

# RECORDED MESSAGE FOR SPRING MOBILIZATION [NEW YORK, 1967]

BERTRAND RUSSELL

*Stefan Andersson, in his review in this issue of Erik Eriksson's book on Vietnam, cites the message that Bertrand Russell reportedly tape-recorded for the largest anti-Vietnam War demonstration in the United States. It took place in New York City, 15 April 1967. Russell's tape was to have been played at the demonstration, but it was rain-shortened and the tape wasn't presented. The whereabouts of the tape, if it is extant, are unknown.*

*The message is of special interest for its several explicit and oblique references to the upcoming sessions of the International War Crimes Tribunal. It was not known at the time where and when they would take place, but later in April, France having failed Russell, Sweden stood firm in its tradition of free speech, assembly and press.*

*The message was first published in the tenth number of the New York BRPF's Foundation Bulletin (BR C67.08). It was reprinted in Volume 2 of Bertrand Russell's America, without the nine sentences from "We will demonstrate this" to "who insist that we identify Johnson and his policy with you the American people." The present text is printed from the typescript, dated 7 April 1967, in the Bertrand Russell Archives (220.148669) and was compared with that in the Foundation Bulletin. The typescript's type is of baggage-stamp size. In extreme old age Russell commonly made his tapes from type of this size. There is no manuscript with it. Corrections are in another hand. Indeed, some of the phrasing is uncharacteristic of Russell's prose, but his tape-recording the message must be regarded as conferring his approval—just like his extant tape-recording of "Appeal to the American Conscience" the previous year.* (K.B.)

**I**t is clear to all who have the will to see that the United States Government is committing genocide in Vietnam. The Secretary of Defence informed the Senate that approximately 4,000,000 pounds of bombs fall daily on Vietnam. The tonnage exceeds all the bombing in the Pacific theatre during the entirety of World War Two. It exceeds the bombing in Western Europe during the same period.

This concentration of explosives is taking place in a relatively tiny area—in a country the size of New York and Pennsylvania. The *Washington Post* of March 17 reported that in the month previous, the United States Air Force dropped 68,000 tons thus raising the daily total of bombardment to four and a half million pounds daily. This is four times the Korean total.

Four and a half million pounds daily of bombardment in a small peasant country is terror bombing aimed at the population. Reports from North Vietnam brought by our investigators make clear that roads, bridges and railways are rarely hit. Villages, towns, hospitals, schools, churches, pagodas, tuberculosis sanatoria and leprosaria—these are destroyed *and* especially targeted.

Fragmentation bombs, steel pellet bombs, napalm, white phosphorous and magnesium bombs are used to terrorize and massacre the peasants of North Vietnam. That is their sole purpose.

For any person capable of human impulse, for any man with a shred of intellectual probity, for any with the faintest murmur of moral feeling—this supreme atrocity is hateful. The cynical men who discourse in the newspapers about the extent of civilian damage as opposed to military targets are men who lack honour. They compare with Germans who argued as to the extent to which Jews polluted the Aryan race when these Germans discussed the Gas Chambers.

What is our proper response to this criminal barbarism? It is simple and compelling. We must call for an end to the aggression and for the victory of the Vietnamese people in their struggle for national independence. We must document the full record of the U.S. war of annihilation and expose the motive nestling behind the power. This is the task of the War Crimes Tribunal. The evidence from the U.S. Government's own acknowledged deeds is overwhelming—every bit as overwhelming as the evidence of Nazi atrocity. We will demonstrate this and with procedures unassailable by the most shameless disguiser of American aggression.

In the South of Vietnam the United States by its own proud admission wages a scorched earth war of burning and killing all in the path of foraging army units. Must the American people be cannon fodder for the directors of U.S. capitalism and the Pentagon? Must the American people allow the crimes against the people of Vietnam to be their responsibility? This is the consequence of allowing Johnson and his gang of cut throats be identified<sup>1</sup> with the people of the United States. That is the real anti-Americanism. I say it is intolerable to allow this filthy Government to be identified with the American people. Johnson is not the United States. You who resist his barbarism are the only honourable representa-

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<sup>1</sup> [The word "confused" was deleted here and no replacement verb inserted on the typescript. The version in the *Foundation Bulletin* has, as would be expected from the next sentence but one, the word "identified". (Ed.)]

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tives of America and the anti-Americans are those who insist that we identify Johnson and his policy with you the American people.

The cost to the American people of this cruel war of aggression is very high. The country is being brutalized. The u.s. soldier fights for conquest on behalf of high finance. The Vietnamese fight for survival, for national independence, for land reform, for social justice. The whole people are against the u.s. war and even the Pentagon must acknowledge that American casualties exceed 1,000 a week, killed and wounded. This figure is lower than the truth for the u.s. Government always lies about this war to the American people. Yet it is high, very high.

Considering that only a small proportion of the u.s. forces are engaged in front-line battle, this is an enormous percentage of men lost. A generation is scheduled by Johnson for slaughter. A whole nation is subjected to inhuman war involving torture and experimental weapons.

All of you know this. I appeal to you to move beyond decrying war in the abstract. Support the victims of this aggression. Support the Tribunal in its effort to present the evidence overwhelmingly. Fix the responsibility where it belongs. Do not always permit the argument to centre on the assumptions of the aggressor. Remember that the Vietnamese are being asked to countenance mass murder on their soil by a foreign invader. They are denied the right to retaliate. Not one city in the u.s. is under threat from Vietnam. Even the Seventh Fleet and the air bases in the very south of their own country are immune from Vietnamese attack. Why? What permits the u.s. to massacre at will and declare their own bases and fleets immune from reprisal? There is a clear necessity for all of us. We must forget vague formulas which enable us to avoid supporting the victims of aggression. We must stop looking for others to take responsibility. The United Nations is not the arena. South Vietnam and the United States are the arenas of struggle.

It is in Vietnam and in America that this aggression must be defeated. Demand an end to the u.s. aggression now. The troops should come home now. The crimes should be exposed and denounced now. The Vietnamese should have our solidarity and unflinching support now. The American people should be told their Government is waging an aggressive and imperialist war now. This is the task of the American movement as it is the challenge to our War Crimes Tribunal. This Spring the people of America should be mobilized to stop the destruction of Vietnam. Let us join in a clear struggle to the end now.

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