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Anti-Imperialist Solidarity in the
International War Crimes Tribunal on Vietnam

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Abstract

In 1967, in the midst of the U.S. war in Vietnam, around thirty distinguished leftist intellectuals and activists gathered in Sweden and Denmark and brought one of the first so-called citizens' tribunals into being. Initiated by mathematician and philosopher Bertrand Russell and conducted by prestigious personalities such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Lázaro Cárdenas, and James Baldwin, the purpose of the International War Crimes Tribunal (IWCT) was to place the U.S. government on trial for its military action in Southeast Asia. Considering itself in the tradition of the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals, the Tribunal aimed to evoke indignation and protest amongst the citizens of the 'West' by bringing to light infringements of international law by the U.S. This thesis demonstrates that the IWCT was a manifestation of a broader international anti-imperialist movement, which reached its zenith in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and investigates in what way the Tribunal was an act of political solidarity. Even to the present day, the concept of solidarity remains undertheorized and overlooked by historians. I claim, however, that it provides a fruitful theoretical framework for the global history of social movements, and as such, this thesis examines the Tribunal against the backdrop of political solidarity theorized by Sally J. Scholz. With additional inputs by feminist and anti-racist intellectuals and activists, this investigation highlights the importance, advantages, and pitfalls of political solidarity across unequal social, political, and/or economic positioning and standing.

Abstract

1967, inmitten des U.S.-Krieges in Vietnam, versammelten sich um die dreißig renommierte linke Intellektuelle und Aktivist*innen in Schweden und Dänemark und riefen eines der ersten sogenannten Bürger*innentribunale ins Leben. Initiiert von dem Mathematiker und Philosoph Bertrand Russell und ausgeführt von angesehenen Persönlichkeiten wie Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Lázaro Cárdenas und James Baldwin, hatte das International War Crimes Tribunal (IWCT) die Absicht, die U.S.-Regierung für ihre Beteiligung am Krieg in Südostasien anzuklagen. Sich selbst in der Tradition der Tribunale in Nürnberg und Tokio sehend, zielten die Beteiligten darauf ab, Empörung und Protest bei der 'westlichen' Bevölkerung hervorzurufen, indem sie Verletzungen internationalen Rechts durch die USA aufdeckten. Diese Masterarbeit zeigt auf, dass das IWCT ein Beispiel einer breiteren internationalen anti-imperialistischen Bewegung war, die ihren Höhepunkt in den späten 1960ern und frühen 1970ern fand, und untersucht, inwiefern das Tribunal ein Akt der politischen Solidarität darstellt. Selbst bis zum heutigen Tag hat das Konzept der Solidarität wenig theoretische Ausarbeitung sowie Aufmerksamkeit von Historiker*innen erfahren. Ich argumentiere jedoch, dass ebenjenes einen fruchtbaren theoretischen Rahmen für die Auseinandersetzung mit der Globalgeschichte sozialer Bewegungen bietet, weshalb die Arbeit das Tribunal vor dem Hintergrund der Theorie zur politischen Solidarität von Sally J. Scholz betrachtet. Ergänzt durch Beiträge von feministischen und anti-rassistischen Intellektuellen und Aktivist*innen, hebt diese Untersuchung die Wichtigkeit, Vorteile, sowie Herausforderungen von politischer Solidarität inmitten ungleicher sozialer, politischer und/oder ökonomischer Positionierungen und Stellungen hervor.

Content

Acknowledgements	3
Abbreviations	4
1. INTRODUCTION.....	5
1.1. Terms and Spellings	9
1.2. Research Method and Sources	13
2. SOLIDARITY	16
2.1. A Historical Outline of the Term Solidarity.....	16
2.2. Political Solidarity – Sally J. Scholz	19
Individual Commitment	21
The Collective	22
Social Justice Ends	24
Morality and Obligations	28
2.3. Critical Reflection on Internationalist and Global Solidarity.....	32
The Problem of Identity Politics	35
Privilege and Political Solidarity.....	37
(Post)colonial Tropes, ‘Western’ Universalism, and International Power Relations.....	42
3. ANTI-IMPERIALIST INTERNATIONALISMS	47
3.1. Third Worldism	47
Origins of Internationalism	47
Historical Context of Decolonisation	49
Promoting Anti-imperialism	51
Opposing Racism and Global Power Asymmetry.....	55
Criticizing Eurocentrism and USSR-Centrism	58
Third Worldist Connections	61
3.2. Internationalism of the (French) Left	65

3.3. Internationalism in the Vietnamese-American War Era	73
A Brief History of the Vietnamese-American War.....	73
Internationalist Movements against the Vietnamese-American War.....	80
4. THE INTERNATIONAL WAR CRIMES TRIBUNAL ON VIETNAM.....	89
4.1. Internationalism and Connections	90
4.2. Individual Commitment and The Collective	94
4.3. Social Justice Ends and Means.....	98
Shared Interpretation of Past, Present and Future	98
Oppositional Clause	103
Means	104
4.4. Morality and Obligations	110
4.5. Images and Identity	118
4.6. Power, Inequality, and the Shared Struggle	126
5. HISTORICAL OUTLOOK AND CONCLUSION	131
5.1. Third Worldism and the Shift towards Human Rights.....	131
5.2. Impact of the International War Crimes Tribunal.....	133
5.3. Summary of the Findings and Relevance for Political Solidarity	136
Sources	142
Literature	143

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Abbreviations

BIPoC	Black, Indigenous, people of colour
BRPF	Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation
CIU	Collectif Intersyndical Universitaire
CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
CVN	Comité Vietnam National
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale (Algeria)
IWCT	International War Crimes Tribunal on Vietnam
NLF	National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (Việt Cộng)
OSPAAAL	Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America
PAIGC	African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde
PCF	Parti Communiste Français
PWCT	People-led War Crimes Tribunal
SFIO	French Section of the Workers' International
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
WINA	Women, intersex, non-binary, agender people

1. INTRODUCTION

“The course of history is being shaped in Vietnam.”¹

Bertrand Russell (1967)

On December 1st, 1967, a tribunal jury announced a unanimous verdict: the United States Government was committing a genocide against the people of Vietnam. Not only that, but the jury members also concluded that the U.S. government was guilty on five other accounts: waging a war of aggression, the employment of new or forbidden weapons, committing crimes against civilians as well as against prisoners of war, and genocide. Despite these strong allegations and the condemning verdict, the tribunal and its outcome are rarely known today – neither among the U.S.-American public nor elsewhere. The reason for that can be found in the nature of the tribunal. Instead of being carried out by an official court, the tribunal was conducted by a group of citizens. That is, neither did it enjoy the legal legitimization and executive authority of a court, nor was it officially supported by any nation state. On the contrary, it was a case of activism against the U.S. aggression towards North Vietnam and South Vietnamese guerrilla fighters. The members of the so-called International War Crimes Tribunal (IWCT) were, without exception, distinguished intellectuals and well-known activists. The endeavour was initiated by nobody less than the British philosopher and mathematician Bertrand Russell and presided over by the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre and the Yugoslav historian and former partisan Vladimir Dedijer. Twenty-four prominent figures from fifteen different countries agreed to serve as the Tribunal Committee, including journalists, philosophers, lawyers, novelists, as well as activists and politicians.

Between 1955 and 1975, the Second Indochina War was being waged in the countries of the former French colony. What was officially declared a war between North Vietnam and South Vietnam, was in fact a complex constellation of issues including the struggle for national sovereignty, post-colonial power relations, Cold War ideologies, as well as national interests. In 1965, the war in Vietnam escalated to a full-scale confrontation, including the systematic bombing of North Vietnam by the U.S. Airforce as well as the war against guerrilla troops in South Vietnam. It was that year that Russell decided to set up a tribunal to investigate the U.S. conduct in Vietnam. As he saw it, the U.S. government had to be held to the same standards that they themselves had created twenty years prior: the Nuremberg principles. After World

¹ Bertrand Russell, ‘Opening Statement to the Second Tribunal Session’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 313.

War II, the allied nations had been eager to put German Nazi, as well as Japanese, officials on trial for starting a war of aggression, for committing war crimes against prisoners of war (POWs) as well as against their own population, namely genocide. The tribunals in Nuremberg, Tokyo, and throughout Southeast Asia were unprecedented. It was the first time in history that political and military officials were taken to court by foreign nations and indicted for “crimes against peace” and “crimes against humanity”. With that, international criminal law standards were set. The allies further founded the United Nations Organisations (UN) as a guardian for peace. In his Opening Statement before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, back in 1945, Chief Prosecutor for the United States Robert H. Jackson stated: “We must never forget that the record on which we judge these defendants today is the record on which history will judge us tomorrow.” He concluded the speech by asserting that

*the ultimate step in avoiding periodic wars, which are inevitable in a system of international lawlessness, is to make statesmen responsible to law. And let me make clear that while this law is first applied against German aggressors, the law includes, and if it is to serve a useful purpose it must condemn aggression by any other nations, including those which sit here now in judgment.*²

At the time of the U.S. invasion of Vietnam, however, neither the UN nor any state was willing or had the power to hold the U.S. government responsible for the war. And yet, there were enough reasons for doing exactly that. The United States had never formally declared war on North Vietnam and was therefore on thin ice concerning the legality of what the U.S. government called the “Vietnam conflict”. Moreover, by 1965, first reports of the employment of illegal weapons and other war crimes had appeared in the U.S. media.

In the mid-1960s, protest against the war emerged in the United States and elsewhere. In order to draw attention to the legal aspects of the U.S. war effort and to collect evidence for war crimes, Russell began to create a citizens’ tribunal or people-led war crimes tribunal (PWCT) – one of the first of its sort. In November 1966, members gathered for a preliminary meeting in London to prepare their investigations. The actual tribunal was held in two sessions, May 2nd through 10th, and November 20th until December 1st, 1967. The charges followed the example set at Nuremberg. Russell and Sartre invited U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson and Secretary of State Dean Rusk to either appear before the tribunal personally or to send a representative to defend themselves against the allegations. Instead of a reply, the U.S. government attempted to

² ‘Opening Statement before the International Military Tribunal’, Robert H Jackson Center, accessed 2 June 2022, <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/opening-statement-before-the-international-military-tribunal/>.

thwart the Tribunal from taking place through diplomatic means. Worried about the findings and the potential impact of the trial, it pressured different governments to condemn the Tribunal and to prevent it from taking place in their country. After Great Britain and France denied visas for Tribunal members and witnesses, the IWCT organizers explored different options for an alternative location. Ultimately, the first session was held in Stockholm, Sweden. After further pressure from the United States, the Swedish government prohibited another session, hence why the second meeting took place in Roskilde, Denmark.³

The Tribunal had a number of goals. First and foremost, by sending several investigation teams to Southeast Asia, evidence for U.S. war crimes was to be gathered. Secondly, through the exposure of the misdeeds committed by the U.S. military, the IWCT sought to raise awareness among the U.S. and European public about the cruelties of the war and to arouse resistance against it. That also explains another peculiarity of the Tribunal: the fact, that it took place during and not after the war. Instead of merely pursuing the goal of seeking justice, the Tribunal's ultimate goal was to increase pressure on the U.S. government to withdraw their military from Vietnam. This thesis takes a look at the mode of this specific endeavour.

As can be seen already from the brief summary given above, the Tribunal was a decidedly political and activist undertaking. As I content, it was an example of solidarity activism. David Featherstone, who has written on international solidarity connections, calls solidarity “a central practice of the political left.” He argues that it “is indispensable to the activity of radical social and political movements”.⁴ Furthermore, the Tribunal was internationalist in its intent. Not only did the participants come from different countries and continents, but the IWCT was also an act of solidarity for people in a faraway country. That is, the participants connected with a cause that was neither their own nor in close proximity. In contrast to extending “help” or charity to people, solidarity differs in its intention, means, morals, and other factors. At a political event in Paris in 1966, called Six Hours for Vietnam, Sartre stated: “This is how we need to be in solidarity with the Vietnamese people [...] Their fight is ours. It is the fight against American hegemony, against American imperialism. The defeat of the Vietnamese people,” he argued, “would politically be our defeat, the defeat of all free people. Because Vietnam is fighting for

³ Tor Krever, ‘Remembering the Russell Tribunal’, *London Review of International Law* 5, no. 3 (1 November 2017): 483–87; Luke J. Stewart, ‘Too Loud to Rise above the Silence: The United States vs. the International War Crimes Tribunal, 1966-1967’, *The Sixties* 11, no. 1 (2018): 17f.; Bethany Keenan, “‘Vietnam Is Fighting for Us’. French Identities and the U.S.-Vietnam War, 1965–1973’ (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2009), 206ff.

⁴ David Featherstone, *Solidarity. Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 5.

us.”⁵ Solidarity here is thought as a shared struggle of the Vietnamese guerrillas and antiimperialist activists from all over the world against the U.S. war and imperialist aspirations. Besides its legal claims and imperatives, which will not be part of the thesis, the Tribunal can be seen as the manifestation of a larger global anti-imperial movement. Since World War II had accelerated anti-colonial movements and resistance in the (former) colonial world, a new form of global alliance had arisen against European and U.S. supremacy, (neo-)colonial dominance and imperialism. While this agency first and foremost amounted to an endeavour of formerly colonized or enslaved people, a new kind of radical Left emerged in countries of the ‘West’, which turned its focus of activism towards the struggles of liberation in the (former) colonized world.

When I first started examining this example of international political solidarity, several questions arose. Firstly, what does the term solidarity actually entail? In contrast to other political concepts, such as freedom or equality, solidarity has rarely been theorized. Besides the support of a faraway cause, the term could also evoke images of a strong bond among citizens or the mutual help among suppressed people. What, then, are the different types of solidarity and what are the parameters that make solidarity an emancipatory praxis? Secondly, in addition to the conceptual question of a solidarity that is directed at a marginalized other, the question of potential pitfalls arises – regarding issues of privilege and power structures. Even though the IWCT was an international project, it was first and foremost organized by activists from Western Europe. What is more, the participants were not “ordinary” citizens but prominent figures. That is, privilege in terms of the protagonists’ global positioning and social standing comes into play. In order to investigate these issues, I take the historical and political context into consideration. In the case of the Tribunal, this includes the ending of the colonial era, the Cold War, and the hegemonic position of the United States. Furthermore, to understand privilege on all levels, I delve into the discursive power relations, such as *white* hegemony, orientalist tropes, and racism. Lastly, I examine in what way the IWCT must be located within anti-colonial and anti-imperialist solidarity movements. In order to answer this question, I look at the context of Third Worldism as it provides the ideological and political framework of the Tribunal.

My thesis serves a double purpose. Despite its eminent members, the politically charged topic, and the compromising findings, the Tribunal has not received much academic attention. Thus, one of my goals is to bring this example of internationalist solidarity to light. At the same time,

⁵ Keenan, “‘Vietnam Is Fighting for Us’”, 1f.

and by accomplishing the first, I also seek to bring the concept of political solidarity to the consideration of historians, thus contributing on both theoretical and empirical levels to the global history of anti-imperialist movements and connections. Thereby, I aim to advance non-official and not nation-bound historiographies that take into account how marginalized people and non-governmental protagonists have shaped the world. As the question of solidarity is not a purely historic one, my research questions are also aimed at the larger problem of what risks as well as chances solidarity can imply for activist solidarity movements. I not only hope to carve out the historical specifics of solidarity that the IWCT members committed to but also contribute to the larger question of what privilege-sensitive solidarity could look like today.

In sum, this thesis investigates the IWCT on Vietnam as a form of international solidarity activism against U.S. imperialism. Its second chapter delves into a theory of political solidarity – distinguished from civic, social, and parasitical solidarity – developed by the U.S. philosopher Sally J. Scholz. I further complement the theory with materialist, anti-racist, feminist, and postcolonial approaches as I deem them vital for the consideration of privilege, global power structures, and identity politics in the specific historical context. Important authors include bell hooks, Stuart Hall and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. In the third chapter, I contextualize the Tribunal within the anti-imperialist internationalisms of the 1960s – including the Non-Alignment Movement, Third Worldism, Tricontinentalism, the Afro-American struggle against racial oppression, as well as the rise of the New Left in the ‘West’. This provides the historic and discursive frame of reference to my analysis of that specific form of political solidarity. In a similar vein of contextualization, I offer some historical background to the war in Vietnam. Finally, in the fourth chapter, I analyse the IWCT on Vietnam against the backdrop of the theoretical and historical background. Through the scrutiny of primary sources, I examine the IWCT as an example of political solidarity and approach it with the privilege and power sensitive theoretical framework.

1.1. Terms and Spellings

This thesis uses certain terms and specific ways of writing. Firstly, I refer to the war commonly known as the “Vietnam War” in the ‘West’ nowadays – as “Vietnamese-American War”. Indeed, the war has had many names. In Vietnam, the war was widely called the “American War”, while communists also referred to it as the “War of Liberation” or the “Anti-U.S. War of National Salvation”. To this day, in Vietnam, *Kháng chiến chống Mỹ* (“Resistance War against America”) is a common name for the war. Meanwhile, the U.S. government used the term “Vietnam conflict” to downplay the intensity of U.S. interference. Scholars, in contrast,

often use “Second Indochina War” in order to include the neighbouring theatres of war.⁶ As can be seen, none of the terms are neutral as they emphasize certain aspects or a perspective – and no term can be neutral. In this thesis, I refer to the hostilities as Vietnamese-American War to highlight the main belligerents. Furthermore, wherever possible, I use the Vietnamese spelling of names and words – with the exception of the country name Vietnam, for which I use the English spelling.

Secondly, I employ the terms *white*, Black, ‘West’, and Third World in different formatting to accentuate the specific way I use them. Referring to one of the pioneers of Critical Whiteness Studies, sociologist and feminist Ruth Frankenberg, I understand *whiteness* as “a complexly constructed product of local, regional, national, and global relations, past and present”.⁷ Similarly but more specifically, anthropologist Ghassan Hage, calls *whiteness*

*an everchanging, composite cultural historical construct. It has its roots in the history of European colonization which universalized a cultural form of white identity as a position of cultural power at the same time as the colonized were in the process of being racialized.*⁸

That is, the concept of *whiteness* goes back to the age of European empires, in which Europeans sought to distinguish themselves and their civilisation from the rest of the world. The existence of other complexion-based systems of social hierarchy and racialization notwithstanding, the idea of *whiteness* most relevant to this thesis was based on the denigration of societies and people outside of the Christian civilisation of Western Europe. The hierarchisation legitimised the exploitation, kidnapping, killing, enslavement, and other kinds of mistreatment of non-Europeans for centuries. It was justified through the pseudo-scientific categorization of humans into races in the 18th and 19th century. Along with either valorising or devaluing characteristics, *whiteness* and *non-whiteness* was, and still is, arbitrarily applied to people. The arbitrariness of the concept can be seen in the desperate attempts of different societies to classify different races and subraces in order to manifest and maintain social hierarchies. Among others, this was true for territories of the Spanish Empire in Latin America and its complex set of racial categories, the United States and its “one-drop-rule”, as well as the South African Apartheid system and its racial classifications. In order to highlight the fact that *whiteness* is a social construct based on racist beliefs, I italicise the word.

⁶ Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War. A Concise International History*, Very Short Introductions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.

⁷ Ruth Frankenberg, cited in Mahrouse, *Conflicted Commitments: Race, Privilege, and Power in Solidarity Activism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014), 17.

⁸ Ghassan Hage, cited in Mahrouse, 17.

The term goes hand in hand with the term ‘West’ or ‘Western’. Similarly, it displays global power structures that go back to colonial times. The word implies a supposed timeless and trans-historical entity with supposed intrinsic characteristics.⁹ Originally, it was used to distinguish Europe from the ‘East’, but has been extended to other places, such as the United States, Canada, and Australia. That is, the ‘West’ is a historical rather than a geographical construct. Through the demarcation, Europe was able to create a positive self-image of “a society that is developed, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular, and modern”.¹⁰ According to the cultural theorist Stuart Hall, the concept has had the functions of categorizing, creating a system of representation, a model of comparison, as well as criteria of evaluation. The constructs of the ‘West’ and the ‘East’ are “short-hand generalizations”, which actually “represent very complex ideas and have no simple or single meaning”.¹¹ By putting the words in quotation marks, I follow the example of scholars who aim to emphasise the constructiveness of and the set of meanings that comes with the term. Even though it is an equally ideologically loaded term, I use the word Global North when referring to the highly industrialized world after the 1970s.

The terms Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPoC) are equally social constructs and, in a way, antonyms to *white* and ‘West’. As they are used here, however, they imply another component of meaning – namely, empowerment. In reference to anti-racist activists and scholars, I capitalize the terms Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour. Being BIPoC is a social position of people who experience racist discrimination. By capitalizing the terms, I refer to the resistance and empowerment movement of Black Americans in the 1960s and 1970s as well as Indigenous and PoC activism that aimed to revalue these terms. It symbolizes the appropriation of terms with a racist meaning by racialized people to empower themselves and to emancipate from *white* supremacy and racism.

The term Third World has different meanings and connotations. As I will demonstrate in detail in the third chapter, I use it in the historically specific context of the decolonization era until the mid-1970s. In contrast to the negative and derogatory connotations that the term has nowadays, the Third World was a place of anti-colonial and postcolonial empowerment and connection. It was also an, albeit complexly heterogeneous, Cold War protagonist as newly

⁹ Raymond W. K. Lau, ‘What Is Meant by “the West”? A Genealogical Critique of a Eurocentric Concept’, 2017, 1, https://www.academia.edu/36473206/What_is_meant_by_the_West_A_genealogical_critique_of_a_Eurocentric_concept.

¹⁰ Stuart Hall, *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000), 186.

¹¹ Hall, 185.

created post-colonial states sought to form a third path among Cold War rivalries between the capitalist 'West' and the socialist 'East'. For the historian Arif Dirlik,

*the 'Third World', the location for neo- and postcolonialisms, was a product of a systemic understanding of the world in terms of capitalism and socialism – the 'First' and the 'Second' Worlds understood in developmental terms – which showed the Third World alternative paths to its future. Politically, the idea of the Third World pointed to the necessity of a common politics that derived from a common positioning in the system (rather than some homogeneous essentialized common quality, as is erroneously assumed these days in much postcolonial criticism).*¹²

When I refer to the post-colonial part of the world after the 1970s, I use the term Global South in order to avoid the negative implications that the term Third World has today. Despite the effort to create terms that avoid hierarchies, they are not free of connotations and assumptions. They were also coined in the Global North and are, therefore, still embedded in a setting of power of interpretation.

Furthermore, I use the words marginalized, subaltern, and oppressed interchangeably to describe the position of people who are silenced, unheard, discriminated against, and who suffer from a lack of privileges.

To be clear, all these terms are merely an attempt to loosely group certain people or countries in order to demonstrate global hierarchies and historically specific power relations. They all relate to inequalities created by the age of empire, including colonialism, slavery, and racism, and to their ongoing effect in a post-colonial world. All of these terms are analytically limited, imprecise, and – as they are so closely related to the colonial era – they root in the worldview and mindset of racist Europeans. Nevertheless, they are needed to describe certain historical constellations, developments, and privilege.

Lastly, this thesis uses the terms women, cis women, and the acronym WINA. I assume that sex and gender are categories that are socially constructed. Sex, on one hand, is assigned at birth, usually based on sexual and reproductive organs. Other physical traits such as chromosomes, gonads, and hormones are typically not included. The sex binarity assumes that all people can be assigned to one of the two sex categories, female or male, despite the fact that these five variables differ from person to person and create sex asymmetries. Gender, on the other hand, includes certain social expectations that come with the assigned sex, such as roles,

¹² Arif Dirlik, 'Rethinking Colonialism. Globalization, Postcolonialism, And the Nation', *Interventions* 4, no. 3 (1 January 2002): 433.

tasks, behaviour, or physical appearance. These differ culturally and have changed historically – in fact, not all times and not all cultures have been based on a gender binarity. Despite the dominant culture of gender binarity, other sex and gender identities exist, such as intersex, non-binary, trans gender, or agender people. In order to differentiate, I use the terms cis women for those whose assigned sex and gender coincide, women for everyone who identifies as such independent of their sex assigned at birth, and WINA, which stands for women, intersex, non-binary, and agender people. With that, I hope to be as specific and inclusive as possible but am grateful for criticism and input.

1.2. Research Method and Sources

This thesis combines the exploration and evaluation of the theoretical concept of solidarity with the application of this concept to the specific case of the IWCT. In reference to Philipp Mayring's method of qualitative content analysis, I determine certain parameters (or categories, in Mayring's words) in my theoretical analysis on solidarity (chapter 2), which are then applied to the sources (chapter 4) I have at hand. Moreover, a whole chapter (chapter 3) is dedicated to contextualizing the tribunal historically as well as in the history of ideas.

With his conception of qualitative content analysis, Mayring aimed to establish an intersubjectively verifiable and systematic method for the humanities and social sciences – combining techniques from qualitative as well as quantitative analysis.¹³ He borrows from different fields and methods, such as communication studies, hermeneutics, psychology, and literary studies, which all deal with the analysis of linguistic material. Generally speaking, the object of qualitative content analysis can be any kind of fixated communication, such as texts, images, videos, or musical scores. The analysis and interpretation of such communication must be systematic, rule-driven, and theory-driven.¹⁴ To be more precise, sources must be analysed with the help of categories. These are either obtained from the source itself – which is called the inductive category application – or from a theory – namely, the deductive category application. Thereby, with the help of a theory, categories are formulated and subsequently applied to the analysis of the given source.¹⁵ Accordingly, I follow Mayring's deductive category application by, firstly, expounding a theory of solidarity, which offers certain aspects

¹³ Philipp Mayring, *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse*, 12th ed. (Weinheim: Beltz, 2015), 9f., 17.

¹⁴ Mayring, 12f.

¹⁵ Philipp Mayring, 'Qualitative Content Analysis', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 1, no. 2 (2000): paras 9–13.

to address the sources with. In a second step, I limit the sources to a representative and manageable quantity and apply these aspects or categories.

In order to make the method systematic, Mayring specifies the following steps. Firstly, the source material has to be determined, that is, it has to be defined, contextualized, and its formal characteristics have to be examined. Defining the sources includes the selection of a representative quantity from a bigger volume of material. When analysing the context and origin of the sources, one has to gather information on the author of the specific sources and their intentions but also on the circumstances under which the sources were produced, their socio-cultural background, and who the communication was directed at.¹⁶

In a second step, the guiding research question must be specified in order to clarify under what aspects the sources will be interpreted. It is useful to determine the direction of the analysis. This will help to understand what exactly the analysis focusses on – a specific topic in the source itself, the impact of the text, or the author. A communication model can be a helpful tool for this step. Furthermore, the research question must be based on a theoretical foundation for it to be precise and conclusively justified. By making use of a theory, the researcher draws on existing knowledge, applies it to the subject-matter, and advances it. That implies the inclusion of the current state of research on the material. The theory-driven approach will further help to formulate more sub-questions.¹⁷

The third step proposed by Mayring is the analysis itself. The analysis, again, follows a procedural model. First, the researcher must decide on a technique to analyse the material – namely, the summary, the explication, or the structuring of a text. That is followed by the determination of categories. This step is arguably the most decisive one for Mayring's method. It is the central instrument of the analysis and ensures intersubjectivity and replicability. As mentioned before, the categories can be obtained from the source itself or from the theoretical reflexions. With the help of these categories or aspects, the material is then analysed by segmenting it and coding it accordingly. In a last step, the results have to be interpreted regarding the main research question.¹⁸

While I followed Mayring's method by determining and contextualizing the material as well as structuring my sources with categories deduced from a theory on solidarity, I did not strictly adhere to the rather technical application of the coding that he suggests. As my major focus lies

¹⁶ Mayring, *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse*, 54f.

¹⁷ Mayring, 58ff.

¹⁸ Mayring, 61f.

on the theory of solidarity, which I then applied to the sources, this strict technique would have restricted the handling of the material rather than enhance the interpretation. Having established the historical context of the sources' production and having developed a theoretically grounded set of categories to guide my analytical gaze, I submitted the texts to a hermeneutical reading. My analysis is three-fold and allows for a bidirectional conclusion: Firstly, I analyse the Tribunal in the historical as well as ideological contexts of anti-imperialist and internationalist movements. Secondly, the Tribunal sources are examined through the lens of the theoretical conception of solidarity. Lastly, the Tribunal reversely also serves as an empirical review and verification of the theory of solidarity that will be presented. I conclude with some insights into the theoretical conception of solidarity, the historical example of anti-imperial solidarity, as well as takeaways for contemporary solidarity movements.

The sources that are available to me include *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal* – a book that compiles the Tribunal proceedings, published in 1968 by the American publishing company Simon and Schuster. It was edited by John Duffett and includes a preface by Noam Chomsky, an introduction by Bertrand Russell, and a foreword by Ralph Schoenman. In the year after the tribunal sessions, the organizers published the proceedings and results in different languages. These publications collect differently edited and shortened versions of the proceedings, namely statements, reports, and testimonies. Moreover, I accessed the Russell Tribunal Records which are stored in the *Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives* in New York City. Beside the published documents, they include clippings, bulletins, correspondence, press statements, leaflets, and other reports. I have also included a selection of contemporary publications from what can be called the larger realm of Thirdworldist activism and its solidarity vis-à-vis in Europe and the United States, such as the multilingual review *Tricontinental*.

2. SOLIDARITY

„If you’ve come to help me, you’re wasting your time. But if you’ve come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”¹⁹

Aboriginal activist group
Queensland, 1970s

2.1. A Historical Outline of the Term Solidarity

Throughout history, the term “solidarity” has had multiple and competing meanings, which to this day obscures its use. Deriving from the Latin adjective *in solidum* and meaning “for the whole”²⁰, the term originates in Roman law. It determined the liability among members of a family or community to pay common debt. It was only at the end of the 18th century when the idea of mutual liability was slowly translated into the realm of society, morality, and politics. The term gained popularity in post-revolutionary France as it came to replace or be used as a synonym for the third element of the triad *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. Solidarity was soon understood as both, the *factual* common ground and the *moral* obligation of mutual aid, as academics attempted to establish a socio-theoretical meaning and definition.²¹

Scholars of the emerging discipline of sociology were engaged in defining “the patterns that ensured social cohesion and solidarity among members of increasingly industrialized European society” and theorized the term for the first time.²² For August Comte and later Émile Durkheim, *solidarité* was ensured by the division of labour.²³ In Émile Durkheim’s treatises on solidarity, he distinguishes between mechanic and organic solidarity, whereby the former is an element of traditional societies. For him, mechanical solidarity is based on resemblance, similitude of genealogical heritage and is the outcome of people’s social positions. Organic solidarity, by contrast, has materialized with the development of more complex societies, based on division of labour. Rather than a conscious bond between its members, individuals are connected through cooperation.²⁴ The search for the source of social cohesion already dates back to Ibn Khaldun, the great Arab intellectual of the 14th century, who is said to be the founder of modern

¹⁹ Mz many Names, ‘Attributing Words’, *U.S. Against Equine Slaughter* (blog), 3 November 2008, <http://unnecessaryevils.blogspot.com/2008/11/attributing-words.html>.

²⁰ Rubén A. Gaztambide-Fernández, ‘Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity’, *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (8 September 2012): 48.

²¹ Kurt Bayertz, *Solidarität: Begriff und Problem*, 1. Aufl., Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 1364 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), 11.

²² Gaztambide-Fernández, ‘Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity’, 48.

²³ Hermann-Josef Große Kracht, *Solidarität und Solidarismus: Postliberale Suchbewegungen zur normativen Selbstverständigung moderner Gesellschaften* (transcript-Verlag, 2017), 11.

²⁴ Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 19f.

disciplines such as sociology and historiography.²⁵ While the later and contemporary use of the word “solidarity” might invoke “warm” associations of community and closeness, the theologian Hermann-Josef Große Kracht argues, that the term in its Roman legal as well as the French political-sociological use in the 19th century was in fact “cold”, thus, descriptive rather than normative. That is, as an analytical social-scientific term, it was utilised to describe the “natural laws” of modern societies.²⁶ At the same time, the term also entered the moral philosophy and Catholicism as the “Golden Rule”, “ethic of reciprocity” or concept of *caritas*, in which it related to concepts like “charity”, “community spirit” or “love of mankind”.²⁷ In contrast to the descriptive use of the sociologists, “solidarity” here implies a moral instruction as people have some sort of responsibility or obligation towards each other, especially towards the disadvantaged or deprived.²⁸ Yet another strand of meaning was brought into the arena with social movements of the 19th century, namely the Paris Commune, the First International, and the international workers movement. Here, solidarity was thought as a revolutionary binding force amongst workers exploited by the capitalist bourgeoisie. In the same vein, solidarity was a central theme within the unions, which ensured loyalty and the joint struggle for rights. Especially in the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, as well as Max Weber, “solidarity emerges as a quality of relationships among particular groups of people with shared interests, rather than society as a whole”.²⁹ This notion was also taken up by Lenin, who saw class alliances between the peasantry and workers as strategic means to the greater end of the revolution. While his vision of solidarity was forged by a vanguard party, Antonio Gramsci, the influential Italian Marxist thinker, stressed the importance of self-organized, un-elitist alliances across factory workers of the Italian North and impoverished peasantry of the South.³⁰ For Gramsci, solidarity is a goal in itself, a transformative practice and a “part of the conduct of political activity and struggle”³¹ rather than just a means.

Despite the fact that “solidarity” was often invoked during the 20th century and became one of the great terms of hope and aspiration, the term has barely been systematically explored and theorized.³² Unlike other terms such as “freedom”, “equality”, or “justice”, for which

²⁵ Gaztambide-Fernández, ‘Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity’, 48; Robert Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun: An Intellectual Biography*, Ibn Khaldun (Princeton University Press, 2018), ix.

²⁶ Große Kracht, *Solidarität und Solidarismus*, 10f.

²⁷ Bayertz, *Solidarität*, 11.

²⁸ Gaztambide-Fernández, ‘Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity’, 47.

²⁹ Gaztambide-Fernández, 48; Sally J. Scholz, *Political Solidarity* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 9.

³⁰ Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 24–27.

³¹ Featherstone, 27.

³² Große Kracht, *Solidarität und Solidarismus*, 7.

sophisticated theories have been developed, solidarity is still an obscure concept with competing and even contradictory associations. Große Kracht points out that after promising attempts of theory building in the 19th century, the 20th century saw a downfall and lack of serious theorizing: “Es scheint, dass das 20. Jahrhundert einen veritablen Zerfall der modernen Solidaritätstheorie erlebt hat, ohne sich dessen überhaupt bewusst zu sein.“ [It seems like the 20th century experienced the modern theory of solidarity’s veritable decay, without even being aware of it].³³ Nevertheless, within academia, solidarity has been employed in sociology (e.g. Niklas Luhmann), for socio-theoretical explorations (e.g. Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth), for jurisprudential and moral-philosophical reflexions, liberal theories, as well as republican and pragmatic perspectives.³⁴ Within leftist theory and praxis, solidarity has been used to invoke a binding force among suppressed people as well as their allies – be it class, gender, race, or any other kind of discrimination or oppression. For instance, African American intellectuals and activists such as Alain Leroy Locke, an important exponent of the Harlem Renaissance, and W.E.B. DuBois called upon “racial” or “race solidarity” among Black people in order to gain consciousness and pride for their own cultural achievements and to fight their oppression and exploitation. Similarly, solidarity has been a central theme in feminist movements and theory since the 1960s. In the beginning, solidarity was mainly understood as a linking force rooted in a shared experience. Dominantly *white* feminists based their fight against patriarchal domination on the idea of a universal experience of cis women in their call for “sisterhood”. This assertion was strongly criticized by Black, ‘non-Western’, working-class, and non-cis feminists who exhibited the divisions and different experiences among WINA, especially along lines of class and race.³⁵ Another movement, that made popular use of the word and added new aspects to the understanding to the term, was the Polish workers’ movement from 1980 to 1982 – a movement which started off fighting for the right to form trade unions independent from the Communist Party but grew to fight for social change, against unjust economic conditions and, ultimately, turned into a critique of the Communist Party more generally. The trade union *Solidarność* (solidarity) did not only appeal to the bond and loyalty within the union, but it also called on solidarity from outside Poland to support their cause and, most importantly, to create alliances and work together with peace activists across ideological boundaries of the Cold War. Eventually, the movement encompassed 4 million workers and is often credited to having fundamentally contributed to the fall of Communist dictatorships.³⁶

³³ Große Kracht, 259.

³⁴ Große Kracht, *Solidarität und Solidarismus*.

³⁵ Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 2f.

³⁶ Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 29f.; Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 8f.

Then again, solidarity is sometimes depicted as a “European value”. The term titles the 4th chapter of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU* and refers to the rights and security of citizens that the states are supposed to provide, such as workers’ rights, the protection of familial life, social security, social assistance, health care, consumer protection, and environmental protection. That is, solidarity is used as a synonym for welfare state.³⁷

As can be seen from this short historic and epistemological introduction, the different and sometimes competing understandings of solidarity range from a bond among members of a society, a moral obligation, shared experience of oppression, mutual support of social movements, support from the “outside”, charity, to the protection of citizens by a state. In the following, I will introduce the understanding of solidarity employed in this thesis, which is mainly based on the book *Political Solidarity* by the philosopher Sally J. Scholz but complemented by anti-racist, feminist, decolonizing theories and voices, such as bell hooks, Ida Danewid, Rubén A. Gaztambide-Fernández, and Nancy Fraser.

2.2. Political Solidarity – Sally J. Scholz

In response to the lack of systematic discussions of a concept of solidarity, the U.S. philosopher Sally J. Scholz released an in-depth conceptualisation of the term with her book *Political Solidarity* (2008). Just like the few thinkers who have engaged with solidarity – such as Max Scheler (1970), Christian Lenhardt (1975), Kurz Bayertz (1988), and Klaus Peter Rippe (1998) – Scholz suggests a classification of the term due to its diverse usage. Roughly following Bayertz, she divides it into social, civic, political, and “parasitical” solidarity. After laying the ground by defining the different forms of solidarity, the book provides a profound and systematic elaboration on political solidarity, as the book title already alludes to.

While the different types of solidarity share certain characteristics, they differ in their specific roots and content. Firstly, according to Scholz, solidarity always “mediates between the community and the individual”³⁸, meaning that it blends elements of both individualism and communalism. Moreover, “solidarity is a form of unity”³⁹ – usually not as long lasting as a society or as formal as an association and changeable in its nature or motivation. Lastly, “solidarity entails positive moral obligations”.⁴⁰ *Social solidarity*, with its roots in the theory of Durkheim, refers to the bond between people of a certain social group based on shared

³⁷ Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 9.

³⁸ Scholz, 18.

³⁹ Scholz, 19.

⁴⁰ Scholz, 19.

experiences, attributes, histories, or locations. Individuals are understood in relation to the community, family group, religious collective etc., and often define themselves through this group.⁴¹ In sociology, the term is used in a descriptive manner to measure the extent of “groupness”. However, as Scholz argues, social solidarity also implies normative ties between members. Responsibilities and obligations are mediated through customs, social mores, laws, or codes, that bind members together and that are mutually expected to be followed.⁴² In *civic solidarity*, by contrast, individuals are understood as citizens who are connected to each other through the civic society, put into effect through a political state and governmental institutions. This connection can be found on different levels, from local, national to international. Usually, the concept of civic solidarity refers to the responsibility of a state to protect its citizens and to ensure the rights and basic necessities of individuals, as it is believed to benefit society as a whole. This idea, in contrast to the more individualistic and liberal U.S.-American relationship between citizens and state, is often considered a European value – stemming from socialist influence, and best developed in the EU Charter.⁴³ *Political solidarity*, the focus of Scholz’s treatise, has its roots in revolutionary praxis and builds on the traditions of political and social movements. In short, individuals are bound to a group in political solidarity through a conscious commitment but the group itself has a transformative influence on the individual. Rather than being based on similarities, the solidarity collective is based on the joint commitment to a certain cause for social change. “Broadly speaking, political solidarity is a unit of individuals who have made a commitment to struggle for liberation.”⁴⁴ Finally, Scholz speaks of “*parasitical solidarity*” in the case of solidarity being invoked for rhetorical reasons but lacking, in fact, at least one of the key elements. This can apply to expressions of sympathy – e.g., between two nations who have experienced terrorism –, camaraderie, peer pressure, mutual concern, or familial responsibilities.⁴⁵

In the following, I will outline Scholz’s conception of political solidarity including the specifics of the relationship between the individual and the group as well as the obligation among members, the features of the collective, problems of privilege, the social justice ends, as well as its moral aspects.

⁴¹ Scholz, 41.

⁴² Scholz, 21.

⁴³ Scholz, 27f., 41.

⁴⁴ Scholz, 21.

⁴⁵ Scholz, 46ff.

Individual Commitment

While the affiliation to social or civic solidarity is based on social or civic belonging, dependency, and group control, joining a political solidarity collective must be an act of “active commitment”. This commitment does not necessarily imply to be a rational choice, as participation can be motivated by different factors, such as experience of oppression or injustice, the desire to care for others, or feelings of indignation. However, it must be a conscious choice.⁴⁶

*Each individual makes a conscious commitment to a cause. A number of things contribute to or motivate an individual's commitment to the sort of political engagement, social activism, and personal transformation compelled by political solidarity [...] Anger, hope, sympathy, pity, fear, self-confidence, self-interest, friendship, and countless other feelings may contribute, as might a host of other intellectual factors, arguments, experiences, or perspectives.*⁴⁷

The choice to join is usually provoked by the insight into an unjust situation or system, and an act of conscience.⁴⁸ Scholz contrasts the commitment to decision-making as it is imagined in classical liberal theory, which relies on the idea of autonomous, rational, and free individuals who pursue their self-serving interests and who form relationships through contracts.⁴⁹ In contrast, subjectivity is here understood as relational, interdependent, and is embedded in its specific social context and intersecting identities.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the commitment to political solidarity towards a social justice end is often contrary to self-interest as it might involve sacrifices and changes in the individual's life. Through the involvement with a cause, the individuals will have to critically reflect on their personal life and lifestyle. That might include the examination of the language they use, such as terms, jokes, idioms, or communication patterns that might be stereotyping, exclusive, and oppressive. It might also affect their choices of consumption and “could radically challenge other seemingly unrelated elements of their lifestyle”.⁵¹ The decision to join political solidarity may also mean to opt for certain hardships, scorn, sacrifices, and other difficulties. That is not only due to the things the individual chooses to abdicate according to the cause, but also due to disdain, hostility, or even violence from the broader community or society. Sacrifices and hostilities might not only affect the individuals,

⁴⁶ Scholz, 33, 72.

⁴⁷ Scholz, 51.

⁴⁸ Scholz, 196.

⁴⁹ Scholz, 75.

⁵⁰ Scholz, 137f.

⁵¹ Scholz, 57.

and his or her daily life and decisions, but even their family and friends.⁵² Moreover, participants might have to publicly voice their support of the solidarity movement through open letters, strikes, votes, public speaking etc. Finally, for those who suffer from oppression or injustice, the commitment to a political solidarity group and the joint struggle can be an empowering experience.⁵³

Despite the active role of individuals to commit to a cause, they do not enjoy an ontological priority over the collective – nor the other way around. Rather, the individual commitments form a unit of political solidarity in which the individuals will experience a transformation and intensified bonds to others, but they will never lose their individual identity and will contribute in their individual way. “There is, in other words, a reciprocal relation between the individual and the group based on mutually undertaken commitments.”⁵⁴ That is, all participants join in their specific particularity and the “group itself does not take on a separate existence but exists through individual commitment”.⁵⁵ Despite the commitment to a group, the individuals will not give up their own understanding and perception of things. As an example for this integrative potential of solidarity, Scholz refers to Tribunal member Simone de Beauvoir and her existentialist social ethics.⁵⁶

The Collective

The collective of political solidarity differs from other types of unity in its specific ontology, moral relations, and positive duties. As might have already become clear, the collective of political solidarity, unlike civic or social solidarity, is not based on shared attributes, location, or interests but on a shared commitment to a social justice cause. While oppression is the content of political solidarity, the shared experience and history of oppression is not.⁵⁷ For Scholz, it is important to stress that the collective of political solidarity is not equivalent with the oppressed group. Even though they might often be the same or overlap, political solidarity is best understood, when there is a distinction made between the two groups. If the political solidarity collective and the group of oppressed were in fact the same, political solidarity would conflate with social solidarity. That is, the struggle for a certain cause would be based on the affiliation

⁵² Scholz, 136, 144f.

⁵³ Scholz, 52f.

⁵⁴ Scholz, 41.

⁵⁵ Scholz, 191.

⁵⁶ Scholz emphasises that Simone de Beauvoir’s existentialist social ethics in *Ethics of Ambiguity* is a solidarity ethics and is useful to understand the relationship between the individual and the collective in political solidarity. “The group does not take on a separate existence but exists through individual commitment and yet the group nonetheless transcends the mere aggression of its parts.” Scholz, 134.

⁵⁷ Scholz, 33f.

to a group of oppressed people rather than the conscious choice. Not only does this account of solidarity overdetermine identity, but it also excludes others who oppose the oppression, and assumes that the oppressed will necessarily commit to solidarity.

Scholz's notion of the political solidarity collective argues against Marx' idea that shared consciousness is the requirement for revolutionary activity. Instead, Scholz contends, social consciousness should be the foundation of political solidarity and the shared consciousness is something that is gained in the joint struggle. "Instead of group consciousness causing the collective action, collective action in political solidarity causes group consciousness."⁵⁸ Therefore, it "is the commitment rather than oppressed group identity that determines participation in political solidarity".⁵⁹ That also means that former oppressors or people who belong to a privileged group can work on renouncing their privilege and be part of the political solidarity group. That, again, raises dilemmas and issues of privilege within a counter-privilege movement, a concern that will be discussed more detailed further below.

While the lines are not sharp, exclusive, and might overlap, the political solidarity collective or movement is distinct from other bonds, such as camaraderie, or groups, such as formal organisations or associations, parties, communities, or collectives. In contrast, political solidarity is a type of unity that is not formal but must be identifiable.⁶⁰ The individual commitments, that members enter, differ in scope and intensity, just the same as the power of the political solidarity itself can be weak or strong. According to the strength of determination, commitment, size of the group, intensity of the activism, as well as the external pressure and exigency, the political solidarity group changes. It could be small and intimate as well as large and unconnected, and the number of participants can change over time as the membership is fluid, thus, the collective must be open. It could be short-lived as well as a long-term project, it could turn into a revolution and even become formalized.⁶¹ Its unity does not require a central organizational structure, strong emotional bonds between its members or even a collective decision-making structure.⁶² While Scholz admits that formal democratic procedures cannot be a requirement, she assures processes within political solidarity collectives to be democratic by adding moral conditions. Through the moral obligation of mutuality, which will be explored further down, actions and decision-making are required to be consistent with democratic values.

⁵⁸ Scholz, 134.

⁵⁹ Scholz, 125.

⁶⁰ Scholz, 19.

⁶¹ Scholz, 34, 65, 121f.

⁶² Scholz, 116.

That is, reciprocity, civility, deliberate communication must be part of decision-making processes.⁶³ Moreover, every individual must be able to contribute, in accordance with her or his unique personal talents, abilities, proximity, and other factors.⁶⁴ The unity, that political solidarity creates, is based on a moral relation. Being part of a political solidarity collective comes with certain moral obligations and the duty to be willing to engage in an individual and collective process. Scholz sums up:

*Thus, the group that forms in political solidarity is somewhere between an organized group and a random collection of individuals. We call it a group because there is a unity of purpose that connects the members, but in some forms of political solidarity such as international political solidarity, there may be very little contact between and among group members.*⁶⁵

And further: “It is important to note that solidary groups are much more than the aggregate of their constituent members, it is the public, collective action – multiple people acting in concert and openly – that effects social change”.⁶⁶

Social Justice Ends

Political solidarity always brings individuals together to collectively struggle for a certain cause, that is dedicated to challenge and change an unjust or oppressive circumstance or system. According to Scholz, three basic considerations govern the goal of social justice – namely, the unifying interests, the oppositional clause, and the means. Firstly, political solidarity is based on a shared interest by the participants. While only one is necessary, there can also be more and overlapping interests, and additional ones might develop throughout the collective process. Scholz argues that the shared interest creates a strong bond between the members of a solidarity movement and has even more potential, compared to bonds based on shared history or experience, in the way that it gets individuals to expand their visions by connecting their cause to other movements of political solidarity. While the movement or collective of political solidarity is always directed at a specific incident or system of injustice and, so to say, project-based, it might initiate connections and commitments to other causes.⁶⁷ Despite the fact that the commitment to the cause can be sparked by emotions, political solidarity is – in contrast to social solidarity – not primarily premised on feelings but on the idea of social change. Most feelings, such as indignation, envy, guilt, pride, shame, joy, can be a stimulus to get active but

⁶³ Scholz, 146f.

⁶⁴ Scholz, 121f.

⁶⁵ Scholz, 122.

⁶⁶ Scholz, 121.

⁶⁷ Scholz, 195f.

are dependent on the specific cause. There is only one feeling that is necessary, which is hope.⁶⁸ “Hope means that they believe the future can be better than the present [...] Hope keeps the movement alive, for without it there would be no reason to act collectively.”⁶⁹ More important than the emotional level, however, is the insight into some case or form of social injustice and the willingness to challenge and change it. While political solidarity does not require a shared consciousness, as already demonstrated, it must be based on a shared interpretation of the past and the present and will entail a mutually shared vision for the future. That vision must involve the liberation from the detected oppression, the equitable distribution of rights, privileges, or resources due to the “inherently oppositional nature” of political solidarity. As “a response to human suffering”, political solidarity strives for social justice.⁷⁰

All forms of political solidarity involve activism, but not all forms of activism constitute political solidarity. There is something special about that form of social change – even beyond the uniqueness of the relationships between members. Political solidarity is a response to injustice, oppression, or social vulnerability. That is, it is political in the broad sense of that term. Activists in solidarity seek not just any form of justice: they seek social justice. They unite their collective efforts to alleviate their own suffering or the suffering of others brought about through human action or inaction⁷¹

The question arises, however, what just actually is. According to Scholz, both the individual and collective actors are responsible to make their stance publicly and argue why their cause serves justice. Acknowledging the possibility of a failure in assessment, the cause and the question of what just is, must be up for public debate and scrutiny.⁷² Further, the definition of what unjust and oppressive is, will help with the comprehension and judgement.

What is more, political solidarity employs, and is itself an example of, oppositional politics. In other words, political solidarity appears in a collective of individuals who commit to the struggle against an unjust system, and which might even lead to the establishment of a more just one. Scholz characterizes the goal of solidaristic activity, in contrast to other forms of unity for change, as the combination of a substantial goal and a formative goal. Substantive goals refer to a more or less concrete aim, which is the response to a specific unjust situation. Formative goals, on the other hand, are broader, more long-term visions of liberation, justice,

⁶⁸ Scholz, 82.

⁶⁹ Scholz, 82.

⁷⁰ Scholz, 34.

⁷¹ Scholz, 189.

⁷² Scholz, 54f.

and ending oppression.⁷³ To get a clearer idea of what that might entail, the following will demonstrate the particular terms of injustice. Specifically, the struggle is directed towards one a specific situation of social injustice, oppression, social and political vulnerability, or tyranny.⁷⁴ *Social injustice* entails the “inequitable distribution of rights and privileges in society [...], violations of human rights [...], misuse or misapplication of otherwise just laws, physical harm or violence done to innocents or in gross abuse of the principles of retribution when done to criminals, and similar violation of justice”.⁷⁵ Moreover, for Joel Feinberg, social injustice includes discrimination, exclusion, and partisanship. It does not only refer to distributive but also to procedural issues, such as the participation in public forums and decision-making. Iris Marion Young states: “For a norm to be just, everyone who follows it must in principle have an effective voice in its consideration and be able to agree to it without coercion”.⁷⁶ *Oppression* implicates but extends beyond the distribution of rights and privileges or the exclusion from political, social, and public life. It also entails violence, systematic humiliation, marginalization, silencing, and other forms of abuse. Young makes out five faces of oppression, which include 1) exploitation, 2) marginalization, which ranges from the exclusion from rights to genocide, 3) render people powerless, that is to say to deny the entry to social and educational institutions and circles, 4) cultural imperialism, in other words, to dominate meaning and knowledge, to generate stereotypes, as well as to ignore, suppress and render invisible languages, customs and traditions of the oppressed, 5) the vulnerability to violence on the basis of group affiliation.⁷⁷ Others have pointed out the effect of oppression on identity, which is dehumanising in its withholding of recognition. It affects the self-respect and self-worth as oppressed may internalize the prescribed inferior status and derogative and harming image of themselves.

*Oppression marks, constrains, stereotypes, and violates a group of people such that individuals are identified as members of the group; unique individual identity and personal relationships are shaped by external prescriptions of oppressed group status. Oppression prevents members of the oppressed group from all the tools for self-determination and social interaction.*⁷⁸

While oppressive systems might be created and introduced intentionally to discriminate, such as colonial rule, it can also emerge “as a by-product of attempts to construct otherwise just or

⁷³ Scholz, 190f.

⁷⁴ Scholz, 51f., 192.

⁷⁵ Scholz, 55.

⁷⁶ Iris Marion Young, cited in Scholz, 207f.

⁷⁷ Scholz, 211f.

⁷⁸ Scholz, 215.

morally neutral institutions”.⁷⁹ Unintentional systems of oppression may not have active oppressors or an oppressor group, but it generates a group that is privileged. Most importantly, “oppressive practices are so common, consistent, pervasive, and ubiquitous that they appear to be a natural part of the social order”.⁸⁰ Thirdly, people can suffer from *social vulnerabilities*. In contrast to other kinds of vulnerabilities, such as the vulnerability to sickness, weather conditions, or accidents, social vulnerabilities are created or exacerbated by human means. They “are those human-made structures or impediments that inhibit participation in civic life”, that is, they might discriminate in education, employment, healthcare, or in the consumer and environment protection.⁸¹ Further, social vulnerabilities can include economic hardship, discrimination due to age or disability. People can also enter temporary vulnerabilities, such as being in a dependent or defenceless situation, such as being a child, being in health care, or imprisoned. Besides social vulnerability, political solidarity might address cases of *political vulnerability*. This could include to fight for the protection of refugees who flee from an oppressive, even genocidal home state, as well as the protest against redistricting that would render minorities’ votes less weighty.⁸² Lastly, political solidarity may be aiming to abolish *tyranny*. “Tyranny is the unjust rule of a state or society by a power, either in the hands of a single person or disbursed to a wider group or even the majority.”⁸³ Due to its scope, tyranny is more likely be fought against through a revolution rather than a solidarity movement. With that, we reached the question of means and methods that political solidarity may make use of.

To achieve its goal, political solidarity can deploy a range of different methods, such as resistance, protest, challenges to law, or the change of personal choices and everyday-life decisions.⁸⁴ While formative ends are part of its long-term vision, political solidarity “usually tries to change some social systems or challenge some unjust laws; only rarely does it try to overthrow an entire legal system”.⁸⁵ What is most important, the employed means must always be in line with the goal. As will be shown further down, the relation to the goal is a moral relation and must, therefore, be in accordance with the social justice end. That is, “employing unjust or oppressive methods would not only be counterproductive but also contradict the very logic of political solidarity”.⁸⁶ As a result, political solidarity cannot adopt violent means. What

⁷⁹ Scholz, 209.

⁸⁰ Scholz, 209.

⁸¹ Scholz, 55.

⁸² Scholz, 217–20.

⁸³ Scholz, 55.

⁸⁴ Scholz, 54.

⁸⁵ Scholz, 67.

⁸⁶ Scholz, 194.

is more, Scholz identifies two elements that political solidarity movements and actions call for. Firstly, the movement must serve the oppressed, whether they join the struggle or not. The course of action must include the struggle to alleviate the hardship of those who suffer. Yet, the needs and desires of those that are served must be heeded instead of using models established by the privileged, oppressive group. On a second level, the movement must confront and challenge the systems of oppression, “that create, perpetuate, or legitimate that suffering”.⁸⁷ These two elements are co-dependent and must both be part of the action and are incomplete without the other part.

Morality and Obligations

The positive duties, which political solidarity brings about, as well as the moral obligations, which members have towards each other, are related and support each other. Every specific cause and goal of the political solidarity movement will inform different obligations and responsibilities but there are three main positive duties, namely mutuality, cooperation and social criticism, and social activism, which concern the three different levels of relations. The three levels involve the relation between the individual members, the members towards the collective and its cause, and the relation of the solidarity group towards non-members in the larger society. Firstly, individual members have the moral obligation of mutuality. Mutuality is a value that is premised on reciprocity, equality, communication, and interdependence. That is, individuals are required to face and communicate each other in an open, loving, and non-arrogant way, in which they are open to listen and ask about other’s needs and perceptions. Moreover, interactions and relations must be expected to be manifold, complex, and many-sided, and the responses “vague, flexible, and open-ended” because they will vary depending on context, ability, and situation.⁸⁸ The encounter of individuals within a political solidarity group is based on the concept of “working with”, rather than “working for” those who suffer injustice or oppression, which is the premise of charity work. At the same time, individuals must still make their own decisions.⁸⁹

*Mutuality might mean that the interests of others enter into my own practical reasoning in noninstrumental ways, that our fates interconnect such that our triumphs, joys, and hardships in relation to the cause are shared, that each of us is bound to respond to all others in a reciprocal fashion, or some combination of these.*⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Scholz, 194f.

⁸⁸ John Ladd, cited in Scholz, 92.

⁸⁹ Scholz, 91–94.

⁹⁰ Scholz, 91.

The second level concerns the relation between members and the collective, as well as their relation to the goal, which must be informed by cooperation and social criticism. This relation, namely the cooperative activity, stands for the balance between the collective and individual action and connects solidarity to literature on collective responsibility. This neither means that the individual is given up, i.e., too much agency is attributed to the collective, nor does this notion resort to methodological individualism. Based on the “working with”-approach, the solidarity group generates a shared responsibility. To a certain degree, that entails mutual liability as individual action will be made responsible for the whole group. That requires “that each individual consider his or her actions as part of a larger movement and act in such a way as to support or foster the solidarity group aim”.⁹¹ The group can draw on the commitment, as well as the individual talents, abilities, and resources of its members. The conjunction and joining forces will, in turn, fortified these talents and skills.⁹² At the same time, political solidarity is obliged to social criticism, which is supposed to balance between the individual and the collective. Social criticism applies to all levels. That is to say, while it is quite obvious that political solidarity will exercise social criticism over the dominant, privileged, or oppressing group or system, it is just as much required to apply social criticism to the solidarity group itself. “Because it is a social and political ethic, solidarity requires honest and diligent social criticism directed at both society as a whole and at the solidarity movement itself.”⁹³ The social criticism within the collective should address the means employed by the movement, the, at times, conflicting values and mediate between ideological divides, and, finally, pursue criticism when the movement was successful and may have become more powerful or even the dominant group. Social criticism – and that is closely related to the last level of moral relations – is important to analyse, evaluate, and criticise social practices in the broader society and, most importantly, in the dominant group. Customs, language, laws, religious and cultural rituals, and other practices must be critically assessed, as well as their underlying values. At times, the values themselves will be rejected as problematic and replaced with new values aiming towards emancipation and social justice. At other times, values are worth being upheld but the social practices are not consistent with these proclaimed values.⁹⁴ Against the backdrop of society’s own values, it is the task of social criticism to reveal contradictions and “to awaken feelings in response to value inconsistencies”. Subsequently, that criticism fulfils the task “to establish

⁹¹ Scholz, 86.

⁹² Scholz, 84ff.

⁹³ Scholz, 94.

⁹⁴ Scholz, 996f.

communities of resistance for collective action”.⁹⁵ Social criticism is therefore closely linked to the goal of the political solidarity movement. Scholz asserts that the goal itself is often overlooked in the conceptualization of solidarity in favour of the bond or group conformity. For her, “it is the cause or goal that creates the social movement and compels individuals to join in solidarity”. It is the cause that brings people together, creates the movement, and that “serves as a guide throughout the solidarity process”.⁹⁶ In contrast to the means, which can vary, the goal is set. It may be idealistic but is always directed at social change towards liberation from inequality, oppression, or tyranny.⁹⁷

When the common cause has been identified through social criticism and individuals have joined in a collective for social change, the last level of moral obligations must be addressed, namely the relation to the larger society. That relation entails the obligation to commit to social activism, meaning to engage in active means and create a social movement in order to raise consciousness. On one hand, consciousness-raising is an important part of the individual’s path towards the commitment to political solidarity and should, just like social criticism, be an ongoing process. On the other hand, it is the duty of the political solidarity movement to reach out to the wider society and disseminate information and knowledge. Consciousness-raising has the purpose to demystifying the oppressed, to shine a light on new perspectives on social structures, to awaken indignation about injustice and oppression, and to provoke the insight that new values are needed and social practices should be altered. Ultimately, it has the goal to convince people to join the social movement.⁹⁸ In addition, activism and resistance are constitutive obligations in solidarity ethics. Activism towards a liberatory goal can take various shapes and can be performed on different levels, such as grassroot activism, public manifestation, or symbolic protest but it also entails the change of individual behaviour. Yet, activism can never be a value on its own. In other words, activism should not be committed to for its own sake, instead, it requires social criticism and the cooperative and multifaceted relationship among members of the group – which I outlined above –, and the vision of a just future.

Resistance is another aspect of the relation to the dominant group or larger society and might become necessary in case of strong oppression or injustice. Various forms of resistance have been suggested and exist, from the resistance of WINA to fulfil housework that is expected

⁹⁵ Scholz, 96.

⁹⁶ Scholz, 95.

⁹⁷ Scholz, 95.

⁹⁸ Scholz, 58, 83f.

from them in a patriarchal society, to the resistance of workers called upon by Marx and Engels to unite and overthrow their capitalist exploiters. Resistance can be passive or active. Despite their differences, the various forms of resistance share the personal transformation that the resisting individual experiences, as well as the political challenge.⁹⁹ Whether activism or resistance, the relation demands three responsibilities that the political solidarity group and their members have to live up to: “(1) act according to conscience, (2) negotiate in good faith, and (3) act in a morally coherent manner with regard to the ends of solidarity and the existence of the larger community of which the solidarity group is a part”.¹⁰⁰ As a consequence, Scholz maintains that activism and resistance cannot employ violence as a legitimate means as it is diametrically opposed to the social justice ends and as it utilizes the logic of the oppressor system. She states:

*If the nature of political solidarity is a struggle for liberation in opposition to a system or group that uses violence, then in opposing violence, political solidarity cannot in principle utilize violent means [...] To utilize violence, political solidarity risks recreating some of the system of injustice, oppression, or tyranny within the movement of the new regime it seeks to establish.*¹⁰¹

At this point, one might be inclined to challenge her assertion with the one made by Frantz Fanon (*The Wretched of The Earth*, 1963) who vindicates the employment of violent means for anti-colonial liberation struggles. However, Scholz insists that he does not “explicitly address the normative requirements of political solidarity”.¹⁰² Instead, he refers to mere resistance to oppression and an individual or collective self-defence. While Fanon argued that “violence might be seen as the way to reclaim one’s status as a human agent in a society bent on domination”, Scholz suggests that political solidarity assumes subjectivity by requiring the conscious commitment to the cause.¹⁰³ That is, non-violent activism requires an already established recognition of one’s subjectivity. That means, that while “political solidarity itself is incompatible with physically violent forms of activism and resistance”, in the case of self-defence or the fight for subjectivity violence might be necessary.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, “the principle of self-defense here is a justificatory structure outside the moral relation of political solidarity”.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, political solidarity differs from rebellions, which lack the moral

⁹⁹ Scholz, 102–5.

¹⁰⁰ Scholz, 102.

¹⁰¹ Scholz, 108.

¹⁰² Scholz, 111.

¹⁰³ Scholz, 110.

¹⁰⁴ Scholz, 112.

¹⁰⁵ Scholz, 111.

relation to its actions and the liberatory vision or goal.¹⁰⁶ In sum, individuals have a responsibility to coordinate into a collective movement and “to come to the aid of others through communication and action directed toward a goal”.¹⁰⁷

To sum up, I would like to quote Scholz once more with her definition of political solidarity in all its different aspects. For her, “the political conception of solidarity highlights individual conscience, commitment, group responsibility, and collective action”.¹⁰⁸ Further, it, “arises in response to a situation of injustice or oppression. Individuals make a conscious commitment to join with others in struggle to challenge a perceived injustice.”¹⁰⁹ While it can have been either long in the making or a spontaneous outburst, political solidarity starts when individuals, who decided that a certain situation or system of injustice or oppression has become unbearable and can no longer be tolerated, commit to a cause. With that, they enter and create a collective action, that is based on moral relations, to bring about social change.¹¹⁰ Next, I will expand on and add certain aspects of political solidarity with the help of feminist, postcolonial, and anti-racist perspectives in order to gain more theoretical tools to critically examine the Tribunal. Namely, I will discuss internationalist and global solidarity, criticism of power relations and (neo-)colonial tropes, the problems of identity politics, privilege, and ‘Western’ universalism.

2.3. Critical Reflection on Internationalist and Global Solidarity

Since the outset of global injustice and oppression, but especially in the last decades, people have raised their voices to call attention to global political, economic, and cultural power structures as well as to how they infiltrate language, cultural codes, perceptions, and habits. Since the IWCT dealt with a cause of people in a faraway country, which was fighting to rid itself from the grip of colonialism and imperialism – it is vital to include critical reflexions and arguments on colonialism and global hierarchies in the analysis of this thesis. Thus, in the following I will introduce some crucial themes of anti- and postcolonial standpoints, feminist arguments, as well as materialistic critique of global power relations that will be useful in the analysis of the Tribunal.

Movements of political solidarity can take place on different levels of sphere, namely local, national, international, and global. As the Tribunal brought together people from different

¹⁰⁶ Scholz, 68.

¹⁰⁷ Scholz, 150.

¹⁰⁸ Scholz, 33.

¹⁰⁹ Scholz, 34.

¹¹⁰ Scholz, 72, 124.

countries and backgrounds, as well as it addressed an issue in the distance, it is worth exploring some specifics and pitfalls of internationalist solidarity. According to Scholz, international solidarity can take three forms. Firstly, individuals from all over the globe may pledge solidarity with a certain cause, which defies national boundaries, such as the struggle against HIV/AIDS, racism, or violence against WINA. Secondly, individuals from all over the world take up a cause of injustice or oppression inflicted on a distant other or nation. This could entail a boycott of products of a company to show objections against bad working conditions or the support of the struggle against Apartheid. Lastly, international solidarity can also be understood as several nations cooperating for a certain social justice aim, such as imposing sanctions on a country that violates human rights. In addition, there is the idea of a global political solidarity, which would, according to Scholz, imply the unification of all people around the globe for a collective struggle against injustice, oppression, or social vulnerability. This could become the case in the struggle against pollution, global warming, and their effects.¹¹¹

In the following, I will explore some problematic implications and assumptions that might come with international solidarity and what that could mean for a political solidarity that takes these criticisms into consideration. Scholars, such as Peter Waterman and Gada Mahrouse, have drawn attention to possible underlying universalist presumption of internationalism and internationalist solidarity. While ‘Western’ universalism will be discussed further in detail later, it is important to note that the belief of universal knowledge, goals, and means are embedded in the history and presence of ‘Western’ sense of superiority and claim to power. It is found in most internationalist doctrines, including ideas of Enlightenment, religious internationalism, liberalism, as well as socialism.¹¹² Thus, movements of international political solidarity must be wary of universalising claims, methods, goals, interpretations of the past, present and future by ‘Western’ activists and intellectuals. This can include the universal claim of human rights, international law, global citizenship, as well as the notion of international charity. Instead, as Scholz has suggested with her moral obligations of mutuality, cooperation, and social criticism, any paternalizing approaches which uphold existent power structures must be analysed, criticized, and aimed to overcome. Likewise, subalterns, namely people who suffer from oppression and injustice, must not only have a powerful voice in the process but must be part of it.

¹¹¹ Scholz, 252, 256f.

¹¹² Peter Waterman, ‘Globalisation, Civil Society, Solidarity: The Politics and Ethics of a World Both Real and Universal’, *ISS Working Papers - General Series*, ISS Working Papers - General Series 18938 (The Hague: International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam, 1993), 46f.

Moreover, internationalist solidarity must reflect historical and present circumstances of hierarchies as well as power relations. In her dissertation, Ida Danewid draws attention to problematic shortcomings and assumptions in contemporary literature on cosmopolitanism, global ethics, and international relation. Despite the differences in definitions and understandings, “all put forward a vision of solidarity that transcends historical, cultural, and territorial borders, and that offers an alternative to communitarian and nationalist accounts that limit solidarity to those bound by common nationality, ethnicity, religion, citizenship, and so on”.¹¹³ However, they also all put forward an underlying universalism and neglect that race and colonialism are not just distant phenomenon of the past but haunt realities today, as they still produce factual inequalities. In a similar fashion, Rúben A. Gaztambide-Fernández shows that “notions of solidarity [that] are caught within conceptions of humanity, citizenship, social belonging, and moral obligation” draw on “the same concepts around which colonization and other dynamics of oppression also operate, pointing to how solidarity always operates in tension with logics of domination”.¹¹⁴ What is more, Danewid suggests that liberal, postmodern, and even postcolonial interpretations suffer from blind spots in regard to the effects and legacies of colonialism and the global “colour-line” – a term coined and used by Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. DuBois to exhibit the demarcation that racism, slavery, and colonialism created. That is, while post-modern and postcolonial studies have made important contributions and have given crucial impulses, which I will also draw on in this thesis, they shy away from global political and economic structures that cause or support inequalities and hierarchies.¹¹⁵ In contrast to the liberal conception of “nonracialism”, which ignores race and factual inequalities, an anti-racist approach must “recognize the possibilities of multiple manifestations of racist exclusions, of exclusionary resurgences and redefinitions, of newly emergent racisms or expressive recurrences, of different discursive impositions or terminological transformations”.¹¹⁶ In sum, in this thesis, I adopt a materialist critique of racial capitalism, draw on contributions by Critical Race Studies, as well as the analysis of oppression through the lens of immaterial circumstances, put forward by postcolonial approaches. I aim to lay some further theoretical ground in order to critically review movements and encounters of internationalist solidarity. The issue is well problematized by Rubén A. Gaztambide-Fernández when he says:

¹¹³ Ida Danewid, ‘Race, Capital, and the Politics of Solidarity: Radical Internationalism in the 21st Century’ (Ph.D. thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2018), 10.

¹¹⁴ Gaztambide-Fernández, ‘Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity’, 47.

¹¹⁵ Danewid, ‘Race, Capital, and the Politics of Solidarity’, 6f.

¹¹⁶ David Goldberg, cited in Mahrouse, *Conflicted Commitments*, 145.

While solidarity is often evoked in the context of political projects committed to decolonization, it also provokes scepticism as a concept that can be mobilized to obscure the very dynamics of colonization that set the stage for—and are sometimes reproduced through—solidary relations [...] This genealogy presents a challenge for the way we both think about and engage in projects of solidarity committed to decolonization.¹¹⁷

The Problem of Identity Politics

Identity politics might be more likely to be associated with right-wing agendas, however, the issue of identity is often at the centre of social movements. Social movements with social justice goals, often draw on identities that are created and oppressed by a political elite or a system of power. The feminist movement, civil rights movement, and gay movement are only a few of many movements, that have relied on the idea of a shared identity and experience. However, critical voices have challenged that claim and called attention to the diversity of oppressive experiences and the problem of evoking the categories that were created by the system of power that is opposed. For instance, the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s based their struggle on the slogan of “sisterhood” and with that, subsumed different experiences under one – namely, the experience of many *white*, heterosexual middle- or upper-class cis women. WINA of colour, Indigenous, ‘non-Western’, and working-class WINA have, ever since, pointed out that different kinds of inequalities and oppressions are interwoven, and that one struggle cannot be fought without the other. In particular, they accused *white* feminists of the 19th century U.S. feminist movement of excluding black feminists and of not using their bond to fight racism. Others again have pointed out the disregard of feminist issues by socialist movements and thinkers.¹¹⁸ In 1981, bell hooks published her first book with the title *Ain’t I a woman? Black Women and Feminism* and three years later *Feminist Theory. From Margin to Centre*, in which she criticizes the assumed shared background and experience and reveals the blind spots of class and race within feminism.

While it is evident that many women suffer from sexist tyranny, there is little indication that this forges a ‘common bond among all women’. There is much evidence substantiating the reality that race and class identity creates differences in quality of life, social status, and lifestyle that take precedence over the common experience women share – differences that are rarely transcended.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Gaztambide-Fernández, ‘Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity’, 43.

¹¹⁸ Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 3, 139.

¹¹⁹ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (New York, London: Routledge, 2015), 4.

These different experiences, alternative voices, and criticism, so hooks, have been ostracised and silenced. Instead, they were met with paternalism and condescending behaviour by *white* cis women in the movement. She states:

Although the impulse towards unity and empathy that informed the notion of common oppression was directed at building solidarity, slogans like 'organize around your own oppression' provided the excuse many privileged women needed to ignore the differences between their social status and the status of masses of women.¹²⁰

Instead of building sisterhood on shared oppression, victimization, and a common enemy, she suggests a Sisterhood based on shared strengths, recourses, and the shared “political commitment to a feminist movement that aims to end sexist oppression”.¹²¹ The dismissal of social struggles based shared identity is something we recognize from Scholz’s conceptualisation of political solidarity. In the same vein, in *Feminism Without Borders* (2003), Chandra Talpade Mohanty rejects the idea of a “universal sisterhood” based on shared experience and argues for coalition politics grounded in “communities of people who have chosen to work and fight together”. Instead of a “ahistorical universalism”, the common fight should be “forged on the basis of memories and counter narratives”.¹²² For her, “it is the *common context of struggles against specific exploitative structures and systems* that determines our potential political alliances”.¹²³ These alliances, just like Scholz’s concept, must respect differences, and must be based on mutuality, and accountability.¹²⁴

In addition, identity politics are prone to build on problematic essentialism and othering, phenomenon that have been criticized by feminist and postcolonial thinkers. Essentialism assumes a fixed essence of identity, for instance racial, cultural, or gender identity, with certain determined attributes and characteristics. That is, essentialist notions believe social identities to be homogenous and pure. Thereby, they reduce complexity and ignore that likeness is socially and actively produced. Critics have shown that identities are socially and culturally influenced and constructed, and group identities are often a vindication for generalization, racism, sexism, xenophobia, and other forms of oppressive systems.¹²⁵ Despite their social construction, they produce direct and factual consequences and realities. Thus, in the case of international political solidarity, one must be wary of problematic conceptions of “culture”, which demands cultural

¹²⁰ hooks, 6.

¹²¹ hooks, 47.

¹²² Chandra Talpade Mohanty, cited in Danewid, ‘Race, Capital, and the Politics of Solidarity’, 105.

¹²³ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, cited in Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 38.

¹²⁴ Scholz, 37f.

¹²⁵ Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 21f.

identities, fixed characteristics, and clear boundaries, and therefore reinscribes colonial essentialism. While anti-racist solidarity must be informed by anti-essentialist thinking, race and the “colour-line” still matter and must be addressed. Following Mahrouse, international solidarity must understand “racialized identities as fluid, constructed, and shifting over time and place” and “think about racial identification and subject formation in ways that are nuanced and relevant for contemporary geopolitics”.¹²⁶ Furthermore, colonial conceptions of the “distant and exotic other” must be recognized and addressed, in order to create new and anti-hierarchal relations.¹²⁷

As a result of the critique on social movements based on identity, the idea of intersectionality arose and was further theorized by feminist, and anti-racist, and Marxist thinkers. The term was coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989 and expresses the idea of intersecting identities and aspects of privilege and discrimination, namely that of Black American WINA.¹²⁸ This thought has developed further to grasp the different aspects of an individual’s social identity, such as gender, race, age, geographical location, physical ability, religion, residence status, or caste, contribute to a specific experience of disadvantages as well as advantages. As bell hooks has already alluded to in 1984, struggles, such as the feminist movement, can only be inclusive and meaningful if they not only acknowledge other forms of discrimination, such as racism and classism, but actively resist them. The former idea of sisterhood, so hook, disguised the complex and varied realities of WINA and the division by “sexist attitudes, racism, class privilege, and a host of other prejudice”. Instead, “[s]ustained woman bonding can occur only when these divisions are confronted and the necessary steps are taken to eliminate them.”¹²⁹

Privilege and Political Solidarity

Since political solidarity, which is not based on identity but on commitment, may include members who do not or differently experience injustice or oppression, it must critically engage with the issue of privilege. The examination of privilege stems from feminist and anti-racist activists and thinkers, such as Peggy McIntosh or W.E.B. DuBois, and has been an important object of research in critical whiteness studies, feminist, and critical men’s studies. In *White Privilege and Male Privilege* (1988), McIntosh reflects on the phenomenon that enjoying a certain privilege comes with the inability to see and recognize it. She demonstrates not only

¹²⁶ Mahrouse, *Conflicted Commitments*, 14.

¹²⁷ Gaztambide-Fernández, ‘Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity’, 44f.

¹²⁸ Kimberle Crenshaw, ‘Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics’, *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, no. 1 (1989): 139–67.

¹²⁹ hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 44.

men's unwillingness to acknowledge their advantages but also her own as a *white* person. Privileged people tend to perceive their own experience as a neutral norm, which is taken for granted, and thought to be available for everyone. She writes:

I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cash in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks.¹³⁰

She lists forty-six "ordinary and daily ways" of how her experiences differ from her black colleagues and with that encouraged not only an individual process of gaining consciousness as well as a public and academic examination of race privilege.¹³¹

Scholz draws attention towards the problem of privileged participating in a social justice movement. When individuals join in solidarity to overcome an incident and system of injustice or oppression, the "paradox of privileged" may arise. That is, individuals who have been (passively) benefiting from a system of injustice or oppression are "[o]ften those with the most persuasive ability, social status, or group stature" and with that privilege may remain unquestioned, will be uphold, and even fortified. "They may not be aware of the way their privilege becomes reinscribed in the solidarity group or they may relish their newfound power with a well-meaning if misplaced arrogance."¹³² Thus, the participation of privileged, which Simone de Beauvoir calls to be "fraught with ambiguity", bears risks of being actually counterproductive. Despite that, many thinkers hold on to the importance of the participation of individuals who have enjoyed privileges or who were even part of the oppressor group. While bell hooks acknowledges separatist organisations and spaces as a necessary strategy, separatism must not be the ultimate goal. The idea of "men are the enemy" does not overcome "imperialist patriarchal state which equates independence with narcissism, and lack of concern with triumph over others".¹³³ Moreover, for change to be possible, people who benefit from oppression and privilege gain insight into these oppressive structures and behaviours and overcome them. Bell hook writes: "Since men are the primary agents maintaining and supporting sexism and sexist oppression, they can only be successfully eradicated if men are compelled to assume responsibility for transforming their consciousness and the consciousness of society as a

¹³⁰ Peggy McIntosh, 'White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies', in *Race, Class, and Gender. An Anthology* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1992), 71.

¹³¹ McIntosh, 71.

¹³² Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 158.

¹³³ hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 78.

whole”.¹³⁴ Further, for hooks, cis men should also be included in a common anti-patriarchal struggle because they also suffer from rigid gender roles which curtail the development of a multifaceted self. Therefore, the feminist movement shall focus on “improving relationships between women and men, ways for men and women to work together to unlearn sexism”.¹³⁵ Movements can benefit from privileged to take responsibility and join as they can do their part to unlearn oppressive behaviour and structures and point them out to other benefiteres. “In particular, men have a tremendous contribution to make to feminist struggle in the area of exposing, confronting, opposing, and transforming the sexism of their male peers.”¹³⁶ What is more, Scholz highlights that oppressed or marginalized groups may not have the tools, means, or access to power structures, such as policies or laws, that privileged groups enjoy and that might be crucial to induce effective social change.¹³⁷ Hooks points out what it needs for men, or any other privileged group for that matter, to be helpful parts of a political solidarity movement.

*This does not mean that they [men] are better equipped to lead feminist movement; it does mean that they should share equally in resistance struggle [...] When men show a willingness to assume equal responsibility in feminist struggle, performing whatever tasks are necessary, women should affirm their revolutionary work by acknowledging them as comrades in struggle.*¹³⁸

Thus, for privileged to be “comrades in struggle”, it requires certain commitment and responsibilities. In an interview, Angela Davis sheds light on the sensitive relationship between prison inmates and outside solidarity groups. She as well stresses the importance of an egalitarian relationship, which respects and acknowledges the experiences, the knowledge, and interests of people behind bars. She argues that solidarity has to involve “a commitment to break down the hierarchies that almost inevitably begin to assert themselves into relationships between people on the outside and people on the inside.”¹³⁹ For Scholz, privileged must be willing to, firstly, renounce their social and epistemological privilege, secondly, engage in understanding the situation and experience of the oppressed, and lastly, actively participate in resistance. Only then, political solidarity has the chance to not reinscribe existing privileges. “Unlearning the abusive patterns must accompany our struggles for liberation – so too

¹³⁴ hooks, 83.

¹³⁵ hooks, 78.

¹³⁶ hooks, 83.

¹³⁷ Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 163.

¹³⁸ hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 83.

¹³⁹ Angela Davis, ‘Solidarity Is Not Charity’, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uib2F4Ri4_I.

participants must undergo a thorough renunciation of privilege that comes from the oppression or injustice inflicted on another.”¹⁴⁰

Further, political solidarity requires a mode of communication that acknowledges the diversity of views and knowledge, negotiates it in a loving way, and which gives enough weight to experiences of the marginalized and oppressed. The existence of privileges asks for an active communication across differences, persistent attentiveness, and a caring perception of others which hold the potential to build affective bonds. Scholz lends from other approaches in order to expand on the issue of how to deal with privilege differences among members of political solidarity groups. María Lugones, for instance, suggests the concept of “world”-travelling, which requires individuals “to be open and attentive, to lovingly and proactively attempt to understand the world through the eyes of another”. It also demands to not reduce complexity and subsume experiences and sufferings of oppressed and subaltern under one singular meaning. In other words, members of political solidarity need to acknowledge social and material structures that produce power, privilege, and injustice and at the same time recognize the uniqueness of the individuals. Elizabeth Spelman employs the image of apprenticeship. That is, advantaged people must become apprentices to disadvantaged in order to learn about systemic differences in experiences.¹⁴¹ Similarly, bell hooks, drawing on her own experiences in academia as well as in activism, emphasizes the benefits of engaging with others in such a way that we learn each other’s cultural codes and languages. Not only will misunderstandings be resolved and stereotypes be challenged, but meaningful bonds and a sense of community are rendered possible. Conflicts and debates are part of the process of becoming aware of and unlearning hierarchies and are unavoidable when people of different backgrounds come together. “Respecting diversity does not mean uniformity or sameness.”¹⁴² Instead, strategies of communication and mutual learning will help to overcome the prejudices, resentments, fears, and competitiveness, that might exist.¹⁴³ For hooks, solidarity is a good that is developed and gained in a joint process. “When women actively struggle in a truly supportive way to understand our differences, to change misguided, distorted perspectives, we lay the foundation for the experience of political solidarity.”¹⁴⁴ This kind of communication has been described by Nancy Fraser as discourse ethic of solidarity. The ethic for social movements reflects on the fact that communication is not value-neutral and tends to represent the experience and

¹⁴⁰ Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 142.

¹⁴¹ Scholz, 181–86.

¹⁴² bell hooks, ‘Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women’, *Feminist Review*, no. 23 (1986): 135.

¹⁴³ hooks, 137f.

¹⁴⁴ hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 67.

vocabulary of the dominant group. Therefore, discourse ethic stresses the need for connections and cooperation, which create space for the voices, needs, and hopes of subordinated groups.¹⁴⁵

By developing such kind of communication, political solidarity creates the possibility of meaningful interpersonal connections and processes. David Featherstone stresses that solidarity is not just a rational relation and a mean towards a certain end but can create emotional, passionate, and intimate connections and bonds.¹⁴⁶ With that, solidarity can turn into a “genuinely productive, equal and transformative process”¹⁴⁷, in which universalism can be questioned, privileges dislocated, and values and terms reinterpreted.¹⁴⁸ In a like manner, in the collected volume *Revolutionary Solidarity and the Poverty of Liberalism*, an anarchist activist describes that solidarity is based on affinity and mutual aid. While affinity refers to the conjoint struggle, which will be achieved when the “relationships are based in trust, friendship, and love”. “Mutual Aid is the idea that we all have a stake in one another’s liberation, and that when we act from that interdependence, we can share with one another as equals.”¹⁴⁹

Finally, while privilege must be understood and renounced, it can never fully be abandoned. Experiences of underprivileged and oppressed must be acknowledged but cannot be “understood” in a way that we know what it is like. Borrowing from studies on trauma and memory, I would like to stress the impossibility of putting ourselves into the shoes of others. That applies to museum visitors who are encouraged to empathize with victims of atrocities as well as to privileged who want to “feel” the experience of marginalized and oppressed people.¹⁵⁰ Further, it is not desirable to make more people suffer from social inequalities. Renouncing privileges might come with great sacrifice but does not mean to “increase the population of victims of injustice, oppression, or social vulnerabilities”. According to Scholz, “solidarity does not ask formerly privileged to experience the victimization or oppression of others; it does ask committed individuals to stand alongside of these others, who similarly commit, to bring about social change”.¹⁵¹

The described requirements for relationships, communication, and the handling of privilege rule out forms of “solidarity” that are pursued in charity or philanthropy. Activists and scholars

¹⁴⁵ Nancy Fraser, ‘Toward a Discourse Ethic of Solidarity’, *Praxis International* 5, no. 4 (1 January 1986): 428.

¹⁴⁶ Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 36f.

¹⁴⁷ Featherstone, 30.

¹⁴⁸ Featherstone, 37.

¹⁴⁹ Cindy Milstein, *Taking Sides. Revolutionary Solidarity and the Poverty of Liberalism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2015), 69.

¹⁵⁰ Steffi De Jong, *The Witness as Object. Video Testimony in Memorial Museums*, *Museums and Collections*, Volume 10 (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2018), 188.

¹⁵¹ Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 126.

have dismissed charity approaches as they represent a one-way street from a more powerful, privileged actor towards a “silent victim” instead of an egalitarian relationship in which people struggle towards a common goal, transform, and learn in a collective process.¹⁵² Informed by Indigenous and internationalist movements, anarchist and antiauthoritarian activists have criticized charity as “patronizing and selfish” as it imagines the recipient as unable to take care of themselves and inherently in need of a saviour.¹⁵³ The idea of charity contradicts Scholz’s principle of mutuality, in which everyone makes their own decision and represents her- or himself and in which people work together in a non-patronizing way. Subaltern people must be recognized as powerful and knowledgeable “agents in a collective struggle against interlocking systems of oppression”.¹⁵⁴ Reflecting on the non-aligned trans-European peace movement, the czechoslovak dissident Jaroslav Šabata wrote in an open letter to peace activist and socialist historian E.P. Thompson in 1983, in which he stresses the significance of a joint effort that surmounts mere sympathetic support.

*Solidarity with us cannot be mere solidarity with people who are the victims of certain circumstances. Solidarity must not be motivated solely by humanitarian considerations [...] We are now confronted with the all-important task of formulating a common, universal, and all-embracing strategy for the democratic transformation of Europe.*¹⁵⁵

(Post)colonial Tropes, ‘Western’ Universalism, and International Power Relations

Anti-colonial and anti-racist thinkers, and in a different ways also postcolonial thinkers since the 1980s, have illustrated how power over marginalized and colonized people has not only resorted to physical, political, and economic oppression but also on the creation of an oppressive systems of knowledge, language, and cultural truths. Influential thoughts and analysis have come from W.E.B. DuBois, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Angela Davis, Stuart Hall, Edward W. Said, bell hooks, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty among many others.

Even after the formal decolonization of the colonized world, oppressive systems continue to be hegemonial and perpetuate an unequal and hierarchical world order. In order to justify and implement colonial oppression, as Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978) has famously demonstrated, ‘Western’ rulers made use of the powerful demarcation between and representations of “us” and “the other”.¹⁵⁶ These binary categories helped not only to forge a

¹⁵² Danewid, ‘Race, Capital, and the Politics of Solidarity’, 12.

¹⁵³ Milstein, *Taking Sides. Revolutionary Solidarity and the Poverty of Liberalism*, 69.

¹⁵⁴ Danewid, ‘Race, Capital, and the Politics of Solidarity’, 12.

¹⁵⁵ Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 29f.

¹⁵⁶ Pramod K. Nayar, *Postcolonialism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 13.

denigrating image of the colonized but also a valorising image of the colonizer – and, in fact, only then created the concepts of, in the words of Stuart Hall, ‘the West’ and ‘the Rest’. The representation, that this ideology produces, simultaneously creates binaries of civilization vs. barbarism, secularity vs. religion, modernity vs. primitiveness, development vs. backwardness, morality vs. indecency, and so on.¹⁵⁷ These binary concepts categorize, create images, and set ‘the West’ as a standard model of comparison and as a norm.¹⁵⁸ What is more, complex realities are being simplified through certain discursive strategies, such as idealization, projection of fantasies of desire and degradation, the failure to acknowledge and respect difference, and the imposing of European categories and norms on others. Through these discourses, powerful images and stereotypes have established. Stereotyping is the “collapsing of complex differences into simple ‘cardboard cut-outs’”, according to Hall.¹⁵⁹ Transnational and postcolonial approaches have shown that with modernity and the doctrine of liberalism the idea of a ‘universal *white* subject’, imagined ‘without history and as disembodied’, became a hegemonic trope. That is, the *white* ‘Western’ and male body is elevated to be the norm, whereas everyone else is demarcated as ‘the other’. What is more, the *white* ‘Western’ male subject is “constituted as having the more advanced ability to think in the abstract, which is largely attained through the white body’s freedom of movement”.¹⁶⁰ Another influential aspect within the studies of coloniality and postcolonialism has been described by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. In her most famous essay *Can the subaltern speak?* (1985), she argues that systems of power render the subaltern voiceless. As they are not given authority to speak or a forum in which they are listened to, they are spoken for. That means that subaltern are represented by powerful discourses. “Spivak proposes that the subaltern can figure only in an ethical relation where there is the deliberate creation of a space for the voice of the radical Other.”¹⁶¹

Mahrouse, Danewid, and Van den Bulck show in their respective studies that these tropes are still present today – be it in international charity, cosmopolitanism, international relations, or international solidarity activism – and that markers such as skin colour and citizenship are embedded in the context of postcolonial realities. In her analysis of international solidarity activism, Mahrouse exhibits how the *whiteness* of activists is marked as such “within a global racial hierarchy”¹⁶² and strategically employed in interventions. Drawing on Michel Foucault’s

¹⁵⁷ Hilde Van den Bulck, *Celebrity Philanthropy and Activism: Mediated Interventions in the Global Public Sphere* (Routledge, 2018), 82.

¹⁵⁸ Hall, *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, 186.

¹⁵⁹ Hall, 215.

¹⁶⁰ Mahrouse, *Conflicted Commitments*, 143.

¹⁶¹ Nayar, *Postcolonialism*, 26.

¹⁶² Mahrouse, *Conflicted Commitments*, 6.

understanding of power, which is built on the domination of discourses and the creation of knowledge, Mahrouse understands race as a system of power. In order to get to the bottom of it and to avoid the perpetuation of this power system, one must examine the legacies, continuities of colonialism and imperialism.¹⁶³ Despite good intentions, “transnational solidarity activism is fraught with *contradictions and paradoxes* with respect to race and power. In fact [...] the discursive, symbolic, subjective, and material effects of accompaniment-observer activism reinforce rather than transcend or disrupt global white hegemony”.¹⁶⁴ Similarly, Danewid criticises that international cosmopolitan solidarity reproduces and legitimises rather challenges the current unjust and unequal racialized global order. ‘Western’ players are imagined as neutral bystanders, as intrinsically good, ethical, and humanitarian instead of embedded in and benefitting from injustices.¹⁶⁵ This can be seen even more explicitly in the case of international celebrity philanthropy, a topic Van den Bulck has investigated. Celebrity involvement in international affairs date back to the 19th century when influential celebrities engaged in exposing and challenging crimes committed by King Leopold II of Belgium in Congo Free State. During the 20th century, campaigns became widespread by celebrities such as Marlon Brando, Bob Dylan, Jane Fonda, Lady Diana, and gained great popularity since Bob Geldof’s concerts *Band Aid* and *Life Aid* to raise money for a relief package for the famine in Ethiopia in 1984/85.¹⁶⁶ Again, the engagements often rely on and reinforce the image of voiceless postcolonial subjects who are in need of (*white*) ‘Western’ individuals to save them, as well as the divide between ‘us’, thus ‘the West’, and ‘them’, ‘the Rest’. By focussing on superficial campaigns and avoiding the complexity that underly issues of international affairs, this type of international philanthropy de-historizes and deradicalizes issues that are deeply embedded in the context of postcolonial power structures.¹⁶⁷ As a consequence,

*it bears witness and further contributes to the spread of neoliberal modernisation and cultural imperialist paradigms with regard to global inequality (‘the West’ versus ‘the Rest’), while ignoring alternative views of international relations and development based on structural changes, self-reliance and an understanding of development as equal partners.*¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Mahrouse, 15.

¹⁶⁴ Mahrouse, 146.

¹⁶⁵ Danewid, ‘Race, Capital, and the Politics of Solidarity’, 10f.

¹⁶⁶ Bulck, *Celebrity Philanthropy and Activism*, 78.

¹⁶⁷ Bulck, 81f.

¹⁶⁸ Bulck, 77.

Achille Mbembe puts it this way: “Africa still constitutes one of the metaphors through which the West represents the origins of its own norms, develops a self-image and integrates into the set signifiers asserting what is supposed to be its identity”.¹⁶⁹

All these accounts stress the importance for international solidarity or other forms internationalisms to contextualize their activities in historical and continuous forms of international economic exploitation, political dominance, imperialist endeavours, and racist ideologies. Danewid, therefore, proposes a “revolutionary” or “subaltern solidarity” that takes intersectional oppressions and material structures into account and that is “based on the global, interconnected character of geographically dispersed freedom struggles, rather than on abstract notions of what it means to be human”.¹⁷⁰ Instead of pushing forward ‘Western’ values and concepts as universalist standard, revolutionary solidarity is a shared global struggle, that connects localized struggles and translates them into an overall internationalism.¹⁷¹ Instead of extending pity, generosity, empathy, and humanitarianism, subaltern solidarity addresses questions of accountability, structural changes, and joint resistance.¹⁷² Nikita Dhawan describes solidarity as “a move away from a politics of help that reinforces asymmetrical relations between givers and receivers of solidarity to a subversive listening, wherein global agents are hospitable to the idea of learning from those whose epistemic agency has been historically disregarded”.¹⁷³ With recourse to Sara Ahmed, Mahrouse highlights that transnational encounters must acknowledge the global hierarchies and privileges they are set in. In order for international solidarity to be a decolonizing solidarity, it must address these issues and create alternative epistemology frameworks and a new set of practices in order to challenge former and ongoing colonial attitudes. That implies to question the universalism of ‘Western’ paradigms, to embrace strives that might come with the encounters, and to engage in creative processes of learning and creating. Only then “truly transformative decolonizing solidarity practices” can be imaginable.¹⁷⁴ In a similar fashion, Gaztambide-Fernández suggests solidarity to be relational, transitive, and creative. The relational aspect requests the acknowledgement that subjects are made in and through relationships. This brings inequalities and material conditions to the surface, which must be addressed in order to ensure full participation of marginalized people. “Rather than the idealized subject, a relational solidarity committed to

¹⁶⁹ Achille Mbembe, cited in Bulck, 82.

¹⁷⁰ Danewid, ‘Race, Capital, and the Politics of Solidarity’, 105.

¹⁷¹ Danewid, 23, 108.

¹⁷² Danewid, 21.

¹⁷³ Nikita Dhawan, cited in Danewid, 109.

¹⁷⁴ Mahrouse, *Conflicted Commitments*, 154.

decolonization takes the experience of colonization and the racialized other as a point of departure.” This must be done to create “the space where the subaltern *can* speak”.¹⁷⁵

Further, solidarity must be transitive – namely, an active process that transforms the participants and their relationship to each other. The realization of privileges and power structures should not lead to paralysis. Instead, Gaztambide-Fernández encourages individuals to enter a praxis and with it the process of change. Referring to Stuart Hall, he thinks of that process as being “without guarantees”, meaning for it to be open for “unimaginable outcomes”.¹⁷⁶ Lastly, solidarity requires creativity to confront the hierarchical symbolic order in ourselves, in the relationship with others and to find new and unexpected ways of expression and engagement. This creative process discards an understanding of cultures as stable entities with fixed boundaries and which must be preserved in their “authenticity”. “Rather than a site of coherence and unity, creative solidarity requires a view of cultures as a site of action, change, and dissonance.”¹⁷⁷ Therefore, according to Gaztambide-Fernández, solidarity is a mode of engaging in decolonizing practices, that differ with “the particularities and complexities of local desires and needs”, rather than a solution or a set of fixed claims and instructions that has to be followed.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, Featherstone also refers to a “solidarity without guarantees”, which does not predetermine terms but, instead, focuses on new connection and communities that emerge from it. Further, he also stresses the understanding of solidarity as a transformative relation and process, which provides a radical openness for unpredictable ends and outcomes.¹⁷⁹ “This stress on the different ways that solidarities are articulated opens up a sense of the heterogeneous, diverse politics of the left.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁵ Gaztambide-Fernández, ‘Decolonization and the Pedagogy of Solidarity’, 53.

¹⁷⁶ Gaztambide-Fernández, 54f.

¹⁷⁷ Gaztambide-Fernández, 57.

¹⁷⁸ Gaztambide-Fernández, 60.

¹⁷⁹ Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 245f.

¹⁸⁰ Featherstone, 246.

3. ANTI-IMPERIALIST INTERNATIONALISMS¹⁸¹

“The solidarity of all progressive forces of the world towards the people of Vietnam today is similar to the bitter irony of the plebeians coaxing on the gladiators in the Roman arena. It is not a matter of wishing success to the victim of aggression, but of sharing his fate; one must accompany him to his death or to victory.”¹⁸²

Ernesto Guevara (1967)

After having outlined a conception of political solidarity, this chapter will turn to the anti-imperialist internationalisms of the 1960s in order to highlight the conceptual and historical setting the Tribunal emanated from. As internationalism, generally speaking, is not as much a theoretical idea than a practical principle, I give insights into the historical developments, conditions, and characteristics of different anti-imperialist internationalisms. This chapter introduces to two different understandings of Third Worldism. Firstly, the term refers to the connection and cooperation among movements and leaders from (former) colonized areas of the world between the 1950s and 1970s. Secondly, and equally important for the contextualization of the Tribunal, Third Worldism can be understood as a movement of the New Left in ‘Western’ countries, such as France. Lastly, this chapter gives background to the anti-imperialist, internationalist movement against the U.S. war in Vietnam.

3.1. Third Worldism

Origins of Internationalism

Internationalism can be understood as a doctrine that traces back to the 19th century, emerging in both, liberal and socialist thought and politics. The liberal idea of internationalism is based on Adam Smith’s theory of the free market and free trade. The theory assumes that the unbound trade among states not only creates greater good for everyone but also decreases the possibility of war because nation states will be more dependent on each other. Apart from economic and political aims, liberal internationalist aspirations have sought to create international norms in juridical terms. International organizations and endeavours such as such as the League of Nations, the United Nations, or more recently, the International Criminal Court have been cited as manifestations of liberal internationalism. Liberal internationalism has been criticized for its complicated relationship with imperialism. Even though some liberal internationalists were

¹⁸¹ This chapter draws in part on an unpublished essay by the author: ‘What Were the Dominant Factors in the Collapse of the European Empires in the Decades Following World War II?’ (2018). Text available from the author.

¹⁸² Ernesto Guevara, ‘Message to the Tricontinental’, The Ernesto Che Guevara Collection, 1997, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160715124204/http://www.rcgrfi.easynet.co.uk/ww/guevara/>.

critics of imperialist endeavours, many have supported the idea to bring ‘Western values’ into a ‘backward’ world. With that, liberalism has contributed to the justification of ‘Western’ imperialism.¹⁸³

Apart from the liberal notion, internationalism has mostly been associated with leftist, namely, socialist and anarchist politics. It was Marx and Engels who, in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), laid the foundation for the theory and practice of socialist internationalism. With its slogan “Proletarians of all countries, unite!”, the manifesto put forward the idea of a shared revolutionary struggle across borders – brought about by the industrial working class.¹⁸⁴ 19th century Marxists envisioned a socialist world community which would replace hostile relations with peaceful cooperation and presented their socialist or labour internationalism as internationalism as such.¹⁸⁵ With the founding of the *International Workingmen’s Association*, or better known as the *First International*, in 1864, the first internationalist socialist institution was created and subsequently kicked off a history of ensuing organizations.¹⁸⁶ Frictions between Marxists and anarchists – as well as the predicament of the different socialist groups supporting their respective country during World War I – led to schisms of the *First* and *Second International*. After their dissolutions, Lenin brought the *Third International* to life in 1919. The *Third International*, commonly called Comintern, was an association of different national communist parties. Its emergence was tightly linked to the Russian Revolution of 1917 – the first revolution with internationalist intent as it aimed to spread the revolutionary movement to the rest of the world. The Comintern first became a vessel for that ambition and later for the foreign policy goals of the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁷ Therefore – despite the attempt of a non-Stalinist International with the founding of the *Fourth International* by Leon Trotsky – socialist internationalism was soon dominated by the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin.¹⁸⁸ While many ‘Western’ socialists and communists were struggling to untie their political associations and internationalist endeavours from the USSR, a new powerful internationalism emerged from the

¹⁸³ Duncan Bell, ‘Liberal Internationalism’, in *Britannica Academic*, accessed 10 June 2021, <https://academic-eb-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/levels/collegiate/article/liberal-internationalism/600961>.

¹⁸⁴ Andrew Nash, ‘Third Worldism’, *African Sociological Review / Revue Africaine de Sociologie* 7, no. 1 (2003): 94.

¹⁸⁵ Peter Waterman, *Globalization, Social Movements, and the New Internationalism*, Employment and Work Relations in Context Series (London: Continuum, 2001), 1.

¹⁸⁶ Danewid, ‘Race, Capital, and the Politics of Solidarity’, 52.

¹⁸⁷ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, ‘First International’, in *Britannica Academic*, accessed 11 June 2021, <https://academic-eb-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/levels/collegiate/article/First-International/42563>; The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, ‘Second International’, in *Britannica Academic*, accessed 11 June 2021, <https://academic-eb-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/levels/collegiate/article/Second-International/42564>; The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, ‘Third International’, in *Britannica Academic*, accessed 11 June 2021, <https://academic-eb-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/levels/collegiate/article/Third-International/42565>.

¹⁸⁸ Nash, ‘Third Worldism’, 94.

colonized and formerly colonized world. The amalgam of ideas and political praxis, today most commonly known as Third Worldism, had become the most prominent form of internationalism by the 1960s.

According to Talbot Imlay, internationalism can be approached in different ways – which include the emphasis on internationalism as a doctrine comprised of a set of principles, a political project, an institution, movement, network, identity, or practice. These distinctions help us understand the different natures and focusses of the different internationalisms. Liberal and socialist internationalisms relied and built on doctrines as well as institutions. In contrast, Third Worldist internationalism might be best understood as a political project, network, or even a practice. That is, Third Worldism was a loose project with a vision of a new international order, it included a network of contacts, exchanges, and transfers.¹⁸⁹ Following David Featherstone, this thesis refers to an internationalism that is associated “with attempts by left political movements to reshape the world on more equitable terms”. This understanding draws attention away from the top-down internationalism or transnationalism of institutionalized networks and endeavours by the Comintern or the UN, for example. Instead, it focusses on subaltern political activity and marginalized histories.¹⁹⁰ Even though it neither has one singular meaning nor was it a homogenous project, I conceptualise Third Worldist internationalism in the following subchapters – because, as I contend, the Tribunal must be seen in the context of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist internationalism. Third Worldism is a broad concept that comprises diverse and at times contradictory meanings. To begin with, I will look at Third Worldism as an ideology as well as a political practice formed after World War II by movements and leaders seeking independence from colonisation as well as seeking equality in a post-colonial global system. In more concrete terms, the term is used for a project that connected various liberation movements after World War II, in the beginning especially from Asia and Africa, later including Latin America. Despite its diversity in interpretation and realization, some core elements of Third Worldism can be determined.

Historical Context of Decolonisation

Firstly, Third Worldism was a historically specific phenomenon linked to the end of colonial rule, national liberation struggles, as well as the Cold War.¹⁹¹ Political developments at the beginning of the 20th century slowly brought about the era of decolonisation. Around 1900, the

¹⁸⁹ Talbot Imlay, ‘Socialist Internationalism after 1914’, in *Internationalisms. A Twentieth-Century History*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 214f.

¹⁹⁰ Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 8f.

¹⁹¹ Nash, ‘Third Worldism’, 97.

European colonial empires showed first signs of vulnerability. The defeat of the Spanish on the North American continent in 1898, the severe weakening of all European powers during World War I – the German Reich even lost all its colonial territories –, and the Great Depression in the 1930s were indicators of the demise. At the same time, anticolonial movements emerged in the colonies, which found some hope in the 14-Points-Program of U.S. president Woodrow Wilson, the League of Nations, and Lenin's antiimperialist stance.¹⁹² However, it was only after World War II that the European empires disintegrated. By the mid-1970s, most of the former colonies had gained independence. That is, World War II constituted a turning point in the era of empires and brought about the process of decolonization. Firstly, the European powers experienced another blow against their economies and therefore their global standing. This, consequently, enabled the rise of the United States and the USSR, which were both interested in the dismantling of the old empires. Lastly, anticolonial movements grew stronger during the war on two levels. Locally, the different movements fought for self-determination and national independence. On a global level, different anticolonial leaders aimed to connect the struggles and to create a powerful dissident voice in a world of 'Western' hegemony. The cooperation between (formerly) colonised countries, leaders, and movements is what became known as Third Worldism.

What is more, the context of the Cold War shaped the history of the (post-)colonised world. As mentioned, the two new superpowers were both interested in ending Europe's colonial empires and therefore promoted and stimulated the process of decolonisation. However, both sides were anxious to secure their sphere of ideological influence in the newly decolonised parts of the world. On one hand, the block rivalry created an opportunity for new leaders to play off the two powers against each other and to access support from one or the other. On the other hand, newly independent countries became a battlefield of the conflict and experienced foreign meddling in form of coup d'états and hot wars in addition to decolonisation struggles and civil wars. Moreover, with the help of the Bretton Woods institutions, the *World Bank* and the *International Monetary Fund*, 'Western' countries sought to establish economic and indirect political power over the newly independent states.¹⁹³ Confronted with these new global power relations after World War II, neo-colonialist and imperialist endeavours, as well as the materializing nuclear threat, post-colonial countries joined forces in order to create a third block

¹⁹² Raymond F. Betts, *Decolonization* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 28f.

¹⁹³ Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations. A People's History of the Third World*, A New Press People's History (New York: The New Press, 2007), xviii.

and a vision for an alternative world order.¹⁹⁴ In 1952, French historian and anthropologist Alfred Sauvy coined the term *Third World* to label the solidarity and platforms that were developing amongst and constructed by (post-)colonial movements and players. Referring to the French Revolution he states: “Ignored, exploited, scorned Third World, like the Third Estate, demands to become something as well”.¹⁹⁵

Promoting Anti-imperialism

Accordingly, while far from being a harmonious or ideologically aligned movement, Third Worldism bore the core elements of struggling against imperialism and neo-colonialism, as well as for a cooperative and peaceful world order. In order to forge a serious counterweight against the superpowers and blocks, anti-colonial leaders sought to join forces and set up conferences, alliances, and organisations. The different leaders and movements created forums and offered each other financial, military, and moral support. It was a time of colonial and post-colonial subjects entering the international stage and make themselves heard.¹⁹⁶ While the era of Third Worldism is usually dated to the 1950s to 1970s, the history of anti-imperialist activism goes back to the late 18th century. Its roots can be found in (East-)Asia where anti-imperialist and pan-Asian sentiments created informal networks across Indochina, Japan, China and other Asian regions around 1900. In his extensive study *Underground Asia*, Tim Harpers has shown how Asian revolutionaries have shaped the history of anti-imperial struggle and Asia today. With the goal to build a counterforce against the European colonizers, activists clandestinely travelled across Asia to connect, learned each other’s languages, wrote pamphlets and novels, as well as took up arms. Even though not very successful yet, it was the source for the strong anti-colonial movements in Asia a few decades later.¹⁹⁷

The history of anti-imperialist institutions started with the *League Against Imperialism* in 1927. Over 200 delegates representing 134 organisations from 37 states or colonized regions attended the first conference of the League in Brussels. The passed resolutions opposed all kinds of discrimination or cruelty, including Jim Crow laws, Italian fascism, and the Japanese invasion of Korea, amongst others. Further, the League criticized and attacked the *League of Nations* for

¹⁹⁴ Christoph Kalter, *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt. Dekolonisierung und neue radikale Linke in Frankreich* (Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag, 2011), 27f.

¹⁹⁵ Albert Sauvy, cited in Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 11.

¹⁹⁶ Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution. Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3, 6.

¹⁹⁷ Timothy N. Harper, *Underground Asia: Global Revolutionaries and the Assault on Empire* (London: Allen Lane, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2020).

its support and preservation of the imperialist mandate system and its denial of self-rule.¹⁹⁸ Article 22 of the Covenant of the *League of Nations* justified the ongoing colonial and imperial rule, arguing that the colonized were “peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world”.¹⁹⁹ Later, delegates would recall the first anti-imperialist conference to have laid the foundation of “sympathy and solidarity across the borders of the colonized world”.²⁰⁰ Thus, the cooperation and public anti-colonial expression had emerged well before the time of decolonization, their “internationalist spirit evolving symbiotically with localized anticolonial trends as a result of the inherently cosmopolitan character of Europe’s empires in the post-World War I era”.²⁰¹ At that time, a growing number of students, low-level administrators, workers, and soldiers from the colonies came to cities of the centre of the empires or studied and worked in other colonized countries. For instance, Mahatma Gandhi worked in South Africa as a lawyer, Hồ Chí Minh entered the stage of international politics during his time in France, and Caribbean activists and Pan-Africanists mingled in London. The shared experience of having fought a war for the European colonial powers “inspired political awakenings, instilled a sense of shared suffering, and encouraged colonials to look at imperialism as a massive integrated system that could only be defeated through collective resistance”.²⁰²

The process of anti-imperial solidarity that was started at Brussels, culminated in the *First Asian-African Conference*, held 1955 in Bandung, Indonesia – which is considered the first official meeting of Third Worldist internationalism and milestone in Third Worldist solidarity. Representatives from 29 countries followed the invitation of Indonesia’s first president Sukarno to meet and discuss the slow process of decolonisation, the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, neo-colonial expansions by the United States, the nuclear danger, as well as how to build technical, financial, and cultural cooperation amongst African and Asian countries and movements.²⁰³ While the main target of criticism at the *League against Imperialism* conference had been Europe’s imperialist policies, the *Bandung Conference* additionally addressed imperialist endeavours of the Soviet Union and the United States. In his opening speech, Sukarno called for unity and solidarity between the (former) colonies, for peace and morality, for a policy of understanding and cooperation, and condemned new and old forms of

¹⁹⁸ Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 18–22.

¹⁹⁹ The Covenant of the League of Nations, cited in Vijay Prashad, 21.

²⁰⁰ Vijay Prashad, 20.

²⁰¹ Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution*, 6.

²⁰² Byrne, 6.

²⁰³ Mark T. Berger, ‘After the Third World? History, Destiny and the Fate of Third Worldism’, *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2004): 12.

imperialism as well as nuclear armament. He argued for “the subordination of everything to the well-being of mankind”, which was to be achieved by mobilizing “all the spiritual, all the moral, all the political strength of Asia and Africa on the side of peace.”²⁰⁴ Despite ideological differences, infighting, and debates, the so-called “Bandung spirit” created a Third World identity. Instead of being united by cultural or even “racial” commonalities, Sukarno saw the similarity in a common experience and vision. “We are united by a common detestation of colonialism in whatever form it appears. We are united by a common detestation of racialism. And we are united by a common determination to preserve and stabilize peace in the world”.²⁰⁵ Thus, three years after he had coined the term *Third World*, “this meeting brought Sauvy’s concept to life”.²⁰⁶

The *Bandung Conference* can be seen as the starting point of an era of Third Worldist cooperation and a joint struggle that was shaped both by the vision to put forward a substantial third power as well as by conflicts concerning ideological and pragmatic dissents – especially in the first ten years after the conference. As Mark T. Berger has shown, the “Bandung Era” (from 1955 to 1975) saw two generations. The first was mainly represented by Sukarno, Gamal Abdel Nasser (second president of Egypt), Jawaharlal Nehru (first Prime Minister of India), as well as Hồ Chí Minh, Zhou Enlai (first Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of China), and Kwame Nkrumah (first PM and President of Ghana).²⁰⁷ Despite the initial success of Bandung, internal conflicts hampered the solidarity. The *Second Asian-African Conference*, planned to be held in Algiers, was cancelled due to the Sino-Soviet Split.

However, Bandung provided inspirations for the founding of other Third Worldist organisations. At the beginning of the 1960s, the more moderate *Movement of Non-Aligned Countries* (NAM) came into being. The movement was launched at its first conference in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, which was hosted by Josip Broz Tito in September of 1961 – thus marking the beginning of Non-Aligned cooperation precisely at the moment when the surprising construction of the Berlin Wall marked a new escalation in Cold War tension between ‘East’ and ‘West’ – and attended by 25 representatives from 19 countries. Subsequent conferences took place in Cairo (1964), Lusaka (1970), and Algiers (1973).²⁰⁸ Other important

²⁰⁴ Sukarno, ‘Speech at the Opening of the Bandung Conference, April 18, 1955’, in *Africa-Asia Speaks from Bandung* (Jakarta: Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1955), 19–22, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1955sukarno-bandong.asp>.

²⁰⁵ Sukarno, cited in Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 34.

²⁰⁶ Vijay Prashad, 32.

²⁰⁷ Berger, ‘After the Third World?’, 12.

²⁰⁸ Berger, 12ff.

conferences of the first generation include the *Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conferences* in 1957 (Cairo, Egypt) and 1960 (Conakry, Guinea), the *Afro-Asian Writers' Conference* (Tashkent, Uzbekistan), as well as the *Afro-Asian Women's Conference* held in 1961 in Cairo.²⁰⁹

The second generation coincided with the “golden age” of Third Worldism, which had its heyday in the 1970s. By the late 1960s, most leaders of the first generation had either died, like Nehru, been overthrown, like Sukarno in a U.S. sponsored coup, or were transforming their leadership into a dictatorship, like Nasser.²¹⁰ After the connections were initially mainly formed between African and Asian movements and governments, strong ties across the three continents were forged with Latin American and U.S. movements in the 1960s and 1970s. While Latin American movements had not been less internationalist, they did not share the same contemporary colonial experience – as most of Latin America had become independent from Spain and Portugal in the early 19th century. However, as more and more countries gained independence in the 1960s, a shared experience of U.S. imperialism, economic dependence, and an unequal political and economic world system bound these governments and movements together. This joint struggle – involving movements, revolutionaries, and governments from three continents – is also known as Tricontinentalism.²¹¹ Berger characterizes the second generation as more radical and more linked to socialist ideas. The successful Cuban Revolution 1959, the independence of Algeria in 1962 after a long war between the FLN (*Front de libération nationale*) and France, as well as the African “year of independence” 1960, marked crucial and triumphant cornerstones in the struggles of Third Worldists and radical socialists.²¹² The key event of the second-generation cooperation was the *First Solidarity Conference of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America* (or *Tricontinental Conference*), which was held in Havana in 1966. At the conference, 500 socialist, communist, nationalist, and anti-colonial leaders from 82 countries came together to strategize anti-imperial tactics and forge cooperation and relations.²¹³ It was a cornerstone “for the development of an internationalism grounded in anti-imperialist and decolonial solidarity”.²¹⁴ The conference is a witness of a significant and

²⁰⁹ Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 51f.; ‘Visualisation’, Afro-Asian Networks. Transitions in the Global South, accessed 30 September 2021, <https://afroasiannetworks.com/visualisation/>.

²¹⁰ Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 108.

²¹¹ Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Chicester: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2016), 213.

²¹² Berger, ‘After the Third World?’, 19–22.

²¹³ Anne Garland Mahler, *From the Tricontinental to the Global South: Race, Radicalism, and Transnational Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, Duke University Press Books, 2018), 3.

²¹⁴ Lani Hanna, ‘Tricontinental’s International Solidarity. Emotion in OSPAAAL as Tactic to Catalyze Support of Revolution’, *Radical History Review* 2020, no. 136 (1 January 2020): 169.

largely forgotten movement of the Cold War, which denounced global capitalism, racial violence, and inequality. While the *Bandung Conference* had been based around the experience of colonialism, the *Tricontinental Conference* had to deal with a more “fluid notion of power and resistance”.²¹⁵ Since the *Bandung Conference* eleven years earlier, U.S. imperial endeavours as well as the Cold War had intensified. Cuba had turned to the USSR for support, as it feared U.S. intervention after the overthrow of the U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista. Hence, the establishment of a Communist system in Cuba by Fidel Castro and the 26th of July Movement was a result of that fear, rather than the cause of U.S. retaliation. Yet, Soviet support did not necessarily grant immunity. Despite formal Soviet backing, the United States assisted or approved coups in Bolivia, Brazil, Congo, Greece, and Indonesia between 1964 and 1967 and started their aerial bombardment campaigns against North Vietnam in 1965.²¹⁶ The Vietnamese-American War and the expectation and impatience that NAM or the USSR would step up against the U.S. meddling in Vietnam and other locations, became a central theme within the debates among the Third World from the mid-1960s until the late 1970s. Militant and revolutionary voices became most prominent in Third Worldist meetings and so did the demand for armed action against imperialism. “It is in this period that armed struggle will be revived not only as a tactic of anticolonialism but significantly *as a strategy in itself*.”²¹⁷ At the *Tricontinental Conference*, Amílcar Cabral, the leader of the PAIGC (*African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde*) stated: “We are not going to eliminate imperialism by shouting insults against it. For us, the best and worst shout against imperialism, whatever its form, is to take up arms and fight.”²¹⁸

Opposing Racism and Global Power Asymmetry

What is more, Third Worldism was a response to racial suppression and global inequality. Third Worldist antiracist consciousness grew out of a diverse and complex conglomerate of concepts, philosophies, and activisms of racial liberation that date back to the late 18th century but intensified in the beginning of the 20th century.²¹⁹ These include anticolonialism, Pan-Africanism, Négritude, and Pan-Asianism, among others, which were already internationalist in their conception and had forged connections and networks. For instance, in 1900, the *First Pan-African Conference* took place in London, followed by several Pan-African Congresses,

²¹⁵ Mahler, *From the Tricontinental to the Global South*, 8.

²¹⁶ Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 106f.

²¹⁷ Vijay Prashad, 106f.

²¹⁸ Amílcar Cabral cited in Vijay Prashad, 111.

²¹⁹ Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, ‘The U.S. 1968. Third-Worldism, Feminisms, and Liberalism’, *American Historical Review* 123, no. 3 (June 2018): 712.

which connected intellectuals and activists to address racism, political suppression, economic exploitation in a colonial and, later, post-colonial world.²²⁰ After the decolonization process had begun, more connections were established at meetings such as the *All-African People's Conference* in Accra, Ghana in 1966. Pan-Africanism was not just a vision that concerned people living on the African continent. On the contrary, its roots go back to the United States and Caribbean in the mid-19th century, when, most prominently, African Americans Martin Delany and Alexander Crummel as well as West Indian Edward Blyden emphasized the commonalities between Africans and their descendants in the Americas. They put forward the idea that Black Americans should establish their own nation – either in America or in Africa – as they would not find an equal place in the existing American societies. Other important figures of the movement were Marcus Garvey from Jamaica and Henry Sylvester Williams from Trinidad. The person who is considered to be the true father of Pan-Africanism, however, is W.E.B. Du Bois – a U.S.-American intellectual and activist, who famously proclaimed that “the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line”.²²¹ It was also Du Bois who organized several Pan-African congresses and therewith had a major influence on African leaders and their visions of African unity and solidarity. It was only in the 1940s that African figures took the lead in Pan-Africanist aspirations, such as Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya's first president), and Julius Nyerere (the first president of Tanzania), among others.

That the vision of Pan-Africanism first emerged in the Americas was not by chance. Shortly after the abolition of slavery, all hopes of equality of Black Americans were crushed by the establishment of Jim Crow segregation and the terror campaigns by groups like the Ku Klux Klan. By the turn of the 20th century, hundreds of thousands of African Americans moved to cities like New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia. The so-called Great Migration brought Black Americans together – diverse in background and education but sharing the experience of racism – and sparked one of the United States' most important eras of cultural expression: the Harlem Renaissance. Between the end of WWI and the mid-1930s, African Americans created an artistic public sphere, including music, literature, visual art, fashion, and dance. What is more, the “spiritual coming of age”, as the prominent exponent Alain Locke described it, transformed “social disillusionment to race pride” and laid the foundation for the

²²⁰ J. Daniel Elam, ‘Anticolonialism’, *Global South Studies: A Collective Publication with the Global South*, accessed 16 September 2021, <https://globalsouthstudies.as.virginia.edu/key-concepts/anticolonialism>; Andreas Eckert, ‘Panafrikanismus, Afrikanische Intellektuelle Und Europa Im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert’, *Journal of Modern European History* 4, no. 2 (1 September 2006): 227, 233.

²²¹ W.E.B. Du Bois, cited in ‘Pan-Africanism’, *South African History Online*, accessed 30 September 2021, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/pan-africanism>.

militant demand of civil rights. Despite its decline during the Great Depression, the Harlem Renaissance “instilled in African Americans across the country a new spirit of self-determination and pride, a new social consciousness, and a new commitment to political activism, all of which would provide a foundation for the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s”.²²²

Meanwhile, another movement and theory of race liberation emerged among francophone intellectuals. The so-called *Négritude* was a specific form of protest against French colonialism and racism in the 1930s and 1940s, mainly put forward by Aimé Césaire from Martinique, Léon Gontran Damas from Guiana, and Léopold Sédar Senghor from Senegal (who would later become the first president of Senegal). The three met as students in Paris and connected over the experience of being colonial subjects, thus “uncivilized” and “barbaric” in the eyes of their colonizers and being “in need” of European education and guidance. Influenced by the Harlem Renaissance through encounters with Black American writers, they developed a concept of racial empowerment that comprised the experienced of being colonized, enslaved, and deprived of a status of being culturally productive, political, and civil humans. With the help of their magazine *L'Étudiant Noir*, which became the core vehicle of the movement, they advocated the self-affirmation of Black people and the cultivation of a Black consciousness in order to regain dignity and pride. Like poets of the Harlem Renaissance, such as Alain Locke, these writers aimed to manifest *Négritude* as an aesthetics by publishing poems and literary work. At the same time, they developed *Négritude* as an ontological philosophical concept as well as a political instrument. The movement gained much attention when Jean-Paul Sartre agreed to write the preface to Senghor's *Anthology of the New Black and Malagasy Poetry in French* (1948), titled *Black Orpheus*.²²³ Despite justifiable criticisms challenging the *Négritude*'s essentialist and particularistic tendencies, philosopher Lucius Outlaw concludes that “nonetheless, the *Négritude* arguments, fundamentally, involved a profound displacement of the African invented by Europeans”. He goes on:

It is this African challenge and displacement, through radical critique and counter-construction, that have been deconstructive in particularly powerful and influential ways: involving direct attacks on the assumed embodiment of the paragon of humanity in whites of Europe, an attack that forces this embodiment back upon itself, forces it to confront its own

²²² ‘A New African American Identity: The Harlem Renaissance’, National Museum of African American History and Culture, 11 October 2017, <https://nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/new-african-american-identity-harlem-renaissance>.

²²³ Souleymane Bachir Diagne, ‘Négritude’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/negritude/>.

*historicity, its own wretched history of atrocities, and the stench of the decay announcing the impending death of the hegemonic ideal of the Greco-European Rational Man.*²²⁴

By the time the 1950s came around, these ideas amounted to a new level of resistance and international connections. Drawing on the longer historical traditions of domestic and internationalist racial liberations, Third Worldism brought them to the stage of world politics. With the process of decolonization and the slow riddance of direct *white* control, a new world order came to light – an order that involved economic dependencies and unequal power relations. After movements had fought for cultural and philosophical reappropriation as well as for self-rule, Third Worldism aimed to shape global relations in the favour of post-colonial and racially suppressed subjects.

Criticizing Eurocentrism and USSR-Centrism

Finally, Third Worldism was not only a challenge to Eurocentric thought and politics but also to a profuse focus on the USSR. For many thinkers, Third Worldism is tightly linked to the history of socialist and Marxist thought. Despite ambivalent positions towards the questions of racism and colonialism, Marxist thinking had offered important contributions in the analysis of and struggle against imperialism. Furthermore, it had put the exploited human in the centre of its doctrine. To begin with, Karl Marx himself made mixed statements about the colonial world. On the one hand he condemned the violence committed in the colonies. While the capitalist exploitation in Europe was enforced more subtly, according to Marx, it was accomplished through sheer force in the colonies – for him that was a sign that the bourgeois civilisation was inextricably linked to barbarity. This idea was later taken up by anticolonial thinkers, such as Césaire or Frantz Fanon. What is more, Marxist thinking was fruitful for anticolonial interpretations as both the proletariat as well as the colonized world suffered from the same capitalist system. On the other hand, Marx built his universalist project of liberation on European concepts and contexts, such as class, nation, and progress. Furthermore, he deemed colonialism necessary for the worldwide spread of capitalism, which in turn he considered a premising step towards world socialism.²²⁵ That is, capitalism was given a central and necessary position in Marxist thinking and so was Europe – as capitalism derived and was most developed in the ‘West’. The traditional revolutionary subject was the exploited (European) worker, there was little room for different, non-European agents. At the same time, the focus on the workers’ movement and the goal of universal liberation made Marxist politics internationalist, at least

²²⁴ Lucius Outlaw, cited in Diagne.

²²⁵ Kalter, *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt*, 97.

within the borders of the capitalist world. It was Rosa Luxemburg who gave more weight and importance to pre-capitalist societies outside of Europe and promoted the idea of the European proletariat and Indigenous peoples of colonized countries to forge alliances against the common enemy of imperialism.²²⁶ At the same time, the *First* and *Second International* still discussed whether or not to support anticolonial movements and whether “national sovereignty” and “international solidarity” were competing or complementing principles.

It was only with the successful October Revolution 1917 in Russia and the defeat of all revolutionary attempts in the ‘West’, that Eurocentric presumptions had to be re-evaluated. Not only did recent developments demonstrate that the revolutionary subject was not limited to the ‘Western’ worker but also did the question of anticolonial struggle become less ambivalent. Due to Lenin’s anti-imperialist stance, the Soviet Union adopted a supportive attitude towards nationalist independence movements. Lenin asserted that nationalism was temporarily justified in the fight against colonial suppression as they would eventually merge in the internationalist class struggle. At the *Second Comintern Congress* in 1920, Lenin acknowledged that revolutions could be pushed by national elites of colonized countries. With the formation of the *Third International*, Lenin established an institutional frame to support anti-imperialist struggles worldwide.²²⁷ What is more, the October Revolution and the Soviet Union provided inspiration for many “Third World” leaders. Firstly, the USSR had built a socialist state from a peasant society – unlike the industrialized society that Marx had in mind. With the help of a centrally planned economy, the USSR was able to create rapid growth and development within a few decades. The economic success served as a model and motivation for numerous leaders of post-colonial countries, which were agrarian and whose societies were suffering from the effects of colonial exploitation. In order to compete in a global capitalist system, most leaders sought to “develop” their countries’ economies accordingly.²²⁸ Secondly, for many anti-colonial movements, socialist ideas served as an example as they aimed to establish egalitarian societies based on cooperation, peace, and communal values.²²⁹ Thirdly, liberation fighters felt supported in their cause by Lenin’s anti-colonial stance – as can be seen in Hồ Chí Minh’s article *The Path Which Led Me to Leninism* (1960).²³⁰ Lastly, the October Revolution was an

²²⁶ Nash, ‘Third Worldism’, 97.

²²⁷ Kalter, *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt*, 98ff.

²²⁸ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 92.

²²⁹ Prasenjit Duara, *Decolonization. Perspectives From Now and Then*, *Rewriting Histories* (London: Routledge, 2004), 8f., <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=105248&site=ehost-live>.

²³⁰ Chí Minh Hồ, ‘The Path Which Led Me to Leninism’, in *Ho Chi Minh: Selected Articles and Speeches, 1920-1967*, ed. Jack Woddis (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1969).

inspiration for many as it represented a successful overthrow of an oppressive system. Hồ expresses his deep belief in the ideas and revolutionary tactics of Lenin. Not only did he love and admire “Lenin because he was a great patriot who liberated his compatriots”²³¹ but after having studied Lenin’s *Thesis on the National and Colonial Question* (1920), he was convinced that “only socialism and communism can liberate the oppressed nations and the working people throughout the world from slavery”.²³² Nevertheless, despite some concessions by Soviet politicians towards the role of non-capitalist forms of development, Soviet Marxism only ascribed a secondary role to colonized countries. That is, overall, the classic evolutionary historical model of Marxism was being preserved, in which the path towards a Communist society must be paved by a linear sequence of slavery, serfdom, capitalism, and socialism.²³³ The Eurocentric assumption by the Comintern that liberation had to be carried out through the lead of the vanguard party was ultimately refuted by events like the Chinese Revolution of 1949, the victory of the Việt Minh in 1954, as well as the starting decolonisation in Africa. While Europe was far from any revolutionary upheaval, every emancipatory change at the time originated from a non-European movement.²³⁴

Altogether, Third Worldism neither simply evolve from earlier forms of internationalism nor from Marxist theory. While keeping in mind that Third Worldism was by no means homogenous, it can nevertheless be regarded as part of Marxist thought and politics and, thereby, altered assumptions and perspectives. As Andrew Nash argues: “Within the history of Marxism, Third Worldism could be seen as a way of ridding earlier forms of socialist internationalism of their Eurocentrism, historical parochialism, and residual ideas of racial superiority.”²³⁵ Most prominently, Frantz Fanon, psychiatrist and political philosopher from Martinique, drew on Marxist theory, adapted it to the reality that colonialism had created, and employed it for anti-colonial struggle. In his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) – the manifesto for Third Worldism, according to Nash – he reinterprets Hegel’s master-slave dialectic, a central motif in Marxist thinking. For Fanon, decolonisation was a process of the decolonized regaining their selfhood and at the same time held revolutionary potential in a Marxian sense.²³⁶ Conclusively, Third Worldist leaders and thinkers drew on internationalist and Marxist traditions while they criticised their universalist implications. Universalist

²³¹ Hồ, 156.

²³² Hồ, 158.

²³³ Nash, ‘Third Worldism’, 97.

²³⁴ Kalter, *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt*, 100.

²³⁵ Nash, ‘Third Worldism’, 96.

²³⁶ Nash, 98f.

doctrines, their models and utopian ideas are thought and promoted as universal norms that apply to any circumstances.²³⁷ In other words, universalist doctrines present the particular as a general truth which can be imposed on others.

Third Worldist Connections

As has become apparent, Third Worldism did not only connect (post-)colonial regions but, more generally, people suppressed on racial grounds. That is, after WWII, various and diverse movements, thinkers, and leaders around the world connected personally and ideologically – working together, influencing, as well as disagreeing and debating with each other. These involve movements struggling against Jim Crow racism in the United States, anti-colonial resistance movements in Asia and Africa, the NAM movement, pan-Africanist campaigning, the Tricontinental movement, as well as Black feminist internationalisms, and Indigenous activism for land and rights in the Americas, New Zealand, and Australia.²³⁸ These movements did not only act as an inspiration for each other but created a common reference point of identity. Despite the differences and dissents among and between the movements, from the mid-1950s to the 1970s, a sense of simultaneity existed due to the various emancipation and liberation movements. “One of the defining features of the political and cultural movements of the era was the feeling of acting simultaneously with others in a global sphere, the belief that people elsewhere were motivated by a common purpose.”²³⁹

The following examples illustrate this sense of simultaneity and Third Worldist connection. The Algerian War (1954-1962), the Cuban Revolution (1959), the ongoing war in Vietnam since 1949, and 1955 respectively, as well as the decolonization struggles in Africa and Asia posed, all at once, an important challenge to ‘Western’ hegemony and supremacy.²⁴⁰ In the same year of the *Bandung Conference* (1955), Rosa Parks famously refused to give up her seat on a bus to a *white* man in Montgomery, Alabama, which instigated the Montgomery Bus Boycott and consequently incited the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Racialized people in the United States soon identified with Third Worldism or being part of the Third World as they were suffering from internal colonialism. The Black Panthers proclaimed to fight imperialism, racism, and colonialism from “within the belly of the beast”. At its founding

²³⁷ Waterman, *Globalization, Social Movements, and the New Internationalism*, 199f.

²³⁸ Hanne Hagtvedt Vik, ‘Indigenous Internationalism’, in *Internationalisms. A Twentieth Century History*, ed. Patricia Clavin and Glenda Sluga (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 316f.; Danewid, ‘Race, Capital, and the Politics of Solidarity’, 106.

²³⁹ Karen Dubinsky et al, cited in Wu, ‘The U.S. 1968’, June 2018, 712.

²⁴⁰ Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, ‘The U.S. 1968: Third-Worldism, Feminisms, and Liberalism’, *American Historical Review* 123, no. 3 (June 2018): 711f.

conference, the grassroots organization *Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee* (SNCC) declared in response to the ongoing violence in Africa “that we identify ourselves with the African struggle as a concern of all mankind”²⁴¹. The SNCC emerged from the sit-in movement in the U.S. South which coincided with the “Year of Africa” 1960 – the year when seventeen African countries declared independence.

In 1957, the Ghanaian independence ushered the era of African decolonization.²⁴² Kwame Nkrumah became Ghana’s first elected president and thus supported other independence endeavours as well as Pan-African networks and thoughts. In 1958, the first *All-African Peoples’ Conference* took place in Ghana’s capital Accra to create an overarching political union of African movements, leaders, and countries.²⁴³ Further, it was aimed to encourage and support independence movements to strategize for a nonviolent revolution in Africa, as well as to reconstruct post-colonial African societies economically and socially. The conference brought together African union leaders, observers from countries such as China, India, the Soviet Union, and the United States, representatives from 28 dependent and independent states, including Patrice Lumumba (the future first president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo), Kenneth Kaunda (the future president of Zambia), the Kenyan nationalist Tom Mboya, and the Angolan revolutionary Holden Roberto.²⁴⁴ The first secretary-general was George Padmore, an important figure in the Pan-African movement, whose political activism had taken him from Trinidad, to the United States, Moscow, Germany, London, and finally Ghana, where he helped Nkrumah to build their shared Pan-African vision.²⁴⁵

In the same year of the Cuban Revolution, which famously inspired ‘Western’ leftists, Martin Luther King Jr., Coretta Scott King, and Lawrence Reddick embarked on a five-week trip to India to meet with prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and vice president Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and to discuss nonviolent resistance for social change.²⁴⁶ After the Revolution, Cuba became a pivotal intersection of transnational routes and solidary agency with African American civil rights movements as well as an important supporter of revolutionary guerrilla groups in Africa. Fidel Castro not only endorsed the struggles for independence and socialism

²⁴¹ SNCC Papers, cited in Sarah Seidman, ‘Tricontinental Routes of Solidarity: Stokely Carmichael in Cuba’, *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 4, no. 2 (2012): 5.

²⁴² Wu, ‘The U.S. 1968’, June 2018, 712.

²⁴³ Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 24.

²⁴⁴ Norman J. Padelford and Rupert Emerson, eds., ‘All-African People’s Conferences’, *International Organization* 16, no. 2 (1962): 429.

²⁴⁵ ‘George Padmore’, The Open University. Making Britain, accessed 10 January 2022, <https://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/george-padmore>.

²⁴⁶ Wu, ‘The U.S. 1968’, June 2018, 711f.

in Africa and condemned the Apartheid regime in South Africa, but he also sent troops to countries like Angola or Somalia. After the *Tricontinental Conference*, which is characterized by its “emphasis on anti-imperialism, espousal of anti-racism, and its goal of cultivating a vanguard of Third World leaders”²⁴⁷, the *Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America* (OSPAAAL) as well as the magazines *Tricontinental* and *Tricontinental Bulletin* were founded in 1966. All constituted important institutions for Third Worldist exchange and flow of information. The bulletin became a central medium of communication across movements in the 1960s and 1970s, published articles in Spanish, English, French, sometimes also in Italian and Arabic. Revolutionary leaders and activists from different countries and movements published articles in both magazines.²⁴⁸ “The *Bulletin’s* diverse contributors, broad circulation, and internationalist vision all contributed to imagining a united global revolutionary movement.”²⁴⁹ In 1967, Stokely Carmichael, leader of the SNCC, the *Black Panther Party*, and later of Nkrumah’s *All-African People’s Revolutionary Party*, travelled to Cuba for the *Organization of Latin American Solidarity* (OLAS) conference in Havana. Carmichael himself embodied Black internationalism. Born in Trinidad to a Pan-Caribbean family, he immigrated to the United States at the age of eleven and moved to Guinea in 1969. As many other African Americans, he saw Cuba as an ally for the resistance against U.S. power and establishment of fundamental social change. Carmichael judged the OSPAAAL to be “one of the most important organizations for the development of the struggle of the Negroes in the United States”²⁵⁰. Despite the accordance and affinity between U.S. activists for civil rights and the Cuban government, the visit revealed certain dissents, as Sarah Seidman has shown. While both movements were brought together by a shared anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, anti-racist “tricontinental” belief, the different contexts and experiences were a reason for divergence. While both Carmichael and Fidel Castro denounced racism at the conference, they differed on the centrality of the question of race within the larger fight against oppression. Even though Castro’s government had abolished racial discrimination, discussions on societal racism, demonstrations, and organizations aimed at racial equality had been banned.²⁵¹ SNCC members also travelled across Africa, to Vietnam, Japan, the Soviet Union, protested South African Apartheid, publicly opposed the Vietnamese-American War, and

²⁴⁷ Seidman, ‘Tricontinental Routes of Solidarity’, 2.

²⁴⁸ Hanna, ‘Tricontinental’s International Solidarity. Emotion in OSPAAAL as Tactic to Catalyze Support of Revolution’, 170.

²⁴⁹ Hanna, 180.

²⁵⁰ Stokely Carmichael, cited in Seidman, ‘Tricontinental Routes of Solidarity’, 4.

²⁵¹ Seidman, 1ff.

supported Palestine in the Six Day War 1967.²⁵² Lastly, Third Worldism found its way into the ‘West’, connecting people who were marginalized on a local or a global level, respectively. For instance, the *Third World Liberation Front* (1968) was a coalition in the United States of African American, Latin American, Asian-American students who fought for campus reforms at the San Francisco State University and University of California, Berkeley, which culminated in the establishment of ethnic studies.²⁵³

As I have aimed to show in an exemplary manner, Third Worldism was a set of diverse movements, connected by the goal to reshape global power balances in the favour of marginalized, suppressed, and exploited people. Andrew Nash roughly defines Third Worldism as “the political theory and practice that saw the major fault-line in the global capitalist order as running between the advanced capitalist countries of the West and the impoverished continents of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and saw national liberation struggles in the Third World as the major force for global revolution”.²⁵⁴ While often creating powerful alliances and fruitful connections, the movement is also characterized by ambivalences and contradictions. Vijay Prashad neatly summarizes this:

*The Third World was not a place. It was a project. During the seemingly interminable battles against colonialism, the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America dreamed of a new world. They longed for dignity above all else, but also the basic necessities of life (land, peace, and freedom). They assembled their grievances and aspirations into various kinds of organizations, where their leadership then formulated a platform of demands. These leaders, whether India’s Jawaharlal Nehru, Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah, or Cuba’s Fidel Castro, met at a series of gatherings during the middle decades of the twentieth century. In Bandung (1955), Havana (1966), and elsewhere, these leaders crafted an ideology and a set of institutions to bear the hopes of their populations. The ‘Third World’ comprised these hopes and the institutions produced to carry them forward.*²⁵⁵

After the onset of Third Worldist internationalism in the 1950s, the first zenith was reached in the pivotal year of 1968. The year, that has gone down in history as an outbreak as well as culmination of student protests in Europe and the United States, was, in fact, an important connector between elite discourses in the United States, Europe, and Israel and the worldwide

²⁵² Seidman, 5.

²⁵³ Wu, ‘The U.S. 1968’, June 2018, 711f.

²⁵⁴ Nash, ‘Third Worldism’, 95.

²⁵⁵ Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, xv.

anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, as well as the civil rights movements in the United States.²⁵⁶ Thus, the movement of 1968 was not limited to the ‘Western’ world nor to *white* people within the ‘Western’ world. As a matter of fact, student protests in the ‘West’ were heavily influenced by Third Worldist and predecessor movements, as I will expand in the next section. The overarching movement of 1968 connected smaller movements from all over the world on a common ground of anti-capitalist, anticolonial, and antiimperialist sentiments. By highlighting the Third Worldist context of the *International War Crimes Tribunal on Vietnam*, I aim to emphasize a marginalized history of Third Worldist actors and movements.

3.2. Internationalism of the (French) Left

While Third Worldism is often understood as an ideology of the Third World – as “the assertion of the humanity of colonised or previously colonised people”²⁵⁷ –, some actually perceive it as a ‘Western’ ideology. Samir Amin, an Egyptian-French Marxian economist and political scientist, even goes as far as stating: “I believe the term applies only to certain Western leftists who in the Bandung era (1955-1975) thought they could substitute ‘third world peoples’ for the ‘proletariat’ in expressing their messianic expectation”.²⁵⁸ Considering the movements, connections, and solidarity created among ‘non-Western’ actors, I believe that the statement goes too far by claiming that Third Worldism was solely an idea of the ‘West’. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the revolutionary movements in the Global South had an influential impact on the ‘Western’ Left and that a new kind of Left developed in the 1950s in reaction to Third Worldist events and movements. What is more, the Third Worldist movements became a central reference point for this new leftist generation.

According to Christoph Kalter, the term “left” can be categorized into four strands: The republican Left, that emerged from the French Revolution, the social Left, that was a reaction to the Industrial Revolution, the communist Left that brought about the October Revolution, and lastly, the New (Radical) Left that emerged after WWII with the era of decolonisation.²⁵⁹ During the 1950s the New Left, Nouvelle Gauche, Neue Linke, Nuova Sinistra, and the Nieuw Links appeared in different ‘Western’ countries. Despite their differences, they emerged from a similar context and shared their criticism of conservatism, capitalism, reform policies, as well

²⁵⁶ Berthold Molden, ‘Genozid in Vietnam. 1968 Als Schlüsselereignis in Der Globalisierung Des Holocaustdiskurses’, in *Weltwende 1968? Ein Jahr Aus Globalgeschichtlicher Perspektive*, ed. Jens Kastner and David Mayer (Vienna: Mandelbaum Verlag, 2008), 84f.

²⁵⁷ Eckert, ‘Panafricanismus, Afrikanische Intellektuelle Und Europa Im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert’, 233.

²⁵⁸ Samir Amin, cited in Nash, ‘Third Worldism’, 96.

²⁵⁹ Kalter, *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt*, 82.

as the dogmatism of the Soviet Union. The ultra-left groups dismissed the representative party system as hierarchical and oppressive and, instead, embraced internationalism, antifascism, and revolution.²⁶⁰ Kalter asserts that the idea of Third Worldism as well as the New Radical Left in France developed at the same time. Both were intertwined from the end of the 1950s until the mid-70s, the time of the “long 1960s”.²⁶¹ He even argues that the anti-colonial radical Left first developed in France.²⁶² Indeed, as mentioned before, the term “Third World” was coined by the French scholar Alfred Sauvy in 1952 and was, subsequently, taken up by the French Left. That is to say, the term as well as the concept of a joint Third World revolutionary struggle and solidarity had their origins in France, Andrew Nash concurs. For French Marxists, the national liberation struggles against colonial rule, anti-imperialist efforts in Latin America, and antiracist movements worldwide were an answer to the problem of revolutionary agency. After decades of economic growth, the majority of the ‘Western’ working class had subscribed to the politics of reformism and, with that, had presented the Left with the predicament of who was now to incite and lead the revolutionary change.²⁶³

In France, the history of the New Radical Left commenced with the triple crisis of 1956. Firstly, the brutal suppression of the anti-Soviet revolts in Hungary led to a crisis of the *French Communist Party* (PCF), which prompted many members to turn their back on the party and to quit their memberships. The New Left was a response to the discontentment and frustration with communist dogmatism and leading role of the USSR. Secondly, the Suez crisis shifted global power further away from Europe and brought ‘non-Western’ nations as active players to the stage of world politics. The crisis was provoked when Egypt’s Prime Minister and Third Worldist Gamal Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal Company, which had hitherto been owned by French and British shareholders. The battle over the control of the Suez Canal was fought between Egypt and Israel, supported by Great Britain and France. When the United States and USSR pressured the aggressors to withdraw, Nasser emerged as the winner. What is more, the French socialist reformist party SFIO (*French Section of the Workers’ International*) – being part of a centre-left coalition – was involved in the war against Egypt. In fact, it was SFIO Prime Minister Guy Mollet who commanded the war. This resulted in a final rift between the radical and the reformist Left. Lastly, another crucial factor for the rise of the New Radical Left was the intensification of the Algerian War (1954-62) in 1956. Because the PCF never publicly

²⁶⁰ Kalter, 88–92.

²⁶¹ Kalter, 82.

²⁶² Kalter, 26.

²⁶³ Nash, ‘Third Worldism’, 98, 101.

sided with the FLN and the socialists even supported the war, many leftists turned away from the parties. The traditional leftist strands and parties had lost credibility, the Soviet Union lost its status of a utopian place. Instead, the New Left turned towards the revolutionary efforts in the colonised periphery, which was now “discovered” as an instigator for a global revolution.²⁶⁴ Emmanuel Terray, anthropologist and activist, reflects: “For all of us who entered into politics during that period, the problem of decolonization immediately became the major, if not the exclusive, concern”.²⁶⁵ The term “Third World” gained popularity among the French Left during the Algerian War and their proclaimed solidarity with the FLN.²⁶⁶ French Third Worldism manifested itself especially in the form of personal, material, and ideological support, like joining underground resistance. By joining the FLN, French leftists referred to the tradition of partisan resistance against the Nazi occupation. The reference to antifascist resistance in the solidarity with Third Worldist movements was not just evoked during the Algerian War but was, in fact, a reoccurring theme, as we will see in the fourth chapter. For the Left as well as for the colonised world, WWII constituted a benchmark for resistance and change. The trope of resisting Nazi-like evil was reinforced during the decolonization struggles, the Algerian War, the anti-Vietnam War movement and the May ’68 movement. Putting themselves in the tradition of the *résistance*, whose legacy had to be preserved, the New Radical Left were quick in comparing governments, armies, and policies to the German fascists and, in turn, established their own political activities as anti-fascist and anti-colonial at the same time.²⁶⁷

While the French New Left included many different, at times competing or even hostile groups, they were all influenced by Marxism and took on a radical anti-colonial and anti-imperialist perspective. The Third World was not only a bearer of revolutionary hope for the New Radical Left but also an important point of reference for the critique of their own societies. What is more, through its strive for self-liberation, the Third World embodied a force that seemed to be capable of ridding the world of colonialism, capitalism, Stalinism, and Eurocentrism.²⁶⁸ The Left read speeches and texts by prominent Third Worldist leaders and intellectuals, such as Frantz Fanon, Fidel Castro, Mao, Hồ Chí Minh, and Stokely Carmichael; travelled to places of resistance, such as Albania, Vietnam, Mozambique, and Cuba; and produced media as well as symbols and icons, such as the “Che”. The “long 1960s” brought together people from afar,

²⁶⁴ Kalter, *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt*, 108–12.

²⁶⁵ Emmanuel Terray, cited in Kristin Ross, *May ’68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 80.

²⁶⁶ Nash, ‘Third Worldism’, 98, 101f.

²⁶⁷ Kalter, *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt*, 127.

²⁶⁸ Kalter, 113.

motivated “political pilgrimages” and “revolution tourism” – for Kalter, these Leftists were inciters as well as recipients of a political and cultural globalization.

However, the alliance was not always an easy one. The question of solidarity was often defined by conflicts over power, respective perceptions, goals, and methods. The relation of the radical Left with the Third World was partly shaped by dissent, wrong perceptions, and paternalism. ‘Western’ Third World discourse created a symbolic compression of the diverse movements in the Global South and stereotypical narratives by morally elevating the ‘non-Western’ suppressed and revolutionaries. In other words, the Third World became the utopian symbol that could save decadent mass-consumerist Europe but was not necessarily perceived in its diversity, ambivalence, and complexity.²⁶⁹ While the ‘Western’ Left undoubtedly romanticized and homogenized the faraway revolts and used them for their own aims, the positive reference and solidarity movements created contacts, networks, new imageries, and philosophies. With that, the Third Worldist movement of the New Radical Left contributed to the decentralisation of Europe.²⁷⁰ “This ambivalent relationship of the ’68ers to the Third World was precisely not a ‘phantasmagoria,’ but for many a winding path – embedded in everyday practices – between a differentiating analysis and undifferentiated idolization, between a curiosity in diversity and essentializing notions.”²⁷¹ Kalter distinguishes three phases of the “long 1960s” in France. He locates the ascending phase between 1956, the year of the triple crisis, and 1961. It was a period of Third Worldist actors and activities increasingly entering the global political sphere, it was the time of the Cuban Revolution, numerous Third Worldist conferences, the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, the Algerian War, and the Year of Africa. It was also a period in which Frantz Fanon and Jean-Paul Sartre formulated central perspectives of the New Radical Left and Third Worldism. The phase between 1961 and 1968 was the unfolding phase with the central theme of Vietnam War opposition. From 1968 to the mid-1970s, Kalter sees the specific idea of the Third World as well as the New Radical Left descending.²⁷²

French anti-colonial solidarity comprised of support committees, media production, and informal networks. Among the first conflicts that became object of solidarity were the Algerian War and the liberation wars in the Portuguese colonies in Angola, Mozambique, or Guinea-Bissau. The first anti-colonial solidarity networks formed in support of the Algerian liberation

²⁶⁹ Kalter, 480ff.

²⁷⁰ Kalter, 23, 26f.

²⁷¹ Christoph Kalter, *The Discovery of the Third World: Decolonization and the Rise of the New Left in France, c.1950–1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 18.

²⁷² Kalter, *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt*, 16.

movement. The Algerian War was a conflict between the FLN and France over the independence of Algeria. The roots of the conflict go back to the end of World War II and the Sétif and Guelma massacre, committed by the French colonial authorities and French settler militia. It was a brutal repression against anti-colonial demands, that had been brought forward at the victory celebration over the Axis Powers on May 8, 1945, in Algeria, when demonstrators called for independence for Algeria by waving the later adopted Algerian flag. The conflict turned into a full-scale war in 1954 and ended with Algeria's independence in 1962. It was characterized by guerrilla warfare by the FLN and the employment of torture by the French.²⁷³ France was anxious to lose another colony after just having lost the war against the guerrilla Việt Minh in Indochina. Soon enough, networks of anti-war and anti-colonial activists in France were formed to protest the scandalous war and the unwillingness of France to accept the end of the colonial era. A whole generation in France was politicized by the war, developed crucial skills, and built long-lasting networks. "Indeed, many radicals became deeply involved in the struggle for Algerian independence, collaborating with the FLN, laundering money, forging documents, distributing illegal literature, and assisting deserters, to list only a few examples."²⁷⁴ In addition, important leftist intellectuals, who were also later involved in the Tribunal, such as the mathematician Laurent Schwartz, lawyer Gisèle Halimi, Simone de Beauvoir, and Jean-Paul Sartre, entered the arena of protest and saw themselves in the role of "moral and political arbiters".²⁷⁵ In 1960, the "Manifesto of the 121" was signed and published by intellectuals to acknowledge the war as a legitimate struggle for independence, to condemn the use of torture, and to assert the right to object military service.²⁷⁶ The activism of the intellectuals did not remain symbolic though. Beauvoir and Halimi wrote a book together about rape and torture of Algerian women by French soldiers, Schwartz lost his university employment over his involvement, and Sartre's apartment was bombed several times.²⁷⁷ Leftist magazines, such as the prestigious *Les Temps Modernes* founded by Beauvoir, Sartre, and philosopher Maurice Merlot-Ponty in 1945, and *Le Monde Diplomatique* not only reported about the happenings in the Global South but also published articles by 'non-Western' activists.²⁷⁸ Other important Parisian magazines for the spreading of anticolonial thinking were the *Présence Africaine* – a Pan-Africanist magazine that was crucial for the development of Négritude and an important

²⁷³ Kalter, 124f.

²⁷⁴ Salar Mohandesi, 'Bringing Vietnam Home. The Vietnam War, Internationalism, and May '68', *French Historical Studies* 41, no. 2 (1 April 2018): 222.

²⁷⁵ Keenan, "'Vietnam Is Fighting for Us'", 215.

²⁷⁶ Keenan, 199.

²⁷⁷ Keenan, 215.

²⁷⁸ Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 84.

advocate of the liberation struggles in the French colonies – as well as *Études Anticolonialistes*. *Fiches D'information* – a bulletin founded in 1962 by anticolonial activists.²⁷⁹ What is more, the bookshop *La Joie de Lire* in Paris, opened by the writer François Maspero in 1955, became a pivotal place for the dissemination of anti-colonial books, pamphlets, and magazines. Not only did the store contain leftist classics by Marx or Lenin, poetic writings by Jean Giraudoux or Joseph François Michaud, but, most importantly, writings from activists and intellectuals from the Global South. In fact, Maspero found his own publishing company *Edition Maspero*, which specialized in the printing of theories and testimonies from the Global South. This press “tracked the ruin and collapse of Empire” and “regularly gave voice to Latin American, African, and Asian political theories and testimonies”.²⁸⁰ It was the first to publish works by the Moroccan anti-colonialist and leader of the *Tricontinental Conference* Mehdi Ben Barka, of Malcolm X, the Vietnamese military commander Võ Nguyên Giáp, the anti-colonial leader from Guinea-Bissau Amílcar Cabral, Ernesto “Che” Guevara, or the famous book by Frantz Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* with Sartre’s controversial preface. Thereby, Third World actors were not solely perceived as revolutionary subjects but recognized as significant thinkers.²⁸¹ Moreover, as *La Joie de Lire* brought the distant struggles to Paris, it

*became a center of sorts in the lives of many militants, an inevitable stopping place along daily trajectories, a place where, particularly during the Algerian period, any number of censored periodicals, state documents, banned books like Alleg’s La question, as well as foreign, difficult to locate, or ephemeral political pamphlets, could be found downstairs.*²⁸²

Thus, the solidarity movement for the Algerian independence, through its direct assistance of the FLN, the formation of committees, and media coverage, helped to change public opinion in favour of the independence movement.

As the war in Algeria came to an end, the focus shifted towards other independence movements. In the beginning of the 1960s, Portugal was facing armed resistance movements in Africa, which ultimately resulted in the independence of Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau in 1974 and Cape Verde in 1975. The French Left, which had gained all these skills and had created networks, was quick to build solidarity structures for these liberation struggles in the Portuguese colonies. Committees were formed all over Western Europe, such as the French

²⁷⁹ Victor Barros, ‘The French Anticolonial Solidarity Movement and the Liberation of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde’, *International History Review*, 2019, 4.

²⁸⁰ Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 84.

²⁸¹ Ross, 84.

²⁸² Ross, 82.

Support Committee for the Angolan People (later *Support Committee for Angola and the Peoples of the Portuguese Colonies*) and the *Comité National de Soutien de la Lutte de Libération dans les Colonies Portugaises* (CNSLCP).²⁸³ Support committees were autonomous civil society organisations, established “in order to encourage and provide political, informational, moral, financial, material and medical support to African liberation movements.”²⁸⁴ Not only did they attack Portugal’s determination to maintain its colonial empire but also the French government which supported the Portuguese “New State” (*Estado Novo*) dictatorship and its wars diplomatically, economically, and through military assistance.²⁸⁵ The French solidarity movement focussed mainly on the PAIGC (*African Party for Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde*), under the leadership of Amílcar Cabral. Cabral was in close correspondence with anticolonial activists and enjoyed political and moral support from French intellectuals, such as Sartre, the filmmaker Claude Lanzmann, or the independent scholar Gérard Chaliand, among many others. Cabral invited activists to travel to Guinea-Bissau and record the struggle through filming, photographing, interviewing, and writing.²⁸⁶

*The PAIGC considered transnational anticolonial solidarity a way to integrate Guinea-Bissau’s and Cape Verde’s liberation struggle in a world history of the peoples fighting for freedom and emancipation. Transnational solidarity was a key part of the PAIGC’s political language, to the point that the support from the world’s anti-colonialist organisations was a key theme included in the program for the formation of the PAIGC combatants. French solidarity played a role in fulfilling this vision.*²⁸⁷

What is more, in the 1960s, France became the main destination for Portuguese migrants, deserters, and draft dodgers who sought political exile – many of whom became active in the French Left, such as the *French Communist League*, the action committees of May ’68, as well as the proletarian Left. That is, their presence in France increased the critical voices against the *Estado Novo* regime as well as the Portuguese wars in Africa. Despite the fact that the solidarity movement had no success in ending France’s allyship with the *Estado Novo*, it created a public awareness of Cabral’s revolutionary struggle in France. The committees mobilized civil society actors and collected voluntary contributions to provide financial, material, medical, and

²⁸³ Barros, ‘The French Anticolonial Solidarity Movement and the Liberation of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde’, 4f.

²⁸⁴ Barros, 2.

²⁸⁵ Barros, 2.

²⁸⁶ Barros, 8, 11f.

²⁸⁷ Barros, 16.

educational assistance. Not only was money sent to the liberation movements, but also school supplies, blood donations, and volunteers to help build infrastructures.²⁸⁸

As we have seen so far in the last two subchapters, “the long 1960s” were a time in which Third Worldist struggles culminated. Beginning with the demise of the European colonial empires, the appearance of non-European anti-colonialist leaders in the global political sphere, and later with numerous anti-colonial wars, with the Cuban Revolution, Algerian War, and the Vietnamese-American War, as well as through the networks of Third Worldist leaders, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist ideas influenced a whole generation of the ‘Western’ Left which looked towards and up to the new revolutionaries and theorists. Third Worldism, as I conceptualize it, was twofold: the focus of ‘Western’ Radical New Leftists on ‘non-Western’ revolutionary movements, their romanticized hopes of a new messianic force creating a better world, and the solidarity movements that created actual connections and support. And yet, it also describes the cooperation, networks, and agenda among ‘non-Western’ governments, leaders, movements, and players during the time in order to shape global politics on behalf of the suppressed, exploited, and underprivileged Global South and racialized people within the Global North. Kalter puts it as follows:

*The radical Left’s concept of the Third World was the embodiment of what was demanded here: a fresh idea promising a novel world. [...] in spite of the divisive inequalities and conflicts it addressed, this concept was above all a globalizing one. It had French roots but originators that were spread over various continents, since Sauvy, Sartre, and Maspero had shaped it just as much as Samir Amin and André Gunder Frank, Frantz Fanon and Ernesto “Che” Guevara. By connecting decolonization, the Cold War, and global economic structures, the concept represented the world as an interconnected web – while at the same time promoting this web in the process. The idea of the Third World was the expression of a global consciousness, but also the reference point for transnational, transcontinental, and eventually global actions. It not only imparted shape and relative coherence to a political movement in France, but was appropriated on all continents. It brought together people from all parts of the world and offered them a conceptual framework to define political projects – oftentimes even joint projects. In this sense, the radical Left not only reacted to a growing globality, but wished for and reinforced it.*²⁸⁹

Andrew Nash argues that both interpretations – conceiving Third Worldism either as only an ideology by the Third World or by the ‘Western’ Left – are limited. Only by considering Third

²⁸⁸ Barros, 13, 15f.

²⁸⁹ Kalter, *The Discovery of the Third World*, 427.

Worldism in its complexity, ambiguity, and defects, we will be able to grasp the historical meaning and importance of it. For Nash,

*it was an extraordinary and unprecedented achievement to construct and sustain over decades a political and intellectual project capable of inspiring and harnessing the effort and commitment of millions of people in the advanced capitalist countries in solidarity with the struggles of people in the poorest societies. Even larger numbers of people in the Third World came to see their struggles as part of an effort to create a new world.*²⁹⁰

Having outlined the different aspects of Third Worldism and how to understand it, the following section will engage with the specific Third Worldist internationalism in solidarity with the struggles in Vietnam against the U.S. war efforts.

3.3. Internationalism in the Vietnamese-American War Era

Like no other conflict, the Vietnamese-American War was a connector for all different kind of Third Worldist movements around the world – from Civil Rights movements in the United States, revolutionary movements in Latin America, decolonization struggles in Africa, to ‘Western’ radical leftist movements. In Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s words, Vietnam created “overlapping communities of resistance” as it conflated different themes of struggles.²⁹¹ In order to understand these different themes and the protesting internationalism that manifested in response to the Vietnamese-American War, the following will give a short introduction in the conflicts in Vietnam, or Indochina.

A Brief History of the Vietnamese-American War

What is generally known as the “Vietnam War” (1955-1975) in the ‘West’, was actually the second war of ‘Western’ powers against guerrilla troops in the area of Indochina. Indochina was a colony of France which today encompasses the territory of the three countries of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the Kingdom of Cambodia, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, as well as the Chinese territory of Guangzhouwan. The so-called Indochinese Union was established in 1887 by the Third French Republic with Napoleon III aiming to reach ultimate imperial domination.²⁹² Since the beginning of colonial rule, there was resistance against it. Yet, it was only after 1945 when conditions were favourable enough for the

²⁹⁰ Nash, ‘Third Worldism’, 96.

²⁹¹ Ruth Wilson Gilmore, cited in Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 10.

²⁹² Lawrence, *The Vietnam War*, 10.

revolutionary potential to manifest itself. Vietnamese nationalism until then had neither been unified nor had a strong agenda beyond the restoration of the pre-colonial order.²⁹³

Hồ Chí Minh, known at the time as Nguyễn Tất Thành and by many other pseudonyms throughout his life, was involved in protests early on. Due to harassment by French colonial authorities, he left Indochina at a young age. He had lived and worked in the United States, Great Britain, France, the USSR, China, Thailand, and other places for three decades before returning in 1941 and forming the Việt Minh. During his stay in France, he started to involve himself in anti-colonial and Communist politics. At the end of World War I, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson brought forward his Fourteen Points, a set of principles to help establish peace in Europe. One of the principles called for the self-determination of national minorities. This idea was intended for the settlement of nationalist conflicts within a Europe of empires. However, leaders and movements in the colonies embraced the principle for their own struggle. In 1919, Hồ and other Indochinese exiles entered the Paris Peace Conference to bring forward a petition that called for the self-determination of the Vietnamese, for reforms, and equal rights. However, when their appeal was ignored, Hồ became disillusioned by ‘Western’ hypocrisy and turned towards socialist thought, especially Lenin’s espousal of anticolonialism and anti-imperialism.²⁹⁴ After WWII, France was soon exonerated for its role as Vichy France during the war and aspired to re-establish its colonial rule in Africa and Asia. Upon arrival, however, it was met with fierce nationalist movements aiming for independence.²⁹⁵ Hồ quickly became a symbol of anti-colonial resistance as he “showed a remarkable ideological flexibility and tactical genius that enabled him to succeed where earlier nationalists had failed”.²⁹⁶ On September 2, 1945, the Việt Minh declared Vietnam’s independence with the creation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). After a year of failed negotiations, war between the Việt Minh and France broke out – a war that scholars call the First Indochinese War.²⁹⁷

Although it was a war between a colonial power and an anti-colonial movement, the United States soon emerged as a party involved and interested in the conflict. While U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt had been eager to finish Wilson’s task after WWII – by placing all countries, that were formerly under a League of Nation mandate, under the trusteeship of the United Nations to prepare them for independence – the intensifying conflict with the USSR

²⁹³ Lawrence, 15f.

²⁹⁴ Lawrence, 17ff.

²⁹⁵ Marc Frey, ‘Drei Wege Zur Unabhängigkeit. Die Dekolonisierung in Indochina, Indonesien Und Malaya Nach 1945’, *Vierteljahrshefte Für Zeitgeschichte* 50, no. 3 (2002): 401f.

²⁹⁶ Lawrence, *The Vietnam War*, 17.

²⁹⁷ Lawrence, 26f., 33.

changed the U.S. course. In fact, when WWII came to an end and Harry S. Truman took office, he made clear that he would not oppose the restoration of colonialism in Indochina. The United States' main determination became the global containment of the spreading communist movements and establishment of communist governments. In 1950, when the communist Chinese government officially recognized the DRV and when socialist North Korea invaded democratic South Korea, the United States started to support France's war financially and materially. Within two years, the United States financed more than one-third of the war expenses.²⁹⁸ The war ended in 1954 with the battle of Điện Biên Phủ – and the U.S.' decision not to intervene. While the DRV was victorious, they barely had a say at the Geneva Conference. The conference, which was to settle the peace arrangements, mainly ensured the interests of the great powers, including France, the United States, USSR, China, and United Kingdom. Vietnam was divided at the seventeenth parallel, allocating the northern part to the Việt Minh or, to be more precise, *Communist Party of Vietnam* (CPV), and the southern part to a government headed by the former emperor Bảo Đại. The parts were to be governed from Hanoi and Saigon respectively. Moreover, the settlement called for the unification of the country in 1959 through nationwide free elections. The communist CPV leaders were convinced to agree to the settlement by Zhou Enlai who argued that the United States might otherwise invade the country straightaway.²⁹⁹

The ultimate failure of the Geneva Accords was a result of multiple factors, the main one being Cold War rivalry. Soon after the conference, the anti-communist, nationalist, and Catholic politician Ngô Đình Diệm took over Bảo Đại's position of South Vietnam's prime minister. Backed by the United States, which was eager to establish its influence in the country and avert the spread of Communism, he enjoyed full reign. Even when he converted South Vietnam into a quasi-dictatorship and persecuted and arrested twenty-five thousand suspected Việt Minh supporters, of whom many were tortured and executed, the United States assisted South Vietnam with more than a \$1 billion over the years. Diệm was able to use the United States' anxiousness about Communism to his ends. When the North Vietnamese CPV, who also reigned dictatorially and had executed fifteen thousand people in the course of a land reform, requested discussions about how the elections were going to be held, they were confronted with Diệm's rebuff. Not only the United States were willing to abandon the agreement of unification and elections, but also the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, who chaired the Geneva

²⁹⁸ Lawrence, 30f., 39f.

²⁹⁹ Lawrence, 46–50.

conference and were eager to maintain a smooth relationship with the United States.³⁰⁰ However, North Vietnamese leaders – urged even by the USSR to avoid war and to accept a two-state solution – could not “ignore the increasingly desperate appeals of their Southern comrades”.³⁰¹ The different communist groups in the South started their activity in the mid-1950s under the name of *Mặt trận Dân tộc Giải phóng Miền Nam Việt Nam* – or commonly known as Việt Cộng – which in 1960 became the military branch of the political organisation *National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam* (NLF).³⁰² As of 1957, the NLF launched the so-called “Extermination of Traitors” campaign, which included the assassination of South Vietnamese officials and raids against government strongholds.³⁰³ In 1959, the North Vietnamese government came to the decision to take up arms again. This conclusion was encouraged by the increasing support of China and the Soviet Union for another armed struggle as well as the belief that Diệm’s violent campaign on the countryside had laid the ground for popular support of the communists. Shortly afterwards, a supply line was established that enabled troops and equipment to cross the seventeenth parallel into South Vietnam – known in the Global North as the Hồ Chí Minh trail. The trail was a network of routes that ran from North Vietnam through Laos and Cambodia into South Vietnam. Moreover, the North Vietnamese government allied with other groups in the South opposing Diệm and created a broad coalition between various political, religious, and ethnic groups to fight for the unification of both Vietnams.³⁰⁴ As Mark Atwood Lawrence puts it,

By the start of 1961, then, the communists had laid the political and military groundwork for a new war. The conflict had also acquired one of the most distinct features it would have over the years to come: it was simultaneously a civil war among Southerners and a cross-border effort by Hanoi to reunify the country on its own terms, a complexity that would often elude American policymakers prone to see the conflict simply as a result of Northern aggression against the South.³⁰⁵

The “Vietnam War” is usually dated from 1955 to 1975 but this timeframe includes different phases of the war. Until 1961, the war was conducted by the southern NLF, supported by the northern CPV, against the southern government, which was supported by the United States. The U.S. involvement was limited mainly to economic and monetary aid, specialist advisors,

³⁰⁰ Lawrence, 54–61.

³⁰¹ Lawrence, 62.

³⁰² The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, ‘Viet Cong’, in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 8 December 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Viet-Cong>.

³⁰³ Lawrence, *The Vietnam War*, 63.

³⁰⁴ Lawrence, 63f.

³⁰⁵ Lawrence, 65.

and weaponry.³⁰⁶ When John F. Kennedy took the presidential office after Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1961, South Vietnam was in a state of “active guerrilla warfare”.³⁰⁷ While the new president was wary of a war and its implications for American society, the desire to thwart the spread of communism and to stabilize the anti-communist South prevailed. Moreover, the U.S. government feared to lose credibility among its allies as well as authority among its enemies.³⁰⁸ Similarly, the CPV leaders feared an all-out American intervention. At the same time, they deemed the situation as advantageous as Diệm’s policy had alienated the rural population and the USSR and China were again more willing to support a war.³⁰⁹ Both, the U.S. as well as the North Vietnamese government expanded their war commitment and gradually escalated the war until 1965. During these years, the United States sent military advisers and assistance, established an enlarged military bureaucracy, and approved of the use of “defoliants, herbicides, and napalm” in order to detect and locate supply routes and positions of the CPV and NLF fighters.³¹⁰ At the same time, the South Vietnamese government proved hard to stabilize. After unpopular and brutal anti-Buddhist campaigns and little cooperative will, Diệm was ousted and killed in a coup d’état that brought a military junta to power. Over the next years, the government was in constant upheaval, which resulted in little approval from the South Vietnamese population.³¹¹

In 1965, the war reached a new stage of escalation. The Hanoi government had secured military aid from the Soviet Union as well as China, which – after the Sino-Soviet Split – were both eager to secure their influence. The new U.S. president Lyndon Johnson, who as former Vice President took power after Kennedy’s assassination in 1963, was zealous to display more dominance and strength in the conflict.³¹² Despite disagreements within his administration and first civil protests, he decided to commit the United States to a major war. Not only did he send troops to wage a ground war in the South, but he also launched the Operation Rolling Thunder – an aerial attack campaign that bombed North Vietnam and Laos vigorously for the next three and a half years.³¹³ By the end of 1968, 643,000 tons of bombs had been dropped, 52,000 North Vietnamese had been killed, and much of the country’s infrastructure and industry demolished. The operation’s main goal was to destroy supply routes and to stop troops and equipment from

³⁰⁶ Lawrence, 59f.

³⁰⁷ Lawrence, 67.

³⁰⁸ Lawrence, 71,73.

³⁰⁹ Lawrence, 63, 67.

³¹⁰ Lawrence, 72f.

³¹¹ Lawrence, 78ff.

³¹² Lawrence, 82.

³¹³ Lawrence, 93.

infiltrating into the South.³¹⁴ Meanwhile, through “aggressive ‘search-and-destroy’ operations” the United States hoped to “inflict casualties more quickly than North Vietnam and the NLF could replace their losses” and to wear out the enemy.³¹⁵ Millions of gallons of Agent Orange and other chemicals were used to locate troops and to “flush the enemy out of its hiding places”.³¹⁶ Despite the military and artillery superiority of the United States, the opponents were able to persevere. In defiance of the attacks, supply routes were never completely cut off and quickly restored a steady flow of troops was able to be maintained. What is more, North Vietnam proved to be surprisingly resourceful. Troops, equipment, and whole factories were moved to remote locations, into underground tunnel networks and caves. Much of the civil society, including WINA, was engaged in war activities, such as building bomb shelters or damage repair. Moreover, the long history of Vietnamese nationalism and communist propaganda secured a high approval and legitimacy in the North as well as in the South.³¹⁷ Even though both belligerent sides declared their willingness for peace talks and negotiations on several occasions, neither was actually interested. Both saw a good chance for victory and thus an outcome serving their interest.³¹⁸ The three years of intensive fighting resulted in a deadlock, which prevented either side from retreating. Even the Tet Offensive, a massive surprise attack in the beginning of 1968 carried out by the NLF and North Vietnam, could not decide the war. It was, nevertheless, decisive for the outcome in the long run.³¹⁹

Even though the Vietnamese communists were able to achieve small victories and to withstand the American military advantage, they were eventually counting on winning the war on the political rather than a military field – which would prove to be true.³²⁰ The United States had little international support when entering the war, but the dismissal grew stronger over time. While they were supported militarily by South Korea, Australia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Taiwan, their most powerful allies expressed strong scepticism or fierce opposition.

*Around the world, America's reputation suffered as the war dragged on. From Sweden to India to Japan, large chunks of public opinion lauded North Vietnam as a heroic nation fighting for its independence and decried U.S. behaviour, especially the bombing of the North.*³²¹

³¹⁴ Lawrence, 98.

³¹⁵ Lawrence, 102.

³¹⁶ Lawrence, 103.

³¹⁷ Lawrence, 99ff., 104, 108.

³¹⁸ Lawrence, 111.

³¹⁹ Lawrence, 115f., 125.

³²⁰ Lawrence, 108.

³²¹ Lawrence, 111f.

Meanwhile, the pressure from within the United States rose constantly. By the end of 1967, 45 percent of the American population believed that the military intervention had been a mistake. In the same year – the year of the *International War Crimes Tribunal on Vietnam* – “antiwar activism accelerated dramatically, marking a watershed moment not only in the Vietnam War but also in the Cold War more generally. For the first time, a large percentage of the public questioned the way political leaders managed foreign affairs.”³²² After the Tet Offensive, the U.S. military intensified their war efforts once again, which made 1968 the bloodiest year of the entire war. More than 14,500 American and 60,000 North and South Vietnamese soldiers were killed and many more wounded. The year also saw the assassination of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy as well as an intensifying civil rights movement. 1968 was characterised by widespread protests and brutal clashes between police and demonstrators in the United States. Johnson reacted to the movement with an illegal surveillance program against protest leaders by the CIA, called Operation Chaos, which collected information on 300,000 Americans until 1974. Moreover, the FBI infiltrated and harassed the protest movement and pro-war media reports were mobilized.³²³ Nevertheless, as 1968 was another election year, Johnson eventually gave in to pressure from his own party and offered to end all bombing in North Vietnam. Despite the concession, his opponent, the republican Richard Nixon won the election with the promise to end the war and still achieve “peace with honour”.³²⁴ According to Atwood Lawrence,

*Over the following years, Nixon tried a variety of novel expedients to achieve peace on American terms, variously employing escalation and withdrawal, bold gestures and secret manoeuvres. At every turn, however, the new administration ran up against old problems. Though badly damaged, communist forces refused to buckle. Though apparently stable, the South Vietnamese government failed to gain support among its people. Though relieved by declining U.S. casualties, the American public and Congress continued to sour on the war.*³²⁵

Despite his aim to end the war in order to save American credibility and to establish “a more harmonious international order”, Nixon was also aware that a quick withdrawal would lead to an imminent collapse of the South Vietnamese government with the CPV taking power.³²⁶ After a pro-American coup in Cambodia in 1970, another military operation was launched – against the Cambodian communists Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese communists in the border areas.

³²² Lawrence, 112.

³²³ Lawrence, 119, 131, 134f.

³²⁴ Lawrence, 135ff.

³²⁵ Lawrence, 137.

³²⁶ Lawrence, 139.

The manoeuvre sparked another, unprecedented protest in the United States, which left four students dead and thirteen wounded. Nixon lost the approval of Congress and the Senate, which heralded the beginning of the end of U.S. war efforts in Indochina.³²⁷ The fighting intensified in the beginning of 1972 as well as towards the end of the same year – interrupted by negotiation talks that secured Nixon his re-election. Finally, the heavy domestic and international criticism to the recurring aerial onslaughts led the United States to accept a disadvantageous peace agreement in early 1973. After the U.S. troops retreated, another two-year war continued which, eventually, led to the victory of the communist forces. The war ended on April 30, 1975, with the seizure of Saigon – and thirty years of war in Indochina came to an end.³²⁸ 1.5 million tons of bombs had been dropped on North and South Vietnam – three times the amount employed in the entire Pacific region during World War II.³²⁹ Over one million North Vietnamese and Việt Cộng guerrillas had been killed, two million Vietnamese civilians, tens of thousands Lao and Cambodian civilians, as well as 58,000 U.S. troops and at least 250,000 South Vietnamese soldiers.³³⁰

Internationalist Movements against the Vietnamese-American War

As already mentioned, the U.S. involvement in the war between North and South Vietnam unleashed massive anti-war protests – not only in the United States themselves but in many countries worldwide. Vietnam became a symbol of suppressed people fighting against an imperialist power. The fact that the Vietnamese revolutionaries managed to defy a global superpower with such little resources shocked the entire world. For the Third World, it was an extraordinary example of resistance. The Vietnamese struggle therefore became a connecting link between various movements worldwide. Different revolutionaries or activists, be it the Việt Cộng, French students, the PAIGC, or U.S. civil rights activists, saw themselves involved in the same struggle against anti-imperialism as well as anti-capitalism. Just like other anticolonial movements, the North Vietnamese peasants fighting against a highly industrialized power became the new revolutionary subject and a reference for identification.³³¹ For many ‘Western’ Leftists, the Vietnamese-American War was the culmination of anti-imperialist struggles hitherto. It became the most prominent theatre of a global confrontation that had started in Algeria and Cuba and that was also to be fought in the ‘Western’ world.³³² In fact, with slogans

³²⁷ Lawrence, 146f.

³²⁸ Lawrence, 154f., 158f., 161, 167.

³²⁹ Mohandesi, ‘Bringing Vietnam Home’, 231.

³³⁰ *The Vietnam War*, Episode 1, *Déjà Vu* (1858-1961) (PBS, 2017), 00:07:00 to 00:07:40.

³³¹ Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 80f.

³³² Kalter, *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt*, 22f.

like “Vietnam is in our factories” and “The university is our Vietnam”, Leftists in France and Italy translated the struggle in Vietnam into a domestic context.³³³ Guerrilla warfare in the Third World served as an inspiration for activist actions, especially in the United States and West Germany. Moreover, the active role of Vietnamese WINA in the war as fighters and workers became a reference point for feminists in the ‘West’. Vietnamese revolutionaries were well aware of their exemplary role. The *Vietnamese Women’s Union*, for instance, argued that their feminist liberation was somewhat advanced and that ‘Western’ feminists could learn from their example.³³⁴ Finally, the wars and battles, with Vietnamese-American War leading the way, were coming home to ‘Western’ countries meddling in the Global South. That is, protest increased in the global metropolises against their governments, in solidarity with anticolonial and anti-imperialist struggles as well as anti-capitalist movements.

The Vietnamese-American War also provided an important reference point for civil right and radical Black activists in the United States. During the 1960s, radicals, such as the *Revolutionary Action Movement*, argued that “African Americans were colonized in a similar way, faced a common enemy, and fought for the same goal of liberation as the Vietnamese” – thus constituted an “internal Vietnam” in the United States. The best way to commit to solidarity with the Vietnamese was to “open another front inside the imperialist world” and fight the United States from within.³³⁵ That idea was soon taken up by larger groups, such as the *Black Panther Party* and the SNCC. In 1967, American antiwar activists met with representatives of the NLF in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia. During the meeting, SNCC member John Wilson told the Vietnamese: “we feel very close to your struggle and understand it to its fullest since we are a colonized people also.” Therefore, he went on,

*“it is our job to disrupt American society by any means necessary. The duty of a revolutionary who finds himself captured in the heart of imperialism is to destroy that imperialism by any means necessary so that it cannot carry its aggression to other people of color around the world”.*³³⁶

Vietnamese revolutionaries applauded African Americans for their stance. In an article in the *Courrier du Vietnam* in 1966 they agreed that “[t]he first front against American imperialism is in Vietnam. The second is in the United States itself. In this country there are 20 million blacks oppressed, exploited, and despised like slaves.” In order “to win freedom and equality, they

³³³ Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 81f.

³³⁴ Mohandesi, ‘Bringing Vietnam Home’, 242f.

³³⁵ Mohandesi, 231f.

³³⁶ John Wilson, cited in Mohandesi, 232.

must, like the Vietnamese people, oppose antirevolutionary violence with revolutionary violence.”³³⁷ The communist party newspaper *Nhân Dân* often covered the struggle of Black Americans. After the assassination of Malcom X in 1965, an article titled “Malcom X Murder Shows Imperialists’ Cruelty”, drew the comparison between the “extremely reactionary home policy of the U.S. imperialists and their warlike, aggressive foreign policy; between their suppression of American negroes and their massacre of the South Vietnamese people”.³³⁸ In 1967, even moderate Martin Luther King Jr. started to publicly denounce the war. In a speech, he condemned that young Black soldiers were dying in Vietnam for a country that denied them equal rights. They were sent “8,000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem”.³³⁹ More than half a million people defied conscription. Most famously, boxer Muhammad Ali publicly protested the draft for religious and ethical reasons. His conviction and the fact that he was stripped off his boxing titles made him an idol of the anti-war movement in the United States.³⁴⁰ By the end of the 1960s, the opposition to the U.S. meddling in Vietnam and the support of the DRV spread throughout the whole African American community. In 1967, SNCC activist Stokely Carmichael visited North Vietnam to meet with DRV officials and revolutionaries. Interestingly enough, Vietnamese officials reacted with solidarity committees as well. In 1971 a delegation of Black radicals travelled to North Vietnam, invited by the *Vietnam Committee for Solidarity with the American People*.³⁴¹

At the same time, Third Worldist networks and connections that had been built since the *Bandung Conference* were used and intensified to condemn the U.S. war in Vietnam. While the states of the Non-Aligned Movement did not have the means to join the war and support the communist forces, other forms of solidarity were exercised.³⁴² As early as 1962, the Bissau-Guinean revolutionary Amílcar Cabral emphasized the importance of “the Vietnamese struggle, resistance and courage as inspiration for all the oppressed peoples in fighting for liberty and dependence”.³⁴³ The *Tricontinental Conference* in Havana, 1966, was an important milestone

³³⁷ Chien Sy, cited in Mohandesi, 232.

³³⁸ Vietnam News Agency, cited in Harish C. Mehta, “‘People’s Diplomacy’: The Diplomatic Front of North Vietnam during the War against the United States, 1965-1972” (Ph.D., Canada, McMaster University (Canada), 2009), 83.

³³⁹ Martin Luther King Jr., cited in Robert R. Tomes, *Apocalypse Then. American Intellectuals and the Vietnam War, 1954-1975*, *Apocalypse Then* (New York University Press, 1998), 192.

³⁴⁰ Lawrence, *The Vietnam War*, 113.

³⁴¹ Mehta, “‘People’s Diplomacy’”, 83ff.

³⁴² Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 110.

³⁴³ Barros, ‘The French Anticolonial Solidarity Movement and the Liberation of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde’, 14.

of anti-Vietnam War connections. Not only did the attendees condemn the U.S. war unanimously, Vietnam and “how to provide genuine solidarity to Vietnam” was one of the central points of the discussions.³⁴⁴ Moreover, Nguyễn Văn Tiên, a representative of the NLF and the North Vietnamese official *Trần Danh Tuyên* were present at the conference. Prime Minister Fidel Castro had offered to send thousands of Cuban volunteers to join the war in Vietnam. In a message sent to the Conference, Ernesto “Che” Guevara, who himself was in East Africa to support the revolutionary movement in Congo, plead for a different strategy.³⁴⁵ Instead of joining the Vietnamese forces, he appealed to create multiple fronts against the imperialist powers and to intensify the fighting wherever else the United States engaged in imperialist endeavours. He called for the creation of “two, three, many Vietnams” – a slogan that became a popular rallying cry amongst anti-imperialist and antiwar activists worldwide.³⁴⁶ The French Trotskyist philosopher Daniel Bensaïd later called the appeal “the internationalist manifesto of our generation”.³⁴⁷ Solidarity, wrote Guevara, was “not a matter of wishing success to the victim of aggression but sharing his fate; one must accompany him to his death or to victory”. Imperialism “must be defeated in a world confrontation”.³⁴⁸ A year later, Vietnamese revolutionaries endorsed Guevara’s appeal at the *Frist Conference of the Latin American Organization of Solidarity (OLAS)* in Havana:

*As comrade Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara put it, once ‘2, 3, or many Vietnams’ emerge, once the struggle of the American people, and in particular, the black sector, develops in the heart of the USA with the force of a storm [...] it is certain that North American imperialism will no longer stay standing.*³⁴⁹

At the same conference, Carmichael, who would also be involved in the Tribunal, pointed out that “[t]he heroic struggle of the people of Viet Nam aids all revolutionary peoples fighting against imperialism to an inestimable degree and constitutes an inspiring example for the peoples of Latin America”.³⁵⁰ Soon after the conference, the NLF embraced a stronger internationalist attitude. They vowed to “actively support the national liberation movement of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America against imperialism and old and new colonialism”, as well as, “the just struggle of Black people in the United States for their

³⁴⁴ Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 107.

³⁴⁵ Andrew Annandale Sinclair, ‘Che Guevara’, in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 16 June 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Che-Guevara>.

³⁴⁶ Wu, ‘The U.S. 1968’, June 2018, 711.

³⁴⁷ Daniel Bensaïd, cited in Mohandesi, ‘Bringing Vietnam Home’, 233.

³⁴⁸ Ernesto Guevara, cited in Nash, ‘Third Worldism’, 111.

³⁴⁹ Vietnam, cited in Mohandesi, ‘Bringing Vietnam Home’, 233.

³⁵⁰ Stokeley Carmichael, cited in Mohandesi, 233.

fundamental national rights”, as much as, “the struggle of the American people against the US imperialists’ war of aggression in Viet Nam”.³⁵¹ This passage was part of their new political program, published in the Vietnam Courier and read by many radicals all over the world. What is more, in the magazine *Tricontinental*, an important medium for the radical internationalist left with a circulation of 50,000 copies at its height in 1968, Vietnam was one of the central topics.³⁵² Articles on the matter were published by prominent figures such as Angela Davis, Sartre, Wilfred Burchett, another member-to-be of the Tribunal, as well as Vietnamese and Laotian revolutionaries.³⁵³

Similar to Guevara’s appeal as well as to the Black Panther’s mission of fighting “within the belly of the beast”, many ‘Western’ leftists took on the idea to disrupt and oppose imperialism from within. Guevara represented the personified revolutionary idealism of the second generation of Third Worldism and was therefore highly influential amongst the left.³⁵⁴ A factor that helped to forge an internationalist anti-Vietnam War commitment amongst the Left was the formation of the Trotskyist *Fourth International* in 1965, which officially committed to the anti-imperialist struggle, particularly to the support of the Vietnamese revolution. However, outside of politicizing young people, the *International* never played a crucial role as its organizational capacities were limited. Western European radicals therefore focussed on forming their own internationalist networks in order to pressure the United States and their allied governments. Vietnamese revolutionaries from the North and South welcomed these initiatives to fight imperialism not only on the battlefield but also on an ideological and political level by increasing pressure on ‘Western’ governments. By mobilizing domestic and international opinion against the war, the U.S. government would lose support and justification for the interference in Vietnam.³⁵⁵ Because France played a special role in the Vietnamese-American war and the French solidarity movement was particularly strong, the following pages will focus on this specific example of national internationalist solidarity.

It is no coincidence that many of the members of the Tribunal were French activists. The Vietnamese-American War was not only a key event for the French left but also for French national identity, which came to recreate itself in the mid-1960s. After having fought in

³⁵¹ Vietnam Courier, cited in Mohandesi, 233.

³⁵² Hanna, ‘Tricontinental’s International Solidarity. Emotion in OSPAAAL as Tactic to Catalyze Support of Revolution’, 180.

³⁵³ Executive Secretariat of the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, ed., ‘Tricontinental’, *Tricontinental*. 41 (1974); Executive Secretariat of the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, ed., ‘Tricontinental’, *Tricontinental*. 23 (1971).

³⁵⁴ Berger, ‘After the Third World?’, 22.

³⁵⁵ Mohandesi, ‘Bringing Vietnam Home’, 227–30.

Indochina until 1954 and against the Algerian independence movement until 1962, France now had the chance to shift its role from away from a colonial power towards an advocate of the self-decolonizing world. President Charles de Gaulle, who had formerly been involved in attempts to regain colonial territories, changed his policies as he saw the risk of another world war arising in the course of the Vietnamese-American War. He knew that European countries, in their alliance with the United States, would be dragged into a major war if America's war efforts would escalate internationally.³⁵⁶ Consequently, he pursued an outspoken policy of self-determination and asserted in 1963 that the future of Vietnam should rest on its citizens: "It belongs to the [Vietnamese] people, and only to them, to choose the ways to solve their problems".³⁵⁷ He positioned himself as "friend and aid to Third-World countries breaking free from the yoke of colonialism".³⁵⁸ De Gaulle was in correspondence with Hồ Chí Minh, induced the removal of American troops from French soil, withdrew France from the military command of the NATO, and, in 1966, he travelled to Cambodia and gave a famous speech in Phnom Penh condemning the war.³⁵⁹ This new stance against imperialism made it difficult for the French left, after years of opposing his foreign policies, to not appear Gaullist. As a response, they questioned his sincerity, attacked his hypocrisy and inconsistent policies.³⁶⁰ While the French anti-Algerian War movement had criticized its own country's policies, the French anti-Vietnam War movement targeted the U.S. government – and thus had to operate more internationally. As a result, the movement created a conceptual space that connected the Third World, the Parisian student district Quartier Latin, World War II, and the Algerian and the Vietnamese-American war.³⁶¹

The Vietnamese-American War politicised a new generation and further radicalized and internationalized parts of the French left.³⁶² As previously demonstrated, the French anticolonial and antiwar movement emerged from a "political ecosystem shaped by the accumulation of prior struggles",³⁶³ most importantly against the Algerian War and in support of the liberation struggles in Portuguese colonies, which would become Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Cape Verde. That is, the movements were able to draw on previously build networks, press, and skills. Just like in other countries of the 'West' and during former anticolonial wars,

³⁵⁶ Keenan, "'Vietnam Is Fighting for Us'", 2f.; Bethany S. Keenan, "'Flattering the Little Sleeping Rooster': The French Left, de Gaulle, and the Vietnam War in 1965", *Historical Reflections* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 93.

³⁵⁷ Charles de Gaulle, cited in Keenan, "'Flattering the Little Sleeping Rooster'", 94.

³⁵⁸ Keenan, 95.

³⁵⁹ Keenan, 102.

³⁶⁰ Keenan, 95ff.

³⁶¹ Kalter, *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt*, 205.

³⁶² Keenan, "'Vietnam Is Fighting for Us'", 50f.

³⁶³ Mohandesi, 'Bringing Vietnam Home', 222.

solidarity committees were founded in order to mobilize support. Antiwar activism, which gathered speed with the launching of Operation Rolling Thunder in 1965, involved teach-ins, mass marches, agitation in neighbourhoods, schools, and factories, radical reporting, declarations, as well as the assistance of deserted American soldiers, among others.³⁶⁴ In February 1966, 15,000 Parisians delivered a petition to the U.S. Consulate; in March, a three-day protest brought 100,000 people on the streets of 125 towns all over France. 50,000 French WINA participated in several “Peace Vigils”, 70,000 people followed the appeal for meetings of the *Mouvement de la Jeunesse Communiste*, and 30,000 took to the streets in Paris after the bombardement of Haiphong and Hanoi.³⁶⁵

While these early protests were dominated by the *French Communist Party*, New Radical Left activists soon took over. The Vietnamese-American War brought together three generations: the older ones, such as Sartre and Laurent Schwartz, the ones that had been politicised during the Algerian War, and the young activists.³⁶⁶ These activists often stemmed from academic settings. In 1965, the umbrella organisation *Collectif Intersyndical Universitaire* (CIU) was formed, which coordinated anti-Vietnam War activities. The CIU organized protest, such as the International University Week Against the Vietnam War in 1965, and played a pivotal role in educating people on the history of, and war in, Vietnam. Later, members of the Tribunal played critical roles, such as university professors Laurent Schwartz, a member of the CIU, and Jean Chesneaux, who gave lectures on Indochina.³⁶⁷ Academic and communist youth organisations similarly organized protest, such as the *Union Nationale des Etudiantes de France* (UNEF) which formed an “Action Committee Against the Vietnam War” in 1966.³⁶⁸ While many communist, socialist, and radical groups worked together for joint activities in the beginning – such as mass demonstrations or an “International Solidarity Week” in 1966 – divisions between the different leftist orientations as well as amongst them hardened over time. While the PCF and other communist and socialist groups called for peace in Vietnam, the radical Left fought under the slogan “Arms to Vietnam”.³⁶⁹ In late 1966, the *Comité Vietnam National* (CVN) was founded as an over-arching committee for all radical groups opposing the war and was to become the most successful group. It was headed by the prominent activists and academics Schwartz and Sartre. The CVN would be heavily involved in the Tribunal. Two protest

³⁶⁴ Mohandesi, 219f.

³⁶⁵ Keenan, ““Vietnam Is Fighting for Us””, 48.

³⁶⁶ Kalter, *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt*, 203.

³⁶⁷ Keenan, ““Vietnam Is Fighting for Us””, 51, 55f.

³⁶⁸ Keenan, 58.

³⁶⁹ Keenan, 60–64.

meetings, called “Six Hours for Vietnam” and “Six Hours of the World for Vietnam”, were organized.³⁷⁰ They “offered an intellectual, cultural and artistic smorgasboard meant to bring anti-war activities in France to the next level”.³⁷¹ The second one, which took place in November 1966, brought as many as 5,000 people together to hear key speakers Sartre, Schwartz, and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, musical performances, join teach-in style colloquiums, as well as watch films on the war by Roger Pic and Australian filmmaker Wilfred Burchett. Both were going to be members of the Tribunal. Personalities from Brazil, Morocco, Cuba, the United States, the Netherlands, as well as North Vietnamese officials made an appearance, which rendered the meeting more internationally connected than any before.³⁷² In his speech, Sartre made clear the importance of the solidarity movement with the Vietnamese cause: “Their fight is ours. It is the fight against American hegemony, against American imperialism. The defeat of the Vietnamese people would politically be our defeat, the defeat of all free people. Because Vietnam is fighting for us.”³⁷³ As will be shown more in depth in the following chapter, the solidarity movement was not based on an altruistic idea but on a sense that Vietnam was the theatre in which a common battle was fought.

Anti-Vietnam War internationalism, which connected people from all over the world, on the one hand often reverted to idealisation; on the other hand, it helped create new and more complex images of Southeast Asia and brought into focus alternative values and political possibilities. In her book *Radicals on the Road*, Judy Tzu-Chun Wu traces back some travels that anti-Vietnam War activists undertook in order to connect their struggles. She shows not only how they helped forging antiwar internationalism, but also how *white* ‘Western’, Black ‘Western’, and Asian individuals shaped a new image and representation of Southeast Asia in the ‘West’. While the U.S. government saw itself as an agent of a democratic, capitalist, and individualist world, activists from the ‘West’ travelled to Southeast Asia to challenge American politics and values. Distancing themselves from militaristic, materialistic, and racist principles, ‘Western’ internationalists at the same time gained personal, political, and religious inspiration from their travels. Referring to Edward Said’s concept, Wu calls this reversed dichotomy ‘radical orientalism’ – as it idealized ‘the East’ and denigrated ‘the West’ in order to criticise ‘Western’ imperialism and capitalism. That is, while this perception still rested on a dichotomy of cultures and the representation were often simplified and inaccurate, it helped forge a

³⁷⁰ Mohandesi, ‘Bringing Vietnam Home’, 223–26.

³⁷¹ Keenan, ““Vietnam Is Fighting for Us””, 1.

³⁷² Keenan, 1, 86f.

³⁷³ Jean-Paul Sartre, cited in Keenan, 1f.

different image of Vietnam. Firstly, it helped to acknowledge humanity of America's enemy, which was – due to warfare propaganda – lost in the wider perception of Vietnamese people. Further, Southeast Asian people were active in the production of new images and voices. Lastly, the activists laid focus on shared political ideas and other commonalities, rather than differences.³⁷⁴ Moreover, through these transfers and encounters, “the decolonizing East helped to define the identities and goals of activists in the West”.³⁷⁵ By witnessing the conditions of the war and disseminating their experiences through photographs, films, letters, reports, books, artwork, and others, ‘Western’ activists contributed to a “global public sphere of civic debate about morality of the U.S. war in Vietnam”.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴ Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road. Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism During the Vietnam Era*, Cornell Paperbacks (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 3–6.

³⁷⁵ Wu, 5.

³⁷⁶ Wu, 4.

4. THE INTERNATIONAL WAR CRIMES TRIBUNAL ON VIETNAM

“I admit that I am, like other members of the ‘tribunal’,
a declared enemy of imperialism and that I feel myself
in solidarity with all those who fight against it.”³⁷⁷

Jean Paul Sartre (1967)

The more the war in Vietnam escalated in the mid-1960s the more urgently people in the ‘West’ and elsewhere felt the need to show resistance. With that, questions arose as to with which means these interventions could be carried out, how pressure on governments be increased, and consciousness among the wider population raised. In the movie *Far from Vietnam* (1967), one of the moviemakers, Jean-Luc Godard, reflects on the question “what it means to support a struggle when one is so far, in every sense of the word, from the scene”.³⁷⁸ Leading up to the filming, he had approached the DRV, which declined his offer to film. Godard admits that the refusal had been for the best as he “could have given them more problems than help”.³⁷⁹ As he was not the one fighting, he was too far removed from the actual struggle. “Here, we are not fighting with arms,” he goes on, “Far from it. We may say that our hearts bleed, but how? Our blood has nothing to do with the blood of anybody injured. So, there was some kind of shame.”³⁸⁰ In his reflexion, he raised a question that many at the time pondered about: How to demonstrate solidarity with a struggle that is not one’s own? Not only did Godard refer to Vietnam, but also to the workers’ movements in France, such as the Rhodiaceta factory strike in Besançon. He concludes that “instead of invading Vietnam” people had to “let Vietnam invade us”. That is, he asked for the credo demanded by Che Guevara to be taken seriously in the ‘West’.

*And we are made to realize the place it takes in our everyday life wherever we are. It makes us understand Vietnam isn’t alone. There’s all of Africa and South America. We have to start creating a Vietnam. When Che Guevara says ‘Let’s create two or three other Vietnams’, we can apply it to ourselves.*³⁸¹

Similarly, Bertrand Russell had pondered about this question of solidarity. With the set-up of the *International War Crimes Tribunal on Vietnam*, he and all the other members created and

³⁷⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘Imperialist Morality. Interview with Jean Paul Sartre on the War Crimes Tribunal’, *New Left Review*, no. 41 (1967): 4.

³⁷⁸ Mohandesi, ‘Bringing Vietnam Home’, 219.

³⁷⁹ *Far From Vietnam* (Societe pour le Lancement des Oeuvres Nouvelles, 1967), 57:06.

³⁸⁰ *Far From Vietnam*, 58:48.

³⁸¹ *Far From Vietnam*, 59:49.

tried out an unprecedented form of solidarity. On the basis of the extensive theoretical background on solidarity and the historical contextualization given in the previous chapters, this chapter looks at how solidarity was factually carried out at the IWCT. I start with shining light on the members, their activities, and connections within a broader internationalist movement.

4.1. Internationalism and Connections

Bertrand Russell, initiator and Honorary President of the Tribunal, had a long history of antiwar activism and was well connected among antiimperialist activists. The philosopher, who was 93 years old when he commenced to organize the Tribunal, had publicly opposed the South African Boer War, World War I, and was an opponent of nuclear weapons and armament.³⁸² In the early years of the Cold War, Russell did not hide his anti-Soviet sentiments and – contrary to his pacifist beliefs – even deemed a war necessary in view of a potential Soviet invasion of Western Europe. In his eyes, the establishment of a world government could be the solution for long-lasting peace. With Stalin's death and the political rise of the United States, however, Russell deemed the United States to be the prime threat to peace in their imperialist endeavours and claim of global dominance. The American War in Vietnam strongly infuriated his sense of justice and took his antiwar activities to the next level. Despite his dislike for authoritarian rule and the restraint of freedoms, he put aside his anti-communist sentiments in order to pursue peace. He saw ideology and nationalism as the main reasons for war. In 1963, he founded the *Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation* (BRPF) as well as the *Atlantic Peace Foundation* in order to collect funds and as a tool to intensify and assist his activism.³⁸³ On its website, the BRPF states that the

Foundation was formed to further the cause of peace, and to assist in the pursuit of freedom and justice. It sought to identify and counter the causes of violence, and to identify and oppose the obstacles to worldwide community. It was designed to promote research into disarmament, wars and threats of war, and to publish the results.³⁸⁴

Russell wrote numerous letters to U.S. authorities, British government officials, and newspapers to express his disapproval of the war engagement. He accused the United States of suppressing a justified struggle for independence in South Vietnam and warned against the risk

³⁸² Marcos Zunino, 'Subversive Justice: The Russell Vietnam War Crimes Tribunal and Transitional Justice', *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 10, no. 2 (1 July 2016): 213.

³⁸³ Arthur Jay Klinghoffer and Judith Apter Klinghoffer, *International Citizens' Tribunals. Mobilizing Public Opinion to Advance Human Rights* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 104.

³⁸⁴ 'About the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation', Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, accessed 19 February 2022, <http://www.russfound.org/about/about.htm>.

of a larger war with the Soviet Union and China. When Britain endorsed the U.S. war effort, he wrote to Prime Minister Harold Wilson and blamed the British Labour government for supporting an unjust war by a hegemonic power.³⁸⁵ In a letter to the *New York Times* in 1963, he alleged that the American war in Vietnam was “reminiscent of warfare as practiced by the Germans in Eastern Europe and the Japanese in Southeast Asia.”³⁸⁶

Not only did he use his eminent status to address people in power directly or did he take to the streets to protest the war, but he also built connections with people directly affected by colonization and imperialism. Russell “conducted vigorous international diplomacy with foreign heads of government in Asia, Africa, eastern and western Europe, and Latin America aimed at building an international movement against U.S. intervention in Vietnam.”³⁸⁷ In 1963, he first got in contact with Hồ Chí Minh. In his first correspondence, Russell expressed his sympathy with the Vietnamese cause but also criticized North Vietnam’s censorship of the press and demanded the release of imprisoned journalists who had criticized the poverty and starvation caused by the DRV’s land reform. Despite his criticism and the fact that the two never met in person, Hồ and Russell established an amicable connection. After a public statement by Russell condemning the 1964 air attacks and calling for the U.N. to hold the United States accountable to the Geneva agreement, Hồ Chí Minh reacted with a cable, stating:

*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.*³⁸⁸

Hồ not only became a donor to Russell’s foundation and the IWCT but also supported the Tribunal by inviting and hosting the numerous investigation teams. At the same time, Russell was in close contact with the NLF, which he approached with the idea of a tribunal first. In 1965, Ralph Schoenman, a young Jewish American activist who became Russell’s secretary and right hand during the time, met up with members of the NLF central committee Ma Thi

³⁸⁵ Klinghoffer and Klinghoffer, *International Citizens’ Tribunals. Mobilizing Public Opinion to Advance Human Rights*, 105.

³⁸⁶ Bertrand Russell, cited in Krever, ‘Remembering the Russell Tribunal’, 483.

³⁸⁷ Harish C. Mehta, ‘North Vietnam’s Informal Diplomacy with Bertrand Russell: Peace Activism and the International War Crimes Tribunal’, *Peace and Change* 37, no. 1 (January 2012): 69.

³⁸⁸ Ho Chi Minh, cited in Stefan Andersson, ‘Behind the Scenes at the BRPF, the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, and the Russell Tribunal’, *Russell: The Journal of Bertrand Russell Studies* 34 (2015): 150.

Chu and *Đinh Bá Thi* several times to put forward the idea of a tribunal.³⁸⁹ The first meeting took place at the *World Congress for Peace, National Independence, and Universal Disarmament* in Helsinki. According to Schoenman, the proposals “were warmly received”.³⁹⁰ For Russell, the NLF was first and foremost a group struggling for national independence against an imperial power, rather than a communist front.³⁹¹ Following an invitation by the DRV, Schoenman and Russell Stetler, the BRPF’s New York director, were sent to North Vietnam by Russell in the beginning of 1966. In Hanoi, they met up with Hồ Chí Minh and Prime Minister Phạm Văn Đồng to work out the details and arrangements for a possible tribunal. Furthermore, they visited five provinces collecting first evidence to ascertain whether there was enough ground for a tribunal.³⁹² The first time Russell appears to have publicly announced the setup of the IWCT was in a press statement in January 1966. In March and May, tape-recorded announcements by Russell were played on Havana Radio and Radio Hanoi. Lastly, the American public learned about the Tribunal in *An Appeal to the American Conscience* published by Russell in July.³⁹³ Russell was not only in contact with DRV and NLF officials but with “ordinary Vietnamese people”, as Harish C. Mehta has shown. He was addressed by *Nguyễn Xiển*, chairman of *Committee of Struggle Against U.S. Imperialists and Henchmen’s Persecution of Intellectuals in South Vietnam*, as well as Dr. *Lê Đình Thám*, the head of the *Vietnamese Peace Committee*, with reports about the U.S. deployment of chemical weapons. Both asked Russell to bring this conduct of illegal warfare to the public’s attention. Moreover, staff of the Russell Foundation coordinated antiwar events and were in close contact about the Tribunal with Vietnamese journalists and London-based representatives of the North Vietnamese journal *Cuu Quoc*. Russell also helped a major Hanoi-based book distributor to find booksellers in London who would distribute DRV literature. Concurrently, Russell’s books were translated and published in Vietnam.³⁹⁴

The people who Russell invited to be members of the Tribunal or to take part in it, were all eminent intellectuals or otherwise public figures who had been publicly outspoken against the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. In most cases, they were internationally connected and involved in antiimperialist struggles. The members, and those who would present their findings or give

³⁸⁹ Mehta, ‘North Vietnam’s Informal Diplomacy with Bertrand Russell’, 70f.

³⁹⁰ Ralph Schoenman, cited in Andersson, ‘Behind the Scenes at the BRPF, the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, and the Russell Tribunal’, 153.

³⁹¹ Klinghoffer and Klinghoffer, *International Citizens’ Tribunals. Mobilizing Public Opinion to Advance Human Rights*, 105.

³⁹² Klinghoffer and Klinghoffer, 107.

³⁹³ Andersson, ‘Behind the Scenes at the BRPF, the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, and the Russell Tribunal’, 152.

³⁹⁴ Mehta, ‘North Vietnam’s Informal Diplomacy with Bertrand Russell’, 73–77.

testimony, came from different ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’ countries, including Great Britain, France, Germany, Cuba, Italy, the United States, Australia Mexico, Turkey, Yugoslavia, the Philippines, Pakistan, Sweden, Japan, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Korea, Cambodia, and Laos. Besides the already mentioned (Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Vladimir Deijer, and Ralph Schoenman), other important protagonists included the German writer and philosopher Günther Anders, Turkish journalist, politician, and Doctor of Jurisprudence Mehmet Ali Aybar, African American writer James Baldwin, former President of Mexico Lázaro Cárdenas, Polish-Israeli partisan in WWII Haika Grossman, Philippine poet, journalist, and labour leader Amado V. Hernandez, American writer David Dellinger, and Scottish coal miner and unionist Lawrence Daly. Black power leader Stokely Carmichael, who had agreed to participate, was tied up in other activities and therefore represented by civil rights activist and member of the SNCC Courtland Cox.

The participants and members of the IWCT were embedded in international activism in different ways. As already shown, the French Left had already pooled its strength during the Algerian War and networks had been established. Beauvoir and Sartre, for instance, had travelled to Cuba in 1960 and met with Fidel Castro and Ernesto “Che” Guevara. They had further visited Japan, Mexico, China, and different African countries to form bonds and connect with movements around the world.³⁹⁵ David Dellinger, who was active in several socialist and antiwar groups, reflects in his biography *From Yale to Jail* (1993) his activism that led him to North and South Vietnam in 1966. There he met with Hồ Chí Minh and Phạm Văn Đồng and concluded that the movement for social justice in the United States and the Third Worldist movements for national liberation were inherently linked. “Self-determination in the countries presently occupied by the American military-industrial complex and self-determination within the United States go hand in hand.”³⁹⁶ He was also the editor of the magazine *Liberation*, which linked the black movement and pacifist ideas. Despite his pacifist standpoint, Dellinger deemed the militant means taken up by liberation movements necessary. During his lifetime he built many contacts and friendships around the world.³⁹⁷ Another important member of the Tribunal, Tariq Ali, had also made previous contacts with many social movement leaders around the world, despite only being in his twenties. The British journalist, historian, and filmmaker, who had fled Pakistan in his teenage years due to his activism against the military dictatorship, had

³⁹⁵ *Jean-Paul Sartre et Simone de Beauvoir* (Radio-Canada, 1967), 14:04, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSRuzzdcJgQ>.

³⁹⁶ David Dellinger, cited in Mehta, “People’s Diplomacy”, 82.

³⁹⁷ Mehta, 81f., 85.

met with Malcom X and Stokely Carmichael and was sent to Bolivia in 1967 by Russell to attend a trial against the French writer and revolutionary Régis Debray.³⁹⁸

While these networks encompassed liberation, peace, and civil rights movements around the world, the Tribunal also mustered condensed competence on its actual topic. Many of its participants and members had engaged in anti-Vietnam War activism and intellectual examination. Wilfred Burchett, an Australian journalist, had extensively and critically reported not only about the war in Southeast Asia but also on the Korean War and the bombing of Hiroshima during World War II. He had published several books on the Vietnam, such as *The Furtive War. The United States in Vietnam and Laos* (1963) or *Vietnam. The Inside Story of a Guerrilla War* (1965). He further reported from communist Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea, employing contacts with leaders such as Zhōu Ēnlái, Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, and many others.³⁹⁹ In 1970, the first chapter of his new book on the war in Laos was published in the *Tricontinental* magazine.⁴⁰⁰ Moreover, historian Gabriel Kolko was invited to give testimony before the IWCT as he had conducted extensive research and written on Vietnam. The Swedish artist and Tribunal member Peter Weiss wrote a pamphlet on Vietnam in 1966, and Günther Anders published his book *Visit Beautiful Vietnam* a year after the Tribunal took place.

Considering the close involvement of Vietnamese civilians and NLF and DRV officials as well as the broad international array of members, the Tribunal displays an important event that connected activists with different backgrounds and origins for the common solidarity struggle against the U.S. war in Vietnam.

4.2. Individual Commitment and The Collective

At this point, it bears reminding that Sally Scholz's first categories for political solidarity deal with the individuals, including their commitment and sacrifices, as well as the collective. As we have seen, members of the Tribunal were mostly well-known anti-war activists and personalities from the Left. As the Tribunal's goal was to gather damning material and evidence, as well as to create public consciousness and arouse indignation, the members had to deliberately decide if they wanted to be associated with such a controversial action. The IWCT and its members were targets of attack and ridicule by U.S. officials and press. Even though the

³⁹⁸ Tariq Ali, *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties* (Verso Books, 2018), 92,103,193,202f.

³⁹⁹ Jamie Miller, 'The Forgotten History War: Wilfred Burchett, Australia and the Cold War in the Asia Pacific', *The Asian-Pacific Journal* 6, no. 9 (2008): 1f.

⁴⁰⁰ Executive Secretariat of the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, ed., 'Tricontinental', *Tricontinental*. 18 (1970).

U.S. government dismissed and downplayed it publicly, the administration was concerned about the Tribunal's potential impact and went to great lengths to prevent and discredit it. Russell had sent several letters to President Johnson over the years, urging him to end interventions in Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, and had even asked him to financially support his foundations. In 1966, Russell wrote to him to inform him about the Tribunal and to call on him to make an appearance.

*I ask you to appear before this tribunal in your own defence to answer charges contained in the evidence and eye-witness testimony concerning the acts carried out on your instruction. If you are unwilling to appear personally I request you to appoint officially persons who will seek to defend the actions of your Government.*⁴⁰¹

President Johnson was advised by the State Department to not reply to any of Russell's letters to not give the impression that he had anything to defend. That is also the reason why the idea of a counter-tribunal carried out by the *International Committee of Jurists* at the Hague and supported by the U.S. government was dismissed. It would have also given unwanted attention to the Tribunal, that the U.S. authorities aimed to thwart by all means.⁴⁰²

In July 1966, an interagency group headed by Under Secretary of State George Ball was created to deal with the matter of the IWCT. Soon after, Ball reported to Johnson that the group was “quietly exploring with the British and French available legal steps that could be taken to forestall this spectacle. We also plan to stimulate press articles criticizing the ‘trials’ and detailing the unsavoury and leftwing background of the organizers and judges.”⁴⁰³ As a result of this U.S. diplomacy, France as well as Great Britain denied visas for several members and witnesses and Harold Wilson's government condemned the Tribunal as one-sided.⁴⁰⁴ After the Swedish government had allowed for the IWCT to convene in Stockholm on the condition to not put individual U.S. officials on trial – as the Swedish law prohibited the insulting of foreign heads of state –, ongoing pressure from the U.S. government resulted in the ban of the second Tribunal session in Sweden.⁴⁰⁵ Informal diplomatic efforts also pressured sponsors of the BRPF, such as the presidents of Tanzania, Senegal, Ethiopia, and Zambia, to discontinue their support.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰¹ Bertrand Russell, ‘Exchanges of Correspondence with Heads of State’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 19.

⁴⁰² Mehta, ‘North Vietnam's Informal Diplomacy with Bertrand Russell’, 78f., 83.

⁴⁰³ George Ball, cited in Krever, ‘Remembering the Russell Tribunal’, 485.

⁴⁰⁴ Krever, 487.

⁴⁰⁵ Zunino, ‘Subversive Justice’, 214.

⁴⁰⁶ Stewart, ‘Too Loud to Rise above the Silence’, 17f., 30f.

In addition, anti-Vietnam-War activists also faced arrests as well as travel restrictions. Schoenman was frequently arrested in Great Britain for unlawful assembly and several times intercepted, detained at airports, refused entry to a number of countries, and deported.⁴⁰⁷ Similarly, Carmichael was held at an airport in Paris for a day on his way to the *Six Hours of the World for Vietnam* before being released into the country as authorities lacked grounds to deny his entry.⁴⁰⁸ The interagency group sent requests to the State Department's Passport Office to flag and revoke passports. On his way to a speaking tour through the United States to present the results of the Tribunal, Dedijer was arrested and his visa denied.⁴⁰⁹

Moreover, members were directly or indirectly brought into public derision by 'Western' media and politicians and had to fear a damaged reputation. Dean Rusk, for instance, when invited to the Tribunal by Russell and Sartre, stated to journalists that he had to intention of "playing games with a 94-year-old Briton".⁴¹⁰ The *New York Times* discredited Russell to be "a full-time purveyor of political garbage indistinguishable from the routine products of the Soviet machine" who had "sunk to defending – not just denying or minimizing, but actively defending – the atrocities of the Viet Cong in Vietnam".⁴¹¹ Russell and Sartre were depicted as "well-intentioned dupes of Hanoi" by most 'Western' media.⁴¹² At the same time, they were hailed in Third World media, which often published lengthy reports on the sessions.

These few examples show the obstacles and pressure that the IWCT had to deal with, and the personal sacrifices that those involved had to make. The sacrifices, resulting from their public stance and activism against the U.S. war in Vietnam, ranged from state interception, travel restrictions, public ridicule, career damage, and even threat to their life – as the bombing of Sartre's apartment shows. Considering the public nature of the Tribunal and the accompanying sacrifices, it is safe to conclude that the people involved made an active and conscious choice to commit to the cause. With their participation, members publicly criticised the U.S. war effort, brought forward reports and witness accounts that antagonized U.S. officials, and therefore had to expect repercussions and restrictions in their personal lives.

⁴⁰⁷ Mehta, 'North Vietnam's Informal Diplomacy with Bertrand Russell', 81; Cody Foster, 'To "Reawaken The Conscience of Mankind": The International War Crimes Tribunal and Transnational Human Rights Activism During the Vietnam War, 1966-1967' (University of Kentucky Libraries, 2021), 119f.

⁴⁰⁸ Keenan, "'Vietnam Is Fighting for Us'", 142.

⁴⁰⁹ Foster, 'To "Reawaken The Conscience of Mankind"', 112.

⁴¹⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Concerning Dean Rusk', in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 36.

⁴¹¹ B Levin, cited in Krever, 'Remembering the Russell Tribunal', 485.

⁴¹² Tariq Ali, cited in Mehta, "'People's Diplomacy'", 265.

What is more, some of the *white* members potentially risked their political power and standing by being associated too closely with ‘non-Western’ or Black people or their cause. However, as the people involved came from diverse backgrounds and enjoyed, or suffered from, different statuses, the effect of being associated with the cause of the NLF and DRV would have been quite distinct depending on who they were. To give a concrete example: Jean-Paul Sartre did experience some hardship due to his activism. However, he remained a highly prestigious public figure with all the privileges of a *white*, male, and famous French intellectual. Stokely Carmichael, or Courtland Cox for that matter, did not enjoy the same privileges to begin with as they were Black Americans. Being publicly outspoken activists against racial inequality and racism in the United States made them more vulnerable, and even more so did speaking out against a divisive war waged by their own country. Many became targets of the FBI program COINTELPRO under the leadership of J. Edgar Hoover, which infiltrated different groups, assassinated several black leaders, and spread rumours in order to create mistrust and division among the movement.⁴¹³ In fact, COINTELPRO’s activities might have been the reason why Carmichael left the United States for Guinea in 1969.

What is more, IWCT members from ‘non-Western’ countries, such as Turkey, Yugoslavia, Cuba, Mexico, Japan, Pakistan, or even Vietnam, were certainly less privileged in a global context. Then again, the political status of the country of origin certainly made a difference, such as diplomatic relations to the United States or the history of sovereignty. Acknowledging intersecting identities also means to recognize the varying privileges according to gender, profession, and political stance towards the war of the country of origin: What ramification would such activism have upon the activist’s return? While Charles de Gaulle did certainly not agree with the IWCT and even adopted certain measures to prevent it, he himself took a public stance against the war. Even more so, Cuban activists did not have to fear punishment or surveillance from their home country due to the official anti-Vietnam War position. As we saw, U.S. citizens faced a different reality.

From these observations, we can firstly conclude that the people involved in the Tribunal committed to it based on a conscious choice and all of them – even though to different degrees – experienced impacts on their personal life. Secondly, we can make deductions regarding the collective. Concurrent with Scholz’s theory, the collective of the Tribunal was not based on shared attributes, locations, or interests but on a shared commitment to a cause. That is,

⁴¹³ Jonathan David Farley, ‘Preventing the Rise of a “Messiah”’, *The Guardian*, 4 April 2008, sec. Opinion, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/apr/04/preventingtheriseofamessi>.

oppression was the content of the solidarity, not a shared experience or history of oppression. What is more, according to Scholz, the political solidarity collective must be an identifiable unity whose membership is fluid. The Tribunal can be characterized as a relatively small but publicity-generating entity, which must be seen in a wider context of several national movements as well as an upcoming international solidarity movement against the war. The membership of the Tribunal itself was hand-picked by only a few organizers and therefore not accessible for everyone. The renowned status of the members, in contrast to “ordinary” activists, was to provide the venture with more status and legitimacy. That is, by creating a Tribunal with eminent members, the organizers placed the potentially higher success over the possibility for everyone to join. However, it must be mentioned, that the Tribunal organizers worked closely with local activists and support groups on their quest for a possible location as well as fundraising and later with Swedish and Danish groups to organize the actual sessions.⁴¹⁴ Lastly, by means of historical reports, medical reports, journalistic investigation, photographs, and films all the different participants contributed according to their own skills and talents.

4.3. Social Justice Ends and Means

Shared Interpretation of Past, Present and Future

A crucial aspect of political solidarity concerns the actual social justice cause, which is shaped by the three considerations of a shared interest, the oppositional clause, and the employed means. As Scholz describes it, the unifying interests create a strong bond between members. Emotions might be a stimulant to become active, but more important is the logical insight into the particular case of social injustice. This requires a shared interpretation of the past and present as well as a common vision for a better future. One of the main goals of the Tribunal was to shift the perspective on a war carried out by a hegemonic power and backed with an enormous propaganda effort. U.S. presidents during the war were anxious to keep media reports and public opinion supportive of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. As they were convinced that Vietnam constituted a crucial place and moment in the further development of the Cold War, a lot of resources were put into legitimizing the war.

In turn, anti-war activists aimed to highlight the imperialist aspect of the war and to emphasize the perspective of a Vietnam struggling for independence – a tradition that had been particularly strong among African American activists already before the Vietnam War.⁴¹⁵ Rather than

⁴¹⁴ Foster, ‘To “Reawaken The Conscience of Mankind”’, 225; Mehta, ““People’s Diplomacy””, 269.

⁴¹⁵ Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 96f.

focussing on Cold War ideology, the context and history of colonialism and ‘Western’ hegemony was foregrounded. For that reason, the IWCT heard several historical reports, including a lengthy *History of United States Aggression in Vietnam* by Gabriel Kolko, a testimony by Jean Chesneaux, and a report by Charles Fourniau. In his juridical report, Samuel Rosenwein quoted President Eisenhower who admitted in his memoirs that everyone “knowledgeable in Indochinese affairs” would have agreed that “possibly 80% of the population would have voted for the Communist Hồ Chí Minh as their leader”.⁴¹⁶ This statement made the prime reason for the U.S. involvement apparent: the containment of communism. The same fact was stressed by Kolko, who quoted Vice-president Richard Nixon in 1953 who was convinced that if Indochina falls under communist rule, Thailand, Malaya, and Indonesia would soon follow. As a result, Japan would inevitably also orient itself towards communism. In 1951, U.S. ambassador to France, David Bruce, claimed that “the possession of Indo-China would be the most valuable and in the long run would be the most crucial one from the standpoint of the west in the east”.⁴¹⁷ This “domino theory” was a common assumption among U.S. officials and ever more pressing after the compromise in Korea, according to Chesneaux. What is more, economic reasons played an important role. Chesneaux cited President Eisenhower who declared in 1953 that, if they would “lose Indochina”,

*the tin and tungsten we so much need will stop coming from that region [...] We are voting for the least costly method of stopping something which would be disastrous for the United States, for our security, for our strength, and for our ability to draw upon the riches of Indochina for certain things we need.*⁴¹⁸

Thus, “American concerns were not limited to Vietnam, but reflected a global policy that made the Vietnamese victims of an escalating U.S. intervention”, concluded the summary of Kolko’s report.⁴¹⁹ Chesneaux emphasized that U.S. intervention had not started with 1954 but with the end of WWII and the beginning of the Cold War, and thus, had already lasted for twenty years. He argued:

⁴¹⁶ Dwight D. Eisenhower, cited in Samuel Rosenwein, ‘Summary of a Juridical Report’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 103.

⁴¹⁷ David Bruce, cited in Gabriel Kolko, ‘Summary of a Historical Report’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 58.

⁴¹⁸ Dwight D. Eisenhower, cited in Jean Chesneau, ‘Resume of Testimony Concerning American Intervention in Vietnam from 1945 to 1964’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 71.

⁴¹⁹ Kolko, ‘Summary of a Historical Report’, 59.

Throughout this long period, American intervention in Vietnam has never been the result of request from an autonomous Vietnam; it is a deliberate and systematic policy of political, military, economic and social upheaval which truly merits being called 'subversion'.⁴²⁰

At the Geneva conference, according to Kolko, the United States had already used their influential power to pressure the USSR and PRC to agree to the compromise of splitting the country in half – that is, they used their status to retrieve diplomatically what the Việt Minh had won militarily.⁴²¹ By supporting the U.S.-friendly Diem regime and by escalating the war against the NLF and DRV, the United States violated the Geneva Accords. For Kolko, the responsibility for the wars in Vietnam since 1945 was clear:

First as passive senior partner, and then as the primary party, the United States made Vietnam an international arena for the Cold War, and the war should never be considered as a civil conflict or even secondarily as a by-product of one, for in that form it would hardly have lasted very long against a national and radical movement that the vast majority of the Vietnamese people always sustained.⁴²²

At the same time, the Tribunal labelled governments in Southeast Asia allied to the United States, such as South Vietnam, Thailand, or the Philippines, as puppets. In doing so, the Tribunal members diminished these governments' agency and stressed the overarching influence of the U.S. government. For Russell, "the modern form of aggression is the installation of puppet regimes which protect the interest of a foreign power".⁴²³ That stance was supported by a South Vietnamese delegation at the Tribunal as well as by Paik Il Kon, the representative of the Korean *Committee for Struggle Against U.S. Crimes in Vietnam*, who in his report dealt "with the illegal and criminal nature of the dispatch of South Korean puppet troops to South Vietnam".⁴²⁴ While the regimes were still held responsible in the sessions of the Tribunal, the main responsibility was assigned to the United States. The United States was portrayed as using regimes and individual leaders for their goal of ensuring influence and hegemony. This can also be seen in the fact that several reports described soldiers as cannon-fodder. The former sergeant of the South Korean ROK Army, An Hak Su, assessed in his report

⁴²⁰ Chesneau, 'Resume of Testimony Concerning American Intervention in Vietnam from 1945 to 1964', 78.

⁴²¹ Kolko, 'Summary of a Historical Report', 58f.

⁴²² Gabriel Kolko, Research Outline to the Legal Commission of the International War Crimes Tribunal: A History of United States Aggression in Vietnam (New York, 1967), 68, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 30, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

⁴²³ Bertrand Russell, 'Message from Bertrand Russell to the Tribunal', in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 38.

⁴²⁴ Paik Il Kon, On the Criminal Troop Dispatch of the South Korean Puppet Clique (New York, 1967), 1, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 60, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

about the war: “It is true that the ‘ROK Army’ soldiers have come here to contain the ‘threat of Communism’? No. We were dragged here only to become cannon-fodder in the U.S. war of aggression.”⁴²⁵ Similarly, addressing Americans in a speech on Radio Hanoi in 1966, Schoenman aimed to illustrate that U.S. soldiers were utilized as cannon-fodder for a war that was only fought to “protect the empire of our rich men”.⁴²⁶ As can be seen, Schoenman created a divide between “rich men” striving for power versus the rest of the world, which is portrayed as a mere victim of the aggressors. The real battle, so Schoenman, was against the policymakers in the United States: “Help us free our country from the shame and burden of such wars. We were born free men. The choice and responsibility are ours.”⁴²⁷

Besides this historical contextualisation of the U.S. aggression, which is commonly accepted by scholars today, the Tribunal had a specific outlook on, and interpretation of, the holocaust and genocide committed by the German Nazis, which would be widely repudiated these days. This interpretation was based on a specific Marxist critique of capitalism which was characteristic of the late 1960. The holocaust was not seen so much as a singular event but as the criminal culmination of imperialism and capitalism. That is, the holocaust discourse of the 1968 movement focussed on the dynamics and perpetrators rather than on the victims. Subsequently, for many of the Tribunal members it was reasonable to compare Nazi Germany and the United States and to conclude that the United States was, in fact, perpetrating a genocide.⁴²⁸ For Russell, the United States “has behaved in Vietnam as Hitler behaved in Eastern Europe” and also “regards Vietnam in the way Hitler regarded Spain”. That is, the United States recognized the threat of social revolutions and had to therefore crush them, according to Russell.⁴²⁹ However, the comparison was not uncontested, neither at the Tribunal itself nor in the wider public. Simone de Beauvoir and Isaac Deutscher objected the focus on that aspect and Shoah survivors criticized the comparison.⁴³⁰ Noam Chomsky, not a member of the Tribunal, writes in the preface to *Against the Crime of Silence*: “Nazi Germany was *sui generis*, of that there is no doubt.” Nevertheless, he admits that “it would be more difficult to argue that American policy is not comparable to that of Fascist Japan, or of Germany prior to

⁴²⁵ An Hak Su, *The Road I have Traversed* (New York, 1967), Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 60, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

⁴²⁶ Ralph Schoenman, *Speech on Radio Hanoi to Fellow Americans* (New York, 1967), 2, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 86, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

⁴²⁷ Schoenman, 5.

⁴²⁸ Molden, ‘Genozid in Vietnam. 1968 Als Schlüsselereignis in Der Globalisierung Des Holocaustdiskurses’, 87f.

⁴²⁹ Russell, ‘Message from Bertrand Russel to the Tribunal’, 38.

⁴³⁰ Molden, ‘Genozid in Vietnam. 1968 Als Schlüsselereignis in Der Globalisierung Des Holocaustdiskurses’, 89.

the ‘final solution’”.⁴³¹ The Tribunal based the claim of the perpetration of a genocide on the gathered evidence of the United States waging a war against the civilian population. It was argued that because this was a struggle of the Vietnamese people against imperialism and for self-determination, which involved the entire population, the United States needed to break the will off all. Furthermore, the fact that guerrilla tactics were employed, turned all Vietnamese into potential and factual enemies who had to be eliminated.⁴³² Russell put it as follows:

*In Vietnam there is a race of men who, in modern times, have never been free and who have never known peace. This explains why the war knows no middle course between national salvation and genocide.*⁴³³

To argue the claim of a genocide, evidence was presented during the sessions that the U.S. military directly targeted dykes, hospitals, schools, and villages, deployed anti-personnel weapons such as mines and chemicals, massacred rural population, and destroyed the basis of existence for many people, such as rice fields, cattle, farming tools, etc. Reports on aerospace weapons, fraction bombs (Folder 11)⁴³⁴, on burns from napalm and white phosphorus (Folder 12), or on the destruction of irrigation systems (Folder 15) among many others as well as numerous witness testimonies gave account of this.

As can be seen from these different aspects presented here, the interpretation of the past and present of the conflict was a core element of the Tribunal and the wider solidarity movement. Historians, political scientists, journalists, philosophers, politicians, and political thinkers offered detailed reports and lectures about the recent Vietnamese history and the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. The main goal was to challenge the official U.S. narrative on the conflict and offer a critical and anti-imperialist perspective. The details of this perspective will be discussed further down. Concerning the shared vision for the future, the Tribunal did not ask the question

⁴³¹ Noam Chomsky, ‘Preface’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), xxv.

⁴³² Zachary Manfredi, ‘Sharpening the Vigilance of the World: Reconsidering the Russell Tribunal as Ritual’, *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 8, no. 1 (2018): 82; Molden, ‘Genozid in Vietnam. 1968 Als Schlüsselereignis in Der Globalisierung Des Holocaustdiskurses’, 89.

⁴³³ Bertrand Russell, Opening Message of Lord Russell to the Copenhagen Session of the International War Crimes Tribunal (New York, 1967), 2, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 32, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

⁴³⁴ The folders refer to the Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098 at the Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

*whether the U.S. can win at an acceptable cost, but rather whether it should win, whether it should be involved at all in the internal affairs of the Vietnamese, whether it has any right to try to settle or even influence these internal matters by force.*⁴³⁵

More concrete, Paik Il Kon contends: “The Vietnam question must be solved by the Vietnamese people themselves without interference of outside forces”.⁴³⁶

Oppositional Clause

Scholz dedicates much consideration to the goal of political solidarity as the centre and content of the collective struggle. Looking at the four different types of injustices distinguished by Scholz, namely social injustice, oppression, social vulnerability, and tyranny, the Tribunal’s goal is best characterized by the attempt to end oppression. Oppression was perpetrated against the Vietnamese by denying them the right to self-rule. Furthermore, through the unequal war waged by a highly industrialized military power against a guerrilla army, the civil population was exposed to violence. Besides the physical harm, harm was inflicted on a cultural or discursive level. Through the unequal power relations, the United States was able to create meaning, such as stereotypes and negative images of the Vietnamese population, within the international discourse.

Political solidarity, according to Scholz, devotes itself to both substantial and formative goals. In the Tribunal sessions, these are frequently discussed. Substantial, namely concrete, goals of the Tribunal were the collection and presentation of evidence of U.S. war crimes to a wider, especially ‘Western’, public. “Our purpose,” as is written in the section *Aims and Objectives* of the English publication of the Tribunal, “is to establish, without fear or favour, the full truth about his war.”⁴³⁷ The brutality and illegality of the war was to be exposed in order to spark outrage. This, in turn, was planned to put pressure on governments, especially the United States. In the Opening Statement to the first session, Russell declares:

*Overwhelming evidence besieges us daily of crimes without precedent. Each moment greater horror is perpetrated against the people of Vietnam. We investigate in order to expose. We document in order to indict. We arouse consciousness in order to create mass resistance.*⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ Chomsky, ‘Preface’, xxiii.

⁴³⁶ Paik Il Kon, On the Criminal Troop Dispatch of the South Korean Puppet Clique, 10.

⁴³⁷ John Duffett, ed., ‘Aims and Objectives of the International War Crimes Tribunal’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal* (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 16.

⁴³⁸ Bertrand Russell, ‘Opening Statement to the First Tribunal Session’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 49.

Wolfgang Abendroth, a German political scientist, jurist, and member of the Tribunal, considered it a “duty of all democratic and humanitarian forces to mobilize world public opinion”.⁴³⁹ What is more, the Tribunal sought to build international connections of solidarity. Firstly, the organizers invited activists from different backgrounds and continents, hence why the Tribunal was an event of connecting places and movements. Secondly, a stated goal was to inspire and provoke an international movement against the U.S. war in Vietnam.⁴⁴⁰

Besides these substantial goals, the broader goals of the IWCT evidently included the end of U.S. war crimes and the war itself as well as the creation of Vietnamese self-determination. To go even further, the Tribunal made a stance against colonialism, imperialism, and oppression in general. Again, the publisher of *Against the Crime of Silence* states: “We sincerely hope that our efforts will contribute to the world’s justice, to the re-establishment of peace and the liberation of oppressed peoples.”⁴⁴¹ As the power of these activists and the impact of the Tribunal were known to be limited, Chomsky called for more people to commit to solidarity with “countries that are suffering in the grip of the imperial powers”. His argument aptly summarizes the Tribunal’s significance for anti-war oppositional politics.

*The work initiated by the Tribunal should be carried further by groups of citizens who take upon themselves the duty of discovering and making public the daily evidences [sic] of barbarism, and the still more severe duty of challenging the powers – state or private – that are responsible for violence and oppression, looking forward to the day when an international movement for freedom and social justice will end their rule.*⁴⁴²

Means

As I showed in Chapter 3, solidarity with movements struggling against colonialism and imperialism was committed to both in the Third World and the ‘West’. That is, the cause the Tribunal was fighting for was a common concern for many people and governments worldwide. However, the means chosen in the particular case of the IWCT presented a rather new form of protest. By focussing on international law, the activists aimed to fill a void in the international community by investigating the legality of the war as well as war crimes. The United States thought themselves safe as can be seen by a statement made by the U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge. He stated in an interview: “As far as I’m concerned, the legal

⁴³⁹ Wolfgang Abendroth, Statement (New York, 1967), 1, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 15, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

⁴⁴⁰ Stewart, ‘Too Loud to Rise above the Silence’, 19.

⁴⁴¹ Duffett, ‘Aims and Objectives of the International War Crimes Tribunal’, 16.

⁴⁴² Chomsky, ‘Preface’, xxix.

aspect of this affair is of no significance”.⁴⁴³ However, the idea to set up a tribunal was controversial and contested. Nevertheless, Russell and other members saw enough advantages in such a venture.

The idea was loosely based on the only two cases of non-official juridical projects that had taken place before. The first one appeared in the form of a commission, organized in London in 1933 to counter the propaganda of the German NSDAP concerning the burning of the Reichstag. A few years later, in 1937, the so-called Dewey Commission was set up in the United States by the philosopher John Dewey. Its aim was to create a counter-trial to the Moscow show trials against Leon Trotsky. Even though most of the commission members distanced themselves from Trotsky’s ideas, they concluded that he was innocent.⁴⁴⁴ Russell was well aware of these cases of informal justice, but it took some time until he was convinced that a tribunal was the right way to address the U.S. war in Vietnam. When sociologist Norman Birnbaum suggested a mock trial between world leaders in 1959, modelled on the Dewey Commission, Russell opposed it. Not only did he fear anti-Soviet undertones, but he wished to focus on the misdeeds of ‘Western’ countries. When he was approached by political scientist Ralph Miliband and journalist M.S. Aronson at the time of the escalation of the war, Russell reconsidered the possibility of a tribunal to confront the American war efforts in Vietnam.⁴⁴⁵ By 1965, accounts of war crimes, especially the use of chemical weapons, committed by the U.S. military in Vietnam had found their way into ‘Western’ media. In the foreword, Schoenman reflected:

In 1961, when the Kennedy Administration spoke of counter-insurgency and dealt in napalm and poison gas, Bertrand Russell began to gather from the Western media the data, the full and proudly proclaimed record of internment camps, forced labor, chemicals, gas, bacteriological weapons and fragmentation bombs.⁴⁴⁶

Despite the limited resources at his disposal, Russell sent Schoenman and Stetler to North Vietnam to assess the state of evidence. Initially, with this trip and the gathering of evidence, Russell and Schoenman aimed to support draft resisters in the United States who were put on trial. Specifically, in 1965, the case of David Mitchell made headlines in which Mitchell

⁴⁴³ Henry Cabot Lodge, cited in Leon Matarasso, *Outline of the General Introductory Report* (New York, 1967), 7, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 9, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

⁴⁴⁴ Luís Moita, ‘Opinion Tribunals and the Permanent People’s Tribunal’, *Janus.Net e-Journal of International Relations* 6, no. 1 (2015): 33.

⁴⁴⁵ Klinghoffer and Klinghoffer, *International Citizens’ Tribunals. Mobilizing Public Opinion to Advance Human Rights*, 105f.

⁴⁴⁶ Ralph Schoenman, ‘Foreword’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 5.

publicly condemned the war and accused its own country of committing crimes against peace and humanity. The Russell Foundation wished to support his case by providing evidence for U.S. war crimes. However, Schoenman's data was not admitted in court and Mitchell was convicted to five years in prison, of which he served two and was then released on parole.⁴⁴⁷ Convinced of the U.S. guilt and further motivated by Mitchell's conviction, Russell put all efforts into the set-up of the Tribunal in 1966. He hoped that it would "establish legal precedent which conscientious objectors could use as reason to avoid military duty".⁴⁴⁸ In contrast to the Dewey Commission, Russell's "goal was to alter an American policy while it was in progress, not to redress a previous miscarriage of justice".⁴⁴⁹

Besides being influenced by the citizen tribunals, the IWCT's fundamental idea was grounded on the International Military Tribunals in Nuremberg and Tokyo after World War II. Not only had they been an *ad hoc* rather than a permanent legal tool to confront the wars waged by Germany and Japan, they were also the first incidents in which leaders were made accountable for a war as well as war crimes by foreign powers. In that sense, these trials had been the first implementation of international law and justice. While they referred to conventions and agreements, such as the Convention of the Hague (1907) or the Briand-Kellogg pact of 1928, they also created new standards – known as the Nuremberg principles. The United States had played a major role in both tribunals. IWCT members pointed out that while the tribunals had contributed to the establishment of new international legal standards and instruments, no institution or government was willing, independent, or powerful enough to hold the United States accountable to the standards that they themselves had created. Chomsky writes: "We can hardly suppress the memory of our initiative at Nuremberg and Tokyo, or the explicit insistence of the U.S. prosecutor, Robert Jackson, that the principles of Nuremberg are to be regarded as universal in their applicability."⁴⁵⁰ In an interview with the *New Left Review*, Sartre proclaimed:

But the condemnation of the leaders of Nazi Germany by the Nuremberg Tribunal only had any meaning at all if it implied that any government which, in the future, committed acts which could be condemned under one or other of the articles of the Nuremberg laws, would

⁴⁴⁷ Staughton Lynd, 'WE WON'T GO: Narratives of Resistance to World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the 1990–91 US–Iraq War, and the 2003– US–Iraq War' (HAW Pamphlet 2, 2014), <https://www.historiansagainstawar.org/resources/wontgo.pdf>.

⁴⁴⁸ Keenan, "'Vietnam Is Fighting for Us'", 199.

⁴⁴⁹ Klinghoffer and Klinghoffer, *International Citizens' Tribunals. Mobilizing Public Opinion to Advance Human Rights*, 103.

⁴⁵⁰ Chomsky, 'Preface', xxiii.

*be subject to trial by a similar tribunal. Our tribunal today merely proposes to apply to capitalist imperialism its own laws.*⁴⁵¹

To fill that void, and because “neither governments nor people are, at the present time, capable of creating such an institution”, Sartre argued, independent civilians would have to take up the Nuremberg legacy and defend its principles.⁴⁵² The fact that a civilian-led tribunal had no power, was the guarantor for their independence. Russell declared:

*The International War Crimes Tribunal is a revolutionary tribunal. We have no armies and no gallows. We lack power, even the power of mass communication. It is overdue that those without power sit in judgement over those who have it.*⁴⁵³

For Russell, the weakness of the Military Tribunals in Nuremberg and Tokyo resided in the fact that the victorious powers had put the losers on trial. Yet, victory should not be a criterion to hold a belligerent party accountable. Instead, a criterion had to be established to “enable private citizens to make compelling judgments on the injustices committed by any great power”.⁴⁵⁴ The circumstance that the Tribunal could not draw on any factual and legal legitimization, however, was one of the main criticisms the endeavour faced. The project was therefore easily dismissed by several governments: “Justice of any sort”, de Gaulle responded to Sartre in a letter, “in principle as in execution, emanates from the State”.⁴⁵⁵ French sociologist Marcel Merle called the Tribunal a “mockery of justice for propaganda purposes”.⁴⁵⁶ Other critics and much of the ‘Western’ media titled it “show trials”, “kangaroo trials”, or “theatrical charades” as the United States had been condemned before the evidence was even heard.⁴⁵⁷

Nevertheless, for the stated reasons, the organizers wished their project to be closely associated with the tribunal in Nuremberg and structured it accordingly. They had a “list of charges” against an accused, a “jury” that listened to the “evidence” brought forward by experts, “witnesses”, documents, photographs, and films. In the end, they announced a “verdict”. Sartre argued that “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”. Instead, “the

⁴⁵¹ Sartre, ‘Imperialist Morality. Interview with Jean Paul Sartre on the War Crimes Tribunal’, 4f.

⁴⁵² Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘Inaugural Statement to the Tribunal’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 42.

⁴⁵³ Russell, ‘Opening Statement to the First Tribunal Session’, 51.

⁴⁵⁴ Bertrand Russell, ‘Introduction’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 4.

⁴⁵⁵ Charles de Gaulle, cited in Krever, ‘Remembering the Russell Tribunal’, 486.

⁴⁵⁶ Marcel Merle, cited in Moita, ‘Opinion Tribunals and the Permanent People’s Tribunal’, 44.

⁴⁵⁷ Mark Boyle and Audrey Kobayashi, ‘In the Face of Epistemic Injustices? On the Meaning of People-Led War Crimes Tribunals’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 33 (2015): 701.

judges are everywhere: they are the peoples of the world”.⁴⁵⁸ The most evident differences between this tribunal and an actual trial were the lack of a judge as well as the lack of a defendant. In the beginning, the Tribunal wished to accuse President Lyndon Johnson, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara, the Ambassador to South Vietnam Henry Cabot Lodge, and commander of United States forces William Westmoreland. Russell wanted the pressure to grow so strong for President Johnson to have to resign.⁴⁵⁹ However, due to problems the IWCT faced in the set-up period, they were left with accusing U.S. government as a whole. As previously demonstrated, numerous invitations to attend the Tribunal and defend themselves had been ignored by the U.S. officials. In order to show the Tribunal’s proximity and adherence to international law, several juridical reports were heard. For instance, the U.S. civil rights attorney Stanley Faulkner, lawyer Samuel Rosenwein, or French attorney Yves Jouffa outlined the current situation of international law and in what ways the U.S. war or the military draft was an infringement of the Hague Convention (1907), The Declaration of the Hague (1923), the Briand-Kellogg Pact, the Nuremberg Judgement or otherwise called London Pact, the Law of Land Warfare (1956), the Convention of Geneva (1949), the Charter of the United Nations, and even of the United States Constitution.⁴⁶⁰ Rosenwein concluded that that

*the U.S. has violated the principles of International law embodied in the U.N. Charter and the Nuremberg Judgment. The war now in Vietnam is an aggressive war, forbidden by international law. The war is also a violation of the principle of the self-determination of nations.*⁴⁶¹

In a statement at the Tribunal, the DRV commission of inquiry stressed the importance of “principles which determine the relations between different States in our so-called civilized world”. They asked: “Are we governed by rules and norms of international law and human morality, or by a stronger law, the law of the jungle?”⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁸ Sartre, ‘Inaugural Statement to the Tribunal’, 44f.

⁴⁵⁹ Klinghoffer and Klinghoffer, *International Citizens’ Tribunals. Mobilizing Public Opinion to Advance Human Rights*, 107.

⁴⁶⁰ Yves Jouffa, Report on the Law of War (New York, 1967), Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 86, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive; Stanley Faulkner, ‘International Law and the Military Draft’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968); Rosenwein, ‘Summary of a Juridical Report’.

⁴⁶¹ Rosenwein, ‘Summary of a Juridical Report’, 103.

⁴⁶² Van Bach Pham, Statement of the Delegation of the Commission of Inquiry of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on U.S. War Crimes in Vietnam (New York, 1967), 1, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 15, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

Another criticism the IWCT faced was the fact that they only put the U.S. government on trial for war crimes, but not the NLF or the DRV. Historian Staughton Lynd, who was otherwise outspoken against the war, declined the invitation due to a “double standard” or one-sided evaluation of the situation.⁴⁶³ Schoenman retorted this by stating the *Việt Cộng* were merely defending themselves in a David-against-Goliath-like scenario. Again, he evoked Nazi comparisons by stating that “we would no more regard the Vietnamese resistance a crime than we would the rising of the Warsaw Ghetto”.⁴⁶⁴ The power difference was also stressed by Sartre who refused “to put on the same level the actions of a group of poor, beaten peasants, [...] and the actions of an immense army supported by an over-industrialized country of 200 million inhabitants”.⁴⁶⁵ Moreover, it was stressed that the U.S. was the aggressor that had invaded Vietnam. Along the same line, the Tribunal was accused of being biased. Chomsky responded to that:

*The participants, the ‘jurors’ and the witnesses, were undoubtedly biased. They made no attempt, in fact, to conceal this bias, this profound hatred of murder and wanton destruction carried out by a brutal foreign invader with unmatched technological resources.*⁴⁶⁶

Similarly, Schoenman posed a philosophical question: How impartial or objective could people and trials even be if the whole justice system was based on certain values and morals that condemn and persecute deeds previously defined crimes? For that reason, he concluded, “the only impartiality which has any meaning in an inquiry or a trial is to be found in the evidence”. The Tribunal, he contended, was initiated out of a “sense of agony about what the United States was doing in Vietnam” as well as the “conviction that terrible crimes were occurring”.⁴⁶⁷

After Schoenman and Stetler had returned from North Vietnam, the organization and coordination of the IWCT commenced – in large part conducted by Schoenman due to Russell’s old age. Prominent intellectuals were invited to join, seven investigation teams with over 150 investigators were sent to North and South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos to gather evidence, testimonies, pictures, and video footage. Jean-Paul Sartre agreed to take on the position of the Executive President, Vladimir Dedijer became Chairman and President of the sessions. Bertrand Russell, who was unable to attend the sessions, was made Honorary President. The jury consisted of 26 members. A corresponding tribunal took place in Japan, set up by peace

⁴⁶³ Krever, ‘Remembering the Russell Tribunal’, 486.

⁴⁶⁴ Schoenman, ‘Foreword’, 8.

⁴⁶⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, cited in Keenan, “‘Vietnam Is Fighting for Us’”, 214.

⁴⁶⁶ Chomsky, ‘Preface’, xiv.

⁴⁶⁷ Schoenman, ‘Foreword’, 7.

activists who worked closely together with the IWCT.⁴⁶⁸ After a first gathering in 1966, the actual sessions were held in May and September 1967 in Stockholm, Sweden, and Roskilde, Denmark, respectively. On the first day of the first session, the “charges” were presented. Based on the Nuremberg Tribunal, the IWCT investigated whether the United States had infringed international law regarding, 1) a war of aggression, 2) forbidden weapons, 3) the bombardment of civilian targets, 3) inhumane treatment of POWs, and 5) genocide.⁴⁶⁹ Besides the legal and historical reports, reports on the deployed weapons were heard, such as cluster bombs, fragmentation bombs, defoliants and other chemicals, as well as numerous testimonies on the targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure. Moreover, medical reports were presented; several Vietnamese victims showed their wounds inflicted by chemical attacks before the Tribunal, including a nine-year old boy. Vietnamese and U.S. soldiers were heard and questioned as witnesses. After the sessions, press conferences were held in France, Britain, Japan, and the United States to present the evidence. By choosing the means of a so-called tribunal for their activism and solidarity, the participants challenged the boundaries of law.

4.4. Morality and Obligations

The realm of morality and obligations that Scholz makes out as conditions for political solidarity, encompasses the relationship among Tribunal members, the relationship between them and the collective, as well as the relations between the group and the larger society. The first relationship should be informed by mutuality, thus reciprocity, equality, communication, and interdependence. Based on the available sources, it is difficult to conclusively determine whether the relationship between the members grounded on a loving, non-arrogant communication, in which members were open to listen, and to include different needs and perceptions – requirements that Scholz and others establish for political solidarity. The same applies to the question whether these relations were manifold, complex, and flexible. However, there are a few indicators that will help to assess the question of mutuality.

Despite the outward presentation of unity, the Tribunal saw some in-fighting. Schoenman, a young and fierce activist, seemed to have attempted to control much of the organization and conduct of the Tribunal. Admittedly, Russell reflected later that “it is quite possible that the Tribunal would never have got off the ground had it not been for his intense efforts”.⁴⁷⁰ However, by doing things his way without informing his Tribunal colleagues, he incurred other

⁴⁶⁸ Stewart, ‘Too Loud to Rise above the Silence’, 18.

⁴⁶⁹ Duffett, ‘Aims and Objectives of the International War Crimes Tribunal’, 15.

⁴⁷⁰ Bertrand Russell, cited in Andersson, ‘Behind the Scenes at the BRPF, the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, and the Russell Tribunal’, 145.

member's anger. One employee of the *Bertrand Russell Centre for Social Research*, David Horowitz, described Schoenman in 2014 as "both an intimidating and also commanding person".⁴⁷¹ While Horowitz might not be the best source as he made a drastic turn away from left-wing politics and "came out" as a right-wing conservative in the mid-1980s, he was not the only one criticizing Schoenman. After Schoenman had spoken to the media before the Tribunal's opening as well as misrepresented the Tribunal itself, other members decided to replace him with a media spokesperson. Instead of describing the IWCT as a commission of inquiry, Schoenman presented it as an actual court of law that. In further consequence, Sartre and Dedijer shifted the IWCT's headquarter from London to Paris and removed Bertrand Russell's name from its title. This implied a split of the BRPF into a London and a Paris faction, with the latter running the second session in Roskilde.⁴⁷²

What is more, as has become apparent by now, the members and participants came from rather different backgrounds and thus had a different stance towards the mode of expressing solidarity as well as they experienced the Tribunal differently. This is indicated by the reflections of Julius Lester, a young African American activist of the SNCC. Just like Stokely Carmichael, he had been asked to represent a perspective of African American activism at the Tribunal, but he was not a jury member. Describing the debate over how to announce the results of the sessions, Lester later stated that Sartre was only going to have it his way or threatened to leave otherwise. "Possibly", he wryly remarked, "he should have been allowed to".⁴⁷³ A real gap showed between the older generation of European intellectuals who had gone through World War II and young radicals from elsewhere. The latter were seeking revolutionary means – in the case of their own struggle as well as the struggle against the American war in Vietnam. Just like Che Guevara had called for, they were seeking to create "one, two, or many Vietnams". Lester, only 28 years old at the time of the IWCT, admitted that the set-up of the Tribunal and standing up against the "crime of silence" was better than doing nothing at all. However, for him more radical action was needed, rather than mere words. In fact, by insisting on words, the Tribunal would prevent real action. Lester even went so far as to conclude: "I couldn't help but feel that Sartre was as much my enemy as L.B.J. Both are men of commitment".⁴⁷⁴

The relation between members also touches on the question of whether the specific case of social activism is "working with" rather than "working for" the oppressed. Even though the

⁴⁷¹ David Horowitz, cited in Andersson, 149.

⁴⁷² Mehta, "People's Diplomacy", 267f.

⁴⁷³ Julius Lester, cited in Keenan, "Vietnam Is Fighting for Us", 220.

⁴⁷⁴ Julius Lester, cited in Keenan, 221.

Tribunal was an endeavour carried out by people who were not directly affected by the U.S. aggression, there was a lot of communication between the members and the oppressed. As shown above, the organizers were in contact with NLF and DRV officials before the set-up of the IWCT as well as during its sessions. The idea of a tribunal was pitched to and discussed with both organizations. It is to assume that they had at least some say in the way the IWCT was conducted. Both NLF and DRV welcomed and hosted the investigation teams, which certainly put them in a decisive and powerful position. Moreover, Vietnamese citizens, such as journalists based in London, were closely involved in the set-up and anti-war campaigns with BRPF staff. At the same time, when Vietnamese officials or citizens tried to influence the Tribunal too much in a direction that Russell did not approve of, they were dismissed. For instance, a conflict arose when DRV representative called for a separate international commission with members selected by them. It seems like they sought more influence on the Tribunal's mode of procedure. Russell, on the other hand, feared that too much Vietnamese influence would undermine the credibility and independence of the Tribunal.⁴⁷⁵ He argued that the "broad base required cannot be a mask for external control".⁴⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the Tribunal stressed the close cooperation:

*The National Liberation Front of South Vietnam and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam have assured us of their willingness to cooperate, to provide the necessary information, and to help us in checking the accuracy and reliability of the information.*⁴⁷⁷

Indeed, all the investigative commissions were warmly received in Vietnam as well as in Cambodia and were provided the necessary support to carry out their investigation. Numerous witnesses, victims, and refugees were questioned, and the results were presented at the sessions. Rena Cukier-Kahn, for instance, submitted her commission's interviews with several Vietnamese, particularly Khmer, refugees in Cambodia who had been specifically targeted by South Vietnamese and U.S. troops.⁴⁷⁸ Some of the Tribunal participants had stayed in Vietnam for months or even years to witness and document the events unfolding. The Cuban journalists Marta Rojas and Raúl Valdés Vivó suggested that during their stay they had "lived side by side with the heroic forces of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam".⁴⁷⁹ Wilfred Burchett,

⁴⁷⁵ Mehta, 'North Vietnam's Informal Diplomacy with Bertrand Russell', 72.

⁴⁷⁶ Klinghoffer and Klinghoffer, *International Citizens' Tribunals. Mobilizing Public Opinion to Advance Human Rights*, 107f.

⁴⁷⁷ Duffett, 'Aims and Objectives of the International War Crimes Tribunal', 16.

⁴⁷⁸ Rena Cukier-Kahn, 'On Cambodia', in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 136–39.

⁴⁷⁹ Marta Rojas, Report (New York, 1967), 1, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 18, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

an Australian journalist, had visited Cambodia regularly since 1955 and had stayed there since 1965. He had reported on the different military operations carried out by the U.S.-South Vietnamese army, interviewed countless civilians, and in 1963 published the book *The Furtive War* that collected all his findings and many interviews. Burchett was one of the very few ‘Western’ journalists who reported from the area and from the perspective of the Vietnamese population and the *Việt Cộng*.⁴⁸⁰

But the testimonies at the Tribunal were not limited to recordings and reports. Some Vietnamese witnesses made their way to Europe to testify before the jury against the U.S. aggressor. Three people, namely Do Van Ngoc (nine years old), Thai Binh Dan (18 years old), and Hoang Tan Hung (45 years old), showed their burns and scars to the jury along with their medical reports that documented the severity of their injuries. All three described the attacks they had survived, the weapons used, and the struggles they had gone through for months afterwards as the napalm wounds would not heal, left them in extreme pain, and made it difficult to even move (Folder 12). While the interviews and witness testimonies gave a voice and platform to otherwise unheard perspectives in the Third World, it is questionable if the relationship was based on real mutuality. The way Dr. Roberto Guerra, a Cuban doctor, describes his visit to Vietnam sounds different: He went there “with the purpose of exchanging with our Vietnamese colleagues scientific knowledge regarding the treatment of conventional and other medical aspects of the war”. The reason why he comes across more at eye level with his Vietnamese colleagues might be found in their similar experience.

*We travelled to Vietnam to exchange experiences because we do indeed have experience in this matter: we had had the opportunity to treat similar cases, though in smaller numbers between the 17th and the 20th of April 1961 when our country, Cuba was under attack by mercenaries trained, armed, and transported by North American imperialism.*⁴⁸¹

Further indicators for a close cooperation can be found in correspondences and the fact that several delegations and committees from North and South Vietnam were present at the sessions and put forward their case. In a letter to Sartre, Hồ Chí Minh sent his “warmest greetings” to all the members of the Tribunal and his “sincere wishes for your success”. “The noble work of the international tribunal”, he went on, was “warmly approved and supported by progressive humanity”. He further thanked the Tribunal “for the warm support to the justly waged resistance

⁴⁸⁰ Wilfred Burchett, ‘Testimony on Cambodia’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 140–44.

⁴⁸¹ Roberto Guerra, *The Effects of the Aggression Against the DRV on Public Health* (New York, 1967), 1, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 14, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

war of our people”.⁴⁸² Similarly, North Vietnamese Prime Minister Phạm Văn Đồng expressed his acknowledgements for the second session in a letter to Sartre and explained the value of the Tribunal.

By defending our just cause through the condemnation of the atrocious crimes which are committed by the American imperialists in Vietnam, the Tribunal has not only rendered a political and moral support, the value of which we, the Vietnamese people, appreciate to the fullest. It has also given a precious contribution to preserving the sacred right of peoples to freedom, independence, and peace.

Because the Tribunal was “an expression of universal right and conscience against the American aggressors”, it therefore deserved “the trust of our people and of other peoples in the world”.⁴⁸³ At the 22nd anniversary-of-independence celebrations in Hanoi, Phạm praised the IWCT in his speech: “We highly appreciate the success of the 1st session of the Bertrand Russell International Tribunal which has exposed the abominable crimes committed by the American imperialists in the South and the North of our country.”⁴⁸⁴

Both sessions saw numeral reports, messages, and statements of Southeast Asian representatives and leaders. At the first session in May, reports by NLF and DRV representatives were presented. In a statement by the head of the DRV delegation, Phạm Văn Bạch thanked the members of the Tribunal “who have invited us to take part in this session, and to give the sincerest thanks of the Vietnamese people for the active support that you are showing in our struggle for freedom, national independence and world peace”.⁴⁸⁵ He also stated that the DRV had created a special State Commission in order to investigate the U.S. war crimes and, with that, assist the Tribunal and its investigative teams: “Our investigating commissions have collaborated with the Tribunal in receiving and aiding, in their investigative work in Vietnam, four investigating teams consisting about twenty lawyers, scientists, journalists, sociologists, doctors, etc”.⁴⁸⁶ The report of this commission was presented by Colonel Hà Văn Lâu (Folder 15). What is more, a report by the Cambodian Commandant Khouroudeth and Mr Vuthi portrayed the situation in Cambodia. They, too, started with their “most sincere thanks for the support that you give to Cambodia” as the country is “more and more threatened to become one

⁴⁸² Chi Minh Ho, Letter to Sartre (New York, 1967), Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 9, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

⁴⁸³ Van Dong Pham, Letter to Sartre (New York, 1967), Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 61, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

⁴⁸⁴ Pham Van Dong, cited in Ngoc Thach Pham, Report (New York, 1967), 1, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 66, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

⁴⁸⁵ Pham, Statement of the Delegation of the Commission of Inquiry of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on U.S. War Crimes in Vietnam, 1.

⁴⁸⁶ Pham, 3.

of the next objectives of the criminal escalation of the American armed forces”.⁴⁸⁷ Similarly, several reports, statements, and messages from DRV and NLF officials and representatives were set forth. For instance, NLF representatives illustrated at great length the reprisal against former resistance fighters, torture of POWs, and the deportation and imprisonment of the South Vietnamese population by U.S. and South Vietnamese troops (Folder 61). Further, the head of the DRV delegation, Dr. Phạm Ngọc Thạch presented a 16-page long statement on the war (Folder 66), a delegation of the *Korean Committee for Struggle against U.S. Crimes in Vietnam* dealt with the deployment of Korean troops in South Vietnam (Folder 60), and the so-called *South Vietnamese Peoples Committee for Solidarity with American People* announced their program of action (Folder 63). More reports were presented by a former sergeant of the South Korean army and a specialist at the permanent mission of the NLF in Hanoi (Folder 62), a message read from Nguyễn Hữu Thọ, the president of the NLF central committee, as well as a declaration by Prince Souphanouvong, the president of the Lao communist party Neo Lao Hak Xat. Just like other representatives and leaders, Souphanouvong praised the Tribunal:

*allow me, first and foremost, to express on behalf of Neo Lao Haksat and the Lao people our warmest regards to all the honourable members of the International Tribunal, founded [...] to establish the war crimes of the American imperialists, perpetrated above all against the heroic people of Vietnam and also against our Lao people, against the Cambodian people and still other peoples. We highly appreciate this noble task of Your Tribunal and consider it a powerful encouragement in the struggle for national salvation against the American imperialists which our small Lao people have undertaken these past 13 years. Your efforts constitutes [sic] an additional precious contribution towards the safe-guarding of Peace and justice in the world!*⁴⁸⁸

Interestingly enough, however, except for a few Vietnamese witness accounts, none of these statements, reports, or messages made it into the English publication of the Tribunal *Against the Crime of Silence*. The editor considered it unnecessary as “there was all too much evidence of War Crimes available from Western sources.”⁴⁸⁹ Instead, over a hundred pages were dedicated to the questioning of three U.S. veterans David Kenneth Truck, Peter Martinsen, and Donald Duncan. Further space was given to more accounts by veterans, journalists, reporters, historians, and doctors who were questioned in the United States. It could have been a

⁴⁸⁷ Khouroudeth and Vuthi, Report (New York, 1967), 1, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 15, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

⁴⁸⁸ Prince Souphanouvong, Speech on Radio Hanoi to Fellow Americans (New York, 1967), 1, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 58, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

⁴⁸⁹ John Duffett, ed., ‘To the Reader’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal* (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 13.

strategical decision to emphasize U.S. accounts, especially by former soldiers. More specifically, this could have been an attempt to appear less ‘ideological’ by focussing on American ‘patriots’ who had been willing to fight but had changed their perspective on the war – rather than on the belligerent ‘other’.

As this case of solidarity was directed at a ‘distant other’ and was composed of all these people with different backgrounds, it is important to reflect on the question of privilege at this point. As Scholz pointed out, people enjoying more privileges may have access to means, tools, and power structures which the oppressed lack. In this manner, the IWCT took up a struggle that the Vietnamese would have been unable to fight: the resistance against the war within the ‘West’ to put pressure on the U.S. government. In the Opening Message to the second session, Russell stated:

*What we may say counts for little besides their deeds. By examining and exposing American war crimes in Vietnam, we do no more than ask to be counted on the side of those who are struggling in a just cause. By fulfilling the minimal obligations which we recognise, we seek merely to avoid moral impotence.*⁴⁹⁰

That is, he recognized that the Vietnamese were the ones actually committing to the fight against the imperialist power and that, by setting up the Tribunal, he and his co-members were merely doing their little part with means available to them but not to the Vietnamese. Their commitment to solidarity aimed to encourage further protest to tackle imperialism from within. Russell acknowledged: “We have not shared their suffering. Our judgement does not vindicate them, but vindicates ourselves [...] Our words are a small charity, causing us to endure no hardships”.⁴⁹¹ At the same time, it seems that bonds between oppressed and privileged were formed during the process and some participants engaged in learning from the oppressed. However, while many participants of the Tribunal praised the Vietnamese for their endurance, it is not clear how much personal reflection took place and how much awareness of their personal privilege members formed. This topic will be expanded on in the following subchapter.

To sum up, the relationships among members and the ones between oppressed and non-oppressed were controversial. While it is difficult to conclusively assess the quality and kind of relationship and communication, it seems likely that there were some conflict issues. Firstly, members came from various backgrounds and therefore had different ideas on how to commit to solidarity as well as different experiences. While the older academic generation from Western

⁴⁹⁰ Russell, Opening Message of Lord Russell to the Copenhagen Session of the International War Crimes Tribunal, 1.

⁴⁹¹ Russell, 1.

Europe focussed on ‘beating the U.S. at their own game’ by collecting evidence of war crimes as well as replicating the Nuremberg Tribunal in an activist fashion, younger activists saw the need for more radical measures. Lester commented: “America is fighting for its own salvation, and you can publish a million photographs of napalmed babies and by the time you're finished, you'll have a million more to publish”.⁴⁹² It is obvious that racism and status played an important role in this assessment. While renowned, *white* intellectuals, such as Sartre, Russell, and Beauvoir, knew that they enjoyed credibility and respect in the wider public and could achieve something with their words, Black activists from the United States like Lester enjoyed neither of it from within their own society. Being oppressed themselves, they related more personally to the Vietnamese and the Third World in general. African Americans had experienced the brutality of racism and of a state that refused to grant them equal rights. They themselves were left with no other option than to fight this racist and powerful regime and risking their own life. Similarly, the participants from Cuba had been involved in a confrontation with the United States’ armed forces. Secondly, when it comes to the communication and relationship with the recipients of the solidarity, my assessment is split. On the one hand, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian officials and participants were met with much respect, and, in turn, the delegates praised and thanked the Tribunal for its efforts. As we will see in the next subchapter, the revolutionaries as well as civil society in Southeast Asia were praised for their fight and resilience vis-à-vis the imperialist power. The DRV and NLF were approached and worked with to bring the Tribunal to life. On the other hand, too much Vietnamese influence over the details of the Tribunal was thwarted in order to not lose credibility. Being closely connected with the DRV and NLF, two important political agents actively at war with the United States, complicated the solidarity as it exposed the Tribunal to specific criticism. Thirdly, the examples show that some issues of power and ego existed throughout the Tribunal, which prevented a cooperative work based on mutuality. This brings us the second moral obligation.

These insights can also shed some light on the relationship between members and the collective, which should be informed by cooperation. Cooperation and shared responsibility are important moral obligations for political solidarity, according to Scholz. They firstly ensure that the individuality of single members is not lost, and everyone can contribute according to their skills and talents. Secondly, they facilitate a group dynamic in which single persons do not control but rather face each other on equal terms. Mutual liability connects members further as they must be aware that their own actions will affect the collective. From the little insight we have

⁴⁹² Julius Lester, cited in Keenan, “‘Vietnam Is Fighting for Us’”, 221.

gained into some relationships, it seems like the organization and implementation of the Tribunal was not a process that involved all participants on equal terms. Instead, the Tribunal was set up by a few who later also exercised much influence over its realization. While the hand-picked participants all contributed with their skills to the Tribunal, as historians, journalists, medical experts, lawyers etc., the IWCT did not seem to have offered much opportunity for mutual and cooperative work and process. Thus, even though it was a well-defined group that worked together in order to achieve their common goal, it might not quite be considered the collective that Scholz has in mind, with the moral obligations of mutuality and cooperation. It might be seen as a temporary collaboration between many eminent individuals rather than a collective.

Another moral obligation appears between the collective and the larger society. That is, the collective is obliged to commit to social activism in order to advance their cause, raise consciousness, and to create a larger social movement. It is clear from the stated goals of the Tribunal, that the single participants and the project itself aimed to achieve exactly that. The last moral obligation that Scholz identifies is social criticism, which applies to all the different levels. Social practices and politics of the broader society must be closely scrutinized, as well as the own goal, means, and the relationship among members. On one hand, the social and political circumstances of the war and the American involvement were thoroughly criticized at the Tribunal. Also, to pick up the means of a tribunal was well thought through by the organizers. On the other hand, it does not seem like there was much space for neither a collective process nor for self-reflection. It was a conscious choice to invite people from all these different backgrounds and countries to create a more diverse and international movement as well as to join forces. However, focussing too much on the operational level rather than on a collective process, it seems like the chance was missed to create real connection and exchange. Moreover, the IWCT provided little opportunity for regular people and activists to join and can therefore be characterized as an elitist project. As this limitation might be due to the specific choice of means, which did not allow for more people to be included, it raises the question of how democratic the endeavour really was in terms of its own structural drafting.

4.5. Images and Identity

In Chapter 2, I expanded on different aspects that I think should play into the conception of political solidarity, such as identity politics, ‘Western’ universalism, and (post-)colonial tropes. I combine them in this chapter as they all operate on a discursive level. As I have argued, Scholz’s theory of political solidarity should be filled with certain – temporary and adaptable –

approaches that help us to discern and create movements of political solidarity that fulfill Scholz's moral obligation requirements and reflection of privilege. As privilege, oppression, and social injustice do not appear in a vacuum, but rest on historical and political developments and settings, these need to be taken into consideration accordingly. While these aspects are the topic of the next subchapter, this subchapter focusses on the immaterial and discursive elements that sustain and uphold the social injustices and oppression.

'Western' universalist presumptions can be ascertained throughout the IWCT but are marked with a certain ambivalence. To begin with, the decision to create a tribunal modelled on the Nuremberg example drew on certain universalist ideas. As Sartre pointed out in the Inaugural Statement, the legitimacy of the Tribunal derived "equally from its total powerlessness, and from its universality".⁴⁹³ That is, the members argued that the legal principles created to address the crimes committed by the axis powers during World War II, were universal in their content and application. The Tribunal further relied on agreements and institutions with universalist aspiration to forward their case. For instance, references were made to the UN, the World Health Organization, agreements on permitted weapons of war, the treatment of POWs, and many more in order to prove the U.S. infringement of the agreements and statutes. However, the claim of universality of these organizations and agreements has been criticized. That is, international law, as the school and movement of Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL) has pointed out, is fundamentally linked to 'Western' hegemony. Mutua Makau describes international law as following:

*It is a predatory system that legitimizes, reproduces and sustains the plunder and subordination of the Third World by the West [...] The construction and universalization of international law were essential to the imperial expansion that subordinated non-European peoples and societies to European conquest and domination. Historically, the Third World has generally viewed international law as a regime and discourse of domination and subordination, not resistance and liberation.*⁴⁹⁴

In other words, 'Western' powers have used their hegemonic position to globally establish not only their own standards of justice but have also used them to solidify their dominance. Laws helped to legitimize colonization and slavery for centuries. With the era of decolonization, 'Western' powers were eager to maintain control through the implementation of economic, political, and juridical standards that were mainly based on 'Western' traditions and interest. Little contribution or input by Third World countries was permitted. Interestingly enough, many

⁴⁹³ Sartre, 'Inaugural Statement to the Tribunal', 43.

⁴⁹⁴ Makau Mutua, 'What Is TWAIL', *American Society of International Law Proceedings* 94 (2000): 31.

anti-colonial movements actually relied on ‘Western’ concepts and standards in order to fight for their right to self-rule. For instance, most movements had a nationalist intent – with nations being a European concept dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries. Similarly, much of the elite in the Third World struggling for independence had been educated in ‘Western’ institutions which helped them turn the ‘West’s’ own paradigms, such as equality, freedom, national sovereignty, against the colonial rulers. While some aimed to create legal, economic, and political systems that fundamentally differed from ‘Western’ standards by reviving local traditions, this turned out to be an impossible undertaking in a world that was still dominated by ‘Western’ interests. Many leaders realized that the only possible way to shed foreign rule was to adapt ‘Western’ means and utilize them against the oppressors. Consequently, Vietnamese revolutionaries not only embraced the struggle for national unity and self-rule but also a solidarity tribunal that was based on ‘Western’ legal standards. North Vietnamese Prime Minister Phạm Văn Đồng praised the Tribunal as “an expression of universal right and conscience against the American aggressors and is thus deserving of the trust of our people and of other peoples in the world”.⁴⁹⁵

Besides the legal universality, the IWCT also relied on the idea of common European or ‘Western’ values, such as humanism and democracy. Vladimir Dedijer emphasised in a statement that “it is entirely fitting that the Bertrand Russell Tribunal should meet in Sweden”, as it is a “stronghold of democratic traditions and upholder of humanitarian values”.⁴⁹⁶ Nevertheless, Russell also pointed out the hypocrisy of the ‘Western’ self-image.

*The American empire is a world system of exploitation backed by the greatest military power in history. In this role, America invokes the slogans of freedom and democracy, but when the system is challenged, as it has been in Vietnam, we see the reality behind the slogans, and the reality involves war crimes.*⁴⁹⁷

He understood ‘Western’ civilisation as two-fold. On one hand, it was characterized by “our art, our science, our music, our humanity”. On the other, it has produced violence carried out by industrial and technological means. That is, not only has it created weapons to attack civilian populations, such as chemical weapons, cluster bombs, or nuclear bombs, it has also facilitated genocides by making use of industrialized methods of killing. It is this second aspect of ‘Western’ civilisation that the Tribunal has a responsibility to act against. “It is our culture

⁴⁹⁵ Pham, Letter to Sartre, 1.

⁴⁹⁶ Vladimir Dedijer, Statement (New York, 1967), 1, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 16, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

⁴⁹⁷ Russell, ‘Introduction’, 4.

which is at stake. It is our barbarism which menaces it”.⁴⁹⁸ Thus, the Tribunal claimed to act on behalf of “human civilisation” and their actions were directed at the “conscience of humanity”.⁴⁹⁹

While the Tribunal relied on ‘Western’ concepts and presented them as universally applicable, it also challenged ‘Western’ legal standards as well as the hegemony of ‘Western’ universalism. Firstly, the participants set up the Tribunal to confront the United States with means they themselves had created. That is, the claim of universal applicability of ‘Western’ international law was not imposed on a government or on people with a different juridical tradition. Secondly, the Tribunal departed from ‘Western’ legal paradigms in several ways, as Mark Boyle and Audrey Kobayashi have shown. Not only did they appropriate something that is only reserved to state power, but they also gave historical and political context to the war, included the NLF and DRV – that is, the adversary and belligerent party – in the organisation of the Tribunal, refused to hold the victim accountable, and did not attempt to suppress feelings of anger and sympathy.⁵⁰⁰ By including wider factors and the context of the Vietnam War, the IWCT questioned international power relations and criticised international institutions. Marcos Zunino has shown that it therefore undermined legalism – a term created by philosopher Judith Shklar, which highlights the political ideology behind the ‘Western’ juridical systems. By separating law from other spheres of society and by excluding economic, political, and social factors, it exists as a self-contained and sacred system. People-led tribunals undermine boundaries that isolate and insulate law.⁵⁰¹ Boyle and Kobayashi argue that, in doing so, PWCTs are both “in and beyond Western canons of ethics, justice, and law”. Furthermore, “by giving renewed credibility to subaltern testimonies which otherwise might go ignored and by providing profound and articulate renditions of why colonial violence constitutes the primordial ethical wrong, PWCTs confront epistemic injustices and rupture hegemonic epistemic regimes”.⁵⁰² That is, by creating a platform to hear the voices of oppressed or subaltern people, tribunals contribute to testimonial and hermeneutical justice.⁵⁰³

Similar to the question of universalisms, the issue of identity politics, discursive images, and orientalism at the Tribunal is ambivalent. While participants resorted to a language that created

⁴⁹⁸ Russell, ‘Opening Statement to the First Tribunal Session’, 51.

⁴⁹⁹ Kalter, *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt*, 198.

⁵⁰⁰ Boyle and Kobayashi, ‘In the Face of Epistemic Injustices? On the Meaning of People-Led War Crimes Tribunals’, 705.

⁵⁰¹ Zunino, ‘Subversive Justice’, 220f., 224.

⁵⁰² Boyle and Kobayashi, ‘In the Face of Epistemic Injustices? On the Meaning of People-Led War Crimes Tribunals’, 701.

⁵⁰³ Boyle and Kobayashi, 700.

an idealising, under-complex, and homogenising depiction of the oppressed, they also helped to tackle prominent racist images. To begin with, Vietnamese people were portrayed as a unity, which denied the complexity of different fronts, allyships, as well as dissents among them. At the Tribunal, historian Charles Fourniau argued a national and social cohesion among Vietnamese by pointing out a long common history. “There has been an independent Vietnamese state since the eleventh century, and the sense of belonging to a single national community is the basic characteristic of Vietnamese history.” He also claimed: “As a matter of fact, few peoples present a unity, a national cohesion, as strong or as old as the Vietnamese people”. By suggesting such a strong national unity, the IWCT firstly emphasized the right to self-rule and sovereignty and, secondly, supported the image of all Vietnamese being united in one common fight against a foreign invader. Indeed, Fourniau went so far as to ask, “How can such a unified people commit aggression against itself?”⁵⁰⁴ With that, he denied any kind of dissent among the Vietnamese population and implied an absolute homogeneity. While admittedly many Vietnamese supported the NLF and even the DRV, not all agreed with the communist line. What is more, this depiction completely ignores the fact that the war was not only fought between Vietnamese and the United States but equally among Vietnamese. That is, the South Vietnamese government with a bureaucratic system and an army were voluntarily allying with the United States and fighting against NLF and DRV forces. Similarly, the DRV inquiry commission presented a strong unity that dismissed the struggle within. With “its aggression in Vietnam, the United States of America runs up against the heroic resistance of an entire people united like a single man in order to defend its right to liberty and life.”⁵⁰⁵ The head of the Korean delegation, Paik Il Kon, further suggested a common solidarity of Korean people with the Vietnamese as they were fighting against the same enemy.

*The Korean people who regard the aggression against Vietnam as one against themselves and the struggles of the Vietnamese people as their own will allways [sic] share life and death with the brotherly Vietnamese people and step up all forms of support and assistance to them in the struggle against U.S. imperialism – the common enemy.*⁵⁰⁶

By contrast, Gabriel Kolko’s historical report allows space for differentiation in its description of the U.S. meddling in Vietnam. Kolko acknowledged the conflict between the South and the

⁵⁰⁴ Charles Fourniau, ‘Historical Report on U.S. Aggression in Vietnam 1964 to 1967’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 81.

⁵⁰⁵ Pham, Statement of the Delegation of the Commission of Inquiry of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on U.S. War Crimes in Vietnam, 11.

⁵⁰⁶ Paik Il Kon, Report (New York, 1967), 10, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 60, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

North and suggested that not all, but “the vast majority of the Vietnamese people” supported the fight against the South Vietnamese government and the United States. Nevertheless, he, too, refused to call the conflict a “civil conflict”. He stated that

*the war should never be considered as a civil conflict or even secondarily as a by-product of one, for in that form it would hardly have lasted very long against a national and radical movement that the vast majority of the Vietnamese people always sustained.*⁵⁰⁷

Secondly, “the Vietnamese” were portrayed as “heroic” in their struggle throughout the statements and reports of the Tribunal. In the preface to the English publication, editor John Duffett argued that “inexorably, patently, courageously, and above all, determinedly, the Vietnamese have shown the way for the defeat of imperialism”.⁵⁰⁸ The NLF representative present at the second Tribunal session equally declared that “under the direction of the National Liberation Front, the South Vietnamese people have shown to the greatest possible extent their revolutionary heroism and their traditions of unyielding opposition to the foreign invader”.⁵⁰⁹ By emphasizing the heroism of the Vietnamese fighting, the focus was also directed at the indifferent and inactive public in ‘Western’ countries. For Russell,

*The pity is not in the suffering of Vietnam. Her people resist and are heroic. The pity is in the smug streets of Europe and the complacent cities of North America so debased as to be indifferent even as our own fate is enacted in Vietnam.*⁵¹⁰

This statement exhibits the admiration for the Vietnamese revolutionaries and their movement and demonstrates the type of solidarity that the Tribunal committed to. In contrast to philanthropic or benevolent endeavours, the members neither aimed to arouse sympathy or pity with the Vietnamese nor wished to offer help. Instead of belittling the subject of solidarity, they emphasized the Vietnamese’s agency and strength. “To our tribunal”, wrote Schoenman, “the Vietnamese people are a permanent reminder of the dignity and courage of which revolutionary men and women are capable”.⁵¹¹ Similarly, Duffett wrote, “Above all, this book is not a plea for sympathy for the Vietnamese. It is not a plea for pacifism or compassion. The Vietnamese know how to suffer!”⁵¹² As is already implied in this statement, the idealization of the heroic

⁵⁰⁷ Kolko, Research Outline to the Legal Commission of the International War Crimes Tribunal: A History of United States Aggression in Vietnam, 68.

⁵⁰⁸ John Duffett, ed., ‘Editor’s Preface’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal* (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968).

⁵⁰⁹ Report of the Representative of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (New York, 1967), 6, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 15, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

⁵¹⁰ Russell, ‘Opening Statement to the First Tribunal Session’, 51.

⁵¹¹ Schoenman, ‘Foreword’, 9.

⁵¹² Duffett, ‘Editor’s Preface’, 11.

struggle at times hints towards the idea that Vietnamese do not experience pain and suffering as strongly as others. This can be seen in this assertion by Roberto Guerra:

*By use of mass destruction and terrorism US imperialism tries to break down the psychological health of the people. These efforts are in vain. The Vietnamese people are immune to this kind of aggression. Their valor, love of liberty, and unbreakable spirit will triumph.*⁵¹³

Even though this was supposed to have positive connotation, the idea of immunity to pain or grief bears slight resemblance to a statement by Undersecretary of the Air Force Townsend Hoopes. In a memorandum of 1968 in response to the Ted Offensive, he echoed not only a common war-propaganda belief that dehumanized the military enemy, but also a widespread form of racism against Asian people. He wrote:

We believe the enemy can be forced to be 'reasonable', i.e., to compromise or even capitulate, because we assume he wants to avoid pain, death, and material destruction [...] Ours is a plausible strategy – for those who are rich, who love life and fear pain. But happiness, wealth, and power are expectations that constitute a dimension far beyond the experience, and probably beyond the emotional comprehension, of the Asian poor.

Curiously enough, Hoopes was considered a “dove”, meaning he was not in favour of escalating the war. This indicates the prevalence of the racist trope that Vietnamese people did not experience pain or grief in the same way as ‘Western’ or *white* people did. In accordance with this conception, Hoopes claimed that “Asia’s capacity for endurance in suffering into an instrument for exploiting a basic vulnerability of the Christian West”. He went so far as to delegate the responsibility of America’s brutal warfare to the Vietnamese, having invited the ‘West’ “to carry its strategic logic to the final conclusion, which is genocide”. Asians, he concluded, “defy us by a readiness to struggle, suffer, and die on a scale that seems to us beyond the bound of humanity”.⁵¹⁴

Besides the idealization of Vietnamese heroism and strength, participants of the Tribunal also stressed the power difference of the two belligerents. That is, the suffering of the “poor peasant nation” was emphasized in different contexts. For Schoenman, the Tribunal’s aim was to reveal the

true account of the social dynamic of a war between a small peasant people and an industrial technology in the hands of a great imperial power. Distilled from the suffering of the

⁵¹³ Guerra, *The Effects of the Aggression Against the DRV on Public Health*, 3.

⁵¹⁴ Townsend Hoopes, cited in Chomsky, ‘Preface’, xx.

*Vietnamese is the inexorable nature of a war waged by a foreign occupier seeking through its ruling class to bludgeon a people into submission.*⁵¹⁵

As seen, the two images were not mutually exclusive. Instead, “the Vietnamese” were portrayed as heroic because they were economically and militarily inferior to the U.S and were fighting against the shackles of their oppressor. Similarly, the chief of the Japanese investigation team, Saburo Kugai, declared during the second session:

*Under the severe war-time conditions, the people of Vietnam are giving full play to their amazing efforts, wisdom and creative originality, striving to fight and to produce; from the bottom of their hearts, they desire peace and freedom and the reunification of their country and are full of liveliness and optimism with firm belief in their final victory.*⁵¹⁶

In conclusion, we can observe that the Tribunal members contributed to stereotyping images and ‘Western’ universalist assumptions but challenged common racist beliefs and conceptions of ‘Western’ supremacy at the same time. By talking about ‘the Vietnamese’ as a unity, they simplified complex realities as they were, in fact, referring to the NLF, DRV, and their supporters. Everyone supporting and allying with the United States was portrayed as a mindless puppet. This simplification is also supported by the idea of a homogenous Vietnamese nation that has a unified goal. Differences and conflicts among different Vietnamese were eradicated. Further, the IWCT did not question the universality of certain ‘Western’ values, such as the legal standards created by ‘Western’ countries which were to be applied to everyone. However, one could argue that these standards were explicitly applied to their creators – as no other country or institution would do it – and not to people with different juridical traditions. What is more, by idealising the struggle and projecting their own wish for revolutionary upheaval onto Vietnam, the Tribunal drew on what Judy Tzu-Chun Wu calls ‘radical orientalism’. That is, even though certain images were challenged and reversed, the dichotomy between ‘the West’ and ‘the East’ was perpetuated.

At the same time, the Tribunal helped to forge new images of Vietnam and Vietnamese people. For one, certain contrasting binaries that orientalist and racist discourses had created were challenged. The commonly evoked contrast between the civilisation of the ‘West’ and the ‘barbary of the rest’, for instance, was called into question by highlighting the inherent barbary within ‘Western’ civilisation – a theme that had emerged among the European left in response to the horrendous deeds of Nazi Germany. Moreover, the fact that certain attributes, such as

⁵¹⁵ Schoenman, ‘Foreword’, 9.

⁵¹⁶ Saburo Kugai, Report (New York, 1967), 7, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 12, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

morality, were exclusively applied to the West was challenged. By unveiling American war crimes, questioning the legality of the war itself, as well as highlighting the U.S. imperial intentions, the U.S. morality was severely questioned. Instead, Tribunal members emphasized the legitimacy of the Vietnamese resistance to a foreign imperial power, which attributed a moral high ground to the Vietnamese people. What is more, Vietnamese people were humanized. As could be seen in the account of American official Townsend Hoopes, not only were former colonial subjects met with racist perceptions, but the war had brought out dehumanizing and derogatory images of the enemy belligerent. By calling attention to the suffering of Vietnamese civilians, as well as by giving Vietnamese voices a platform, the IWCT challenged these stereotypical images. It confronted the discursive power of the ‘West’ and attributed humanness to Vietnamese people. While the manner and structure of how the accounts could be delivered were predefined, witnesses and revolutionaries from Southeast Asia were able to represent themselves rather than being spoken for.

4.6. Power, Inequality, and the Shared Struggle

The IWCT did not only tackle stereotypical images and give Southeast Asian people the chance to be heard in the ‘Western’ public, but it also voiced profound criticism of historical and contemporary global power asymmetries, *white* hegemony, and imperialism. In stark contrast to international cosmopolitan solidarity, which depoliticizes conflicts by its sole focus on humanitarianism, the Tribunal’s goal was to stress the political, historical, and economic factors that played into the war in Vietnam. As already alluded to, several reports engaged with past and current circumstances in order to contextualize the war and to raise consciousness for the power dynamics underlying the conflict. Furthermore, it was one of the Tribunal’s prime concerns to unveil the role of the United States in Vietnam and its imperialist intent. “It is a role”, Russell pointed out in the introduction to *Against the Crime of Silence*, “which has been disbelieved often in the West, because it is in the nature of imperialism that citizens of the imperial power are always among the last to know – or care – about circumstances in the colonies”.⁵¹⁷ For him, imperialist ideology was the reason for the U.S. meddling in Southeast Asia and the deployment of such brutal warfare. “The objects [of imperialism] are domination, markets, cheap labor, raw materials, conscript armies and strategic points from which to control or threaten”. Similarly, Schoenman described the motivation behind the Tribunal to expose the U.S. power play.

⁵¹⁷ Russell, ‘Introduction’, 3.

*It is not the evil which is new, nor is it the crisis which has changed. Imperialism, the control of peoples' resources and labor and the use of massive brutality to protect the colonial domain, now centers in Washington. The Tribunal sought to isolate, identify and expose this truth, to display the motive nestling behind the power, so that we may feel the global struggle between the powerful and the weak, the aggressor and the victim, the exploiter and the pauperized.*⁵¹⁸

He went on to argue that the U.S. attempt to seek control did not only have political but also economic implications. "U.S. corporate capitalism would hold this people in colonial bondage and force them to yield up their nation's natural wealth and the wracked labor of their most impoverished."⁵¹⁹ Moreover, Chomsky called for others to carry on the work that the Tribunal had initiated to not only "take upon the duty of discovering and making public the daily evidences of barbarism", but "the still more severe duty of challenging the powers – state or private – that are responsible for violence and oppression, looking forward to the day when an international movement for freedom and social justice will end their rule".⁵²⁰ What is more, Tribunal members addressed the racist component of imperialist endeavours. As Russell expressed it, imperialism "is the attempt to create empires that produces war crimes because, as the Nazis also reminded us, empires are founded on a self-righteous and deep-rooted belief in racial superiority and God-given mission".⁵²¹ He then pointed to the racist discourse in the United States that helped legitimizing the war. "Untermensch is a word which lives again in the vocabulary of powerful men in Washington" as did the use of racist terms to describe East Asians, so Russell.⁵²²

Moreover, instead of imagining themselves as neutral bystanders, the Tribunal's participants saw themselves bound to the anti-colonial struggle. As demonstrated, the Vietnamese revolutionaries served as a role model for successful and powerful resistance against the colonialist and imperialist 'Western' powers. These struggles of the Third World were an important point of reference for 'Western' leftists as they channelled the hopes for revolutionary upheaval. For Sartre, "in the last twenty years, the great historical event has been the struggle of the Third World for its liberation".⁵²³ While members of the IWCT admitted that they could hardly relate to the war the *Việt Cộng* were fighting, they nevertheless saw themselves as part of the same movement against imperialism. "To our Tribunal", Schoenman declared, "the

⁵¹⁸ Schoenman, 'Foreword', 9.

⁵¹⁹ Schoenman, 9.

⁵²⁰ Chomsky, 'Preface', xxix.

⁵²¹ Russell, 'Introduction', 4.

⁵²² Russell, 'Opening Statement to the First Tribunal Session', 51.

⁵²³ Sartre, 'Inaugural Statement to the Tribunal', 42.

Vietnamese people are a permanent reminder of the dignity and courage of which revolutionary men and women are capable”.⁵²⁴ American activist Carl Oglesby emphasized the importance of the Tribunal as

*it creates in the very heart of the West a window on the Third World. We who live among the oppressors and who try to fight them in our lives need as acutely to know what happens in Bolivia, in Argentina and in Ghana as well as what happens in Paris, London, and New York. This represents a most vital role for the Tribunal to fill in the building of an internationally solid New-Left movement.*⁵²⁵

Given that one of the Tribunal’s most prominent proclaimed goals was the stimulation of an international movement against an imperialist war, many speakers deployed a rhetoric of a united struggle against a “common enemy” of imperialism, as the Korean representative Paik Il Kon put it. For Duffett “the Vietnamese have shown the way for the defeat of imperialism”.⁵²⁶ It was up to the Left elsewhere to take up this cause. Schoenman declared that “it has been seized by millions of people – workers, students, farmers and soldiers – in Bolivia, France, Germany and the United States”.⁵²⁷ As can be seen in the statement by Cuban journalist Marta Rojas, solidarity consisted not merely in the support of a far-away struggle but in the identification and connection through the shared vision – particularly for those Tribunal members who themselves came from the Third World. “I wish to testify in favour of the Vietnamese people”, she proclaimed, “since I consider their cause to be my own, otherwise I should not be appearing as a witness before the International Tribunal, but among the accused”.⁵²⁸ As already seen in other examples, all Vietnamese representatives at the Tribunal welcomed this engagement. For the head of the DRV delegation, Phạm Ngọc Thạch, “it is for us a source of hope and a great moral comfort to see that the people of the entire world, regardless of race or regime, are at our sides in our hard and long struggle against American imperialism”.⁵²⁹ He called to mind different manifestations of solidarity, such as the immolation of the U.S. antiwar activists Alice Hertz and Norman Morrison. He thanked everyone who has demonstrated “their opposition to the barbarous and unjust war waged in Vietnam”. He also acknowledged the connection of different struggles against the same oppressor. “To Stokely Carmichael, we should like to recall our [sic] much we appreciate the sentiments of militant

⁵²⁴ Schoenman, ‘Foreword’, 9.

⁵²⁵ Carl Oglesby, ‘Greetings to the Tribunal from American Supporters’, in *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the International War Crimes Tribunal*, ed. John Duffett (New York: Clarion/ Simon and Schuster, 1968), 322.

⁵²⁶ Duffett, ‘Editor’s Preface’, 11.

⁵²⁷ Schoenman, ‘Foreword’, 9.

⁵²⁸ Rojas, Report, 1.

⁵²⁹ Pham, Report, 2.

solidarity which he has expressed to us on behalf of the victims of racial discrimination in the United States.”⁵³⁰ In a similar vein, Bertrand Russell opened the second session with the appeal to take into consideration the link between the different movements against oppression. “Vietnam has much in common with other struggles for justice. Although it is not the task of our Tribunal to consider these other struggles, we cannot forget them.” Not only does the racism within the United States but also the “crimes against the people of Latin America” will have to be examined and exposed.⁵³¹

Further, Hồ Chí Minh and other Vietnamese revolutionaries expressed their gratitude towards the Tribunal’s expression of solidarity. Clearly, they were eager for an international movement to grow stronger as it had become apparent that the war was to be won on a political level rather than militarily. Therefore, NLF representative *Phạm Văn Bạch* stressed that

*since the beginning, the Vietnamese people have warmly welcomed the initiative of Lord Bertrand Russell considering it a manifestation of international solidarity towards Vietnam, and they appreciate highly the work of the Tribunal as well as the activities of the judges, members of the investigating teams and the secretariats.*⁵³²

As mentioned above, The North Vietnamese Prime Minister even addressed the IWCT in his speech at the 22nd anniversary celebrations of the independence from the French colonists in Hanoi. He also stressed the connection between different struggles around the world.

*We are very happy to see that the movement to aid our country is becoming ever more closely linked to the struggle for independence, liberty and the interests of the workers themselves and oppressed people throughout the world, against American imperialism’s policy of aggression and intervention in various countries.*⁵³³

In his declaration read at the second session of the Tribunal, the president of the Laotian Neo Lao Hak Sat Prince Souphanouvong highlighted the importance of the support they were receiving from people worldwide.

Proud of its national tradition of unity and inflexible struggle, strong in the sympathy and support of friends and brothers in arms from all continents, which grows great and stronger

⁵³⁰ Pham, 2.

⁵³¹ Russell, Opening Message of Lord Russell to the Copenhagen Session of the International War Crimes Tribunal, 3.

⁵³² Pham, Statement of the Delegation of the Commission of Inquiry of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on U.S. War Crimes in Vietnam, 3.

⁵³³ Pham Van Dong, cited in Pham, Report, 1.

*for each day that passes, our people will continue firmly in its resistance against the American imperialists towards national salvation and the final victory.*⁵³⁴

In a like manner, the head of the DRV inquiry commission stressed that the Vietnamese's "just struggle enjoys great support from the peoples of the Socialist countries and from all the forces of peace, democracy, and progress in the entire world".⁵³⁵ The support of the *Việt Cộng* by an international movement against imperialism is further emphasized by Korean delegate Paik Il Kon.

*At present it is a lofty duty for the peace-loving people all over the world to support, morally and materially, the righteous [sic] struggle of the Vietnamese people who are battling at the outpost of anti-imperialist struggle for national liberation and independence.*⁵³⁶

In a similar vein, Gabriel Kolko stressed the importance of this particular struggle for all social revolutions worldwide and their future.

*On the outcome of this epic contest rests the entire future of peace and social progress in the world for the remainder of the 20th century, not just for those who struggle to overcome the legacy of colonialism and oppression to build new lives for themselves, but for American people themselves.*⁵³⁷

While the shared struggle is emphasised throughout the Tribunal, the different backgrounds and positions of the participants become apparent. The Cuban delegates, as could be seen earlier in the statement of Roberto Guerra, were differently connected to the Vietnamese cause as they themselves had experienced the U.S. strife for control firsthand. Rojas stated that "the case of the United States government is precisely that of a habitual criminal. The people of Asia, Africa and Latin America of the so-called Third World can testify to what I have just said."⁵³⁸ Similarly, young Black radicals from the United States insisted to fight the United States from within or even join the antiimperialist struggles abroad with militant means. As could be seen earlier in the statement by Julius Lester, for many the IWCT went not far enough. It also displayed a certain disconnect between different generations and backgrounds.

⁵³⁴ Souphanouvong, Speech on Radio Hanoi to Fellow Americans, 3.

⁵³⁵ Pham, Statement of the Delegation of the Commission of Inquiry of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on U.S. War Crimes in Vietnam, 12.

⁵³⁶ Paik Il Kon, Report, 10.

⁵³⁷ Kolko, Research Outline to the Legal Commission of the International War Crimes Tribunal: A History of United States Aggression in Vietnam, 69.

⁵³⁸ Rojas, Report, 6.

5. HISTORICAL OUTLOOK AND CONCLUSION

“[The International War Crimes Tribunal] is a strong encouragement – not only for us, the people of Vietnam, but also for all those peoples fighting for national independence, liberty and peace”.⁵³⁹

Hồ Chí Minh (1967)

5.1. Third Worldism and the Shift towards Human Rights

Soon after the Tribunal ended, the movements and political condensations kicked off that would become known under the polysemous label of a global “1968” and that comprised Vietnam War protests as a central feature – both in the countries of the (former) imperial powers and elsewhere. On February 17, 1968, over five thousand radicals from fifteen ‘Western’ countries gathered in West Berlin for the largest antiwar conference of the 1960s. Afterwards, protests in France and other countries increased, which, ultimately, laid the foundation for the events of May 1968 in France. These included mass student protests and a general strike of over nine million workers throughout the country.⁵⁴⁰ For Sartre, it was clear: “The origins of May lie in the Vietnamese Revolution”.⁵⁴¹ Vietnam had radicalized an entire generation. As shown above, the Vietnamese struggle – among other independence movements – gave hope to ‘Western’ leftists who had been waiting in vain for an emancipatory revolution in Europe. Moreover, activists translated the rebellious struggle in the colonial and post-colonial world into their domestic contexts. Not even a decade later, however, the Third World as a messianic hope for revolutionary change had disappeared. Even though the radical New Left shifted their focus back on the ‘Western’ working class as their subject of revolutionary hope, an important conceptual foundation was lost. Already in crisis in the early 1970s, the radical New Left crumbled under the pressure of domestic and global events.

The capture of Saigon, in 1975, marked the end of the war in Vietnam. A year later, the communist DRV officially united North and South Vietnam under its control. Fearing persecution and execution, many of the South Vietnamese who had worked with and for the United States fled the country. In the years following the communist victory, “re-education camps”, censorship, arbitrary imprisonment and other forms of terror were part of the retaliation against South Vietnamese. This resulted in a downright exodus from Vietnam. Hundreds of thousands embarked on a dangerous journey by boat to escape political persecution, but also to find a better life. Many of the so-called “boat people” resettled in the United States, Canada,

⁵³⁹ Ho, Letter to Sartre.

⁵⁴⁰ Mohandesi, ‘Bringing Vietnam Home’, 235.

⁵⁴¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, cited in Mohandesi, 238.

Australia, and other countries. Many, however, tragically found their death in the ocean. What is more, the communist Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia (or Kampuchea, at the time), which had come to power with the help of North Vietnamese forces in 1975, were committing a full-scale genocide against its population. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam invaded its former ally in 1978, which ended the genocide but led to a controversial occupation until 1989.

The humanitarian crises unfolding in Southeast Asia conflicted the ‘Western’ Left as they rendered support to the former “anti-imperialist heroes” impossible. “Radicals in France”, Salar Mohandesi argues, “found it impossible to reconcile these horrific events with the foundational ideas of internationalism, anti-imperialism, and socialist revolution—in short, with the image of Vietnam that had guided them earlier in the decade”.⁵⁴² He concludes: “For if the Vietnam War helped make May ’68 possible, genocide, internecine war, and refugee crises in Southeast Asia in the late 1970s helped sound its death knell. Vietnam not only stood at the origins of May but also was a part of its end.”⁵⁴³ Post-colonial countries struggled to consolidate their nation states and to unify highly diverse societies, which were grappling with the remnants of colonial rule. Apart from the horrifying events in Southeast Asia, civil wars and “socialist” dictatorships throughout the post-colonial world disillusioned the ‘Western’ Left, such as the Biafra War in Nigeria.⁵⁴⁴ The problem, as many leftists realized, was with nation states and nationalism themselves. Samuel Moyn has shown how these events changed the discourse among the ‘Western’ Left – it shifted from a shared struggle against imperialism towards the fight for human rights. That is, the focus moved from the rights of a group of people – to self-rule and sovereignty – to the rights of the individual – human rights. Now that the formal empires had ceased to exist and the world was mainly made up of independent nations, it was the individual who was fighting for its rights. “It was not until the mid-1970s that the romance of leftist armed struggle [...] began to be subject to widespread reexamination,” Moyn shows. “Human rights thus emerged on the ruins of one sort of hope for former colonial areas and the search for some alternative.”⁵⁴⁵ Instead of sending supplies to support the struggle of the NLF and DRV against U.S. imperialism, like ten years earlier, leftist intellectuals organised campaigns to rescue boat people fleeing from the communists – including Sartre, Michel Foucault, and Roland Barthes.⁵⁴⁶ The post-colonial world was “transformed from militant and

⁵⁴² Mohandesi, 246.

⁵⁴³ Mohandesi, 246.

⁵⁴⁴ Kalter, *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt*, 119–23.

⁵⁴⁵ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia. Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 116.

⁵⁴⁶ Danewid, ‘Race, Capital, and the Politics of Solidarity’, 68f.

articulate fighter and thinker to ‘victim’” as they were “in need” of ‘Western’ help.⁵⁴⁷ “Within a decade,” Arif Dirlik sums up, “the ‘South’ had turned from a possible savior of the world to an object of compassion that must be saved in order for the world to save itself.”⁵⁴⁸ This shift from *solidarity* to *help* was compatible with a wider, less radical, public and has been a successful paradigm ever since. From NGOs, charity, celebrity philanthropy, to governmental development aid – the *white* saviour complex has been depriving protagonists from the Global South of their agency and voice. The connotation of the term Third World has shifted from a place of active resistance and a Cold War alternative towards an image of victimhood, which includes poverty, disease, illiteracy, famines, among many others. In contrast to the anti-imperialist discourse of the 1960s and 1970s, the focus on human rights, development, and humanitarianism has taken away the political, economic, and historical components of inequalities – inequalities that were created by colonial and imperialist dominion and linger to this day.

5.2. Impact of the International War Crimes Tribunal

One of the principal goals of the IWCT was to fill a void within the international community, to enforce international law, as well as to apply the same legal standards to the United States that it had co-created two decades before. Even many leftist scholars and activists rejected the endeavour of the IWCT, accusing it of being biased and not a legitimate trial with proper juridical proceedings. Richard Falk, an U.S. expert on international law, called it a “juridical farce” at the time. However, he later came to see the important contributions that the Tribunal had made. After the Mỹ Lai massacre – the mass murder and rape of unarmed South Vietnamese civilians by U.S. troops in March 1968 – became public in November 1969, Falk noted that, “although the Russell Tribunal operated on the basis of one-sided adjudicative machinery and procedure, nevertheless it did turn up a good deal of evidence about the manner in which the war was conducted and developed persuasively some of the legal implications it seems reasonable to draw from the war”. In 1971, he judged that the Tribunal’s findings “stand up well under the test of time and independent scrutiny”.⁵⁴⁹ He himself published several books on the legality and different legal aspects of the war. The first of these were published in 1968, a year after the Tribunal had taken place. Even though it is hard to say with absolute certainty whether it was the IWCT that prompted later studies on the legal dimensions of the war, it was the first comprehensive investigation of U.S. war crimes and first attention-getting project that

⁵⁴⁷ Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 167.

⁵⁴⁸ Arif Dirlik, cited in Danewid, ‘Race, Capital, and the Politics of Solidarity’, 68, footnote 88.

⁵⁴⁹ Richard Falk, cited in Stewart, ‘Too Loud to Rise above the Silence’, 37, footnote 16.

questioned the legality of the war. Soon after, another prominent juridical expert published a book: In *Nuremberg and Vietnam. An American Tragedy* (1970), the former U.S. Chief Counsel for the prosecution at Nuremberg Telford Taylor investigated the question of whether the Nuremberg principles were applicable to the war in Vietnam.

Even though the IWCT might have not had an immediate impact on public opinion, it was an important contribution to the intensifying protests. With its investigation and collected evidence, it brought to light the severity of the war which had been downplayed in the U.S. media. For Harish C. Mehta, “the IWCT went beyond its mandate: It broke several important stories of the Vietnam War”.⁵⁵⁰ It was the first to report of the use of cluster bombs by the U.S. military. Consequently, the U.S. government were forced to publicly deny that they were directed against civilians. Even the Swedish Prime Minister admitted that he had learned from the deployment of fragmentation bombs from the Tribunal.⁵⁵¹ In 1972, efforts were made to hold a third session of the IWCT. In light of an ever-escalating conflict and the publication of the “Pentagon Papers”, released by Daniel Ellsberg, the presidium of the IWCT and the BRPF deemed another tribunal necessary to “determine the individual responsibility of the latest war crimes in Indochina”.⁵⁵² It never took place as the U.S. military involvement in the war ended soon afterwards. Furthermore, the IWCT inspired numerous other projects that focused on the legal aspects of the war, such as the gathering of Vietnam veterans war crimes testimonials as well as investigations in the form of the National Citizens’ Commission of Inquiry into War Crimes in Vietnam (CCI) and the Winter Soldier Investigation, organized by the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) in 1970-1971.⁵⁵³

The IWCT broke new grounds regarding not only its investigations but also the format of so-called citizens’, peoples’ tribunals or people-led war crimes tribunals. Since 1967, over eighty international peoples’ tribunals, that is, tribunals outside formal state or international structures, have been established. Filling an institutional gap, they have investigated international law and civil rights violations committed by states, organizations, or corporations.⁵⁵⁴ Russell had already wished for activists following the example of the IWCT. The publication of the Tribunal’s proceedings “serves not only as an indictment of the United States by abundant

⁵⁵⁰ Mehta, ‘North Vietnam’s Informal Diplomacy with Bertrand Russell’, 67.

⁵⁵¹ Stewart, ‘Too Loud to Rise above the Silence’, 29f.

⁵⁵² Presidium of the War Crimes Tribunal, cited in Christopher Farley and Ken Coates, Memorandum. A Third Session of the War Crimes Tribunal (New York, 1967), 2, Internal War Crimes Tribunal Records TAM 098, Box 1, Folder 79, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive.

⁵⁵³ Stewart, ‘Too Loud to Rise above the Silence’, 21.

⁵⁵⁴ Gabrielle Simm and Andrew Byrnes, ‘International People’s Tribunals in Asia. Political Theatre, Juridical Farce, or Meaningful Intervention’, *Asian Journal of International Law* 4, no. 1 (2014): 104.

documentation,” so Russel, “but establishes the Tribunal as a model for future use.”⁵⁵⁵ Similarly, Chomsky had called for the Tribunal to turn “to Czechoslovakia, to Greece, to a dozen other countries that are suffering in the grip of the imperialist powers or the local forces that they support and maintain.”⁵⁵⁶ In 1973, Italian political scientist, jurist, and politician Lelio Basso – who had also served as a member of the IWCT – organized the second Russell Tribunal. This time, it investigated human rights violations by Latin American military dictatorships. A third tribunal in 1978 dealt with possible West German civil rights violations in the context of the so-called German Autumn. He further put his energy into the establishment of the Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal. Since 1979, it has held forty-six sessions on crimes against international law.⁵⁵⁷ As recent as 2018, a PWCT was held in South Korea in order to investigate and evaluate crimes committed by South Korean troops against Vietnamese civilians during the Vietnamese-American War. Considering that the IWCT was the first tribunal of this sort, scholars have started to recognize the IWCT as a pivotal moment in the development of citizens’ or peoples’ tribunals. Falk later participated in several such tribunals himself, among them the World Tribunal on Iraq held between 2003 and 2005. He acknowledged the importance of transnational activist tribunals as a means to fill institutional gaps, to uncover the breach of international law, and to bring otherwise unheard voices to the foreground. “The jurisprudential rationale for this initiative is the claim that citizens possess a residual right and duty to implement the norms of international law bearing on war and peace when official institutions fail to discharge their responsibilities,” he claimed in 2008.⁵⁵⁸

Some scholars have highlighted the importance of such tribunals within the broader sphere of transitional justice. Marcos Zunino showed that the IWCT constitutes a historical “antecedent of critical approaches to transitional justice”.⁵⁵⁹ The subversive traits of the Tribunal include the desecrating of the sanctity of law and the criticism of the global order. By performing a legal procedure, which is normally exclusively in the hands of a state power, the Tribunal breached the state’s monopoly on justice. It further challenged what philosopher Judith Shklar called legalism: the notion and political ideology that law is separate from the rest of the social and political sphere. What is more, the Tribunal included economic, historical, and political aspects and contexts of the war into their investigations. By doing so, it criticised the

⁵⁵⁵ Russell, ‘Introduction’, 4.

⁵⁵⁶ Chomsky, ‘Preface’, xxix.

⁵⁵⁷ Krever, ‘Remembering the Russell Tribunal’, 469.

⁵⁵⁸ Richard Falk, cited in Simm and Byrnes, ‘International People’s Tribunals in Asia’, 121.

⁵⁵⁹ Zunino, ‘Subversive Justice’, 213.

international power relations and advocated for radical change.⁵⁶⁰ Even though the IWCT and other PWCT have relied on legal standards based on ‘Western’ juridical traditions, they nevertheless have the potential to tackle and deconstruct ‘Western’ discourses. For Audrey Kobayashi and Mark Boyle, they “serve as historically novel instruments through which concerned citizens can speak subaltern moral and legal truth to power, both in and beyond this canon”.⁵⁶¹ That is, they also still to this day constitute important projects to counter official international criminal law. Since the 1990s, the United Nations have carried out or backed several tribunals and investigative commissions to investigate war crimes and to bring war criminals to court. It started with two ad hoc tribunals that addressed the Yugoslav War as well as the genocide in Rwanda. In 2002, the International Criminal Court (ICC) was founded as a permanent institution to investigate breaches of international criminal law. It has, however, been criticized not only for solely relying on ‘Western’ legal standards but also for only indicting war criminals from the Global South. In contrast, peoples’ tribunals can continue to fill the void of investigating the legality of wars waged by countries of the Global North as well as war crimes committed by their armies. Additionally, activists and scholars should draw their attention on non-European justice and legal systems and procedures, such as truth projects. This would allow to break with the prevailing Eurocentric perspective on law and justice on the domestic as well as international level.

5.3. Summary of the Findings and Relevance for Political Solidarity

The goal of this thesis was to give some insights into the questions of how we can conceptualize political solidarity and how the International War Crimes Tribunal can be evaluated with the help of the elaborated categories. In my view, Sally J. Scholz’s theory of political solidarity provides valuable parameters for the evaluation of historical as well as present social movements and activism. Not only does she fill a gap in the theoretical conceptualization of the term. To me, the strength of her theory is her thorough consideration of the goals, means, moral obligations and privilege within political solidarity. Complimenting her theory with materialist, anti-racist, feminist, and postcolonial approaches, as well as with the background of historical events and the history of thought, does not imply a lack in her theoretical groundwork. It does, instead, only fulfill her requirement to examine the type of social injustice, the moral obligations, and privilege. While Scholz states that “political solidarity is a response to human

⁵⁶⁰ Zunino, 220–24.

⁵⁶¹ Simm and Byrnes, ‘International People’s Tribunals in Asia’, 698.

suffering”, it does not end there.⁵⁶² She stresses the importance of understanding the social injustice or oppression that underlies suffering. The goal of political solidarity must be to alter the systematic circumstances that cause the suffering. In contrast to many examples of humanitarianism, charity, or philanthropy, political solidarity is committed to the political sphere of injustice. That is why Scholz’s concept of political solidarity provides a helpful framework for anticolonial and postcolonial encounters. It is not least this potential that makes Scholz’s concept worthy of more attention from academics but even more so from activists and citizens engaging in any sort of social cause. And it has made it an optimal theoretical framework for my analysis of the IWCT.

When looking at the specific example of the IWCT, I have ascertained many aspects that clearly aligned with Scholz’s requirements for political solidarity, but also some aspects that do not. To begin with, the Tribunal fought for a cause of social and political justice. The participants made a conscious decision to commit to political activism in order to put a spotlight on the situation in Vietnam. Having gained an insight into the historical and political situation, they assessed the U.S. involvement as a form of imperial endeavour in the context of the Cold War. To assert their control in the region and to prevent communist movements and governments from spreading, the United States was willing to meddle in the process of post-colonial state building of the split country of Vietnam. The members of the IWCT deemed this U.S. involvement illegitimate and formed a collective based on their shared assessment and cause. What is more, they agreed on the formative goal to end the U.S. war in Vietnam. Considering the thorough evaluation of the historical and political circumstances, as well as the common goal, the participants shared important elements of concurrence in the interpretation of the past, the present, and the future. The substantial goal of the Tribunal involved the disclosure and documentation of war crimes, sparking outrage among citizens of the ‘West’, and contributing to a growing protest against the war. The means chosen were in line with the social justice end and did not employ unjust or oppressive methods.

Furthermore, the collective created connections with people suffering from the very injustice it had identified. That is, the activists were in contact with Vietnamese citizens, North Vietnamese government officials, and South Vietnamese guerrilla commanders, about the formalities of the Tribunal and relied on their help for the investigations and the witness accounts. Instead of *working for* marginalized and oppressed subjects, the Tribunal – at least in parts – *worked with* them. Despite the great distance and different reality of life, the members of the tribunal saw

⁵⁶² Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 54.

themselves bound to the Vietnamese cause by the shared struggle against ‘Western’ imperial quests. Neither did the Tribunal members see themselves as saviours or all-knowing, nor did they perceive the DRV or NLF as voiceless and passive victims. On the contrary, they depicted them as heroic active fighters who were struggling on the front-line for a shared cause. With that, the Tribunal created new images that challenged the way Vietnamese were depicted in ‘Western’ media and public discourse. By being in contact with Vietnamese officials and civilians as well as cooperating with them throughout the sessions, the Tribunal involved the opinion and standpoint of people whose cause they aimed to support. Through the accounts of officials and civilians from Southeast Asia during the Tribunal sessions, marginalized voices were given a platform to tell their stories and assert their standpoints. This contributed to humanizing Vietnamese people. Furthermore, the IWCT connected anti-imperialist activists opposed to the U.S. war in Vietnam from all over the world. For David Featherstone, the importance of leftist solidarity movements lies in exactly this act of connecting places and people across dividing lines created by unequal power relations or ideological antagonisms.

Solidarities have been integral to producing ways of connecting places that are antagonistic to those associated with such unequal and divisive formations as colonialism, neoliberal globalization and the Cold War. In this sense, making alternative logics of connection has been a crucial, if often neglected, contribution of left political cultures.⁵⁶³

What is more, the participants of the IWCT embedded their activism in the historical and political settings of the Vietnamese cause. By emphasising not only the suffering of civilians under the attacks and the war but also the historical and political context of the conflict, it was able to attack the underlying inequalities – namely, the vulnerable position of the two Vietnamese states towards the hegemonial and imperialist power of the United States as they were still in the process of ridding themselves from the grip of colonial control. By doing so, the Tribunal emphasised the perspective of a marginalized and oppressed group of people and promoted it in the ‘West’. In a similar, albeit analytical-academic fashion, it was my intention in this thesis to emphasize the active role of Third World protagonists and movements. Especially considering the later change of discourse towards the Third World or Global South, I deem it not only deeply interesting but also of the greatest importance to excavate the history of Third Worldist internationalism. It does not only help us understand the historical circumstances as well as the self-conception of the activists involved in the IWCT, but also emphasises narratives and histories that counter hegemonial historiography and discourse.

⁵⁶³ Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 259.

It is for these reasons, in my eyes, that the IWCT qualifies as an example of political solidarity. It did, however, exhibit some serious limitations. Firstly, while Tribunal members did challenge racist images of Vietnamese and put forward images of strong, active, but still relatable people, they also resorted to homogenisation and idealization. By persistently referring to “the Vietnamese” as a national and cultural unity and idealizing their “heroism” that defied all attacks, the IWCT drew on limiting and under-complex depictions. Not only did this kind of rhetoric neglect dissent and conflicts within the Vietnamese population but it also reproduced the image of the Vietnamese as an undistinguishable mass. Despite the positive descriptions, romanticising and homogenising also root in racist perceptions and radical orientalism. What is more, the Tribunal relied on ‘Western’ universalist legal standards and assumptions. While the legal standards were admittedly applied to a ‘Western’ power that itself had co-created them, the idea of universality was not challenged. That is, the fact that different traditions of justice exist was being omitted by the sole focus on ‘Western’ traditions, agreements, and norms. This does not only apply to the legal sphere but also to the areas of political and societal organisation. While there was the alternative of socialist economy and politics, pre-colonial concepts were, for a long time, ignored even amongst most leftists in the ‘West’.

Lastly, the relationships and moral duties within the IWCT collective did not entirely satisfy the conditions for Scholz’s political solidarity or for decolonizing or subaltern solidarity – put forward by scholars like Ida Danewid and Gada Mahrouse. While power structures and inequality were taken into focus, personal privileges regarding global and social positioning were barely reflected on. Scholz and others require, for a true political or revolutionary solidarity, the members of a collective to not only criticise the structural inequalities but also to critically reflect on the internalized privileges and hierarchies. To achieve that, the group should create a space in which genuine exchange is possible. This exchange includes listening to people who experience a lack of privilege due to different inequalities – that is, acknowledging intersecting identities and experiences –, learning from each other, to be open to different kind of cultural and social codes, building emotional bonds, and to unlearn internalized stereotypes and privileged behaviour. This kind of engagement, reflection, and process cannot be seen at the Tribunal from the available sources. Looking at the members of the Tribunal, it is also safe to say that the IWCT was an elitist project. As there was a limited number of jury members, all of which were hand-picked and prominent personalities, there was no place for less-known activists. That is, the collective was not fluid and open for new members. There was little room for a shared process to tackle hierarchies and to initiate a creative and transformative process of mutual learning and with an open outcome.

I conclude that the International War Crimes Tribunal was an act of political solidarity that has to be understood in the context of a wider anti-imperialist internationalism. At the same time, it bears elements of privileged paternalism as most members and participants were *white*, male elite figures who did not genuinely engage in a process of unlearning privileges. Despite these criticisms, the Tribunal can give important insights and guidance to activism today as it serves as a fruitful example of political solidarity in which the activists saw themselves bound to the oppressed by a shared cause.

My work on this subject has eventually led me onto the contested field of debate about the “right” way of engaging in cross-cultural, class-transcending contact, the representation of an “other” in discourse, and the question of how to support other peoples’ causes. These are, in a way, issues that transcend theory-driven analysis (although they never ignore it) and approach a normative issue. Moreover, it binds together the dimensions of academic study and political action. The different inputs by scholars and activists I presented in the second chapter, such as bell hooks, Angela Davis, María Lugones, Nancy Fraser, David Featherstone, Gada Mahrouse, or Ida Danewid, have provided crucial contributions to my approach towards the question of what privilege-sensitive political solidarity can look like. As solidarity requires social activism, it can never solely be informed or dealt with theoretically and academically. These inputs have mostly come out of the hands-on experiences gathered in feminist, anti-racist, or prison abolition movements, among others. Some might wonder whether privileged people should involve themselves in political activism at all, as it implies the risk of reinforcing structures of inequality. Especially “transnational solidarity activism is fraught with *contradictions and paradoxes* with respect to race and power”, as Mahrouse has shown in her study.⁵⁶⁴ However, she assesses, staying inactive implies the acceptance of one’s complicity in a system shaped by inequality. That is, simply by enjoying certain privileges one supports and perpetuates inequalities. It also means that being indifferent to cruel and immoral deeds makes one complicit. Only by actively engaging, one steps out of the role of a passive bystander. It should have become clear that there is no blueprint for solidarity or interactions across social, political, and economic positions. Instead, they should be informed by an open-ended process. Political or revolutionary solidarity without guarantees is transformative and creative, confronts systematic and internalized inequalities and stereotypes, and develops connections and bonds that aim to surmount social injustices. Decolonizing internationalist solidarity also has to acknowledge that encounters are still always embedded in an unjust system, or, as Mahrouse

⁵⁶⁴ Mahrouse, *Conflicted Commitments*, 146.

says, “solidarity needs to be conceived as both a central element for effective political movements *and* as a set of practices that rely on racialized and gendered structures of colonialism and imperialism.”⁵⁶⁵ With these theoretical considerations, the historical contextualization, and the empirical findings, I hope to contribute to a discussion on political and decolonizing solidarity – which can inform not only the study of historical examples of activism but also local and internationalist activism today and in the future.

⁵⁶⁵ Mahrouse, 152.

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