technologically. It will become more 'capital intensive'.<sup>7</sup> Some of the prospects were revealed in a speech by Chief of Staff William Westmoreland, reported in the *Christian Science Monitor* (25–7 October 1969) under the heading: 'Technologically the Vietnam war has been a great success.' General Westmoreland 'sees machines carrying more and more of the burden'. He says:

I see an army built into and around an integrated area control system that exploits the advanced technology of communications, sensors, fire direction, and the required automatic data processing – a system that is sensitive to the dynamics of the ever-changing battlefield – a system that materially assists the tactical commander in making sound and timely decisions.

---

<sup>7</sup> In the apt phrase of E. Herman and R. Duboff, 'How to coo like a dove while fighting to win', pamphlet of Philadelphia SANE, 20 S. Street, Philadelphia, Penna. 19107.

Further details are presented by Leonard Sullivan, Deputy Director of Research and Development for South-east Asian Matters:<sup>8</sup>

These developments open up some very exciting horizons as to what we can do five or ten years from now. When one realizes that we can detect anything that perspires, moves, carries metal, makes a noise, or is hotter or colder than its surroundings, one begins to see the potential. This is the beginning of instrumentation of the entire battlefield. Eventually, we will be able to tell when anybody shoots, what he is shooting at, and where he was shooting from. You begin to get a 'Year 2000' vision of an electronic map with little lights that flash for different kinds of activity. This is what we require for this 'porous' war, where the friendly and the enemy are all mixed together.

Note the time scale that is projected for Vietnam. News reports reveal some of the early stages of these exciting developments. The *New York Times*, 22 November 1969, reports a plan to use remote-controlled unmanned aircraft as supply transports for combat areas. On 1 October 1969 the *New York Times* explains that:

The landscape of Vietnam and the border regions are studded with electronic sensors that beep information into the banks of computers. Radar, cameras, infrared detectors and a growing array of more exotic devices contribute to the mass of

---

<sup>8</sup> *Congressional Record*, 8 August 1969. Cited in the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, October 1969 (1737 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, Mass. – an important journal for those concerned with Asian affairs).

of the American mission at the time, and since, on the political power of the NLF relative to that of the succession of puppets we have installed. When the full-scale American invasion began, Bernard Fall cited a remark to George Chaffard of *Le Monde* by a 'high-ranking spokesman of the Front': 'We have not fought all these years simply to end up by installing one set of dictators in place of the old.' Fall added: 'One does not fight for eight long years, under the crushing weight of American armour, napalm, jet bombers and, finally, vomiting gases, for the sheer joy of handing over what one fights for to some bureaucrat in Hanoi, merely on the say-so of a faraway party apparatus.'<sup>31</sup> Despite the intensive American effort since 1965 to destroy social life in Vietnam, there is no reason to believe that the situation is fundamentally different today.

Nixon's speech of 3 November 1969 must be understood as a rejection of these possibilities for an 'honourable' settlement, one that should be acceptable to a large, I should think overwhelming, segment of the American public. Nixon denied the existence of the PRG-DRV initiatives, and made it clear that we have no intention of withdrawing our expeditionary force or broadening the Saigon regime. The present Saigon regime, which exists solely by the force of American arms, is not an acceptable partner in a coalition with the PRG and would no doubt collapse were a realistic effort to resolve the conflict seriously contemplated.

Under these conditions, it is important to take note of recent political developments in Saigon. President Thieu has apparently abandoned any effort to construct a significant political base. Elizabeth Pond reports from Saigon that his new party 'should be very similar to the Can Lao Party [virtually, a branch of Diem's secret police], as it is being directed by

---

<sup>31</sup> *New Society*, 22 April 1965, reprinted in Fall and Raskin, *Vietnam Reader*. Those who speak so glibly of 'bloodbaths' might note his report that from 1957 through April 1965, 'over 160,000 South Vietnamese [overwhelmingly Viet Cong] have thus far been killed in this war'. Note the date.

I saw Sainteny at the end of September, just after his return from the funeral of Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi. He had had a long talk with Premier Pham Van Dong. He was persuaded that the other side was prepared to accept a settlement that would include an independent and non-Communist South Vietnam set in a neutralist Southeast Asia. The obstacle to agreement in his view was that Hanoi did not have any faith in Mr Nixon's claim that he wanted an agreement. On the contrary, the North Vietnamese thought the United States was still trying to impose on Saigon, by military means, a pro-American government hostile to Hanoi. M. Sainteny felt – and his feelings were made known to the President – that the United States could dispel Hanoi's doubts in two ways. One would be a formal statement that the United States recognized the principle of total withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam at some unstipulated date. The other would be by broadening the present regime in Saigon to include some political figures who were not die-hard anti-Communists.<sup>29</sup>

Corroboratory evidence appears in an article by Philippe Devillers in *L'Actualité*, 24 October 1969, and Averell Harriman has publicly stated that Kraft's report is consistent with his understanding of the situation.<sup>30</sup> Subsequent statements by Xuan Thuy and Mme Binh in Paris provide further confirmation of the possibilities for a reasonable settlement.

Since 1960, the NLF has demanded that a neutralized South Vietnam be governed by a coalition in which they would have a fair representation. It is this demand that we have consistently opposed – not surprisingly, in view of the judgement

<sup>29</sup> *Boston Globe*, 10 November 1969.

<sup>30</sup> In a panel at Johns Hopkins University, 14 November 1969

information. Not long ago reconnaissance planes began carrying television cameras.

The data go into the Combined Intelligence Center near Tan-sonnhut Air Base: 'Day and night in its antiseptic interior a family of blinking, whirring computers devours, digests and spews out a Gargantuan diet of information about the enemy', the better to serve the 'conglomerate of allied civil and military organizations that work together to destroy the Vietcong's underground government' – freely admitted to have been the most authentic popular social structure in South Vietnam prior to the American effort to demolish the society of Vietnam. One can understand the gloating of Douglas Pike: 'The tactics that delivered victory in the Viet Minh war, however impressive once, had been relegated by science to the military history textbook.'<sup>9</sup>

What this means is, to put it simply, that we intend to turn the land of Vietnam into an automated murder machine. The techniques of which Westmoreland, Sullivan and Pike are so proud are, of course, designed for use against a special kind of enemy: one who is too weak to retaliate, whose land can be occupied. These 'Year 2000' devices, which Westmoreland describes as a quantum jump in warfare, are fit only for colonial wars. There is surely an element of lunacy in this technocratic

---

<sup>9</sup> *War, Peace, and the Viet Cong* (MIT, 1969). He estimates that in 1963 'perhaps half the population of South Vietnam at least tacitly supported the NLF'. The same estimate was given by the US Mission in 1962. Elsewhere, he has explained that in late 1964 it was impossible to consider an apparently genuine offer of a coalition government, because there was no force that could compete politically with the Viet Cong, with the possible exception of the Buddhists, who were not long after suppressed as a political force by Marshal Ky's American-backed storm troopers. The same difficulty has been noted, repeatedly, by spokesmen for the American and Saigon governments and reporters. For some examples, see Herman and Duboff, *op. cit.*, or *my American Power and the New Mandarins* (Chatto & Windus, 1969), Chapter 3.

nightmare. And if we are still at all capable of honesty, we will, with little difficulty, identify its antecedents.

Our science may yet succeed in bringing to reality the fears of Bernard Fall – no alarmist, and fundamentally in favour of the war during its early years – who wrote in one of his last essays that ‘Vietnam as a cultural and historic entity ... is threatened with extinction ... the countryside literally dies under the blows of the largest military machine ever unleashed on an area of this size’. The South Vietnamese Minister of Information wrote in 1968 that ordinary Vietnamese would continue ‘to be horrified and embittered at the way the Americans fight their war... Our peasants will remember their cratered rice fields and defoliated forests, devastated by an alien air force that seems at war with the very land of Vietnam’.<sup>10</sup>

American reporters have told us the same thing so often that it is almost superfluous to quote. Tom Buckley – to mention only the most recent – describes the delta and the central lowlands:

... bomb craters beyond counting, the dead gray and black fields, forests that have been defoliated and scorched by napalm, land that has been ploughed flat to destroy Vietcong hiding places. And everywhere can be seen the piles of ashes forming the outlines of huts and houses, to show where hamlets once stood.<sup>11</sup>

The truth about defoliants is only beginning to emerge, with the discovery that one of the two primary agents used is ‘potentially dangerous, but needing further study’ while the other causes cancer and birth defects, and probably mental retardation. Both will continue to be used in Vietnam against enemy

---

<sup>10</sup> *New York Times*, 11 June 1968.

<sup>11</sup> *New York Times Magazine*, 23 November 1969.

sion that might stave off such an attack. It is now even imaginable, as a few years ago it was not, that a significant American left may emerge that will be a voice in national affairs, and even, perhaps, a potential force for radical social change. There has been a remarkable shift in popular attitudes over the past months, an openness to radical political thinking of a sort that I do not recall for many years. To let these opportunities pass is to condemn many others to the fate of Vietnam.

Is there an ‘honourable’ way out of Vietnam – meaning by that a way that might be tolerable to the present state of American opinion? The question is important, for if the answer is negative, it may well be that the threat of extinction that Fall recognized will in fact be realized. It is important to stress this possibility, in view of the present mood in certain ‘movement’ circles where it is a criterion of one’s radicalism to believe that America has been defeated and that the Vietnamese will win. On the contrary, a serious person will follow Gramsci’s maxim: pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will. There is not much doubt that the United States has the power to deny victory, or even continued existence, to the people of Vietnam. No one knows whether the present strategy of capital-intensive war can reduce the level of organized social life in Vietnam to the point where an American-imposed solution may, in its terms, be successful.

There surely is an ‘honourable’ way of ending the war. The PRG and DRV delegations in Paris have proposed such a way, repeatedly. It is a measure of the Government’s contempt for the American people that Nixon was willing to publish Ho Chi Minh’s conciliatory letter, with the statement that it signified – in Nixon’s phrase – ‘the other side’s absolute refusal to show the least willingness to join in seeking peace’. It seems that the intermediary in the Ho-Nixon exchange was Jean Sainteny. He was interviewed by Joseph Kraft, who writes:

war is based on humanitarian or moral considerations. Americans are not now rejecting “war”, they merely wish to see this current conflict ended. To achieve this goal, most Americans would pursue a more militant policy and ignore resultant atrocities.<sup>27</sup> We may soon discover whether this speculation is correct. Of course, there is sure to be a segment of American society that will not ‘ignore resultant atrocities’ – namely, the irresponsible, loudmouth vocal minority, or those who are described so nicely by Colonel Joseph Bellas, commanding officer of a hospital in Vietnam where soldiers boycotted Thanksgiving dinner in protest against the war: ‘They’re young, they’re idealistic and don’t like man’s inhumanity to man. As they get older they will become wiser and more tolerant.’<sup>28</sup> If a majority of the American people will, indeed, ignore resultant atrocities and support Nixon’s policy of pursuing a war without discernible end, then this segment of American society may be subjected to domestic repression of a sort that is not without precedent in American history; we seem to be seeing the early signs today with the savage repression of the Panthers, the conspiracy trial in Chicago, and other incidents.

The fact that repression may be attempted does not imply that it must succeed. Surely the possibility exists, today, to create a broad-based movement of opposition to war and repres-

---

<sup>27</sup> J. Robinson and S. G. Jacobson, in *Vietnam: Issues and Alternatives* (Shenkman, 1968), a symposium of the Peace Research Society (International). This organization, following a script by Orwell, is concerned with a special kind of peace research: the question of ‘how pacification can be achieved in turbulent village societies’, along lines that we have been pioneering in Vietnam, for example. The editor explains that the United States is one ‘participant in the game of world domination’. It might be asked why scholars should assist the Government in this game. The answer is that the foreign policy of the US has been characterized ‘by good-intentioned leaders and policy makers’, so the problem, presumably, does not arise. But even the Peace Research Society (International) is not monolithic. It would be unfair to assume that the conclusion of the cited study is mere wishful thinking. It has to be taken seriously.

<sup>28</sup> Reuters, Boston *Globe*, 27 November 1969.

‘training and regroupment centres’ – i.e. anywhere we please, throughout the countryside.<sup>12</sup>

Of course it may be argued that the American government did not know, in 1961, that these agents were so dangerous. That is true. It was merely an experiment. Virtually nothing was known about what the effects might be. Perhaps there would be no ill effects, or perhaps – at the other extreme – Vietnam would become unfit for human life, or a race of mutants and mental retardates would be created. How could we know, without trying? In such ways ‘the tactics that delivered victory in the Viet Minh war, however impressive once, had been relegated by science to the military history textbook’.

To see what may lie ahead, I’d like to turn away from Vietnam to a less familiar case. It has been claimed that Vietnam is the second most heavily bombarded country in history. The most intensively bombarded, so it seems, is Laos. According to *Le Monde*, ‘North Vietnam was more heavily bombed than Korea; Laos is now being bombed even more than North Vietnam. And this battering has been going on for over five years. ... The

---

<sup>12</sup> See *Washington Post*, 31 October 1969; *Los Angeles Times*, 31 October 1969; *New York Post*, 4 November 1969; *Science*, 7 November 1969. A Vietnamese student in the United States, Ngo Vinh Long, has summarized much of what is known, including his personal experience from 1959 to 1963 when he visited ‘virtually every hamlet and village in the country’ as a military map maker, in *Thoi-Bao Ga*, November 1969, 76a Pleasant Street, Cambridge, Mass., a monthly publication of Vietnamese students in the United States. He describes how defoliation has been used since 1961 to drive peasants into government-controlled camps, and from his own experience and published records in Vietnam, he records some of the effects: starvation, death, hideously deformed babies. He quotes the head of the Agronomy Section of the Japan Science Council who claims that by 1967 about half the arable land had been seriously affected. For American estimates, see the report of the Daddario subcommittee of the House Committee on Science and Astronautics, 8 August 1969. They estimate the total area sprayed through 1968 as 6,600 square miles (extrapolating through 1969 the figure would reach about 8,600 square miles, about sixty per cent of this respraying – over ten per cent of it crop destruction).

US Air Force carries out more than 12,500 raids a month.<sup>13</sup> On the same day, 1 October 1969, the *New York Times* announced its discovery that in Laos, 'the rebel economy and social fabric' are now the main target of the American bombardment, which is claimed to be a success:

Refugees from the Plaine des Jarres area say that during recent months most open spaces have been evacuated. Both civilians and soldiers have retreated into the forests or hills and frequently spend most of the daylight hours in caves or tunnels. Refugees said they could only plough their fields at night because they were unsafe during the day. 'So long as the US bombing continues at its new level,' a European diplomat said here this week, 'so-called Communist territory is little but a shooting range....' The bombing, by creating refugees, deprives the Communists of their chief source of food and transport. The population of the Pathet Lao zone has been declining for several years and the Pathet Lao find it increasingly difficult to fight a 'people's war' with fewer and fewer people.

The world's most advanced society has found the answer to people's war: eliminate the people.

It is, incidentally, remarkable that the *New York Times* can so blandly announce that the rebel economy and social fabric are the main target of the American bombardment. It is remarkable that this claim, which, if correct, sets American policy at the moral level of Nazi Germany, can be merely noted in a casual comment, with – so far as I know – no public reaction of horror and indignation.

---

<sup>13</sup> Weekly selection, 1 October 1969.

American and South Vietnamese troops in the course of a drive to clear the area of Viet Cong. More than 12,000 persons were removed from Batangan Peninsula by helicopters and taken to a processing camp near this provincial capital. Heavy American bombing and artillery and naval shelling had destroyed many of the houses and forced them to live in caves and bunkers for many months before the evacuation. ... An elaborate interrogation and screening procedure, in which American intelligence agents were said to have taken an important part, yielded only a hundred or so active Viet Cong suspects. Most of the people were sent to a newly established refugee camp. ... Despite the extensive movement of the population and the military operation, the Viet Cong remain active in the area.<sup>26</sup>

On 22 November, Kamm adds the further information that 'the number of refugees "generated" – the term for the people forcibly dislocated in this process – exceeded intelligence estimates fourfold'. 'The 12,000, instead of being scattered in many hamlets where it would be difficult to keep out the Viet Cong, are now concentrated in six guarded, camp-like settlements.'

It is perhaps remarkable that none of this appears to occasion much concern. It is only the acts of a company of half-crazed GIs that are regarded as a scandal, a disgrace to America. It will, indeed, be a still greater national scandal – if we assume that to be possible – if they alone are subjected to criminal prosecution, but not those who have created and accepted the long-term atrocity to which they contributed one detail – merely a few hundred more murdered Vietnamese.

Recently, a study of American public opinion about Vietnam concluded with this speculation: '... little reaction to the

---

<sup>26</sup> Henry Kamm, *New York Times*, 15 November 1969.

Vietnam today? It is not a question that Americans can easily put aside.

The revelation of the Song My atrocity to a wide public appears to have been a by-product of the November mobilization. As Richard L. Strout wrote in the *Monitor*:

American press self-censorship thwarted Mr Ridenhour's disclosures for a year. 'No one wanted to go into it,' his agent said of telegrams sent to *Life*, *Look*, and *Newsweek* magazines outlining allegations.

Except for the recent antiwar march in Washington the event might not have been publicized. In connexion with the march a news offshoot (Dispatch News Service) of the left-wing Institute of Policy Studies of this city aggressively told and marketed the story to approximately 30 US and Canadian newspapers.<sup>24</sup>

Apart from this, it probably would have disappeared from history, along with who knows what else.

The first investigation by the Pentagon 'reported that the carnage was due to artillery fire. Civilian casualties by artillery fire among hostile villages are so common that this explanation ended the inquiry'.<sup>25</sup> But the murdered Vietnamese were not the victims of artillery fire. Since the soldiers looked into the faces of their victims, the inquiry must continue, despite the difficulties. Henry Kamm reported in the *New York Times* that:

The task of the investigators is complicated by the fact that last January, most of the inhabitants of the peninsula were forcibly evacuated by

---

<sup>24</sup> On 24 November 1969. Attention Mr Agnew.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, 29 November 1969.

Still, it is good that the American press has discovered that the rebel economy and social fabric are the target of the American bombardment of Laos. Perhaps we will be spared the pretence that our targets are steel and concrete, or that the bombing is 'the most restrained in modern warfare' (as McGeorge Bundy so elegantly put it at the time when virtually every structure in North Vietnam, outside of the centres of Hanoi and Haiphong, was being demolished).

The discovery has been mysteriously delayed. For example, in July 1968, the south-east Asia expert of *Le Monde*, Jacques Decornoy, published detailed reports of his visits to the liberated areas of Laos: 'a world without noise, for the surrounding villages have disappeared, the inhabitants themselves living hidden in the mountains ... it is dangerous to lean out at any time of the night or day' because of the ceaseless bombardment which leads to 'the scientific destruction of the areas held by the enemy'. 'The Americans are trying to "break" the Laotian Left, both psychologically and if possible, physically.' The nature of their relentless attack 'can only be explained if the target is the central administration of the Neo Lao Haksat' – the political organization that won handily in 1958 in the only unrigged election in Laos. This electoral victory inspired the American effort at subversion that led to the Laotian crisis in the early sixties, which still persists.

Decornoy describes 'the motionless ruins and deserted houses' of the central town of Sam-Neua district:

The first real raid against the population centre itself was launched on 19 February 1965. Very serious attacks were made on it quite recently on 17 and 19 March 1968.... The two ends of the town were razed to the ground. The old ruins of 1965 have disappeared, those of March 1968 were still 'smoking' when we visited them. Branches of trees lay all along the length of the

river, houses were totally burned out (phosphorus had been used). At the other end of Sam-Neua, the sight was even more painful. Everywhere enormous craters, the church and many houses were demolished. In order to reach the people who might be living there, the Americans dropped their all-too-famous fragmentation bombs. Here lay a 'mother bomb' disembowelled, by the side of the road. All round, over a dozen metres, the earth was covered with 'daughter bombs', little machines that the Vietnamese know well, unexploded and hiding hundreds of steel splinters. ... One of the officials of Sam-Neua district told us that between February 1965 and March 1968, 65 villages had been destroyed. A number impossible to verify in a short report, but it is a fact that between Sam-Neua and a place about 30 kilometres away where we stayed, no house in the villages and hamlets had been spared. Bridges had been destroyed, fields up to the rivers were holed with bomb craters.

Decornoy reports that 'American raids on "liberated Laos" began in May 1964, therefore well before the Gulf of Tonkin incident (August 1964) and the policy of escalation to North Vietnam (spring 1965). For this reason, Laos has, in some ways, served as a testing ground or experimental site'. He describes the amazing persistence of the Laotians in maintaining and advancing the social revolution in the face of this attack, their 'virulent nationalism' and refusal to follow foreign models, the schools and factories in caves, the prosperity of the rare villages that have still, for unknown reasons, escaped destruction. Finally he quotes an American diplomat in Vientiane who says: 'To make progress in this country, it is necessary to level everything. The inhabitants must go back to zero, lose their

a slight shock the statement by Eqbal Ahmad that 'America has institutionalized even its genocide', referring to the fact that the extermination of the Indians 'has become the object of public entertainment and children's games'.<sup>21</sup> Shortly after, I was thumbing through my daughter's fourth-grade social science reader.<sup>22</sup> The protagonist, Robert, is told the story of the extermination of the Pequot tribe by Captain John Mason:

His little army attacked in the morning before it was light and took the Pequots by surprise. The soldiers broke down the stockade with their axes, rushed inside, and set fire to the wigwams. They killed nearly all the braves, squaws, and children, and burned their corn and other food. There were no Pequots left to make more trouble. When the other Indian tribes saw what good fighters the white men were, they kept the peace for many years.

I wish I were a man and had been there,' thought Robert.

Nowhere does Robert express, or hear, second thoughts about the matter. The text omits some other pertinent remarks: for example, by Cotton Mather, who said that 'it was supposed that no less than six hundred Pequot souls were brought down to hell that day.'<sup>23</sup> Is it an exaggeration to suggest that our history of extermination and racism is reaching its climax in

---

<sup>21</sup> In *No More Vietnams?* On the widely noted analogy between Vietnam and the Indian wars see my *American Power and the New Mandarins*, Chapter 3, note 42.

<sup>22</sup> Harold B. Clifford, *Exploring New England* (Follett, 1961).

<sup>23</sup> See Howard Zinn, 'Violence and social change', *Boston University Graduate Journal*, Fall 1968. When disease decimated the Indians, Mather said: 'The woods were almost cleared of those pernicious creatures, to make room for a better growth.'

which notes 'that United States Army helicopter gunships mistakenly attacked a group of Vietnamese civilians 25 miles west of Tamky Tuesday, killing 14 civilians. ... United States helicopter gunships killed 7 unarmed civilians and wounded 17 others in a similar incident 16 September in the Mekong delta.' It is not easy to avoid such accidents as we try to ensure that the Viet Cong constituency ceases to exist.

In *Look* magazine, 18 November 1969, Foreign Editor Robert Moskin describes his visit to a refugee camp, which 'tells part of the story of Vietnam's hopelessness'. Its 3,125 refugees (240 men) were transferred to this 'desolate sand-dune camp' in a military sweep last summer from an island that was regarded as a VC stronghold: 'The rest of the men are still hiding with the VC in the tall grass.' This is in Quang Nam province, where even the American officials in charge admit that the battle was lost 'to Viet Cong forces recruited for the most part from within the province'.<sup>18</sup> With an honesty that others would do well to emulate, Moskin states that in Vietnam 'America's historic westward-driving wave has crested'.

With justice, 'a staff major [of the American 1<sup>st</sup> Division in Chulai] said: "We are at war with the 10-year-old children. It may not be humanitarian, but that's what it's like."'<sup>19</sup>

And now there is Song My 'Pinkville'. More than two decades of indoctrination and counter-revolutionary interventions have created the possibility of a name like 'Pinkville' – and the acts that may be done in a place so named. Orville and Jonathan Schell have pointed out<sup>20</sup> what any literate person should realize, that this was no isolated atrocity, but the logical consequence of a virtual war of extermination directed against helpless peasants: 'enemies', 'reds', 'dinks'. But there are, perhaps, still deeper roots. Some time ago, I read with

---

<sup>18</sup> William Nighswonger, *Rural Pacification in Vietnam* (Praeger, 1967).

<sup>19</sup> Henry Kamm, *New York Times*, 1 December 1969.

<sup>20</sup> *New York Times*, 26 November 1969.

traditional culture, for it blocks everything.' And Decornoy comments: 'The Americans accuse the North Vietnamese of intervening militarily in the country, but it is they who talk of reducing Laos to zero, while the Pathet Lao exalts the national culture and national independence.'

No doubt Laos is still serving as a testing ground or experimental site for the next stage of the Vietnam war, for our new long-haul, low-cost policy. If the American people will only trust their leaders, perhaps there is still a chance to crush the people's war in South Vietnam by methods that will be as well concealed as have been those of the Laotian war.

The secret can be kept. Americans know virtually nothing about the bombing of South Vietnam. To my knowledge, there has been only one pro-Western correspondent who has spent time in the liberated zones of South Vietnam, Katsuichi Honda – and I am sure that his reports in *Asahi* in the fall of 1967 are known to very few Americans.<sup>14</sup> He describes, for example, the incessant attacks on undefended villages by gunboats in the Mekong river and by helicopter gunships 'firing away at random at farmhouses'

They seemed to fire whimsically and in passing even though they were not being shot at from the ground nor could they identify the people as NLF. They did it impulsively for fun, using the farmers for targets as if in a hunting mood. They are hunting Asians... This whimsical firing would explain the reason why the surgical wards in every hospital in the towns of the Mekong Delta were full of wounded.

He is speaking, notice, of the Mekong Delta, where few North Vietnamese soldiers were identified until several

---

<sup>14</sup> They have appeared in English, and can be obtained from the Committee for the English publication of 'Vietnam – a voice from the villages', do Mrs Reiko Ishida, 2-13-7, Nishikata, Bunyo-ku, Tokyo.

months after the Tet offensive, where, according to American intelligence, there were 800 North Vietnamese troops before last summer;<sup>15</sup> and which contained some forty per cent of the population of South Vietnam prior to the American assault.

Occasionally such material finds its way to the American press. Consider again the Mekong Delta. 'In March [1969] alone, the United States 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division reported that it killed 3,504 Viet Cong troops and sympathizers in the northern delta [and] senior officers confidently forecast that they will continue to kill at least 100 a day well into the summer.' The 'conflagration ... is tearing the social fabric apart'. In 'free-fire zones, the Americans could bring to bear at any time the enormous firepower available from helicopter gunships, bombers and artillery ... fighter bombers and artillery pound the enemy positions into the grey porridge that the green delta land becomes when pulverized by high explosives'.<sup>16</sup>

Apparently the performance of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division was not entirely satisfactory, however: '... in the Mekong Delta, US military advisers at My Tho told a UPI correspondent, Robert Kaylor, that the government's pacification programme was still being hampered by the effects of indiscriminate killing of civilians by US 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division troops recently withdrawn from the area. "You can't exactly expect people who have had

---

<sup>15</sup> 'Before this summer, the enemy in the delta consisted mostly of indigenous Vietcong units and guerrillas, many of whom worked during the day in the rice fields and fought at night. The only North Vietnamese were troops and officers who led some of the guerrilla units. They numbered about 800 as against an estimated total of 49,000 Vietcong soldiers and support troops.' *New York Times*, 15 September 1969. On 16 September, *The Times* reports that 'for the first time in the war, a regular North Vietnamese army unit, the 18B Regiment, had attacked in the delta'.

<sup>16</sup> *New York Times*, Peter Arnett, 15 April 1969. Arnett claims that only ninety per cent of the enemy forces of 40,000 are recruited locally, giving a far higher estimate of North Vietnamese than the intelligence reports cited above, or others: e.g., *Christian Science Monitor*, 16 September 1969, which reports that in the early fall of 1969 'North Vietnamese troops in the delta doubled in number, to between 2,000 and 3,000 men.'

parts of their family blown away by the 9<sup>th</sup> to be wholeheartedly on our side," said the US source, a member of a pacification team.<sup>17</sup>

In the *Monitor*, 14 October 1969, there is a front page story reviewing such efforts. It explains that 'the proportion of the country "pacified" has risen with the flow of peasants to resettlement and refugee areas', although the Viet Cong 'currently are intensifying their campaign to drive peasants back to their home areas where [they] have a better chance of controlling them'. The picture is clear. We, in our magnanimity, are using our modernizing instruments, bombs and artillery, to lead the suffering peasants to the promised land of resettlement and refugee areas. while the ferocious Viet Cong – mere 'village thugs', as the MIT political scientist, Ithiel Pool, explains in the journal of the Gandhi Peace Foundation – cruelly drive them back to their homes. The *Monitor* article also notes that 'despite years of thought and effort, officials here are still not agreed on how best to pacify a troubled land. In those years, pacification has advanced from being a theoretical ideal – though inconvenient – to the more important but second-class status of being "the other war"' – and a proper theoretical exercise for American scientists and scholars.

The *New York Times*, 24 September 1969, presents an example of how pacification proceeds. North-west of Saigon, 700 soldiers encircled a village, killing twenty-two and arresting fifty-three. It was the fourth such operation in this village in fifteen months. As for the villagers: 'The Viet Cong are everywhere, they say, and will be back when the Americans leave.' An American junior officer, looking at the deserted central market, had this to say:

'They say this village is 80 per cent VC supporters. By the time we finish this it will be 95 per cent.' Such reports are hardly more newsworthy than a small item of 27 September

---

<sup>17</sup> *Boston Globe*, 1 December 1969.