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# THE STAGES OF WAR AND DUPLICITY

**EVIDENCE  
OF THE PENTAGON SECRET PAPERS**

NOVOSTI PRESS AGENCY PUBLISHING HOUSE  
MOSCOW, 1971



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**The Stages of War and Duplicity.**  
Evidence of the Pentagon Secret Papers ("Politizdat" Publishers, Moscow, 1971).

On the basis of the Pentagon secret "Vietnam Archives" published in the United States, Soviet news analysts here recount the stages of US aggression in Indochina. They expose the duplicity, hypocrisy and cynicism which the American rulers use as a propaganda smoke screen for their aggressive policy.

## Contents

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Why the Truth Has Come Out	6
Stage One	27
Arriving to Stay	27
Stage Two	37
Geneva Agreements Violated and "Special War" Organised	37
Stage Three	51
Open Intervention Prepared	51
Stage Four	71
Tonkin Provocation: What the Pentagon Secret Report Fails to Say	71
Stage Five	87
Air War Against the DRV	87
Stage Six	109
Escalation of Military Action on the Ground	109
Stage Seven	125
"Pauses" in the Bombings of the DRV	125
Stage Eight	133
Aggression in Laos and Cambodia	133
Conclusion	145

In early August 1964, the world was shocked by developments in Indochina: the US Air Force began the heinous bombing of civilians in the towns and villages of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. At the time, US spokesmen declared it had been done in "self-defence," in "response" to an attack by some patrol boats in the Gulf of Tonkin on US warships. From then on that continued to be the accepted version, although all fair-minded people realised that world public was being monstrously deceived, and that the war started by the US imperialists in Indochina had quite definite—aggressive and rapacious—purposes.

What Washington had so carefully kept secret came to light in June, 1971. Widespread publications in the press of secret papers from the Pentagon archives contain countless facts showing how, in deepest secrecy, the US aggression against the peoples of Indochina was contrived, launched and carried out step by step. The Pentagon papers also show that the propaganda screen, a tissue of lies and deceit, was being painstakingly woven along with the escalation of military operations.

It is not very often that the public has an opportunity to peer behind the political scenes in Washington, to glimpse the dirty methods used by the architects of US policy. Now that the opportunity has occurred we can see from the following pages the ugly picture that has come to light.

## WHY THE TRUTH HAS COME OUT

### 1. Washington's Political Striptease

A veritable bombshell exploded when the Pentagon secret papers, published in June 1971, first in *The New York Times* and then in a number of other big US newspapers, shed light on the history of the US aggression in Indochina. The American people at large were shocked by what they learned. Deceit, hypocrisy and double-dealing were what was shown up in the glaring light cast on the secrets of the court in Washington.

Strictly speaking, there was nothing new in the published Pentagon "Vietnam Archives" that the world public had not been aware of long before the 47 volumes of "secret" and "top secret" documents hidden away in the Pentagon vaults were brought out into the light of day.

Thus, a TASS statement issued on August 6, 1964, defined the Gulf of Tonkin incident, the prelude to the sharp escalation of the US aggression in Vietnam, as a deliberate provocation. It said: "It is already becoming clear that the presence of US naval forces in the Gulf of Tonkin has helped to create a situation in the area which is fraught with dangerous complications. It is impossible to ignore the fact that fresh US mili-

tary action is being taken just when reactionary forces in the USA and the South-Vietnamese militarists, who are doing their bidding, are clamouring to have the sphere of the US intervention and armed operations extended to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam." Consequently, the Soviet Union and progressive international opinion learned of Washington's provocative schemes.

But what has been clear to many all along, was kept hidden from the public at large in the USA and other Western countries behind a thick smoke screen of lies and falsifications conceived by US ruling circles and their propaganda machine. Throughout the world, there is growing awareness that the Americans are being deceived, and increasingly so. But the latest revelations came as a complete and staggering surprise to the ordinary American who has it drummed into his head from childhood that his is a democratic country, that the government acts in accordance with the democratic Constitution and that the press, radio and television give an honest account of what is going on. Ordinary Americans refused to believe that they could be so grossly and shamelessly deceived.

Washington's political striptease astounded millions of Americans who not only saw it as a concrete instance of downright deceit but also had to face the fact that all along, and even now, their rulers have not hesitated to stoop to the most ignominious methods, and that the mass media have been covering up for them. Many US citizens—for most of them it was a complete shock—had to ask themselves if they could afford to believe what the top-ranking leaders in Washington, including the President himself, told

them, and if they could believe what was daily being fed to them by the press, radio and TV.

This has greatly undermined the prestige of the US Administration, the authority of the state as a whole. How, then, did such secret papers come to be published? Why did the editors of America's most influential paper—*The New York Times*—which represents the interests of powerful Big Business groupings, and the publishers of other US monopoly publications who have always done yesman service for their masters, take a step that brought them into open conflict with the Republican Administration? Propagandists of the "American way of life" hasten to assure us that the answer lies in freedom of the press. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Where, may one ask, was this much-vaunted freedom of the press throughout the long period of contriving and escalating the aggression against the Vietnamese people and against the peoples of Laos and Cambodia? After all, the very periodicals which subsequently published the Pentagon secret papers, had steadily supported those they now censure. Two years before the adoption of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution Mr. Sulzberger, a member of the family which owns *The New York Times*, wrote in his paper that the agreement on Laos neutrality was not satisfactory. If South Vietnam was worth saving, it was to be saved by stopping the breach through which supplies were conveyed from Laos.

James Reston, one of *The New York Times* policy makers, who now waxes indignant over the conspiracy against democracy, sang quite a different tune on the pages of *The New York Times*. Take his article, "The Undeclared War in

South Vietnam," which fully endorsed the US military intervention in South Vietnam "to prevent a communist takeover."<sup>1</sup> There are very many such statements.

Those who closely follow developments are aware that the "free" US press zealously supported the US actions in Indochina, until the Administration found itself up against a dead end and began to consider a "withdrawal" from that part of the world. For a long time, the escalation of the war had been accompanied by stepped-up militaristic propaganda in the press. Now, those who determine the mass media policy have found it necessary to pose as "champions of the truth" and muck-rakers. "Freedom" of the bourgeois press—a myth which has as much truth to it as Washington's credibility—is quite beside the point. It is all a matter of complex, political behind-the-scene fighting within the US ruling elite, which has recently become more acute in view of the impasse that US policy has led to in South-East Asia.

## 2. Calculations and Miscalculations

The aggressive war of US imperialism against the peoples of Indochina will go down in history as one of its blackest pages. The US militarists stop at nothing: genocide—the massive extermination of civilians in the Indochinese Peninsula, crimes against humanity, gross violation of international treaties and conventions governing the conduct of war, the use of chemical and bac-

<sup>1</sup> *The New York Times*, February 14, 1962.

teriological weapons, deceit of the world public—these are only some of the crimes the US reactionaries will have to answer for to contemporaries and coming generations.

However, none of these has helped the USA to escape the greatest defeat, both militarily and morally, in its history.

The fiasco of the US aggression in Indochina, and the impasse in which the USA has found itself there, those are the reasons for the intense political friction within the US ruling elite. There was almost unanimous support both in Congress and in the big press for the deplorable Tonkin Gulf Resolution, that same resolution which is now the object of such denunciation on the part of many influential Washington leaders: senators and publishers, professors and columnists. Some US politicians may now turn and twist, asserting that the Vietnam venture is a one party affair, but the record says that voting on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution had the solid support of both parties and was peppered with fervent chauvinistic speeches. In the House of Representatives this document, hypocritically designated a Resolution in Support of International Peace and Security in South-East Asia, was passed unanimously. In the Senate, there were 88 votes for it and only two against.

Hardly anyone would have the nerve now to say that the Senators who passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution by such a solid majority were so naive they didn't know what it was all about, or that they took the government's crude forgery at face value. Wayne Morse, one of the two Senators who voted against the Resolution, had made it quite clear to his colleagues that he

possessed enough evidence to show the true role played by the US destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin. Morse declared that the United States had played "a provocative role" in the incident.<sup>1</sup>

But his words fell on deaf ears. The Johnson Administration had no trouble getting a free hand to launch the long-planned overt aggression in Vietnam.

Why has a deaf ear been turned to the truth, why have the US Administration and the US legislators refused to reckon with the facts and to abide by international laws and treaties signed by the USA, including the UN Charter?

The answer to this question largely lies in the following: the earnings of five major Pentagon contractors, all billion-dollar corporations (Lockheed, General Electric, General Dynamics, McDonnell-Douglas and United Aircraft), went up from \$ 395 million in 1964 to \$ 587 million in 1968.<sup>2</sup> One mouthpiece of the monopolies made no secret of its delight when it wrote this in the autumn of 1966: "The nation's factories are already operating at practically full capacity—and at a rate even higher than during the first year of the Korean War. Heavy new demands on industry may force some companies to use obsolete, highcost facilities to meet war demand."<sup>3</sup>

It is scarcely accidental that the biggest share of the war profits pie went to the corporations closest to Washington politicians who were most active in escalating the "dirty war." Richard

<sup>1</sup> *The New York Times*, February 29, 1968.

<sup>2</sup> *The New Republic*, February 7, 1970.

<sup>3</sup> *US News and World Report*, September 12, 1966, p. 36.

Barnet, a co-director of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, wrote: "...freshman Congressman Lyndon B. Johnson obtained a major defence contract for his principal financial backers, the Brown and Root construction firm. The same firm thirty years later was called upon to turn South Vietnam into a succession of military bases at considerable profit. In the Johnson years Texas moved ahead to become the third-ranking state in military contracts. Between 1962 and 1967 the value of prime contracts awarded to Texas firms increased by 350 per cent."<sup>1</sup>

At first, a fairly large section of US business benefited from the boom resulting from the colossal military appropriations, and expected these benefits to keep on and to increase.

But it became clear after some time that what had looked like a political and economic bonanza was a major defeat for the United States, to say nothing of the lasting disgrace. Senator M. Mansfield, Democratic majority leader in the Senate, pointed out that US casualties exceeding 350,000 and the 115 thousand million dollars consumed by the Vietnam war had failed to bring victory in a war which is contrary to the national interest.

"This war cannot be won" is the conclusion drawn by Averell Harriman, well-known political and financial figure.

It is highly indicative that following the heavy defeats suffered by the US Army in Vietnam, many prominent army and navy men have also

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<sup>1</sup> R. Barnet. *The Economy of Death*, New York, 1969, pp. 122, 123.

come to realise that nothing can be gained by carrying on this war.

Brigadier-General William Wallace Ford says: "One my hope (is) ... that we will act quickly to leave South-East Asia, serene in the knowledge that there is no greater courage than the courage to admit a mistake..."<sup>1</sup>

In May 1971, General David Shoup, one-time Commandant of the US Marine Corps, urged the early withdrawal of all US forces from South Vietnam. In the spring of 1971, Vice-Admiral Elmor Zumwalt, Chief of Naval Operations, admitted that the war in Vietnam did not have the American people's support, adding that the nature of the war and the way it was being fought was the reason for it.

Consequently, there is the fact that the USA has suffered a military defeat in the Indochina theatre of military operations, a defeat which is so glaring that even US generals and admirals have been forced to say that it is futile to keep on fighting in the hopes of winning the war.

### 3. Cleavage in the Business Olympus

For the US economy, the war in Vietnam has also had an unfavourable facet. Whereas the Pentagon favourites, a group of military-industrial corporations, took in record profits, the US economy as a whole ran into many difficulties stemming from unbridled inflation and increasing disproportions in production, which accelerated the growth of crisis phenomena.

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<sup>1</sup> *The New York Times*, March 2, 1971.

In the spring of 1966, one of the most influential mouthpieces of US monopolies, *Fortune*, sounded the alarm when it said: "... the Vietnam war would bring on economic strains beyond what most economic experts appear to foresee, and beyond what makers of public policy appear to be anticipating."<sup>1</sup>

George F. Kennan, for many years closely connected with Wall Street bankers, wrote in one article: "Of course, it is little short of fantastic that a country facing such domestic problems as we now face, and one that stands virtually on the brink of a major international financial humiliation, should be continuing to pour its substance, to the tune of a full fourth of its budget and more than half a million of its young men, into a military adventure on the other side of the world, in an area to which its vital interests are only remotely related."<sup>2</sup>

This was written in mid-1968. Four years earlier, Kennan had apparently taken a different view of things. At any rate, this spokesman for the ruling class did not object to the Tonkin Gulf Resolution nor against the subsequent dispatch of "half a million of its young men, into a military adventure on the other side of the world."

The change of mood among some US businessmen is evident from the following: In the spring of 1967 an organisation called Business Executives Move for Vietnam Peace was set up in the USA. Among its leaders is Sinclair Armstrong, one-time prominent member of the Eisenhower

Administration and now Vice-President of the US Trust Company. Thousands of businessmen across the country belong to this organisation. If anyone had proposed setting up such an organisation in 1964, at the time the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was passed, it would have seemed a poor joke, but by 1967 the US political scene had changed to the point where it no longer surprised anyone. It showed that definite US business circles were disenchanted with Washington's policy in Indochina, and denoted their frustrated hopes and growing apprehension over the adverse effects of the Vietnam war on the economy.

Prominent Big Business spokesmen have demanded an end to the war in Vietnam, among them billionaire Marriner Eccles, Chairman of the Board of the First Security Corporation, one of the bigwigs who run the so-called "mountain states." In early 1971, a monthly Morgan's bank report noted that the war was a drain on the budget and a drag on research. It could be that the Morgan banking house statement is connected with the present *New York Times* stand since the two have had long-standing, close connections.

Thomas J. Watson, Chairman of the Board of International Business Machines, said at a hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "The war in Vietnam is the major factor which has turned our healthy economy into an unhealthy one... The longer we continue, the more chaotic the nation will become. The damage we have already seen will take decades to repair."<sup>1</sup>

All these statements are a reflection of the

<sup>1</sup> *Fortune*, April, 1966, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> *US News and World Report*, June 17, 1968.

<sup>1</sup> *Congressional Record*, June 3, 1970, S. 8208-8209.

morning-after feeling among those who had hoped to reap the benefits of aggression, and who now have to face the grave difficulties and problems stemming from the war. Initially backed whole-heartedly by US Big Business, as military and political defeats and economic disruption made themselves felt in many spheres of business, the war in Indochina led to a deep split and serious contradictions in that part of US society which now shapes the country's future. The more aggressive-minded spokesmen of the military-industrial complex refuse to forgo their super-profits, whereas those who have been deprived of their cut of the war-profits pie, and have increasingly suffered from inflation and other adverse effects of the continuing war, are inclined to a belated sobriety.

There is also another demarcation line in the world of US Big Business. Some monopoly groups who have a stake in US penetration in the countries of South-East Asia have stubbornly urged continued aggression in Indochina for their own purposes; other groups with capital invested mainly in Western Europe or the Middle East have displayed growing apprehension over the fact that their interests in these areas are being jeopardized.

General Earle G. Wheeler, one-time Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, declared that the Middle East presented a much greater danger than the Far East. These statements are a reflection of the alarm among highly influential circles in the USA, who fear a weakening of their positions in areas of the globe where their interests predominate.

There seem to be various other reasons up-

permost in the minds of those who feel that they must now insist on substantial changes in Washington's policy. These reasons were fairly frankly spelled out by *The New York Times* shortly before its publication of the Pentagon secret papers. It wrote: "There can be little hope of rapprochement with China as long as Peking perceives an expanding American threat on its borders. An essential first step toward removing this obstacle would be a firm disavowal by Washington of any intention to invade the Chinese border state of North Vietnam, or to give military support to such an invasion by the South Vietnamese."<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. Political Crisis

Finally, there is another highly important factor influencing the alignment of political forces in the USA over the war in Indochina. It is the massive anti-war movement in the country, which includes various sections of the US public. In scale and scope the anti-Vietnam war protest movement goes far beyond anything that has occurred in the postwar history of the USA. It is no exaggeration to say that all sections of US society without exception have found themselves deeply divided. The conflict has shaken not only political parties and groupings, it has also divided social groups, caused the like-minded to differ, split families and alienated parents and children.

The massive demonstrations, in which millions of Americans have been taking part, the flood of

<sup>1</sup> *The New York Times*, March 11, 1971.

letters and wires received by legislators, and the various other forms of protest against the "dirty war" have become a permanent factor exerting a very marked influence on the political situation and, in particular, affecting the course and outcome of federal elections.

It was certainly no accident that President Johnson timed his order terminating US air-raids on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam for the 1968 Presidential elections. The US press now says that President Nixon's time-table for the partial withdrawal of US troops from the theatre of war operations in Indochina has been drawn up in strict accordance with the stages of the current electoral campaign, and one may well expect him to make Johnson-type gestures on the eve of the Presidential elections in the autumn of 1972. There is no doubt at all that each of the rival groupings, each of the two major parties of the US bourgeoisie, has been forced, in one way or another, to reckon with the mood of the electorate, and increasingly so as the fight for getting into the White House draws near.

We find therefore, that the sharpening conflicts within the US ruling elite are due to a number of causes—political, military, economic—above all the heavy defeat suffered by the USA in its aggressive war in the Indochinese Peninsula.

On the one hand, powerful forces in the USA, notably those designated the "military-industrial complex," are seeking, contrary to common sense, to continue the bankrupt political line, and there is every indication that they have sufficient means of influencing the Administration, which largely explains why the Nixon Administration, which on the eve of the 1968 Presidential elections had

promised the American people to take effective steps to pull out of the war, has essentially failed to honour its promises.

Moreover, by extending the area of military operations by the invasion of Cambodia and Laos, the Republican Administration has converted what the US press used to call the "Johnson war" into the "Nixon war." In his first period in office, President Nixon used to refer to the "burdensome legacy he had inherited from his predecessor," but having assumed responsibility for further steps in escalating the aggression, the Republican Administration has heavily underscored the bipartisan character of the policy of aggression in Indochina.

On the other hand, some sections of Big Business and the political groupings, periodicals and party politicians representing their interests, smarting from the adverse effects in many spheres of the US defeat in Indochina, appear to be inclined to take a more realistic view of the situation. They have come to realise not only the futility, but also the grave danger that continued attempts to ignore realities presents to the US ruling class. Hence, the feverish search for ways and means to extricate themselves from the bog of war and the far-reaching political crisis.

We find, therefore, a deep cleavage over the war among those who run the USA, and it is a reflection of this crisis, and not some sudden sense of "peace-making" or a craving for justice among the many Senators, party politicians, publishers and businessmen, that explains the growing opposition to the Administration in Congress and in the political and business world over the last two or three years.

Since the Second World War no US Administration has faced such strong opposition in the Senate as the Nixon Administration is now up against. At first, the Republican Party leadership tried to explain this opposition as coming from the democratic majority in both Houses of Congress. During the Congressional elections in November 1970, the Nixon-Agnew leadership sought to change the balance of forces in Congress. After the elections, the President said that the Administration had an "ideological majority" in the Senate.

However, it soon transpired that the opposition, far from being reduced, had in fact increased. Of the various resolutions, bills and amendments to bills, in one way or another designed to limit freedom of action for the US Administration in carrying on the war in Indochina or to put a stop to it—and there are now several score of them—each gets from between one-third to one-half of the Senatorial votes. In June 1971, after the publication of the Pentagon secret papers, the Mansfield Resolution, setting a nine-month deadline for the pull-out of US forces from Vietnam, under certain conditions, was passed by a majority.

It is significant that opponents of the Administration include not only Democratic Senators, but also prominent members of President Nixon's own party, including Senators Cooper, Hatfield, Percy and Goodell.

Senator Birch Bayh wrote in *The New York Times*: "Each day (of the continuing war—Ed.) means a further diversion of our energy, attention and resources from our own pressing needs here at home. Each day means \$ 27 million that could

otherwise help to provide better health care, better education, better housing, better transportation, and a better environment. Each day means continuation of the divisions within our own society, divisions that threaten to tear us apart."<sup>1</sup>

This has become a fact of US life: the split from top to bottom has affected not only the masses of Americans, but also the country's ruling elite.

An outcome of this split is the stand taken by a number of influential US bourgeois periodicals which have dared, with the shadow support of mighty economic forces, to challenge the Administration by publishing the Pentagon secret papers. It is safe to say that if the editors of *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and other newspapers had not been backed by powerful and influential forces, and if these forces were not motivated by sufficiently weighty reasons for taking such an unusual step, the Pentagon secret papers would have never seen the light of day.

The sensational publications in June 1971 are striking evidence of the grave political crisis now facing US ruling circles, and their confusion over the major military and political defeats suffered by US imperialism.

## 5. Bipartisan Policy and Bipartisan Responsibility

There have been copious comments in the US and foreign press on the Nixon Administration's stand over the publication of the Pentagon secret papers from its Vietnam archives. Various assumptions have been made. Some have circulated the

<sup>1</sup> *The New York Times*, April 23, 1971, p. 6.

