

Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, the Philippines: Southeast Asia “Forgets” about US Sponsored Terror

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Southeast Asian elites “forgot” about those tens of millions of Asian people murdered by Western imperialism at the end of and after the WWII. They “forgot” about what took place in the North – about the Tokyo and Osaka firebombing, about the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs, about the barbaric liquidation of Korean civilians by the US forces. But they also forgot about their own victims – about those hundreds of thousands, in fact about the millions, of those who were blown to pieces, burned by chemicals or directly liquidated – men, women and children of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, the Philippines and East Timor.

All is forgiven and all is forgotten.

And once again the Empire is proudly “pivoting” into Asia; it is even bragging about it.

It goes without saying that the Empire has no shame and no decency left. It boasts about democracy and freedom, while it does not even bother to wash the blood of tens of millions off its hands.

All over Asia, the “privileged populaces” has chosen to not know, to not remember, or even to erase all terrible chapters of the history. Those who insist on remembering are being silenced, ridiculed, or made out to be irrelevant.

Such selective amnesia, such “generosity” will very soon backfire. Shortly, it will fly back like a boomerang. History repeats itself. It always does, the history of the Western terror and colonialism, especially. But the price will not be covered by the morally corrupt elites, by those lackeys of the Western imperialism. As always, it will be Asia’s poor who will be forced to pay.

After I descended from the largest cave in the vicinity of Tham Pha Thok, Laos, I decided to text my good Vietnamese friend in Hanoi. I wanted to compare the suffering of Laotian and Vietnamese people.

The cave used to be “home” to Pathet Lao. During the Second Indochina War it actually served as the headquarters. Now it looked thoroughly haunted, like a skull covered by moss and by tropical vegetation.

The US air force used to intensively bomb the entire area and there are still deep craters all around, obscured by the trees and bushes.

The US bombed the entirety of Laos, which has been given a bitter nickname: “The most bombed country on earth”.

It is really hard to imagine, in a sober state, what the US, Australia and their Thai allies did to the sparsely populated, rural, gentle Laos.

John Bacher, a historian and a Metro Toronto archivist once wrote about “The Secret War”: “More bombs were dropped on Laos between 1965 and 1973 than the U.S. dropped on Japan and Germany during WWII. More than 350,000 people were killed. The war in Laos was a secret only from the American people and Congress. It anticipated the sordid ties between drug trafficking and repressive regimes that have been seen later in the Noriega affair.”

In this biggest covert operation in the U.S. history, the main goal was to “prevent pro-Vietnamese forces from gaining control” over the area. The entire operation seemed more like a game that some overgrown, sadistic boys were allowed to play: Bombing an entire nation into the Stone Age for more than a decade. But essentially this “game” was nothing else than one of the most brutal genocides in the history of the 20th century.

Naturally, almost no one in the West or in Southeast Asia knows anything about this.

I texted my friend: “What I witnessed a few years ago working at the Plain of Jars was, of course, much more terrible than what I just saw around Tham Pha Thok, but even here, the horror of the US actions was crushing.” I also sent her a link to my earlier reports covering the Plain of Jars.

A few minutes later, she replied: “If you didn’t tell me... I would have never known about this secret war. As far as we knew, there was never a war in Laos. Pity for Lao people!”

I asked my other friends in Vietnam, and then in Indonesia. Nobody knew anything about the bombing of Laos.

The “Secret War” remains top-secret, even now, even right here, in the heart of the Asia Pacific region, or more precisely, especially here.

When Noam Chomsky and I were discussing the state of the world in what eventually became our book “On Western Terrorism – From Hiroshima to Drone Warfare”, Noam mentioned his visit to the war-torn Laos. He clearly remembered Air America pilots, as well as those hordes of Western journalists who were based in Vientiane but too busy to not see and to not ask any relevant questions.

“In the Philippines, the great majority of people is now convinced that the US actually ‘liberated’ our country from the Japanese”, my left-wing journalist friends once told me.

Dr. Teresa S. Encarnación Tadem, Professor of Political Science of University of the Philippines Diliman, explained to me last year, face to face, in Manila: “There is a saying here: “Philippines love Americans more than Americans love themselves.”

I asked: “How is it possible? The Philippines were colonized and occupied by the United States. Some terrible massacres took place... The country was never really free. How come that this ‘love’ towards the US is now prevalent?”

It is because of extremely intensive North American propaganda machine”, clarified Teresa’s husband, Dr. Eduardo Climaco Tadem, Professor of Asian Studies of University of the Philippines Diliman. “It has been depicting the US colonial period as some sort of benevolent colonialism, contrasting it with the previous Spanish colonialism, which was portrayed as ‘more brutal’. Atrocities during the American-Philippine War (1898 – 1902) are not discussed. These atrocities saw 1 million Philippine people killed. At that period it was almost 10% of our population... the genocide, torture... Philippines are known as “the first Vietnam”... all this has been conveniently forgotten by the media, absent in the history books. And then, of course, the images that are spread by Hollywood and by the American pop culture: heroic and benevolent US military saving battered countries and helping the poor...

Basically, entirely reversing the reality.

The education system is very important”, added Teresa Tadem. “The education system manufactures consensus, and that in turn creates support for the United States... even our university – University of the Philippines – was established by the Americans. You can see it reflected in the curriculum – for instance the political science courses... they all have roots in the Cold War and its mentality.”

Almost all children of the Asian “elites” get “educated” in the West, or at least in so-called “international schools” in their home countries, where the imperialist curriculum is implemented. Or in the private, most likely religious/Christian schools... Such “education” borrows heavily from the pro-Western and pro-business indoctrination concepts.

And once conditioned, children of the “elites” get busy brainwashing the rest of the citizens. The result is predictable: capitalism, Western imperialism, and even colonialism become untouchable, respected and admired. Nations and individuals who murdered millions are labeled as carriers of progress, democracy and freedom. It is “prestigious” to mingle with such people, as it is highly desirable to “follow their example”. The history dies. It gets replaced by some primitive, Hollywood and Disney-style fairytales.

In Hanoi, an iconic photograph of a woman pulling at a wing of downed US military plane is engraved into a powerful monument. It is a great, commanding piece of art.

My friend George Burchett, a renowned Australian artist who was born in Hanoi and who now lives in this city again, is accompanying me.

The father of George, Wilfred Burchett, was arguably the greatest English language journalist of the 20th Century. Asia was Wilfred’s home. And Asia was where he created his monumental body of work, addressing some of the most outrageous acts of brutality committed by the West: his testimonies ranged from the first-hand account of the Hiroshima A-bombing, to the mass murder of countless civilians during the “Korean War”. Wilfred Burchett also covered Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, to name just a few unfortunate places totally devastated by the United States and its allies.

Now his books are published and re-printed by prestigious publishing houses all over the world, but paradoxically, they do not live in sub-consciousness of the young people of Asia.

The Vietnamese people, especially the young ones, know very little about the horrific acts committed by the West in their neighboring countries. At most they know about the crimes committed by France and the US in their own country – in Vietnam, nothing or almost nothing about the victims of the West-sponsored monsters like Marcos and Suharto. Nothing about Cambodia – nothing about who was really responsible for those 2 millions of lost lives.

The “Secret Wars” remain secret.

With George Burchett I admired great revolutionary and socialist art at the Vietnam National Museum of Fine Arts. Countless horrible acts, committed by the West, are depicted in great detail here, as well as the determined resistance struggle fought against US colonialism by the great, heroic Vietnamese people.

But there was an eerie feeling inside the museum – it was almost empty! Besides us, there were only a few other visitors, all foreign tourists: the great halls of this stunning art institution were almost empty.

Indonesians don’t know, because they were made stupid!” Shouts my dear old friend Djokopekik, at his art studio in Yogyakarta, He is arguably the greatest socialist realist artist of Southeast Asia. On his canvases, brutal soldiers are kicking the backsides of the poor people, while an enormous crocodile (a symbol of corruption) attacks, snaps at, and eats everyone in sight. Djokopekik is open, and brutally honest: “It was their plan; great goal of the regime to brainwash the people. Indonesians know nothing about their own history or about the rest of Southeast Asia!”

Before he died, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, the most influential writer of Southeast Asia, told me: “They cannot think, anymore... and they cannot write. I cannot read more than 5 pages of any contemporary Indonesian writer... the quality is shameful...” In the book that we (Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Rossie Indira and I) wrote together – “Exile” -, he lamented that Indonesian people do not know anything about history, or about the world.

Had they known, they would most definitely raise and overthrow this disgraceful regime that is governing their archipelago until these days.

2 to 3 million Indonesian people died after the 1965 military coup, triggered and supported by the West and by the religious clergy, mainly by Protestant implants from Europe. The majority of people in this desperate archipelago are now fully conditioned by the Western propaganda, unable to even detect their own misery. They are still blaming the victims (mainly Communists, intellectuals and “atheists”) for the events that took place exactly 50 years ago, events that broke the spine of this once proud and progressive nation.

Indonesians almost fully believe the right wing, fascist fairytales, fabricated by the West and disseminated through the local mass media channels controlled by whoring local “elites”... It is no wonder: for 50 nasty years they have been “intellectually” and “culturally” conditioned by the lowest grade Hollywood meditations, by Western pop music and by Disney.

They know nothing about their own region.

They know nothing about their own crimes. They are ignorant about the genocides they have been committing. More than half of their politicians are actually war criminals, responsible for over 30% of killed men, women and children during the US/UK/Australia-backed occupation of East Timor (now an independent country), for the 1965 monstrous bloodletting and for the on-going genocide, which Indonesia conducts in Papua.

Information about all these horrors is available on line. There are thousands of sites carrying detailed and damning evidence. Yet, cowardly and opportunistically, the Indonesian “educated” populace is opting for “not knowing”.

Of course, the West and its companies are greatly benefiting from the plunder of Papua.

Therefore, the genocide is committed, all covered with secrecy.

And ask in Vietnam, in Burma, even in Malaysia, what do people know about East Timor and Papua? The answer will be nothing, or almost nothing.

Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines – they may be located in the same part of the world, but they could be as well based on several different planets. That was the plan: the old divide-and-rule British concept.

In Manila, the capital of the Philippines, a family that was insisting that Indonesia is actually located in Europe once confronted me. The family was equally ignorant of the crimes committed by the pro-Western regime of Marcos.

The western media promotes Thailand as the “land of smiles”, yet it is an extremely frustrated and brutal place, where the murder rate is even (on per capita basis) higher than that in the United States.

Thailand has been fully controlled by the West since the end of the WWII. Consequently, its leadership (the throne, the elites and the military) have allowed some of the most gruesome crimes against humanity to take place on its territory. To mention just a few: the mass murder of the Thai left wing insurgents and sympathizers (some were burned alive in oil barrels), the murdering of thousands of Cambodian refugees, the killing and raping of student protesters in Bangkok and elsewhere... And the most terrible of them: the little known Thai participation in the Vietnam invasion during the “American War”...the intensive use of Thai pilots during the bombing sorties against Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, as well as handing several military airports (including Pattaya) to the Western air forces. Not to speak about pimping of Thai girls and boys (many of them minors) to the Western military men.

The terror that the West has been spreading all over Southeast Asia seems to be forgotten, or at least for now.

Let’s move on!” I heard in Hanoi and in Luang Prabang.

But while the Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian people are busy “forgiving” their tormentors the Empire has been murdering the people of Iraq, Syria, Libya, Pakistan,

Afghanistan, Yemen, Ukraine, and all corners of Africa.

It was stated by many, and proven by some, particularly in South America, where almost all the demons have been successfully exercised, that there can be no decent future for this Planet without recognizing and understanding the past.

After “forgiving the West”, several nations of Southeast Asia were immediately forced into the confrontation with China and Russia.

When “forgiven”, the West does not just humbly accept the great generosity of its victims. Such behavior is not part of its culture. Instead, it sees kindness as weakness, and it immediately takes advantage of it.

By forgiving the West, by “forgetting” its crimes, Southeast Asia is actually doing absolutely nothing positive. It is only betraying its fellow victims, all over the world.

It is also, pragmatically and selfishly, hoping for some returns. But returns will never come! History has shown it on many occasions. The West wants everything. And it believes that it deserves everything. If not confronted, it plunders until the end, until there is nothing left – as it did in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Iraq or in Indonesia.

Renowned Australian historian and Professor Emeritus at Nagasaki University in Japan, Geoffrey Gunn, wrote for this essay:

The US wields hard power and soft power in equal portions or so it would appear. Moving in and out of East Asia over the last four decades I admit to being perplexed as to the selectivity of memories of the American record. Take Laos and Cambodia in the 1970s where, in each country respectively, the US dropped a greater tonnage of bombs than dumped on Japanese cities during World War II, and where unexploded ordinance still takes a daily toll. Not so long ago I asked a high-ranking regime official in Phnom Penh as to whether the Obama administration had issued an apology for this crime of crimes. “No way,” he said, but then he wasn’t shaking his fist either, just as the population appears to be numbed as to basic facts of their own history beyond some generalized sense of past horrors. In Laos in December 1975 where I happened to be when, full of rage at the US, revolutionaries took over; the airing of American crimes – once a propaganda staple – has been relegated to corners of museums. Ditto in Vietnam, slowly entering the US embrace as a strategic partner, and with no special American contrition as to the victims of bombing, chemical warfare and other crimes. In East Timor, sacrificed by US President Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to the Indonesian generals in the interest of strategic denial, and where some 30 percent of the population perished, America is forgiven or, at least, airbrushed out of official narratives. Visiting the US on a first state visit, China’s President Xi Jinping drums up big American business deals, a “new normal” in the world’s second largest economy and now US partner in the “war against terror,” as in Afghanistan. Well, fresh from teaching history in a Chinese university, I might add that history does matter in China but with Japan as an all too obvious point of reference.

“China used to see the fight against Western imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism

as the main rallying cry of its foreign policy”, sighs Geoff, as we watch the bay of his home city – Nagasaki. “Now it is only Japan whose crimes are remembered in Beijing.”

But back to Southeast Asia...

It is all forgotten and forgiven, and the reason “why” is clear, simple. It pays to forget! “Forgiveness” brings funding; it secures “scholarships” just one of the ways Western countries spread corruption in its client states and in the states they want to draw into their orbit.

The elites with their lavish houses, trips abroad, kids in foreign schools, are a very forgiving bunch!

But then you go to a countryside, where the majority of Southeast Asian people still live. And the story there is very different. The story there makes you shiver.

Before departing from Laos, I sat at an outdoor table in a village of Nam Bak, about 100 kilometers from Luang Prabang. Ms. Nang Oen told me her stories about the US carpet-bombing, and Mr. Un Kham showed me his wounds:

Even here, in Nam Bak, we had many craters all over, but now they are covered by rice fields and houses. In 1968, my parents’ house was bombed... I think they dropped 500-pound bombs on it. Life was unbearable during the war. We had to sleep in the fields or in the caves. We had to move all the time. Many of us were starving, as we could not cultivate our fields.

I ask Ms. Nang Oen about the Americans. Did she forget, forgive?

How do I feel about them? I actually can’t say anything. After all these years, I am still speechless. They killed everything here, including chicken. I know that they are doing the same even now, all over the world...

She paused, looked at the horizon.

Sometimes I remember what was done to us... Sometimes I forget”. She shrugs her shoulders. “But when I forget, it is only for a while. We did not receive any compensation, not even an apology. I cannot do anything about it. Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night, and I cry.

I listened to her and I knew, after working for decades in this part of the world: for the people of Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and East Timor, nothing is forgotten and nothing is forgiven. And it should never be!





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