

# Folket i Bild

## KULTURFRONT

REPORTAGE

### *The Russell Tribunal in Stockholm 50 years ago - seen with the CIA's eyes*



Jean-Paul Sartre in the presidium, on his right Vladimir Dedijer and Laurent Schwarz.  
PHOTO Joy Benigh

2017-06-30

Archives from the CIA, the US intelligence service, recently made available, provide a picture of the Russell Tribunal, held in Stockholm in 1967 in protest against the US war in Vietnam. The documents also highlight the spy organization's detailed information collection.

50 years ago, Stockholm became the center of building international opinion against the United States war in Vietnam. In 1967 there were two important meetings in Stockholm: the Russell Tribunal in May and the World Conference on Vietnam in July. Both concerned the fight against war crimes and have left their track on today's political activities. The Russell Tribunal was more anti-imperialist and constituted a breakthrough in the world's opposition to the war. It became a pattern for similar tribunals in the future.



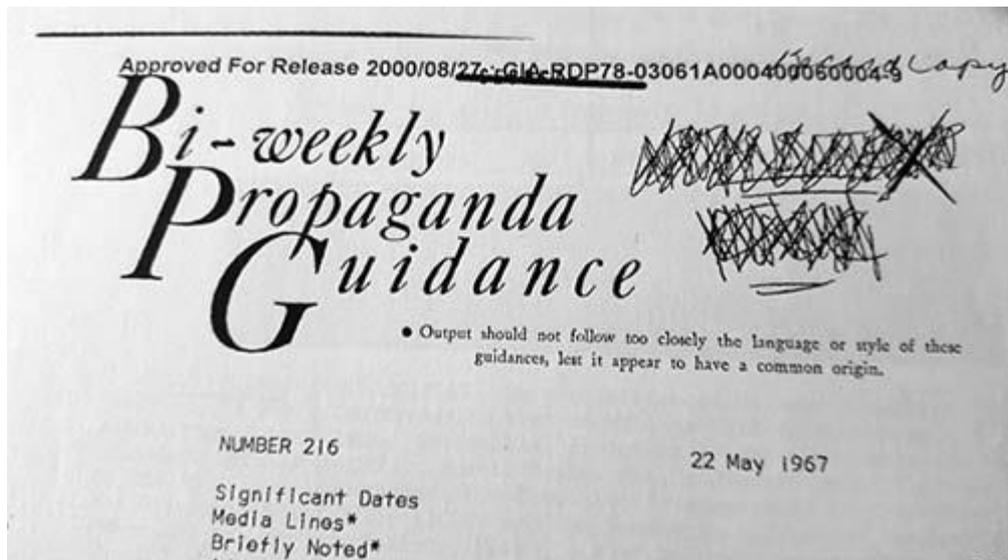
The nine-year-old boy DoVan Ngoc exhibits terrible abdominal injuries caused by napalm bombs. Bending over the is boy Dr John Takman.

### **The archives are opened slightly**

Since 2010, some of the archives of the CIA have been open to researchers. However, access has been limited to four data screens at the Maryland National Archives, which are open 5 working days a week between 9am and 4:30 pm. The stamp of secrecy has been removed on some part of more than 940,000 documents. These range from the 1940s to the 1990s, ie at least 25 years back. However, since January, these can be read by everyone online.

The documents from the CIA complement what is contained in other archives and shows the paranoid atmosphere prevailing within the CIA. They give a detailed - though not complete - picture of how the CIA watched the meeting and how they worried about the effect it would have on the opinion against the United States war in Vietnam. Clearly, the US had sources and insights into what was going on even in the leadership teams at both conferences. The names of the sources are masked in the published documents and are rendered here as "XX".

They consist of CIA telegrams, courier reports, daily summaries for the president and some so-called "Bi-weekly Propaganda Guidance" directives. These latter are communicated with the instruction: **"Output should not follow too closely the language or style of these guidances, lest it appear to have a common origin."**



The CIA Propaganda Guidance instructs users to express themselves in such a way that it does not appear that the source is common.

## 12 million pages

But the problem is finding among more than 12 million searchable pages. It becomes very time-consuming to find the right ones among all possible terms in the search register where you can find traces of CIA's reporting on these events. Searching for Vietnam, for example, gave 48 423 hits. Searching for Sweden gave 9,715.

## The Russell Tribunal

The English philosopher Lord Bertrand Russell took the initiative in November 1966 to invite a number of well-known personalities to a meeting in London about the United States war crimes in Vietnam. The Tribunal actually consisted of this preparatory meeting and the meeting in Stockholm in May and in Roskilde in October the following year. In addition to the Honorary President Lord Russell, the main names involved were Jean-Paul Sartre, the tribunal president, and Vladimir Dedijer, who was president of the actual sessions in Sweden and Denmark.

The London preparatory meeting commissioned the Tribunal

***"To investigate in the most complex and rigorous ways the crimes committed against the Vietnamese people since 1954 and to determine who were responsible for these crimes."***

Investigating groups would be dispatched and the second session would be held in Paris during March. This was not to happen..

## De Gaulle stops the tribunal

A CIA telegram from London in October 1966 reported:

***"XX" declared vigorously that the meeting would be held in Paris in March 1967 as planned. However, if there is any difficulty, which the organizers do not expect, the tribunal could be held in***

**Stockholm. According to "XX", the Swedish government has shown significant sympathy and would not prevent the conference being held in Stockholm. "**

On December 15, the CIA reported that Argentine newspaper Propositos claimed

**"That if France allows the trial of Johnson to be held in Paris, relations between the United States and France would deteriorate".** And furthermore that **"The panic has also forced the US ambassador in Sweden to submit an official protest if the Swedish government is to allow the tribunal to take place in Stockholm."**

In March, it was reported to Washington that **"someone in Sartre's vicinity told us that the whole meeting might be postponed this autumn because of the other plans of the participants and visa problems".**

In a telegram from April 13th about the tribunal office in Paris, "XX" claimed **"That the French government will be forced to grant permission to allow the International Criminal Tribunal to be held in Paris".**

But on the 19th, President Johnson however was informed::

**"Having talked with Couve de Murville, Herve Alphand says that the French government will do everything possible to prevent the Bertrand Russell trial being held in France."**

Maurice Couve de Murville was the French Foreign Minister from 1958-68 under President de Gaulle. Hervé Alphand was the French Ambassador to the US 1956-1965, thereafter Undersecretary in the French Foreign Ministry.

## **Plan B: Stockholm**

During the following days the CIA learned that the meeting had been moved to Stockholm, although they felt sure it would be held at the end of April.. **"Rumor says that the Peoples Hall has been booked a long time ago by Joachim Israel and Dr. John Takman."**

**It was noted that "Takman is a psychiatrist by profession, a member of the Communist Party and the leader of the local Tribunal Committee, and has been active in Scandinavian communist issues for at least 20 years."**

Even if other sources indicate that a majority of the Swedish Cabinet disapproved of the plans there was nothing that could be done to stop the move to Stockholm. The Swedish support group had obviously much earlier made far reaching plans and had prepared arrangements.



Jean-Paul Sartre in the presidium surrounded by Simone de Beauvoir and Vladimir Dedijer.

## SARTRE

The French philosopher and Nobel laureate was the President of the Tribunal. In March 1967, the CIA wrote that ***they had followed the preparations for over six months and were able to make some conclusions.*** The CIA concluded that Russell's Peace Foundation ***"is in practice under the effective control of elements that are loyal to the 4th international"***.

Another internal source stated that, by November, Sartre believed that ***"the Trotskyists were very strong."*** ***"He did not think his Chinese friends were particularly happy about this development"*** ***"He left London very abruptly. He would ask the Chinese for advice and listen to them. "***

***"Sartre had mixed feelings about the tribunal and many of the people who were associated with it."*** But ***"he felt strongly that world opinion must be mobilized against the Vietnam war."***

## JOACHIM ISRAEL

***"Comment by XX ": Israel is a German-born Swedish citizen, a sociologist who has been active for a long time in communist front questions"***

On May 11th it was noted:

***"Israel was the Swedish organizer of the Stockholm tribunal session and has according to reports mortgaged his house to pay the Tribunal deficit.."***

Joachim Israel had borrowed money to fund the tribunal.

Ralph Schoenman, an American, was Bertrand Russell's personal secretary and general secretary of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation (BRPF). During a stormy final meeting on May 9 and 10, he took out a letter from Bertrand Russell, which demanded back the \$100,000 that the Tribunal had paid in advance.

***"A violent dispute about the Tribunal's deficit broke out between Joachim Israel, the Swedish organizer of the Stockholm session, Schoenman and Dennis Berger, an influential member of the French tribunal committee."***

This was perceived as a blackmail attempt on the part of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation.

At a celebration for participants later that night, ***"Joachim Israel told "xx" in confidence that the French "agreed to pay \$ 12,000 (60,000 Swedish Crowns)) to contribute to the costs of the Stockholm session."***

***"In a few weeks, Dr. Israel will reveal the dirty methods used by the French to get the money."*** However, Israel was very clear: ***"this indicated that the money did not come from the French Communist Party."***

## **PETER WEISS**

Attempts were also made by the German Communists in 1966 ***"to use pressure against Peter Weiss, the German-born Swedish playwright of 'Marat de Sade', not to attend the preliminary meeting in London ... and not to attend the Tribunal."***

Peter Weiss held in the end the welcome speech at the conference in Stockholm. His participation was of great importance to the international success of the tribunal.

## **Political contradictions**

From the beginning there were deep political differences within the initiative group and different parts of the tribunal organization. Pro-Moscow Communists had already tried to take the initiative from the BRPF in London. In March 1967, the CIA wrote that they had followed the preparations for over six months and made certain conclusions.

***"The Bertrand Russell Foundation ... is no longer in absolute control of this project". "For the sake of political, pragmatic or ideological reasons, the orthodox movements and front groups that follow Moscow have refrained from supporting the initiative, but have not condemned the anti-American propaganda attempts." "In practice, the BRPF is under effective control of elements that are loyal to the 4th international"***

It is argued in the documents ***that it is Nottingham's International Trotskyist Group, which controls BRPF and the British Solidarity campaign.*** Several leading Trotskyists are named by the CIA, who also requests in-depth information from another agency on the relationship between the SWP and the WWP [World Workers' Party] and the Russell Peace Foundation.

## French-English conflict

During the actual meeting in Stockholm on May 5, the CIA reported **"that the tribunal is increasingly split between French-speaking and English-speaking members."** Delegates from the US Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) considered **"this was a battle between the Trotskyists and Orthodox Communists"** and **"were very sorry about this."** **"In general, the French group is holding up and seems arrogant and hostile to the English-speaking ones who are less socially and politically cohesive."** Russell's organization was in practice outmanoeuvred. In London, Dedijer had reacted strongly to the fact that Schoenman, who the foundation had appointed as secretary general, **"had lectured the members of the tribunal who were older than him and knew more about politics."** At the last meeting in Stockholm, they voted to move the headquarters to Paris where Schoenman was not welcome. This was decided following a proposal by Dave Dellinger, the American pacifist and anti-war leader, who the CIA reported, **"was the most trusted by the Vietnamese in these meetings"**. It was not about languages but rather politics.

But the trust of the majority in the Russell Foundation was totally destroyed. Schoenman would be removed even if no formal decision was taken regarding the general secretary's continued role-

## The Swedish Tribunal Group

A secret CIA report on May 10 states:

**"1. The Swedish contingent consisted of four groups: a. Young Philosophers, a left-wing discussion group; b. the revisionist part of the Swedish Communist Party; c. Social Democratic Youth; and, d. Pro-Chinese Swedish Communists who term themselves as 'Marxist-Leninists'."**

**'2. Tribunal Secretary General Schoenman's "...connections to the Swedish tribunal committee have been through Joachim Israel and Erik Eriksson. Eriksson is a member of Young Philosophers "**

INFORMATION

ORI INFORM

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

REMOVED

The material contains information... Special Defense of the United States within the...  
S.E.C. R.E.T.

[Redacted]

b1

COUNTRY Sweden/Norw. International  
 SUBJECT ~~Swedish Vietnam Movement's Support of the International War Crimes Tribunal and contacts with Prague Representative of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam~~  
 REPORT NO.  
 DATE DIST.  
 NO. PAGES  
 REFERENCE

DATE OF INFO. Mid-December 1966

ALL FBI INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 12/12/82 BY SP-2 [Signature]

PLACE & DATE ACQ.

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION. SOURCE GRADINGS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPLICABLE

SOURCE

[Redacted]

1. The Swedish Vietnam Movement (SVK) supports the International Tribunal primarily because the North Vietnamese had asked also because by doing so, the Movement is able to prevent in the Swedish Communist Party (SKP) from making "political" of the Scandinavian Vietnam Movement in support of the as the Swedish Vietnam Movement is aware that the Tribunal manipulated by the Trotskyites in the Bertrand Russell by (BRPF), the Swedish Vietnam Movement has taken extreme to any direct support to the BRPF. The Swedish Vietnam Movement of BRPF Director Ralph Schoorman's political action because gained confidence in [Redacted] who falsely posed as the Swedish representative of the BRPF real Swedish representative is Peter [Redacted] inc student from a well-to-do middle-class family in the BERTRAND RUSSELL FUNDATION. The December 1966 visit to NORWAY of Ralph Schoorman and [Redacted] (British citizen and author, active in the Tribunal) had a Norwegian Vietnam group which is composed primarily of [Redacted] (Socialistisk Folkeparti - SF) and the revisionist Norwegian Solidaritetskomitten is another group in Norway which North Vietnamese government and the South Vietnamese National Front (NLFSV).
2. The Swedish Vietnam Movement has its closest contacts with representative Pham Van Chuong, although Nguyen Van [Redacted] representative, has been visiting in Stockholm. Funds and the NLFSV. SOUTH VIETNAMESE NATIONAL FRONT
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S.E.C. R.E.T.

A CIA report described the Swedish Vietnam Movement

## The Swedish Vietnam Movement

A document from December 1966 explained that the Swedish Vietnam Movement (SVM that is the Working Groups for the FNL, supports the Tribunal ***"because the North Vietnamese had asked for it and by doing so the movement can also prevent the revisionists of the Swedish Communist Party from gaining political capital in the Scandinavian Vietnam movements by supporting the tribunal. Since the SVM is aware that the Tribunal is actually manipulated by the Trotskyists of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, the SVM has been extremely careful not to give any support to the BRPF. "***

A report noted that Amnesty International refused to have anything to do with the tribunal, which they considered ***"to be partial and political."*** They had no well documented information about war crimes in Vietnam. ***"We do not want to compromise our principles in a dubious project"***. On the other hand, the Social Democratic Student Union dared to send a statement (of support) which was read up for the participants at the opening ceremony, together with statements from the Swedish Support Committee for the Tribunal and one from the Swedish Cultural Workers.

The Washington headquarters were informed that ***"SVM had its closest contacts with Phan van Choung, the FNL: s representative in Prague" "and that collected funds went through the same office."***

### Americans were spied on.

Information about all the role and background of all US citizens was noted in particular and sent as a copy to the relevant agencies. The CIA was convinced that the anti-war movement was sponsored and funded by foreign forces, including the enemy, ie the Vietnamese. This is testified to by the many notations about Americans who were members of the Communist Party or were Trotskyists, but also the progressive intellectuals, academics, lawyers and civil rights and anti-war activists who were involved in some way. (The CIA's illegal spying on American citizens was part of Operation Chaos, which was exposed by Congress in 1973.)

The driving and most important American activist in the jury, Dave Dellinger, came straight from Hanoi. He would later become known as one of the "Chicago Seven", seven American protesters who, in conjunction with the Democratic Party's Convention in Chicago in 1968, participated in protests against the US war in Vietnam and were charged with conspiracy, incitement to riots and other crimes.

### To the President's morning coffee

President Lyndon Johnson was informed daily about the situation in Vietnam, opinion polls about the war and often about what the black radicals were doing abroad. Information about the role and background of US citizens was particularly noted.. The CIA was convinced that the anti-war movement was sponsored and funded by foreign forces, including the enemy, ie the Vietnamese. Johnson was obsessed with civil rights activists' connections with communists. These CIA notices ***"only for the eyes of the president"*** were rich in sometimes unimportant and sometimes insulting details: (Some examples)

The delegate from the SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) believed that *"Issac Deutcher and others not understanding the racist character of the war"*. He was quoted as saying about the conference: *"It has been important if it, like demonstrations, creates confusion"* (probably in the United States). This was reported by CIA directly to the FBI.

**JAMES BALDWIN** The black author James Baldwin did not attend, despite the fact that the meeting had announced that he would attend. An American friend of Schoenman was quoted as saying *"that it was because he was basically lazy, and that his absence was not political"*.

**SHERMAN ADAMS** *"The Swedish police have informed the United States Embassy in Stockholm that a US citizen - a Sherman Adams - among things was [Stokely] Carmichael's Press Officer in Sweden."* According to the police *"Adams was a student at Uppsala University, but he studies very little and spends most of his time employed as a nude model"*. Additionally, the police said, *"Adam's has a bad reputation and is to be considered undesirable."* (Adams would later become known as the one who shouted "Welcome House nigger!" to the newly arrived US ambassador, Jerome Holland. The US media called this Swedish racism.

## Conclusions now and then

Sartre was right about the need for mobilization. It would take eight years until Vietnam was liberated. At least three million people are estimated to have died during what became the Indochina War.

The Tribunal found the United States guilty of war crimes and condemned crimes against civilians. It did not accuse the United States of Genocide because all of the jury did not agree that you could prove the accusation based on the evidence presented at the conference. (In questions to the Tribunal, Schoenman claimed that the US had committed genocide in Vietnam. He said, "It is not possible to release four million pound bombs every day across a country the size" of New York and Pennsylvania without eradicating the civilian population. ) In Roskilde in November, Sartre presented the Tribunal's final conclusions, after which he a number of times spoke of how he thought it was genocide. Then he gave the microphone to Stokely Carmichael. This was strongly disapproved of by some of the organizers who felt that Sartre favoured Carmichael. But Sartre did not give a shit. He was Sartre. The Tribunal did not continue its work, but eventually it ended as a documentation center in Paris.

What was new with the tribunal was that, unlike in Nuremberg, they did not wait for the war to end to accuse the criminals. Of course, they could not impose sentences. But the process itself became a weapon in the fight against the war. The same year, the Stockholm conference on Vietnam was held, which wanted a negotiated end to the war. Gunnar Myrdal became the chairman. It was the Swedish Peace and Arbitration Association, together with eight other traditional international pacifist groups that hosted the meeting. But they soon came to the same conclusions: peace demanded that the United States be forced to leave Vietnam. They established an International Commission to Investigate War Crimes, which was much broader and much more rigorous in its work than the Russell Tribunal could be. They carried out ground breaking work until the Paris peace agreement. But the more anti-imperialist meeting was the breakthrough in world opinion that was needed to

make such efforts both necessary and possible. Many individuals made great contributions to both projects and in the mass movement against the dirty Vietnam war that developed.

***"Sartre had mixed feelings about the tribunal and many of the people who were associated with it."*** But ***"he felt strongly that world opinion must be mobilized against the Vietnam war."*** He was right. It was only after eight years later that Vietnam was liberated.

The tradition has continued around the world (for example, the Peoples Tribunal Movement that Lelio Basso started) and not least of all in Stockholm. Many remember the important international meetings here in Stockholm about Kampuchea, Afghanistan and Iraq. The final session of the World Tribunal on Iraq in Istanbul in 2005 was to play the role of motor and unifying force in solidarity work.

Fifty years afterwards we can draw a number of interesting conclusions that are still important today:

a) Despite the (political) divisions and (organisational) uncertainties surrounding the Russell Tribunal, it was possible to gather and formulate all the criticisms that followed of the United States War in Indochina. There was really not a bad result for the tribunal!

b) Well-known cultural personalities and intellectuals played an important role in mobilizing this important anti-war movement.

c) The efforts to link the protests of American radicals and European radicals played a major role in making the effects of the protests much stronger..

d) The Swedish Vietnam Committee and its followers among pacifists and more moderate and established organizations and voices received a kick in the right direction through the Russell Tribunal and could therefore play an important role in widening resistance to the United States war.

e) CIA countermeasures obviously did not play a particularly important role. That is an important lesson even in today's political situation.

## **MIKE POWERS**

Hasselby, is a former High School Head and history teacher

For a detailed account of the Swedish and international Vietnam movement at this time, the reader is referred to Åke Kilander's major work on the FNL-Groups in Sweden

### **"Vietnam var nära" (Vietnam was close)**

The text's views are the writer's own. In People in Pictures/Cultural Front, all writers write in their own name. People in Pictures/Cultural Front is an independent non-party political journal, which serves to defend freedom of expression, to promote people's culture and to support anti-imperialist forces.