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A call to resist illegitimate authority

Intervention in Vietnam and Central America: Parallels and Differences

NOAM CHOMSKY

The following is Part I (Part II will run in the next issue) of an edited version of a talk given at Harvard University on March 19, 1985, by Noam Chomsky, a member of the board of Resist.

The speech was transcribed and produced by members and friends of the Harvard/Radcliffe Committee on Central America and the Central America Solidarity Association. Those interested in obtaining the full text of the speech (18 pages single-spaced) can contact the Resist office.

In the real world, U.S. global planning has always been sophisticated and careful, as you’d expect from a major superpower with a highly centralized and class conscious dominant social group. Their power, in turn is rooted in their own ownership and management of the society and economy, as is the norm in most societies. During World War II, American planners were very well aware that the United States was going to emerge as a world-dominant power in a position of hegemony that had few historical parallels and they organized and met in order to deal with this situation.

From 1939 to 1945, extensive studies were conducted by the Council on Foreign Relations and the State Department. One group was called the War-Peace Studies Group, which met for six years and produced extensive geopolitical analyses and plans. The Council on Foreign Relations is essentially the business input to foreign policy planning. These groups also involved every top planner in the State Department with the exception of the Secretary of State.

The conception that they developed is what they called “Grand Area” planning. The Grand Area was to be a region that was subordinated to the needs of the American economy. As one planner put it, it was to be the region that is “strategically necessary for world control.” The geopolitical analysis held that the Grand Area had to include at least the Western Hemisphere, the Far East and the former British Empire, which we were then in the process of dismantling and taking over ourselves. This is what is called “anti-imperialism” in American scholarship. The Area was also to include western and southern Europe and the oil-producing regions of the Middle East, and in fact, it was to include everything, if that were possible. Detailed plans were laid for particular regions of the Grand Area and also for international institutions that were to organize and police it, essentially in the interests of this subordination to American domestic needs.

With respect to the Far East, the plans were roughly as follows: Japan, it was understood, would sooner or later be the industrial heartland of Asia once again. Since Japan is a resource-poor area, it would need Southeast Asia and South Asia for resources and markets. All of this, of course, would be incorporated with the global system dominated by the United States.

With regard to Latin America, the matter was put most plainly by Secretary of War Henry Stimson in May 1945 when he was explaining how we must eliminate and dismantle all regional systems dominated by any other power, particularly the British, while maintaining and extending our own system. He explained with regard to Latin America as follows: “I think that it’s not asking too much to have our little region over here which never has bothered anybody.”

The basic thinking behind all this has been explained quite lucidly on a number of occasions. (This is a very open society and if one wants to learn what’s going on, you can do it; it takes a little work, but the documents are

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there and the history is there also.) One of the clearest and most lucid accounts of the planning behind this was by George Kennan, who was one of the most thoughtful, humane, and liberal of the planners, and, in fact, was eliminated from the State Department largely for that reason. Kennan was the head of the State Department Policy Planning Staff in the late 1940's. In the following document, PPS23, February 1948, he outlined the basic planning:

"We have about 50 percent of the world's wealth, but only 6.3 percent of its population. In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real test in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity. We must not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction. . . . We should cease to talk about vague and . . . unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are hampered by idealistic slogans, the better."

There are some questions that one can raise about Kennan's formulation, a number of them, but I'll keep to one. One is whether he is right in suggesting that "human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization" should be dismissed as irrelevant to American foreign policy. Actually, a review of the historical record suggests a different picture, namely that the United States often has opposed with tremendous ferocity, and violence, these elements—human rights, democratization, and the raising of living standards.

This is particularly the case in Latin America and there are very good reasons for it. The commitment of these doctrines is inconsistent with the use of harsh measures to maintain the disparity, to insure our control over 50 percent of the resources, and our exploitation of the world. In short, what we might call "the First Freedom" (there were Four Freedoms, you remember, but there was one that was left out), the Freedom to Rob, and that's really the only one that counts; the others were mostly for show. And in order to maintain the freedom to rob and exploit, we do have to consistently oppose democratization, the raising of living standards, and human rights. And we do consistently oppose them; that, of course is in the real world.

This Top Secret document referred to the Far East, but Kennan applied the same ideas to Latin America in a briefing for Latin American ambassadors in which he explained that: "One of the main concerns of U.S. policy is the protection of our raw materials." Who must we protect our raw materials from? Well, primarily, the domestic populations, the indigenous populations, which may have ideas about raising living standards. And that's inconsistent with maintaining the disparity. How will we protect our raw materials from the indigenous population? Well, the answer is the following:

"The final answer might be an unpleasant one, but . . . we should not hesitate before police repression by the local government. This is not shameful, since the Communists are essentially traitors. . . . It is better to have a strong regime in power than a liberal government if it is indulgent and relaxed and penetrated by Communists."*

Well, who are the Communists? "Communists" is a term regularly used in American political theology to refer to people who are committed to the belief that "the government has direct responsibility for the welfare of the people." I'm quoting the words of a 1949 State Department intelligence report which warned about the spread of this grim and evil doctrine, which does, of course, threaten "our raw materials" if we can't abort it somehow.

In the mid-1950's, these ideas were developed further. For example, one interesting case was an important study by a prestigious study group headed by William Yandell Eliot, who was the Williams Professor of Government at Harvard. They were also concerned with what Communism is and how it spreads. They concluded accurately that 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." That is essentially correct and is a good operational definition of "Communism" in American political discourse. Our government is committed to that view.

If a government is so evil or otherwise as to undertake a course of action of this sort, it immediately becomes an enemy. It becomes a part of the "monolithic and ruthless conspiracy" to take over the world, as John F. Kennedy put it. It is postulated that they have been taken over by the Russians if that's the policy that they appear to be committed to.

On these grounds, American policy towards Nicaragua after the 1979 revolution could have been predicted by simply observing that the health and education budget of Nicaragua rose rapidly, that an effective land reform program was instituted, and that the infant mortality rate dropped very dramatically, to the point where Nicaragua won an award from the World Health Organization for health achievements (all of this despite horrifying conditions left by the Somoza dictatorship which we had installed and supported, and continued to support to the very end, despite a lot of nonsense to the contrary that one hears.) If a country is devoted to policies like I've just described it is obviously the enemy. It is part of the "monolithic and ruthless conspiracy"—the Russians are taking it over. And, in fact, it is part of a conspiracy. It is part of a conspiracy to take from us what is
Reform, Resistance and Reaction in South Africa

DAVID L. GOODMAN

There is a tendency by many people to view the unrest taking place right now in South Africa as part of a monolithic pattern of continued violence in that country. But this is not the case in 1985. There has been a major escalation of grassroots protest in South Africa since September 1984, and this has been to a large extent the result of an increasingly politicized population.

Two major incidents that have taken place this year, namely the massacre on the anniversary of the Sharpeville killings and the riots that took place in the Crossroads squatter camps in February, dramatize this new politicization.

In February, police armored personnel carriers moved in on the sprawling Crossroads squatter camp near Cape Town. Crossroads is home to over 100,000 people, the majority of whom live there illegally as a result of "influx control" laws which prohibit blacks from living in or near the all white preserves of Cape Town. Police were coming to Crossroads to begin one of Pretoria's most ambitious—and vicious—forced removal programs to date. White authorities are preparing to force a quarter of a million black South Africans to a new city that has recently been completed on a sand wasteland 16 miles from Cape Town, called Kayalitscha. But the squatter camp residents began preparing back in the early fall for these removals. The Crossroads executive committee was meeting regularly to map strategy to mobilize people against the removals. The Crossroads executive committee was meeting regularly to map strategy to mobilize people against the removals. The Crossroads executive committee was meeting regularly to map strategy to mobilize people against the removals. The Crossroads executive committee was meeting regularly to map strategy to mobilize people against the removals.

And in February, the battles began. Rumor had spread in the squatter camps that police were about to move in to begin the removals. The squatters mobilized quickly. Pre-arranged choke points inside Crossroads were closed, and piles of trash were placed strategically to prevent police vehicles from passing. The South African Police (SAP) responded in the way people have become accustomed to, by opening fire on the defiant squatters. The confrontation left 18 dead and hundreds wounded. It also forced the South African Minister of Cooperation and Development, Gerrit Viljoen, to declare a temporary truce and suspend the removals.

What followed in March was a surprise even to seasoned opponents of the apartheid regime. Winnie Mandela, appearing on ABC's Nightline show, predicted that the state would not be so stupid as to provoke an incident on the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre. But on March 21, 25 years to the day after 69 unarmed people were gunned down by the SAP, another 21 people (an official figure which residents say represents less than half the real figure) were murdered by police near the major industrial center of Port Elizabeth.

The massacre in March was preceded by the second major general strike in South Africa in five months. On November 5 and 6, the Transvaal region of South Africa, which includes the industrial centers of Johannesburg and Pretoria, was paralyzed by a general strike called to protest the detentions of black political leaders and the repression in the townships. In March, the Port Elizabeth factories, including those of Ford and General Motors, ground to a halt when black workers went on strike. Authorities tried to force people back to work, but to no avail. The strike was at a peak when the SAP opened fire on a funeral procession on March 21. The response of the police must be seen partly as a panicked response by the state, an act of desperation when the most effective weapon in the hands of South African blacks, their labor, was being used with considerable success.

The wave of protests going on in South Africa now began in earnest in September 1984. There were a number of events that occurred in South Africa to spark those protests, the largest and most widespread since the Soweto uprising of 1976. But as the Rev. Frank Chikane, a member of the UDF's (United Democratic Front) national executive who will soon go on trial for high treason, was quick to point out, "The present situation is different. Protest can't be mopped up like in 1976. You are dealing with people with a political consciousness now."

The major causes of urban unrest that began eight months ago have been the opposition in the townships to two new disguises of apartheid policy that came into being in the past year: black local government and the new constitution.

The Black Local Authorities (BLA) Act of 1982 directed that the residents of an urban black township could vote for members of a local town or city council. This council is charged with providing and maintaining basic services such as water and electricity, road building and trash removal. They have also been given control of the police force and responsibility for enforcing pass laws.

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South Africa

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But the councils have not been given any money with which to operate, so they must function solely on income received from sales of alcohol, fines, property levies and utility service charges. House rents are paid to a different government agency.

In practice, 70 percent of the income of the administration boards (the forerunner of the town councils) was derived from the sales of alcohol in 1980-81. The town councils are further starved for money as a result of a law passed in the early '70's that declared a township such as Soweto, lying outside of Johannesburg, was thereafter "autonomous." This was a euphemism for saying that it was financially cut off from a wealthy urban center and would receive none of the taxes paid by the large corporations and wealthy residents of the cities.

The new black town councils are politically impotent, ultimately being under the control of the Minister of Cooperation and Development (formerly the Minister of Bantu Affairs). This branch of government administers most of the apartheid laws that affect black people, from bantu education to forced removals. The government claimed, however, that the act would provide Africans with a bigger say in the running of their townships. But the government's real intention was captured in a newspaper editorial that stated: "the rule is simple: Africans must pay for their own houses and services. If they can't afford it, they must go and live in the homelands."

Elections for the new town councils were held in November and December 1982. Community leaders, led by the UDF, called for a boycott of the elections. They claimed that the new councilors would be government puppets.

The election results surprised even supporters of the plan in Pretoria. Black turnout for the BLA elections was less than 10 percent. One example was demonstrated in the township of Evaton. Of the 33,000 adults living there, only 535 people voted in the council elections. Black township residents let it be known that they would not be duped so easily by the facade of reform.

As always, the promise of big paychecks, houses and political power provided the policy's architects with the black councilors they needed to do Pretoria's work (and the Minister of Cooperation and Development was authorized to appoint councilors in case none were elected.)

The social and economic position of the new councils fits in with President Botha's plan to develop a pool of black, middle-class bureaucrats who can both represent Pretoria's interests and stand as a buffer between the government and the masses of poor, discontented blacks. But more important, it is these black puppet leaders, such as the heads of the bantustans, whom Pretoria points to as the "true leaders" of the black people. It is with these leaders that Pretoria will negotiate the future of South Africa's 23 million blacks.

As Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning Chris Heuin put it, "By leaders, I don't imply that we have only to consult with the leaders of the national independent states, but also with identified urban groups, especially those who seek solutions on a constitutional and peaceful basis. . . . We will not talk to people that opt for revolutionary or forcible changes in this country." Both Pretoria and Washington can point to "negotiations" and "open discussions" that are taking place with South Africa's black "leaders," thus preserving the facade of progress while further entrenched the reality of apartheid.

In the past 10 months, township residents have been proven correct in their predictions about the new councils. The new councilors have quickly set about raising property rents and levying surcharges in a desperate attempt to keep themselves and their townships solvent.

In the Transvaal township of Daveytown, rents were raised by 200 percent. The Soweto City Council increased water tariffs by $2.15, and levied an electricity surcharge of $12 per household — even for households that had no electricity.

Then in October of this year, the Soweto city council voted to provide a plot of land for Soweto "mayor" Ephraim Tshabalala that would accommodate his plans for a two-story house, tennis courts, meeting rooms and swimming pool. Despite the fact that the wait for housing in the over-crowded township is often longer than five years, the Council approved a residential plot that is big enough to hold 50 houses.

The people have responded angrily to this new form of government control. On September 3rd residents of the townships of the so-called Vaal Triangle, an area about 30 miles south of Johannesburg, stayed away from work to protest increased rents. Throughout the day shops were looted, and the homes of the new town councilors were firebombed. It marked the beginning of the protests which still continue.

At one point, people marching peacefully by one of the town councilors' houses were greeted by gunfire, as the councillor began firing at them. Riots broke out, and after two days 70 people lay dead, including four town councilors. Several other councilors heeded residents demands and resigned their positions. In Soweto two weeks later, five people were killed by police in a similar "stay-away." And in two separate incidents that occurred on October 28th, the mayors of two different black townships in the Eastern Transvaal had their houses attacked and burned down by angry mobs of residents. Since late October numerous town councilors have resigned en masse. Alister Sparks of the Rand Daily Mail estimates that since the stay-away of November 5th and 6th, township unrest "has virtually wiped out the system of black local authorities," with only four of the 22 councils in the Transvaal province still functioning.

The South African government is reluctant to admit that the violence in the townships has a decidedly political overtone, preferring to blame it on "outside agitators." Much of the violence is directed specifically at the institutional symbols of apartheid — namely the government-backed "puppet" leaders, their businesses, and government buildings. In a recent incident the government administration buildings in the large black township of Queenstown were burned down by protesters in late April.

Even the Financial Mail, an influential South Africa business magazine, has written, "Black councils established under the BLA Act seem doomed. Members are quitting their posts in response to calls by activist
groups.’”

As an alternative to the town councils, the major townships have elected their own civic associations, which have actively organized residents to fight the rent increases and the policies of the town councils. This struggle for democratic control of the communities has been a major cause of urban unrest.

The new constitution represents a different kind of assault on the black majority. The constitution went hand in hand with the propaganda meant to strengthen the black communities. In a pamphlet entitled “Guidelines for a New Dispensation,” the government’s Department of Constitutional Planning and Development posed the question, “Why are blacks not included in the new dispensation?” The answer given was: “Blacks already have their own governments and administration as for example, in KwaZulu (where Zulu ministers tend to their own affairs), or in Soweto, where new councils with extended powers are to be established.”

The new constitution provides for a tricameral parliament with representation for colored and Indian people. The parliament now consists of a white House of Assembly (178 members), a colored House of Representatives (85 members) and an Indian House of Delegates (45 members).

Blacks had already been given a taste of the kind of reform promised by the new constitution. “The Black Local Authorities, Indian and Colored parliaments are doomed to failure,” predicted a member of the popularly-based Soweto Civic Association. “They are unacceptable and don’t have the support of the people. I am convinced that our experience with the new councils is the indicator of things to come under the new parliament. The same lies, the same promises, and eventually worse hardships for us.” A multi-racial coalition led by the UDF organized a nationwide boycott of what they called the “sham elections.”

The elections, held in August, were boycotted by over 80 percent of the eligible Indian and colored voters.

The timing of the new parliamentary elections in late August and the beginnings of the major riots in the black townships in early September is no coincidence. It represents both a coalescence of opposition and an agonizing climax of black frustration.

Both the black, local authorities and the new constitution must be understood in the context of the larger apartheid strategy. The BLAs evolved as part of Botha’s dream of a social, economic and political “constellation of South Africa States.” Within this scheme, rural blacks would be left to manage their own affairs in the form of independent homelands. Urban blacks would be represented by a national body based on the town councils. The bulk of South Africa would be preserved for the whites.

Together with the new constitution, the new reforms represent a refinement of South Africa’s overarching divide-and-rule strategy. It is a strategy of wholesale cultural, social and economic destruction. Not only are Indians and coloreds set against the blacks in the new constitutional dispensation, but non-whites have delivered a resounding blow to this plan. They have resisted imposed divisions and left Pretoria haphazard and defensive in its attempts to maintain the advantage.

The price for the struggle in the townships has been high. Over 300 people have been killed since September, all but one of them black, and the vast majority the victims of police bullets. And the death toll continues to climb.

State repression is also reflected in the fact that over 1000 people had been detained without trial by the end of 1984. And a new feature of state reaction has been the use of conscripted troops of the South African Defense Force (SADF) to quell urban unrest.

Beginning with the development of 7000 troops in black townships in late October, the SADF had for the first time in South African history been brought in numerous times in past months to back-up the beleaguered and overwhelmed SAP. The use of the SADF represent a major escalation of the urban conflict and is also an indication of how threatened Pretoria feels by the continuing level of protest.

An editorial appearing in the Cape Times in late October argued, “Pretoria can theoretically ring every urban township with steel, but the basic causes of bitterness among blacks, if not addressed will grow. While Mr. Heunis, Dr. Viljoen and their cabinet colleagues [Ministers of Constitutional Planning and Development, and of Cooperation and Development respectively] fiddle around on the periphery of the problem, producing the odd bit of relief here and there, the basic causes of black unrest are left untouched. They include influx control, inferior education and services and, most important, a new constitution which leaves blacks in limbo... Some black leaders have already branded [this] civil war.”

The resistance by blacks and the state response make a mockery of the notion that reform is taking place in South Africa. What Pretoria has confirmed by its actions in the townships is the total failure of its “new deal” policies to appease the majority blacks’ struggle for a democratic, non-racial society. The regime’s heavy handed reaction also legitimates the power of its new opposition, which has put the Botha government and its proxies on the defensive. And this opposition, by nearly all accounts, is only in the formative stage.

David L. Goodman is a free-lance journalist based in Boston. He recently returned from southern Africa, where he was writing for In These Times and The Nation.
As people are beginning to remember the tenth anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, they are forgetting one of its victims, Vietnamese political activist David Truong. David, who was convicted of espionage in 1978, has been imprisoned in Federal institutions since January 1982. The Nation (March 2, 1985) stated that "Truong’s real crime was working for reconciliation between the United States and Vietnam."

While the government has expended over $1,000,000 prosecuting David Truong and another $150,000 imprisoning him for what several of his former prosecutors now admit was insignificant, the same government is preparing to deport him after he is paroled in August 1986. In a letter to the Appeals Board of the Federal Parole Commission in 1983 requested immediate parole and voluntary deportation to France. [So far, the Justice Department has declined to even discuss this option.]

To fight these injustices and to support David’s ongoing work and study,

THE VIETNAM TRIAL SUPPORT COMMITTEE APPEALS TO YOU TO SUPPORT DAVID TRUONG’S CASE

David, who is incarcerated at the Federal Institution at Petersburg, Virginia earns $11 per hour, or $15 per month, at his 35-hour a week clerical job. Just to stay in touch with the real world outside, David needs postage for letters to his friends and colleagues, and money for books and about two dozen newspaper and magazine subscriptions—his most essential necessity. $15 a month will buy no more than a few pieces of fruit, coffee, toilet articles and everyday items at highly-inflated prison commissary prices.

THE VIETNAM TRIAL SUPPORT COMMITTEE MUST RAISE $10,000

- $50 per month, or $600 per year, for David’s personal expenses
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ours, namely "our raw materials," and a conspiracy to prevent us from "maintaining the disparity," which of course, must be the fundamental element of our foreign policy.

Well, it is obvious that a country of this sort is an enemy—that is, part of "the monolithic and ruthless conspiracy"—and that we have to take drastic measures to ensure that "the rot does not spread," which is the terminology constantly used by the planners. In fact, when one reads reports of this kind or looks at the health and education statistics—the nutritional level, land reform, and so on—one can understand very well why American hostility to Nicaragua has reached such fanatic, and almost hysterical levels. It follows from the geopolitical conception previously outlined.

The people who are committed to these dangerous heresies such as using their resources for their own purposes or believing that the government is committed to the welfare of its own people and so on, may not be Soviet clients to begin with and, in fact, quite regularly they're not. In Latin America, they are often members, to begin with, of Bible study groups that become self-help groups, church organizations, peasant organizations, and so on and so forth. But by the time we get through with them, they will be Soviet clients. The reason they will be Soviet clients by the time we get through with them is that they will have nowhere else to turn for any minimal form of protection against the terror and violence that we regularly unleash against them if they undertake programs of the kind described.

And this is a net gain for American policy. One thing you'll notice, if you look over the years, is that the United States quite consistently tries to create enemies if a country does escape from the American grip. What we want to do is drive the country into being a base for the Russians because that justifies us in carrying out the violent attacks which we must carry out, given the geopolitical conception under which we organize and control much of the world. So that's what we do, and then we "defend" ourselves. We engage in self-defense against the Great Satan or the Evil Empire or the "monolithic and ruthless conspiracy."

More generally, the Soviet Union plays the same kind of game within its narrower domains, and that explains a good bit of the structure of the Cold War, in fact.

Well, what has all of this meant for Indochina and Central America? Let's begin with Indochina.

Now remember I'm talking about the real world, not the one in the PBS television series and so on. In the real world what happened was that, by 1948, the American State Department recognized, explicitly, that Ho Chi Minh was the sole significant leader of Vietnamese nationalism, but that if Vietnamese nationalism was successful, it could be a threat to the Grand Area, and therefore something had to be done about it. The threat was not so much in Vietnam itself, which is not terribly important for American purposes (the freedom to rob in Vietnam is not all that significant); the fear was that "the rot would spread," namely the rot of successful social and economic development. In a very poor country which had suffered enormously under European colonialism, successful social and economic development could have a demonstration effect. Such development could be a model for people elsewhere and could lead them to try to duplicate it and gradually the Grand Area would unravel.

So, for example, when the Bishop regime in Grenada began to take any constructive moves, it was immediately the target of enormous American hostility, not because the little speck in the Caribbean is any potential military threat or any of that sort of business. It is a threat in some other respects; if a tiny, nothing-country with no natural resources like this can begin to extricate itself from the system of misery and oppression that we've helped to impose, then others who have even more resources might be tempted to do likewise.

Well, we recognized that we had to prevent the rot from spreading so we had to support France in its effort to reconquer its former colony, and we did so. By the time the French had given up, we were providing about 80 percent of the costs of the war and in fact we came close to using nuclear weapons towards the end, by 1954, in Indochina.

There was a political settlement, the Geneva Accords, in 1954, which the United States bitterly opposed. We im-

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mediately proceeded to undermine them, installing in South Vietnam a violent, terrorist regime, which, of course, rejected (with our support) the elections which were projected. Then, the regime turned to a terrorist attack against the population, particularly against the anti-French Resistance, which we called the Viet Cong, in South Vietnam. The regime had killed about 80,000 people (that means we had killed, through our plans and mercenaries) by the time John F. Kennedy took over in 1961. This assault against the population, after several years, did arouse resistance—such acts have a way of doing that—and by 1959, the anti-French Resistance received authorization from the Communist leadership, after several years and after tens of thousands of people were murdered, to use violence in self-defense. Then, the government, which we had established, immediately began to collapse because it had no popular support, as the United States conceded.

By 1959, the Resistance began to receive some support from the northern half of the country in retaliation against the violence unleashed by the American-organized attack against the population of the southern part of Vietnam. The government we had installed to carry out this attack and to block the political agreements quickly began to collapse as soon as resistance began. Then Kennedy had a problem. It’s important to realize how he handled this. This is one of the dis-similarities between Vietnam and Central America to which I will return. In 1961 and 1962 Kennedy simply launched a war against South Vietnam. That is, in 1961 and 1962, the American Air Force began extensive bombing and defoliation in South Vietnam, aimed primarily against the rural areas where 85 percent of the population lived. This was part of a program designed to drive several million people to concentration camps, which we called “strategic hamlets,” where they would be surrounded by armed guards and barbed wire, “protected,” as we put it, from the guerrillas who, we conceded, they were willingly supporting. That’s what we call “aggression” or “armed attack” when some other country does it. We call it “defense” when we do it.

This was when the “defense” of South Vietnam escalated, with this at-tack in 1961 and 1962. But that again failed. The resistance increased, and by 1965, the United States was compelled to move to an outright land invasion of South Vietnam, escalating that attack again. We also at that time initiated the bombing of North Vietnam, which, as anticipated, brought North Vietnamese troops to the South several months later.

Throughout, however, the major American attack was against South Vietnam. When we began bombing North Vietnam in February 1965, we extended the bombing of South Vietnam which had already been going on for several years. We extended the bombing of South Vietnam to triple the scale of the bombing of North Vietnam, and throughout, it was South Vietnam that bore the main brunt of the American war in Indochina. We later extended the war to Cambodia and Laos.

As far as the major aims were concerned, the American war was a smashing success. For one thing, there was a huge massacre. The first phase of the war, the French war, probably left about half a million dead. From 1954 to 1965 we succeeded in killing maybe another 160,000 to 170,000 South Vietnamese, mostly peasants. The war, from 1965 to 1975, left a death toll of maybe in the neighborhood of 3 million people. There were also perhaps a million dead in Cambodia and Laos. So all together about 5 million people were killed, which is a respectable achievement when you’re trying to prevent any successful social and economic development. Furthermore, there were millions and millions of refugees created by the American bombardment, which was quite extraordinarily savage, not to mention the murderous ground operations.

The land was devastated. People can’t farm because of the destruction and unexploded ordnance. And this is all a success. Vietnam is not going to be a model of social and economic development for anyone else. In fact, it will be lucky to survive. The rot will not spread. We also made sure of that by our actions in the surrounding areas, where we buttressed the American positions.

The post-war American policy has been designed to insure that it stays that way. We follow a policy of what some conservative business circles out of the United States call “bleeding Vietnam.” That is, a policy of imposing maximum suffering and harshness in Vietnam in the hope of perpetuating the suffering and insuring that only the most harsh and brutal elements will survive. Then you can use their brutalit-ty as a justification for having carried out the initial attack. This is done constantly and quite magnificently in our ideological system. We are now supporting Pol Pot forces; we concede this incidentally. The State Department has stated that our reason for supporting the Democratic Kampuchea Coalition, which is largely based on Khmer Rouge forces, is because of its “continuity” with the Pol Pot regime, therefore we support it indirectly through China or through other means. This is part of the “bleeding Vietnam.” Also, of course, we offer no aid, no reparations, though we certainly owe them. We block aid from international institutions and we’ve succeeded in blocking aid from other countries.

India tried to send, in 1977, 100 buffaloes, a very small amount, to Vietnam to try to replenish the buffalo herd that was destroyed in the war. We tried to block it by threatening to cancel Food for Peace aid to India if they sent the 100 buffaloes. Mennonites in the U.S. tried to send pencils to Cambodia; again the State Department tried to block it. They also tried to send shovels to Laos to dig up the unexploded ordance. Of course, we could do it easily with heavy equipment, but that we are plainly not going to do.

Recent Resist Grants

Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, Midwest Region (Chicago, IL) $600
Central American Refugee Defense Fund (Boston, MA) $300
NY Women Against Rape (NY, NY) $600
American Indian Environmental Council (Albuquerque, NM) $600
Clergy and Laity Concerned (Eugene, OR) $600
NH Women’s Peace Center (Concord, NH) $250
Middle East Research Information Project (MERIP) (NY, NY) $500
Black and Proud Elementary School (Jackson, MS) $250