

Review Essay

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE BRPF, THE VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN, AND THE RUSSELL TRIBUNAL

STEFAN ANDERSSON

STEFANKARLANDERSSON@LIVE.COM

Ernest Tate. *Revolutionary Activism in the 1950s and 60s: a Memoir*. Vol. 1: *Canada 1955–1965*. Pp. xvi, 274. C\$15; £9; €11. Vol. 2: *Britain 1965–1969*. London: Resistance Books, 2014. Pp. xviii, 402. ISBN: 978-0-902869-60-8. C\$21; £13.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ernest (Ernie) Tate was born in 1934 in Northern Ireland and emigrated to Canada in 1955. He describes himself as “a working class activist without any formal education, politically formed mainly by my experiences in a small Trotskyist group in Canada” (*Memoir 2*: 164). He came to Britain in 1965 to establish, with much help from his partner, Jess MacKenzie, a British Section of the Fourth International. This is when the International Marxist Group (IMG) was born. In this review I will limit my comments to Tate’s activities in his second volume relating to the BRPF, the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC) and the International War Crimes Tribunal (IWCT).

Tate describes how the IMG came into being and some of its main personalities: Ken Coates, Pat Jordan, Geoff Coggan, and in particular Tariq Ali. Ali was elected President of the Oxford Union in 1965 and organized the first teach-in against the Vietnam war in the UK. He was a delegate on behalf of the British Peace Committee to the Communist-dominated Helsinki Peace Conference, visited Vietnam as a member of one of the investigative commissions sent out by the IWCT and reported his findings at the session in Stockholm in May 1967. He was recruited to the IMG, thanks to Tate’s initiatives (2: 240–1), and became editor of *Black Dwarf*.

Tate has a whole chapter on Tariq Ali. “He was a very important addition to our ranks and he would eventually become one of our most well-known leaders”¹ (p. 241). Tariq Ali became for the student protests in the UK what

¹ There are nine letters from Tariq Ali and five to him in the BRA. In the first, from 20

Tom Hayden and Carl Oglesby were for the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) in the US, and Rudi Dutschke was for Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund (Socialist German Student Union) in West Germany.² Both Hayden and Oglesby had been presidents of SDS. Hayden had written the draft of the Port Huron Statement in 1962 and visited Vietnam in 1965, and Oglesby was a member of the IWCT, participated in both sessions and wrote about it.

December 1964, Ali asks if he can buy two pamphlets on Vietnam. I sent an early draft of this review to Ali, who answered: “Hi: Read your review which I like ... what seems missed out is the role of Jean-Paul Sartre whose involvement was as important as that of Russell ... in fact the two philosophers made an amazing duo. It’s a pity if Ernie left the French out because they were crucial to the operation....”

² For a well-researched and favourably received book about the relationship between the SDS in West Germany and the SDS in the United States and international relations between the different student movements in general, which all had one common interest: to stop the United States’ aggressive war in Indochina, see KLIMKE’s *The Other Alliance* (2010), where he also refers to a CIA investigation “International Connections of US Peace Groups” (available at: http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000538627.pdf). It shows how concerned Johnson was about the possible effects of the Russell Tribunal.

Klimke says that in the report: “People like Dave Dellinger and Tom Hayden stood out as main organizers and international intermediaries, the latter especially because of his visit and contacts with Hanoi. The ‘National Mobilization Committee’ was the main link between them and had, next to the ‘War Crimes Tribunal’ organized by Bertrand Russell, succeeded in rallying internationally coordinated opposition against U.S. actions in Vietnam” (p. 205, n. 50). At the Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum in Austin, there is a National Security File, Vietnam Country file with a special folder for “The Bertrand Russell ‘Trial’”, which contains a number of documents related to Russell and the IWCT. Johnson was worried that the Russell Tribunal would get a lot of attention and open up the eyes of the world to what really was going on in Southeast Asia. Walt Rostow, who served as Special Assistant for National Security Affairs to Johnson in 1966–69, reported that “You may be interested—and a little cheered—by the USIA summary of European Press reaction to the shenanigans in Stockholm” (5 May 1967: Rostow to President: box 191: WH70255). The immediate reaction in the major European newspapers gave, according to Rostow, no reason to fear the impact of the Tribunal’s conclusions.

Three weeks after the first session was over, the Six Day War (5–10 June 1967) broke out, which directed the media’s attention from the Vietnam War to a conflict that is ongoing. Russell’s statement on the Middle East, dated 31 January 1970, and read on 3 February, the day after his death, to an International Conference of Parliamentarians in Cairo, leaves no doubt that what Russell said then is still relevant today. See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdkBgE8tFRI>.

DAVID DELLINGER was a member of the IWCT and has written about this and his relationship with SDS in *From Yale to Jail* (1993): “... the students had introduced a new spirit into the debate over Vietnam. They had refused to let narrowness on both sides of the Cold War obscure the real issue. They had become a force to be reckoned with” (p. 199).

Tate has also much of interest to say about the British students and their part in the VSC, the IMG and the anti-war movement in general. Without the students' protests, particularly those in the US who faced the draft, the anti-war movement would have lacked an important source of energy. Many student organizations turned to Russell for support, which he gladly gave in the form of statements, letters and sometimes tape recordings such as one to the students gathered at Berkeley for a teach-in in May 1965 to show his support for their Vietnam Day.³

II. ENTER RUSSELL STETLER

Almost two years earlier a young American student, Russell Dearnley Stetler, Jr., who was chair of the Student Peace Union of Haverford College and Bryn Mawr College, had written to Russell asking for information and Russell's most recent opinions on the crisis in South Vietnam and offering to publicize Russell's letter in the *New York Times* about chemical warfare. He ended the letter by saying: "I congratulate you for your continued efforts in the cause of world peace and hope that you will reply as soon as possible to insure a quick union of our energies in opposing the war in South Vietnam" (25 Sept. 1963, RAI 640, box 1.55).

Russell replied three days later with more information about his publications on the war, ending the letter: "I wish you every success with your efforts and hope you will keep me informed with regards to their progress" (RAI 640, box 1.50). This Stetler did, and in a Christmas card he informed Russell that:

Better informed through your help, my chapter of the Student Peace Union led others in a demonstration 30 Oct. '63 when Pres. Kennedy was last in Phila. (In treatment not unlike that which you received, the *New York Times* denied the existence of our demonstration. Local news coverage was good.) We still seek dramatic means of publicizing the atrocities and deceit in Vietnam and would welcome your suggestions. Tomorrow—the 3rd anniversary of the Liberation Nat'l Front of South Vietnam—will pass uncelebrated in this country. What is to be done?" (Box 4.5)

³ The first major teach-in was organized by SDS at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor on 24–25 March 1965. The event was attended by about 3,500 and consisted of debates, lectures, movies, and musical events aimed at protesting the war. The largest Vietnam teach-in was held on 21–23 May 1965 at UC Berkeley. The event was organized by the Vietnam Day Committee (VDC), an organizing group founded by ex-grad student (sociology) Jerry Rubin, UCB Professor Stephen Smale (Mathematics), and others. Russell's speech was published as "American Ambition Can Kill Us" (1965). See also DEGROOT's essay "'Left, Left, Left!': the Vietnam Day Committee, 1965–66" (1998), in which Russell's speech is referred to (p. 88). See also Cyril Levitt, *Children of Privilege* (1984).

What Stetler did, among several other things, was to write an article, "Vietnam: the Whole Brutal Business", which he sent to Russell and asked him to supply an introduction⁴ and help him to get it published. After unsuccessful attempts, Stetler seems to have suggested to Russell that the BRPF could publish it, because on 15 September 1964 Russell wrote: "I shall certainly discuss with Ralph Schoenman and Christopher Farley your suggestion about your manuscript on Vietnam" (box 1.8).

The end result was that Stetler's article was published by the BRPF together with an article by Russell, "War and Atrocity in Vietnam", which already had been published in *Views* in the spring, under the same title. This is the information given about Stetler:

... is an undergraduate at Haverford College, Pennsylvania, and the founder of the May 2nd Committee which has vigorously opposed the war in Vietnam. He wrote to Bertrand Russell asking for information about the war, and upon receiving it began a campaign which took him to over 50 universities. He has organized both the collection of money for the dispatch of medical supplies to the National Liberation Front, as a token of American protest against the war, and the publishing of advertisements in American newspapers signed by a large number of students which stated their refusal to fight in Vietnam.

As a result of his individual opposition to the war in Vietnam Mr. Stetler has faced continued harassment. This has included hearings before the Philadelphia

⁴ An Introduction was sent with a letter from Russell 28 May 1964. It is published below for the first time:

Mr. Stetler's article "Vietnam: The Whole Brutal Business" is an exceedingly valuable study of a war characterised by atrocity and sustained cruelty. In the course of this anti-colonial struggle which is at least twenty years old, the United States has conducted a war of oppression against the population. Mr. Stetler traces the attempts to solve the conflict in Indo-China through international agreement and neutral status. He shows how the United States sabotaged free elections in violation of Geneva Agreements, introduced chemical warfare and vast internment camps, sustained corrupt dictators and destroyed immense areas of Vietnam.

His study makes clear that the United States has been guilty of aggression and frustrated a popular movement for national independence and social reform. If Communism comes to the South of Vietnam it will be owing to American attempts to destroy milder attempts at social change. I hope this article will be read widely and will contribute to a greater public understanding and, consequently, a demand for an end to this war. There is time to prevent calamity in Southeast Asia if the Great Powers agree on neutrality and non-intervention. It is fashionable to think that intervention and attempts at domination are always Communist in origin. This article shows that in Southeast Asia popular reform and national movements are suffering from intervention by the Central Intelligence Agency and domination from the United States. I do not believe this serves true American national interests or the peace of the world.

(RAI 220.026560, box 3.72)

School Board for the withdrawal of his scholarship, visits from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, seizure of his letters, and the serious possibility of a charge of sedition which is, at the time of writing, under consideration by the US Attorney General.⁵

The idea of the May 2nd Committee had come up in mid-March 1964 at a conference of leading leftist student groups held at Yale University to discuss what action could be taken against the war in Vietnam. Stetler was elected chairman of the May 2nd Committee. The conference decided to hold mass anti-war demonstrations on 2 May in New York, Chicago, Ann Arbor, Berkeley, Boston, San Francisco and some other cities. Thus the May 2nd Movement was formed. Stetler had been a member of the SDS since the previous fall and was not a member of any leftist group.⁶ He had written to Russell on 17 March and told him about the conference at Yale and the plans for 2 May. Russell answered three days later including a message Stetler could use:

The atrocity ridden war in Vietnam is an instance of appalling policy conducted in the name of the American public with their ignorance or acquiescence permitting a series of disasters.

The May 2nd Committee and its counterparts in the United States deserve every possible support for they are recreating the possibility of a serious alternative to the madness of Cold War policy in the United States. Your actions are fully endorsed by all who wish peace and not brutality to prevail in Southeast Asia and the world.

(20 March 1964)

How Stetler used it is not known, but what is clear is that both Russell and his private secretary, Ralph Schoenman, realized that they had made contact with a very knowledgeable, intelligent and highly motivated anti-war activist who could be recruited to the BRPF as soon as he had graduated, or before that if he had to escape the “*land of the free*” in order to avoid imprisonment for accusations of sedition. In an email of 28 July 2014 to me, Stetler gave a

⁵ Russell was so concerned that he sent a letter defending Stetler to *The Philadelphia Inquirer [and] Public Ledger*, published 2 Sept. 1964, p. 32: “Mr. Stetler is sending medical supplies through the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation to the National Liberation Front in Viet-Nam as a token of American dismay over American practice. His action is noble and courageous. If the exercise of the duty to oppose evil practice is punished by governmental persecution in America, the myth of American freedom will be exposed to the world. Mr. Stetler, and those who support him in the United States, honour their country just as those who would suppress him dishonour it through their support of a war of atrocity and annihilation in Viet-Nam.” For re-printings, see B&R C64.67a.

⁶ See KIRKPATRICK, *SDS* (1973), pp. 121–2. These events are also mentioned by HALSTEAD in his *Out Now!* (1978), pp. 22–3, and LYONS, who has several pages about Stetler in his *The People of This Generation* (2003), pp. 50–8.

short description of his involvement with Russell:

I was by far the youngest person involved with the Tribunal and the Russell Foundation. My involvement with the Foundation coincided more or less with the period of the Tribunal. I joined the Foundation in the summer of 1966, working in London and briefly in New York. I returned to London in 1967, worked directly with BR in Pennrhyndeudraeth during the latter half of 1967 (roughly between the Stockholm and Copenhagen sessions), and left the Foundation in 1968. I was awarded a research grant by the related charity, the Atlantic Peace Foundation, in 1969 and undertook field research on the use of the riot control agent CS. This investigation resulted in my book, *The Battle of Bogside* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1970). BR died in February 1970. My recollection is that we published a few issues of a *Foundation Bulletin* from New York in the autumn of 1966, but I have no copies and no precise recollection of how many issues appeared.⁷

Stetler's memory is reliable, which can be verified thanks to Kenneth Blackwell, who recently located eleven issues of the *Foundation Bulletin* from December 1966 to May 1967 at UBC Special Collections. Each number starts with an untitled informative "update" by chairman John Gerassi, who also visited Vietnam as member of a Tribunal investigation team, and executive secretary Russell Stetler, who himself contributed a report on his visit in Hanoi⁸ and a ten-page review of Arthur Schlesinger's "confessions".⁹

⁷ LYONS writes: "He became Bertrand Russell's personal secretary and executive director of the Bertrand Russell Foundation and played a key role in the War Crimes Tribunal in Stockholm [and Roskilde] in 1967. After leaving the foundation, he became a journalist, including a stint at *Ramparts* magazine [he also published four articles in the *London Bulletin* and was on the editorial board of *The Spokesman* in 1970–72, which incorporated the *Bulletin*; both were published by the BRPF] and worked as a private investigator during the 1970s. As the nation moved past the tumult of the 1960s, Stetler remained a near-mythic figure to those who watched his meteoric rise as one of the New left's first 'stars,' but most lost track of his achievements" (p. 57). For updated information about Stetler, see: <https://www.capdef.net.org/FDPRC/pubContent.aspx?id=2350>.

⁸ Vol. 1, no. 3 (1 Jan. 1967): 8–9.

⁹ *The Bitter Heritage* (1967), reviewed in Vol. 1, nos. 6–7 (15 Feb.–1 March 1967): 11–20. I found Schlesinger's book interesting, because it brings out the American fear of provoking China to enter the war like they had done in Korea. Schlesinger raises good questions to which he doesn't have satisfying answers, such as what other nations in need of protection will think when they see what is happening to Vietnam. He goes on: "And there is a deeper question, a question which already haunts the American conscience. Are we really carrying out this policy, as we constantly proclaim, to save the people we are methodically destroying, or are we doing it for less exalted purposes of our own? Are we treating the Vietnamese as ends in themselves, or as means to our own objectives? The war began as a struggle for the soul of Vietnam: will it end as a struggle for the soul of America?" (p. 49). In his review of

Many of the issues contain articles already published in Britain by Russell, Sartre and other prominent anti-war activists as well as documents reporting the development of the Tribunal. Stetler was also very much involved in putting Russell's *War Crimes in Vietnam* together and finding a publisher. After he left the Foundation he edited and provided an introduction to *The Military Art of People's War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap* (1970), *The Battle of Bogside* (1970), edited *Palestine, the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (1972) and coedited *The Assassinations: Dallas and Beyond* (1976).

As one of Russell's private secretaries Stetler answered many of the letters that came to the Foundation (there are over 700 letters to and from Stetler in BRACERS). He was appointed a director of the BRPF board and Deputy General Secretary of the Tribunal. He travelled on behalf of the Foundation and the Tribunal and was of great help to the Support Committee in Sweden.¹⁰

Schlesinger's book CHOMSKY comments on the same passage: "The question is not directly answered, but the implication is that stupidity and ignorance, rather than pursuit of self-interest, are to blame for the bitter heritage" ("The Bitter Heritage: a Review" [1969], p. 238).

Stetler was not impressed by Schlesinger's position and argumentation: "In judging the book, we might feel that Schlesinger had prostituted himself, if he had ever been a different man. But it would be illogical to expect a different book from him. Arthur Schlesinger wears the stain of Cuban blood for the lies he told to mask the Bay of Pigs. For Vietnam, the uncompleted hell, he has a cold sweat; his pores exude carrion stench. Ever loyal to his president and to his Party, to his Bill of Rights and to his reason, yet he cannot be a man" (p. 20).

Regarding China's policy *vis-à-vis* American aggression, see WHITING, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence* (1975), Chap. 6, "Indochina and PRC Deterrence", and his "China's Role in the Vietnam War" (1993). See also Chap. 6, "Confronting U.S. Escalation 1964-1965", in QIANG ZHAI's *China and the Vietnam Wars 1950-1975* (2000).

¹⁰ Another crucial person, not mentioned by Tate, who also was important for the connection between the BRPF in London and the Swedish Committee in Support of the International War Crimes Tribunal, was Peter Limquoco from the Philippines. He did undergraduate studies at the University of the Philippines and postgraduate studies at the University of Stockholm and Uppsala University in Sweden. He is co-founder and editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. He was senior editor of the regional daily newspaper *Asia Times* (published simultaneously in Bangkok, Hong Kong, Singapore and New York) in 1995-97. He did documentary films on the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and Laos for Swedish Television 1969-70. Together with Erik Eriksson, he was part of the first western TV film crew allowed into the 17th parallel separating North and South Vietnam and the liberated zone of Laos, and made documentary films on Vietnam post-1975 for Swedish Television (all films broadcast on all major European TV stations). He is author, co-author or editor of *Bertrand Russell: Strid för Freden* (in Swedish 1967), *Russelltribunalen* (in Swedish, 1970), *Isaac Deutscher: the Socialist Man and Other Essays* (in Swedish, 1970), *Prevent the Crime of Silence* (1971), *Philippines: from Colonialism to Marshall Law* (in Swedish,

He was also the only member of the London group who was present in Roskilde.

Tate doesn't have a lot to say about Stetler, and not all of it is totally correct. He does say that:

A big asset in helping organize our work was a young American, Russell Stetler, who had been with Ralph when he had met Ho Chi Minh. Ralph had brought him to London from the U.S. and had appointed him Director of the Foundation. In SDS while at Haverford College, he had been an early leader in the embryonic American anti-war movement and in coordinating the May 1964 demonstrations against the war in New York and San Francisco. He was one of Ralph's closest collaborators within the Foundation (2: 99)

Tate also observed that compared to Pat Jordan and Geoff Coggan "Farley and Stetler had much closer relations with Russell and his wife Edith, having been to Wales many times and having stayed at their home over the years;

1977), *Industrialization and the Labour Process in Thailand* (1983), *Neo-Marxist Theories of Development* (1983; also in Japanese), *Partisan Scholarship* (1990), *Labour and Industry in ASEAN* (1990), *Tribute to Renato Constantino* (coauthor, 2000); articles in *Aftonbladet* (Swedish), *Expressen* (Swedish), *Kommentar* (Swedish), *Politiken* (Danish), *Le Monde Diplomatique* (French), *The Nation* (Bangkok), *Asia Times*, *Business World* (Manila) and *Manila Chronicle* (Manila).

In a 2014 email to me he says: "You focus rightly on Russ Stetler. Of the people running BRPF and the Tribunal, Ken Coates was based in Nottingham, Russell in Wales, while Ralph was abroad most of the time. It was only Chris Farley and the secretary Pamela Wood in the office most of the time. Russ commuted between Wales and London. I reported everything happening in the Swedish Support Committee to Russ. And Russ was the only one from London who was in Stockholm, as well as Roskilde.

"You have provided enough material on the background to the setting up of the Tribunal, but you did not provide the whole picture. The Tribunal became successful because of the support committees, specially the Swedish one that took the burden of seeing to it that the Tribunal could resume its work, after de Gaulle banned the Tribunal in Paris. This I think you could add some material on in your work.

"When it moved to Stockholm, the Tribunal took a life of its own and nobody was totally in control of its course. At the end of every day session, a meeting to discuss the session and what to do the following day took place daily. In attendance were the members of the Tribunal and the Secretariat.

"The Russell Tribunal was very important for Vietnam and the world people, for once an initiative of global scale had successfully been pursued independently of the traditional social democrats, communists or state-sponsored initiative. It took on the super-power United States, while not getting support from communist countries like the Soviet Union and China."

For more information on Limquenco, see FREDRIK LINDBLAD, "The International War Crimes Tribunal. Stockholmsessionen 2-10 maj 1967. Förberedelser, mottagande och genomförande i Sverige".

Geoff and Pat had seen them only a few times, and mostly on social occasions” (2: 226). From reading Farley’s essay “Bertrand Russell: Reminiscences and Reflections”,¹¹ I get the impression that he had a friendly professional relationship with Bertie.

III. RALPH SCHOENMAN

While waiting for Schoenman’s final version of his relationship with Russell—his memoirs have been rumored for many years—we have to be content with what he wrote in his essay “Bertrand Russell and the Peace Movement” (1972).¹² But in the light of what he said in his 29 June 1968 letter to Farley and Ken Coates and what Russell said in his “Private Memorandum on Ralph Schoenman”,¹³ it altogether shows that Russell and Schoenman were neither of them totally candid about his real opinion of the other.

In the introduction Tate says: “In the course of this activity, I had the good fortune to meet the folks of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation (BRPF) and Bertrand Russell’s formidable secretary, Ralph Schoenman” (2: 1), who, with his charisma and energy, was a master in recruiting people with radical leanings to work, often as unpaid volunteers, for the different projects that he initiated together with Russell, particularly the establishment of the IWCT, which needed a lot of foot-soldiers. In a 2014 email to me Tate writes: “In fact, there were many volunteers around the Foundation in those years who were only too willing to help out with its various projects.”

In Ernest Tate, Russell’s private secretary found a loyal and hardworking comrade, although Schoenman did not present himself as a Trotskyist, who together with other members of the future IMG did most of the day-to-day work for the Russell Tribunal’s Working Committee.

With Tate as a guide the reader gets a good glimpse of all the work that was performed behind the scenes by Chris Farley, Pamela Wood and a number of Trotskyists, particularly Coates, Jordan and Coggan.

In the third chapter, “Ralph Schoenman and the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation”, Tate describes how he met Schoenman and was engaged in the VSC and the preparatory work for the IWCT. Recognizing that Russell and Schoenman’s positions came from deep feelings of empathy for the most oppressed of the world, he found their line of building solidarity with the NLF very appealing and consistent with what he and other opponents of the American invasion of Vietnam had been doing in North America.

He thought that Schoenman saw that, on the issue of Vietnam, he and his

¹¹ In *Russell in Review* (1976).

¹² In *Bertrand Russell’s Philosophy* (1974).

¹³ CLARK, appendix.

American friends were different from many on the British Left, who were uniformly sectarian towards Russell and had taken very weak positions on the war and did not see any need to make special efforts to oppose it (2: 39).¹⁴ According to Tate, this probably had a lot to do with the fact that Wilson and a majority of the Labour Government had sold their souls to Washington in exchange for a huge loan to bolster the pound. This prevented Wilson from officially opposing the American war of aggression in Southeast Asia, but to Johnson's great disappointment he refused to send troops.

Tate's immediate impression of Schoenman was that "he was a very bright man who could have been successful in any field of endeavour he chose to enter, an appreciation that only increased over the two or three years I worked with him." There were many who claimed that Russell was but a figurehead and mouthpiece for Schoenman, but Tate writes "in my limited contact with the Foundation I saw no evidence of this" (2: 41).

Tate's chapters on Schoenman and the BRPF and the Russell Tribunal supplement the Klinghoffers' book about International Citizens' Tribunals.¹⁵ One big difference is that the Klinghoffers often rely on the testimonies of David Horowitz,¹⁶ who marked out his own niche as the sole employee of the

¹⁴ I sent an early version of this review to Noam Chomsky, who replied by email on 21 June 2014: "Sounds like an interesting book. The comment on the passivity of the British left with regard to Vietnam reminds me of personal experiences. Peggy Duff, who as I'm sure you know was the major figure in organizing British and international protests, sometimes invited IF Stone and me to London to give talks because she couldn't find British counterparts. I saw it more closely when I was Locke lecturer at Oxford in 1969. Students by then were very active and engaged, but not faculty, including left faculty. I spent many evenings speaking to/with student groups because they could find no one on the faculty to do the same. In one remarkable incident, after Robin Blackburn was expelled from LSE for supporting students, a few people at Oxford organized an embarrassingly mild protest and support statement. Signers were almost all American visitors. We couldn't find others."

One who attended Chomsky's Locke Lectures was CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS, who in his *Hitch-22* (2010) says that he "also read Bertrand Russell's appeal to forget about the insipid slogan of 'peace' and take the side of the fighting Vietcong" (p. 81). There are three letters from Hitchens to Russell in the Russell Archives, which were answered by Russell, Schoenman and Farley. When the correspondence ends in June 1967, Hitchens is still not convinced that more violence will help the situation and urges Russell to reconsider his position. Hitchens also says that by the time he enrolled as a student at Balliol College 'he was already a militant 'student' member of the International Socialist *groupuscule*, as such factions were to become known after the momentarily imminent events in France" (p. 87). The International Socialists were broadly Trotskyist and forerunners of today's British Socialist Workers Party.

¹⁵ See ANDERSSON, "International Citizens' Tribunals" (2002).

¹⁶ HOROWITZ has a whole chapter on his time in London when he worked for Russell. See *Radical Son* (1997), pp. 120–54. He was consulted by the Klinghoffers in the preparation of their book.

Bertrand Russell Centre for Social Research and could work independently of the BRPF and Schoenman. Coates was also mostly critical of Russell's private secretary's doings. Tate is on the whole very positive towards Schoenman, although even he could not fail to notice some of his shortcomings, particularly regarding what he wrote about Russell in the letter of 29 June 1968¹⁷ to Farley and Coates after having read a draft of Volume III of Russell's *Autobiography*, in which letter Schoenman says: "The truth is that every major political initiative that has borne the name of Bertrand Russell since 1960 has been my work in thought and deed."¹⁸ According to Tate this "can only be described as a case of careless braggadocio" (2: 230).

Still Russell admitted that the idea of the BRPF was "hatched, again, I think by the fertile mind of Ralph Schoenman" (*Auto.* 3: 158), and in his "Memorandum" he says: "... it is quite possible that the Tribunal would never have got off the ground had it not been for his intense efforts."¹⁹ One can with good reason say that there wouldn't have been any IWCT, if Schoenman had not worked so hard for it. The question is to what degree he succeeded in implementing Russell's original conception of an IWCT.

Nick Griffin's *The Selected Letters of Bertrand Russell: the Public Years, 1914-1970* contains some of Russell's letters to Ho Chi Minh, Jean-Paul Sartre, Isaac Deutscher and other members of the Russell Tribunal. With Griffin's interpolated comments the reader gets the whole project put into context. He also brings up the case of David Mitchell, who had refused the draft on the grounds that the United States was committing war crimes in Vietnam and its citizens had an obligation *under international law* (the Nuremberg principles) to refuse orders to participate, which was another incentive for the BRPF to document war crimes.²⁰

Regarding Russell, Tate says that he was "probably the most important and singular voice in the whole country challenging Wilson on the issue of Britain's complicity in the war. Politically heads and shoulders above much of the left, he stood out like a bright beacon telling the appalling truth about what

¹⁷ RA REC. ACQ. 1343, Felton file 13.

¹⁸ Quoted in CLARK, p. 583. Farley and Coates didn't show the letter to Russell until a year and a half later, which prompted Russell to break relations with Schoenman and the BRPF branch in New York, although claiming in his "Memorandum" that Schoenman had already ceased to be his private secretary in the summer of 1966. Tate calls this "a puzzling aspect of the statement" (2: 232).

¹⁹ In CLARK, p. 648.

²⁰ Another good source for the IWCT is *BRA* 2, Chap. 19, "War Crimes Tribunal". FEINBERG AND KASRILS also have a chapter on "The Black Revolt". Russell felt strong sympathy for the black community and not least the young black man who could be drafted to kill the yellow man to defend the country the white man had stolen from the red man. See particularly "Bertrand Russell's Appeal to Negro Soldiers in Vietnam" (1966).

the American aggression was doing to the Vietnamese people” (2: 58).

The genesis of the BRPF was, according to Tate, primarily stimulated by the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the world appeared to be on the verge of nuclear annihilation. This fear was for Russell the main motivating factor for his pleas for nuclear disarmament and peace during the last quarter of his life. Tate writes: “it is generally recognized by many students of that crisis that the Russell–Khrushchev correspondence was a factor in helping to de-escalate it” (2: 60). Villagers of Penrhyndeudraeth celebrated Russell as the saviour of the world, but, as far as I know, no historians of the incident give credit to Russell’s intervention. They might be wrong, but I wish Tate had supplied supporting references for his claim.

Tate goes on to assert (2: 62) that Russell supported the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and “called for a war against the Soviet Union” (to force them to accept the Baruch Plan), “but by 1965 he had discarded his position of ‘neutralism’ and had become a resolute anti-imperialist, sitting on the editorial board of *The Week* and militantly backing the Vietnamese National Liberation Front” (*ibid.*). This makes one wonder about the meaning of the “P” in the acronym BRPF. Russell published several articles in *The Week*, in which one can follow the development of the VSC and the IWCT, as well as in *The Militant* and *Intercontinental Press*, two weekly magazines with Trotskyist connections.

The general atmosphere among the many different leftist groups that Tate talks about reminds me very much of sentiments that you can find in sectarian religious groups, where intolerance of those who *seem to be* closest to your group’s beliefs, values and norms are the *real* enemies, who are to be cursed with the same strong passion that the Jews of Amsterdam excommunicated Spinoza, Russell’s favourite philosopher.

By December 1965 the small International Group in London (with Ken Coates and Pat Jordan still based in Nottingham) had become the main force helping the BRPF organize most of its press conferences, public meetings and distribution of reliable information about Vietnam. It was in this context that Schoenman’s many visits to Vietnam alone or in the company of some other person related to the BRPF, like Russell Stetler, took place.

Tate says that in February 1966 Schoenman and Stetler had a two-and-a-half hour meeting with Ho Chi Minh and Prime Minister Pham Van Dong to work out the arrangements for a possible war crimes tribunal. In a 2014 email to me, Stetler says that he only accompanied Schoenman later that year in November just before the launching of the IWCT in London.

Tate refers to a document to be found in the Tamara Deutscher archives. The document is also in the Russell Archives with a slightly different title: “Summary Report of Meetings in Hanoi between President Ho Chi Minh, Prime Minister Pham Van Dong and Personal Representatives of Bertrand

Russell, Ralph Schoenman and Russell Stetler". It contains information about what transpired in February and November, when Stetler was present and Pham Van Dong was not (RA2 320.172098). Tate goes on to say: "That's when Schoenman broadcast his famous appeal to the American occupation forces, challenging their right to be there and explaining that the resistance of the Vietnamese was a war of national liberation against a foreign oppressor and similar to the struggle of the Americans when they were battling Britain to set up their own republic"²¹ (2: 74).

Tate often refers to a "Private Memorandum to Professor Schwartz"²² in which Schoenman as Secretary-General explains something of the circumstances of the Tribunal's origins. The document is undated, but it appears to have been written between Schoenman's third and fourth visit to Vietnam in the spring of 1967 (RA2 320.175879).

IV. ARNONI AND THE IWCT

What Tate doesn't mention anywhere is that on 2 March 1965, M. S. Arnoni, editor and publisher of *The Minority of One*, wrote a letter to Russell in which he suggested the creation of an international tribunal to pass judgment on Johnson for his murder of North Vietnamese civilians. No copy of this letter was deposited in the Russell Archives at McMaster, and one may wonder why. However, in a reply ten days later, signed by Russell but obviously written by Schoenman, we read:

I was interested in your suggestion of an international tribunal to pass judgment on Johnson for his murder of North Vietnamese civilians. The idea is attractive but it has been our experience that to organise effective international actions involving the sort of people who might be asked to take part in such a tribunal, requires about three months' preparations. Because the situation in Vietnam is

²¹ A truncated version was published in *The Week*, 5, no. 14 (7 April 1966). The whole "Speech on Radio Hanoi to Fellow Americans", 5 pages, and signed RALPH SCHOENMAN, February 1966, is in RA box 10.12 (.175053). There is no mention of a war crimes tribunal here, although the idea had already been hatched.

²² SCHWARTZ has written about his work for the Russell Tribunal in *A Mathematician Grappling with His Century* (2001). He says: "The idea of a tribunal was put forth by Bertrand Russell himself. It was received enthusiastically by the Vietnamese and by Ho Chi Minh. There was already a Commission in Viet-Nam, presided by Pham Van Bach, which listed American crimes and collected a huge number of documents. Ho Chi Minh proposed that the Tribunal send a mission to Viet-Nam to take the entire set of documents from the Vietnamese Commission. The Tribunal would judge. Russell and Schoenman quickly protested: that would make it equivalent to a 'mock tribunal'. To be truly impartial, the Tribunal would have to run its investigations by itself, and send its own agents to Viet-Nam to interview people and verify the documents" (p. 402).

changing rapidly and also because our resources are already stretched to the limit, I fear that it will not be possible for us to take up your suggestion.²³

(RA2 410.143908a)

Clarks says that by the early months of 1966 Russell had changed his tune. Schoenman had been sent to North Vietnam to collect evidence, and Russell himself was sounding out potential members of a tribunal which would hear evidence of, and adjudicate on, American activities in Vietnam. Clark continues: “There is considerable circumstantial evidence that Schoenman was largely responsible for Russell’s changed view. But, as in other spheres, he reinforced tendencies already present” (p. 624). This is a fair judgment, but what Clark was not aware of was how Schoenman administered Arnoni’s idea and what Arnoni did to promote it in his own journal. More about this below.

There are many versions of when the idea of a war crimes tribunal first surfaced. One that sounds convincing as a genuine memory is the one given by Tariq Ali in his *Street Fighting Years*, where he describes a meeting with Schoenman in April 1965:

I heard him talk with an amazing intensity about the world. He was emotional, which I found a refreshing quality; encountering someone like him in Britain came as a pleasant surprise. He told me of an idea that had occurred to him one day after reading reports of the scale of the U.S. bombings in Vietnam. He wanted to set up a Nuremberg-style tribunal to arraign the United States for war crimes against the people of Vietnam and humanity. (P. 49)

For some reason, Schoenman did not reveal that he himself had first got it from someone else (Arnoni) just about a month earlier.

Caroline Moorehead says that Schoenman on his return from Vietnam in early 1966 paid a call one evening on his LSE tutor, Ralph Miliband. “It was here—according to Miliband—that, sitting at the kitchen table, the idea for a tribunal was really born.”²⁴

The problem with this version is that Schoenman had started to prepare the ground for a War Crimes Tribunal along the lines of Arnoni as soon as he received the letter. He brought the idea with him to the Helsinki Peace Conference in July 1965 and talked to representatives of the NLF about it.

Moorehead’s version can be compared to the one that Edith Russell gives in her notes to Clark’s biography where he discusses Schoenman’s claims of being the originator of all of Russell’s projects. She says:

²³ The letter is quoted in CLARK, p. 624, which was where I first heard of Arnoni’s idea.

²⁴ See MOOREHEAD, *Bertrand Russell* (1992), p. 523.

I remember B. remarking that the nuclear expansion was analogous to War Crimes and that there had been a War Crimes Tribunal held against the Nazis and could be in the case of nuclear expansion. But he did not favour such a procedure. In the case of war crimes in Vietnam there was much to be said in its favour. But he remained hesitant, arguing the matter with R.S. and every one else. At last there was a meeting at Hasker Street of young men from the *New Left Review*, London University, London School of Economics [Miliband?], and certain of R.S.'s colleagues. There was much well-informed argument. Finally the arguments in favour of a War Crimes Tribunal won and B. agreed to support it.

(At a meeting not attended by B.) R.S. was made Director-General of the War Crimes Tribunal out of deference to B. who, it was thought, would wish it. But B. did not wish it. He was not consulted and was horrified when he learned of it, foreseeing in broad outline a good many of the disasters that the appointment brought about. There was, however, nothing he could do about it once the appointment was made. B. had already become disillusioned by R.S.'s ability to toss away money, and by his tactless self-importance and lack of good judgment.

In a following comment regarding Clark's saying that Russell never became senile—"but in the nature of things he allowed more and more of his affairs to be handled by the thrusting young American. Eventually, he disowned him"—she says that "B. wanted to 'disown' R.S. long before he did so, but he was begged not to do so by R.S.'s colleagues in the Foundation. I thought these colleagues quite wrong. But I believe that they behaved honourably (though sometimes ignorantly) in opposing the ousting of R.S."²⁵

Edith Russell's memories fit well with what Horowitz wrote in "Bertrand Russell: the Final Passion" where he describes his first meeting with Russell "on a crisply clear day early in the fall of 1964" and continues: "The gathering which I had come to attend was a meeting of the members of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation to discuss plans for setting up an International War Crimes Tribunal to investigate America's war in Vietnam" (p. 38).

A problem with Horowitz's memory is that 1964 must have been 1965 to fit all other information. I emailed him, and he replied on 11 June 2014:

I am somewhat shaky when it comes to dates, particularly at my age now. Schoenman was moving everything at the Peace Foundation, it was totally his show. He was both an intimidating and also a commanding person. I remember saying to some of my leftist friends that the only person I knew on the left who was capable of walking into the ruling class board room or the Pentagon and saying "We're taking over" was Schoenman. I was the only one at the Foundation that had doubts and voiced them. I moved my research operation away from him. I am sure he manipulated Russell and set his agendas including the War Crimes Tribunal. All I remember is that Ralph and I went to Deutscher's house where Ralph

²⁵ See EDITH RUSSELL, "'Clark's Fatuous Book' (Part 3)" (2010), p. 131.

laid out his ideas for a War Crimes Tribunal. Deutscher strongly opposed it because it was inevitably corrupt. The War Crimes Tribunal after the Second World War which was the model was merely the victors sitting in judgment on the vanquished. Deutscher wanted a Commission of Inquiry modeled on the Dewey Commission. Because it wasn't legalistic like a Tribunal, you could issue a "revolutionary manifesto" when it was concluded. Ralph disregarded Deutscher and went on with his plans. Because I was independent minded and had conflicts with Ralph, and knew more than he did about revolutionary history, he excluded me from all the meetings and the plans. I was so skeptical of the Tribunal that I had nothing to do with it. I'm sorry but this makes me pretty unhelpful. Why are you doing a book on the Tribunal? It was pathetic, dishonest and a disgrace, a Communist propaganda show.

The meeting Horowitz walked into in fall 1965 was probably a different one from the one Edith Russell mentions, which likely took place before the Helsinki conference in July, when the form of an IWCT was still being discussed.

In his *Autobiography* Russell says that from shortly before April 1963, more and more of his time and thought was being absorbed by the war being waged in Vietnam. For four years he had been searching for some effective means to help make known to the world the unbelievable cruelty of the United States in its attempt to subjugate South Vietnam. "It became clear to me that the combination of aggression, experimental weapons, indiscriminate warfare and concentration camp programmes required a more thorough and formal investigation than I was able to manage" (*Auto.* 3: 170).

Russell had already reacted promptly when Johnson ordered air attacks on North Vietnam at the beginning of August 1964. In "Statement on the Attacks on North Vietnam", dated 7 August, Russell wrote: "I hope the United Nations will demand American agreement to a Conference such as that held in 1954 or condemn the United States as an aggressor" (RA2 229.148376). This drew a cable from Ho Chi Minh,²⁶ received 10 August 1964, saying:

I welcome your condemning United States provoked war and endangered peace in our country and South East Asia. Our people and Government have always respected and strictly implemented 1954 Geneva Agreement. But in view of United States imperialists' acts of war, we have been compelled to take necessary action in self-defense to safeguard our sovereignty and security. We are always attached to peace and stand for peaceful settlement of Vietnam problem. Thank you for concern over serious situation created by American imperialists in our country. Respectful greetings. (RA2 374.171846)

In a letter written five days later Russell told Ho Chi Minh "I assure you that

²⁶ There are 96 documents listed in BRACERS relating to Russell and Ho Chi Minh. The first letter is from August 1963 and the last from May 1969.

I shall raise my voice for an end to the war and settlement along the lines of the agreements entered into in 1954” (RA2 374.171847).

V. RUSSELL’S CALL FOR THE TRIBUNAL

Russell’s statement was not a call for an independent IWCT, but considering the powerlessness of the UN, he probably realized that if anything was to be done about it, he would have to do it himself, in order to prevent the Crime of Silence.

In a letter addressed to the UN Security Council 9 February 1965, Russell wrote: “I hope the American action in North Vietnam will be condemned as aggression at the United Nations and that it will be abandoned as a result of protests in every part of the world” (RA2 320.182091). U Thant answered on 26 February: “As you know, I have stated my views on this problem several times in the past. I have always maintained that only political and diplomatic methods of negotiation and discussion will find a peaceful solution and I have more than once appealed earnestly to all parties concerned to co-operate in achieving such a solution” (RA2 320.182092).

Until then Russell had never explicitly asked U Thant to revive the Nuremberg Tribunal and accuse the US of crimes against the peace and war crimes. One problem was that “aggression” was not defined and still isn’t, which is a major problem for the status of international criminal law. This was outside U Thant’s jurisdiction, but when the My Lai Massacre was revealed to the public in November 1969, Russell sent him an open letter on 1 December:

I am sending you this open letter at a time when the peoples of the Western world are learning at last something of the barbarous character of the war against the people of Vietnam. Former members of the U.S. forces in Vietnam are coming forward daily with new evidence of torture and genocide. It is clear that we have heard only the beginning of these reports. When they were investigated by the International War Crimes Tribunal in 1967, they were greeted with considerable ridicule or indifference, but the record of the Tribunal’s proceedings is today vindicated. Now the magnitude of the horror is unfolding, and a new duty presents itself...

I am asking you, therefore, to use the full authority of your high office to propose the creation of an International War Crimes Commission to hear all the relevant evidence and to pronounce solemnly upon it. It is within your power to help stamp out war crimes, and I earnestly beg you to seize this opportunity on behalf of all mankind.²⁷

(RA2 320.182108)

²⁷ The whole letter can be found in COATES’ postscript, “After the Tribunal: Russell’s Writing on Vietnam, My Lai and War Crimes”, in LIMQUECO AND WEISS, eds., *Prevent the Crime of Silence* (1971), p. 384.

Notice that Russell does not suggest a “tribunal” but a “commission”, a word that should have been used from the beginning, which could have prevented a lot of misunderstandings about what the “Tribunal” developed into. U Thant answered on 26 December: “I have given careful consideration to your suggestion that I might propose the creation of an International War Crimes Commission in this context. However, I feel that it would not be proper for me to make such a proposal.... I am following the developments very closely and will be in touch with you again when the situation warrants” (RA 320.182110).

The first time I have found Russell mentioning a war crimes tribunal is in a press statement (RA 320.183186) dated 14 January 1966, which starts: “The United States has perpetrated every atrocity which would come under the purview of a War Crimes Tribunal” and ends: “Let people everywhere call for the indictment of President Johnson, Dean Rusk and Robert McNamara as war criminals and let people everywhere show their unhesitating support for the people of Vietnam in their national struggle.” Parts of this statement were published in the *Peking Review* on 21 January 1966.

Two months later, in March 1966, the Italian journal *Il Paese Oggi* published an extended version of a tape-recorded message for Havana Radio.²⁸ Russell said: “The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation is setting up a War Crimes Tribunal for the purpose of publicly denouncing the criminal actions of American imperialism in Vietnam, which include the use of chemicals, gas, weapons, dismemberment, torture, and indiscriminate bombing of hospitals, clinics, schools and defenseless villages.”

The first time English-speaking Vietnamese heard about Russell’s plans seems to have been in a message from Russell to the people of South Vietnam on Radio Hanoi, broadcast on 24 May 1966: “We are preparing a War Crimes Tribunal which will place on trial, in their absence, Johnson, McNamara, Rusk, Lodge and the other criminals responsible for the gas and chemicals, the torture and the mutilation, the napalm and the lazy dogs, the terrible bombardments and the savage treatment of the people of Vietnam for twelve years” (RA2 220.148489). Americans were told about it in Russell’s *An Appeal to the American Conscience* in July, and the news was soon published in several languages.²⁹

If we now look at the IWCT document by Schoenman, “Private Memorandum to Professor Schwartz”, we can follow the development of the idea according to him: “In August and September, concrete proposals for a War Crimes Tribunal were advanced to members of the National Liberation Front

²⁸ My translation from the Italian is with the help of Google Translate. Published first as “The Example of Cuba”, *World Outlook* 4, no. 1 (4 Feb. 1966): 30–2.

²⁹ Published as a pamphlet, and in *World Outlook*, 4, no. 22 (1 July 1966): 26–32.

in Helsinki. These were warmly received.” The meeting here referred to is the World Congress for Peace, National Independence, and Universal Disarmament, which took place in Helsinki, 10–15 July 1965. At this meeting Schoenman’s behaviour caused a minor uproar, when he, among other things, accused the Soviet Union of not supporting the Vietnamese enough. He was equipped with a message from Russell,³⁰ but he also delivered his own. Tariq Ali, who was present, writes about this in *Street Fighting Years*, where he makes friendly fun of Schoenman by quoting Peggy Duff’s question, “What’s Bertie’s message like today, Ralph?” (p. 59).

Schoenman continues in the IWCT memorandum:

They [the proposals] were repeated to representatives of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Djakarta³¹ and, arising out of this, came an invitation to Hanoi which took place in February 1966. Discussions with President Ho Chi Minh led to the following conclusions: the Russell Foundation was asked to draw up a draft plan. This plan was to be submitted to the Vietnamese who would make suggestions, after which the formation of the Tribunal was to proceed, with close consultations between the Russell Foundation and the highest officials of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front. It was very much appreciated and understood that the Tribunal, like the Foundation, must enjoy a complete independence and autonomy and that the relationship between the Vietnamese authorities and the Tribunal would be one of sympathetic understanding and co-operation. The Russell Foundation sent a draft document to Vietnam in March of 1966, proposing a structure and plan of work for a Tribunal investigating American war crimes. Replies from Vietnam were slow, but in early May it was requested that I go to Hanoi, together with the American lawyer, Mark Lane. Unfortunately, my passport had been withdrawn and Mark Lane was occupied in the defense of David Mitchell. The Vietnamese thus proposed that they send representatives to Paris to discuss with the Russell Foundation next steps towards implementing the proposals for a Tribunal. Thus began a series of elaborate negotiations in Paris. (RA2 384.175879)

Tate states in addition: “Schoenman became a key speaker in our meetings in the build-up to the founding of the vsc, and we organized many press conferences for him so that he could report what he had seen in his travels” (2: 74).

Tate has a lot of interesting things to say about the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, which had its beginning on 20 December 1965 at a meeting

³⁰ The BRPF mimeo by Russell is titled “Statement for World Congress of Peace at Helsinki” dated 8 July 1965 (RA1 220.026800) and published in the *Daily Worker*, London, 12 July 1965, p. 3. (See B&R C65.31.)

³¹ International Conference for the Liquidation of Foreign Military Bases held in Jakarta, Indonesia in 1965, 10–15 October.

convened by the BRPF to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the formation of the NLF.³² On the platform were Coates, Lane, Miliband and Schoenman, who, at the conclusion of a long and detailed description of the US's horrifying brutality against the Vietnamese people, called for the British Left to organize a campaign against the war by mobilizing opposition on the streets and setting up of an international tribunal to look into American war crimes (2: 71).

In his speech Schoenman said: "We shall prepare a War Crimes Tribunal, which will have as its object a definitive indictment of the US Government's atrocities and those responsible for them" (RA2 380.175053). This seems to be the first time any member of the BRPF officially and publicly mentioned the preparations of a War Crimes Tribunal. But he did not mention that the BRPF got the idea for it from Arnoni in March 1965, who again called for one in a speech at Berkeley in October the same year.

In order to give due credit to Arnoni, I have to provide the reader with the result of my investigations. This is how the idea about an International War (Crimes) Tribunal travelled from a letter (2 March 1965) from Arnoni to Bertrand Russell and then, by the initiatives of Ralph Schoenman, appeared as the Russell Tribunal in June 1966.

After Russell had said no to Arnoni's suggestion on 12 March 1965, Arnoni published a plea from the BRPF for financial assistance for the Foundation's many projects in the July 1965 issue of *The Minority of One*, but there is no mention of any plans for an IWCT. Arnoni was at Berkeley on 15 October 1965 and gave a speech in which he called:

... on all men of goodwill and on all groups dedicated to peace and justice wherever they are to join in the convocation of an International War Tribunal to sit judgment on those who are responsible for crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity as defined by the Charter of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg after World War II and are perpetrated on the people of Vietnam.

This was not published in *The Minority of One* until the December issue. But already in the November issue of 1965 Arnoni published "For an International War Tribunal" in which he tied the question about the North Vietnamese

³² In an interesting essay, " 'A Demonstration of British Good Sense?' ", SYLVIA ELLIS writes: "Mass demonstrations against the war were a direct product of student activism. To students from around the country—divided by physical distance, ideology, and disagreements over methods—Vietnam proved to be 'common ground'. The Grosvenor Square demonstrations were organized by the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC). Founded in January 1966 by the Trotskyists Tariq Ali and Pat Jordan, with the help of Bertrand Russell and the Peace Foundation, VSC proved to be the largest and most radical British anti-war group. Although not exclusively a student group, most of VSC's supporters were youthful" (p. 62).

idea of trying American pilots for war crimes to the idea of an International War Tribunal that could be more objective and beyond undue partisanship:

The last doubt about the propriety of North Vietnam's intention to try captured U.S. pilots as war criminals would be removed if the judges were recruited internationally rather than from the ranks of North Vietnamese judiciary. Such an International Tribunal would have even a broader base than that of Nuremberg's International Military Tribunal, which consisted exclusively of representatives of the complaining powers. The new tribunal could consist of renowned jurists, philosophers and political scientists from many nations, wielding tremendous moral power.

The scope of the trial should be broadened to encompass the Vietnam war. The chief accused should be Lyndon Baines Johnson and his aides. They should be tried for crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, as defined in the Charter of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg. (Quoted in Dr. Corliss Lamont's letter to President Johnson, elsewhere in this issue [of *TMO*].)

The Tribunal would have to make every deliberate effort to ensure a fair trial by securing so wide a range of evidence and testimony as would exhaust every known theory and version of the origins and chronicles of the Vietnam war. While it is obvious that the Tribunal would at once be stigmatized by the U.S. and its backers as a biased propaganda effort of the friends of North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front, prominent individuals and numerous groups would, nonetheless, be available to argue before the court the innocence of the accused.

The sentences could not be executed. This notwithstanding, a precedent would be set for trying and sentencing war criminals even without the final defeat of their war machinery.

A mammoth organizational effort would be required to make a trial possible. Conducted on a non-governmental level, it would take the joint energies of peace groups all over the world. Yet, this may be a worthwhile investment if it powerfully amplified mankind's outrage at the genocidal war in progress.

After some deliberation about the principle of individual responsibility and the overwhelming amount of evidence of war crimes being committed by the Americans in Vietnam, he brings up a petition for the impeachment of President Johnson, which is, supposedly, reproduced elsewhere in that same issue. But, when you turn to page 27, you'll find the following information within a centered frame on an otherwise blank page:

For reasons beyond our control a petition, which was supposed to be printed on this page has been deleted.

Arnoni realized that it was a bad idea for many reasons and adds "we therefore consider the impeachment demand merely an opportunity for protest, not an

actual challenge of the President.” He then finishes with saying:

This publication has championed the idea of an International Tribunal for criminal leaders since June 1962. The war crimes perpetrated since by the U.S. invaders in Vietnam add urgency to such an undertaking. We hope that a tribunal will be constituted to try the whole pyramid of officials responsible for the Vietnam tragedy. In the absence of such an initiative, we cannot but welcome North Vietnam’s decision to try the captured U.S. pilots while simultaneously pleading that their lives be spared.

A closer look at the 1962 suggestion, “Let’s Try the World War III Criminals”, shows that one big difference is that the 1962 idea says that *all* the major politicians should be indicted, like Norman Birnbaum’s idea from 1959 that Clark discusses.³³ I have contacted Birnbaum who said that he not only had had no contacts with Arnoni but didn’t know who he was.

Although at Nuremberg only the aggressors were on trial, Arnoni suggested that there be two tribunals, one in which leaders from the West are on trial and one in which the leaders from the East are on trial. The idea is that from such proceedings, people from both sides could draw their own conclusions, which might be against their own governments. The general outline is far from clear, but it differs in important ways from how the Russell Tribunal materialized and from what Arnoni himself later proposed.

In the July 1966 issue Arnoni announces the plans for “The War Crimes Tribunal”:

Being the originator of a war crimes tribunal is a sad source of satisfaction. Yet, unless U.S. war crimes occasion public outrage of the kind expressed at Nuremberg after World War II, man is in danger of forgetting morality. We are therefore satisfied that Bertrand Russell has responded to the public *and private urgings of this publication* [my italics] to convoke a War Crimes Tribunal to pass judgment on the main war criminals in Washington.

This time Arnoni could fall back on his suggestion in the November 1965 issue. One can understand that Arnoni was disappointed that he was not credited properly. Now an email from Chris Farley, Russell’s other private secretary, makes a lot of sense.³⁴ Farley is commenting on my earlier account of the origins of the IWCT: “Ralph Schoenman was reading Arnoni’s journal regularly, and told several people, including me, of *The Minority of One* proposal by its editor. Schoenman, however, never formally acknowledged

³³ See CLARK, p. 623.

³⁴ In ANDERSSON, “A Secondary Bibliography of the IWCT” (2011). The email is to K. Blackwell, 17 February 2012, and concerns specifically my article’s note 10.

Arnoni's article, with the result that he and BR were considered the Tribunal's originators." The "proposal" Farley mentions is probably the one published in *The Minority of One* in November 1965, but it could also refer to what Arnoni had already suggested in his letter to Russell in March of the same year. This letter is lacking in the Bertrand Russell Archives and his own archives at Boston University and the International Institute of Social History, but from Russell's reply and Arnoni's speech in October and his proposal in November, we get a picture of what Arnoni must have suggested in his letter, which had much in common with how the Tribunal turned out.

VI. AFTER THE TRIBUNAL

The longest chapter in Tate's book is "The Russell International War Crimes Tribunal". In a letter to Isaac Deutscher (who gets a chapter of his own because he and his wife became friends of Ernie and Jess, but mostly because he was such an important peace-keeping member of the Tribunal until his untimely death between the sessions in Sweden and Denmark), Russell writes "the IWCT should remain in existence so that in the future, when war crimes may again be committed, we shall have the opportunity, if we wish, to reconvene even after our judgment with respect to Vietnam."

To understand the significance of Russell's remark, we have to know that after the Nuremberg trials (there were thirteen of them) were over, the UN General Assembly created an International Law Commission in 1948 for the "promotion of the progressive development of international law and its codification". Although the Commission had annual meetings throughout the Cold War, no one was really interested in creating an International Criminal Court at that time. Russell's IWCT can be seen as an attempt to fill this void, which did not happen on a regular basis until July 2002 when the International Criminal Court (ICC) started its work in the Hague.

The irony, as Tate points out, was that the League of Arab Nations had turned to the Tribunal asking them to investigate whether Israel had committed war crimes in the Six-Day War (5–10 June 1967), but Russell had to turn their demand down because it might lead to a public display of differences within in the Tribunal. Sartre was pro-Israel while Russell was supportive of the Palestinians (2: 143–4).

There is much more of interest in Tate's book for Russell scholars interested in the IWCT, e.g. his understanding of the tension between its offices in Paris and London. The book also includes two interesting appendices: "Transcript of Speeches, Isaac Deutscher Memorial Meeting, Mahatma Gandhi Hall, September 22, 1967, London" with speeches by Miliband, Daniel Singer, Horowitz, Perry Anderson, Marcel Liebman, K. S. Karol and

Lawrence Daly, and “Secret Police Report about the vsc and the 27th October 1968 demonstration”, which Tate uses to show how the police were in collusion with the government, major corporations and the media to distort the truth and commit the crime of silence, which Russell and all who worked with him tried to prevent.

In his recent doctoral thesis, “‘A New Kind of War’: the Nuremberg Principles and the Vietnam War, 1964–68”,³⁵ Luke Stewart has a whole chapter on the Russell Tribunal. He has gone through a lot of the now available sources that reveal that

... an informal network established under the guidance of Under Secretary George Ball was hastily organized in July and August 1966. It involved backroom diplomacy employed by U.S. officials in embassies as varied as France, Britain, Sweden,³⁶ Denmark, Switzerland, Japan, Pakistan, India, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Senegal, and Zambia to disrupt, discredit and ultimately prevent the Tribunal from convening. The Tribunal was taken less seriously in the United States because the Johnson administration’s campaign against it—which involved members of the White House, State Department, Defense Department, United States Information Agency (USIA), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and U.S. armed forces—largely succeeded in preventing the Tribunal from achieving large-scale publicity in the United States. (P. 233).

The IWCT got a lot of bad press in the US after Russell had announced his

³⁵ STEWART, 2014: available at: <http://uwaterloo.academia.edu/LukeStewart>.

³⁶ John Takman was a key figure in the Swedish Support Committee for the Russell Tribunal. On a visit to his archives kept at ARAB (Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek) [Labour Movement’s Archives and Library] south of Stockholm, where you’ll also find the Archives of Olof Palme, I found a copy of a document “Vietnam ‘War Crimes Tribunal’ ” (4.2: 21A, FI: 31) written by someone in London after the session there in November 1966 that shows that someone had a lot of information about both the members of the Tribunal as well as the directors of the BRPF. The informer writes about the origins of the BRPF and the Trotskyist influence and about Schoenman: “The daily business of the Foundation is entirely in the hands of Ralph Schoenman.... In practice he now controls the BRPF, the Atlantic Foundation and the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (which is run from his private address), freely making use of Lord Russell’s name in publicity” (p. 2). In the last section “Conclusion” we read: “Despite the use which the BRPF makes of Bertrand Russell’s name, it is isolated on the extreme left and distrusted by democratic Socialists and most Communists because of its Trotskyist associations. Although it has achieved some publicity abroad (and publicity is a major objective of the War Crimes Tribunal), the Foundation attracts little attention at home.... The BRPF is in fact almost the only organization in Britain which openly supports the National Liberation Front and calls for a Communist military victory in Vietnam” (p. 3, RA REC. ACQ. 1,724).

plans in June 1966.³⁷ Then in connection with the official launching of the Tribunal in November, its purpose had shifted more to being a commission of inquiry like the Dewey Commission, or “grand jury”, which Schoenman mentions in his foreword to *Against the Crime of Silence*. Since the words “tribunal” and “trial” were being used in the media, very few noticed the shift from “trial” to “inquiry”, of which there already had been a few but by different concerned groups.

However, a closer look at the published proceedings of the Tribunal shows that Russell’s contributions were wholly consistent with the view that the purpose of the Tribunal was to present evidence that the US had committed crimes specified at the Nuremberg Trials. However, in his “Opening Statement to the Second Session”, Russell states: “We are not judges. We are witnesses. Our task is to make mankind bear witness to these terrible crimes and to unite humanity on the side of justice” (DUFFETT, p. 315). And Sartre says in his “Inaugural Statement to the Tribunal”:

“What a strange tribunal: a jury and no judge!” It is true: we are only a jury, we have neither the power to condemn nor the power to acquit anybody. Therefore, no prosecution. There will not even be strictly speaking a prosecution case. Maître Matarasso, president of the legal commission is going to read you a list of charges which will take the place of a prosecution case. We, the jury, at the end of the session, will have to pronounce on these charges: are they well-founded or not? But the judges are everywhere: they are the peoples of the world, and in particular the American people. It is for them that we are working.³⁸

I’m not sure if Russell, Sartre, Schoenman and the official documents were in agreement. The texts are open to different interpretations, but as the document in note 29 shows: “publicity is a major objective of the War Crimes Tribunal”.

On the whole Johnson’s initiatives seem to have worked, or at least not made things worse for him, but there are other factors to take into consideration if we want to understand the reception and influence of the Russell Tribunal, like the time that elapsed between the last session and the publication of its proceedings. Its findings were supported by the news of the My Lai Massacre in November 1969, three months before Russell reluctantly left this

³⁷ In *Strid för Freden* Eriksson, Limqueco and Torsson talk about “*krigsförbrytartribunal*” which translates to “war criminal tribunal”, and they also used this word in translating Russell where he talks about a “war crimes tribunal”. This probably added to the confusion regarding the purpose of the tribunal.

³⁸ See DUFFETT, ed., *Against the Crime of Silence* (1968), pp. 44–5, LIMQUECO and WEISS, eds., *Prevent the Crime of Silence*, p. 67; LINDBLAD, “The International War Crimes Tribunal. Stockholmsessionen 2–10 maj 1967”.

beautiful world. He could die content knowing he had done everything he could to prevent the crime of silence associated with the crime of aggression committed in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos by the governments of the United States, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea. As he said in his open letter to U Thant two months before he died: “the record of the Tribunal’s proceedings is today vindicated.”³⁹

WORKS CITED

- Anon. “Vietnam ‘War Crimes Tribunal’ ”. RA Rec. Acq. 1,724.
- ALI, TARIQ. *Street Fighting Years: an Autobiography of the Sixties*. London: Collins, 1987. (2nd edn., 2005.)
- ANDERSSON, STEFAN. “International Citizens’ Tribunals” [review of Arthur Jay Klinghoffer and Judith Apter Klinghoffer, *International Citizens’ Tribunals*]. *Russell* 22 (2002): 83–9.
- . “A Secondary Bibliography of the IWCT”. *Russell* 31 (2011): 167–90.
- ARNONI, M. S. “Let’s Try the World War III Criminals”. *The Minority of One*, 4, no. 6 (June 1962): 3.
- . “For an International War Tribunal”, *ibid.*, 7, no. 11 (Nov. 1965).
- . “The War Crimes Tribunal”. *ibid.*, 8, no. 7 (July 1966).
- CHOMSKY, NOAM. “The Bitter Heritage” (rev. of Schlesinger). In his *American Power and the New Mandarins*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1969.
- CLARK, RONALD W. *The Life of Bertrand Russell*. London: Cape/Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975.
- COATES, KEN. “After the Tribunal: Russell’s Writing on Vietnam, My Lai and War Crimes”. In LIMQUECO AND WEISS.
- DEGROOT, GERARD J. “‘Left, Left, Left?’: the Vietnam Day Committee, 1965–66”. In DeGroot, ed., *Student Protest: the Sixties and After*. London: Longman, 1998.
- DELLINGER, DAVID. *From Yale to Jail: the Life Story of a Moral Dissenter*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1993.
- DUFFETT, JOHN, ed., *Against the Crime of Silence; Proceedings of the Russell International War Crimes Tribunal*. Stockholm, Copenhagen, New York, London: O’Hare Books, 1968.
- ELLIS, SYLVIA. “‘A Demonstration of British Good Sense? British Student Protest during the Vietnam War’”. In DEGROOT.
- ERIKSSON, ERIK, PETER LIMQUECO AND BJÖRNER TORSSON, eds. *Strid för Freden: Tal & Artiklar 1964–66*. Stafanstorp: Cavefors, 1967.
- FARLEY, CHRISTOPHER. “Bertrand Russell: Reminiscences and Reflections”. In *Russell in Review: the Bertrand Russell Centenary Celebrations at McMaster University October 12–14, 1972*. Ed. J. E. Thomas and K. Blackwell. Toronto: Samuel Stevens, Hakkert, 1976.
- HALSTEAD, FRED. *Out Now! A Participant’s Account of the American Movement against the Vietnam War*. New York: Monad P., 1978.

³⁹ I want to thank Ernest Tate, Tariq Ali, Noam Chomsky, David Horowitz, Peter Limqueco and Norman Birnbaum for their informative responses to my emails. I also want to thank our editor for his substantial input to this review essay. And last, but not least, I extend my gratitude to Erik and Gurli Hultengren’s Foundation for Philosophy and a very generous friend for financial support without which I wouldn’t have been able to visit the Bertrand Russell Archives.

- HITCHENS, CHRISTOPHER. *Hitch-22: a Memoir*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2010.
- HOROWITZ, DAVID. *Radical Son: a Generational Odyssey*. New York: Free P., 1997.
- . “Bertrand Russell: the Final Passion”. *Ramparts*, April 1970.
- KIRKPATRICK, SALE. *SDS*. New York: Random House, 1973.
- KLIMKE, MARTIN. *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties*. Princeton: Princeton U. P., 2010.
- LEVITT, CYRIL. *Children of Privilege: Student Revolt in the Sixties, a Study of Student Movements in Canada, the United States, and West Germany*. Toronto: U. of Toronto P., 1984.
- LIMQUECO, PETER, AND PETER WEISS, eds. *Prevent the Crime of Silence*. London: Allen Lane the Penguin P., 1971.
- LINDBLAD, FREDRIK. “The International War Crimes Tribunal. Stockholms-sessionen 2–10 maj 1967. Förberedelser, mottagande och genomförande i Sverige” [... Preparation, reception and achievement in Sweden]. Candidate essay, Linköpings Universitet, Samhällsvetenskapliga Institutionen, 1994.
- LYONS, PAUL. *The People of This Generation: the Rise and Fall of the New Left in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania P., 2003.
- MOOREHEAD, CAROLINE. *Bertrand Russell: a Life*. London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1992.
- RUSSELL, BERTRAND. *War and Atrocity in Vietnam*. London: BRPF, 1964.
- . “Vietnam Atrocities” (letter to ed.). *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2 Sept. 1964, p. 32.
- . *An Appeal to the American Conscience*.
- . “American Ambition Can Kill Us”. *The Week* 3 (20 May 1965): 219–2.
- . “Statement for World Congress of Peace at Helsinki”. *Daily Worker*, 12 July 1965, p. 3.
- . “The Example of Cuba”. *World Outlook*, 4, no. 1 (4 Feb. 1966).
- . “Bertrand Russell’s Appeal to Negro Soldiers in Vietnam”. *World Outlook* 4, no. 31 (14 Oct. 1966): 27–8.
- . *War Crimes in Vietnam*. New York: Monthly Review P., 1967.
- . “Private Memorandum on Ralph Schoenman” (1969). In CLARK, appendix.
- . *Auto*. 3.
- . *BRA* 2.
- . *SLBR* 2.
- RUSSELL, EDITH. “‘Clark’s Fatuous Book’ (Part 3)”. *Russell* 30 (2010): 127–41.
- SCHLESINGER, ARTHUR. *The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy, 1941–66*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967.
- SCHOENMAN, RALPH. “Bertrand Russell and the Peace Movement”. In G. Nakhnikian, ed. *Bertrand Russell’s Philosophy*. London: Duckworth, 1974.
- . “Speech on Radio Hanoi to Fellow Americans”, *The Week*, 5, no. 14 (7 April 1966).
- SCHWARTZ, LAURENT. *A Mathematician Grappling with His Century*. Basel: Birkhäuser, 2001.
- STETLER, JR., RUSSELL D. “Vietnam: the Whole Brutal Business”. In RUSSELL, *War and Atrocity in Vietnam*.
- STEWART, LUKE. “‘A New Kind of War’: the Nuremberg Principles and the Vietnam War, 1964–68”. PHD thesis, Waterloo U., 2014.
- WHITING, ALLEN S. *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence: India and Indochina*. Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan P., 1957.
- . “China’s Role in the Vietnam War”. *The American War in Vietnam*. Ed. Jayne Werner and David Hunt. Southeast Asia Program Series No. 13, 1993.
- ZHAI, QIANG. “Confronting U.S. Escalation 1964–1965”. In his *China and the Vietnam Wars 1950–1975*. Chapel Hill and London: U. of North Carolina P., 2000.