

By Fred Branfman

Note: Henry Kissinger is to receive "The Intrepid Freedom" award on May 23, 2013, for "defending freedom and democracy", at New York City's Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum.

"A life whose only value was death. I saw this in the village of my birth, as every day and every night the planes came to drop bombs on us. We lived in holes to protect our lives. I saw my cousin die in the field of death. My heart was most disturbed and my voice called out loudly as I ran to the houses. Thus, I saw life and death for the people on account of the war of many airplanes in the region of Xieng Khouang. Until there were no houses at all. And the cows and buffalo were dead. Until everything was leveled and you could see only the red, red ground. I think of this time and still I am afraid."

--Thirty-three year old woman, a refugee from the bombing of the Plain of Jars executed by Henry Kissinger

No living American has done more to dishonor freedom and democracy than Henry Kissinger, who executed the most destructive, protracted, secret, illegal and unconstitutional bombing of civilian targets in human history. Those honoring him dishonor themselves, the more than 10 million officially-estimated Indochinese civilians he helped kill, wound and make homeless, and the 20,000 Americans who needlessly died in Indochina while he held power. The evidence is overwhelming that Mr. Kissinger was the architect of the most massive, prolonged, and illegal bombing of civilians in world history. Those attending this dinner soil themselves by applauding rather than censuring Mr. Kissinger for the countless innocent lives he ruined in Indochina. Have they really no hearts, as they ignore the massive suffering he helped cause? Have they really no heads, as they honor a man for promoting "freedom" and "democracy" when he epitomizes undemocratic, unconstitutional and dishonest authoritarianism more than any living American?

Mr. Kissinger has consistently falsified history - during his years in power and in his writings about it ever since. Honest history would seek to uncover his deceptions not give him a platform to perpetuate them. Unlike former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara he has never had the simple human decency to acknowledge let alone apologize for his disastrous errors of judgment and lack of fundamental human decency. And Mr. Kissinger has consistently covered up his crimes, which included laying waste two countries in addition to Vietnam, and murdering, maiming and making homeless more than ten million Indochinese including countless civilians, according to official U.S. Government figures.

Falsifying history is one of the most serious offenses one can commit against human civilization itself. After 40 years, the American people and particularly its young need to understand the true history of what occurred in Indochina, so they do not repeat it, and so our nation can heal from the moral stain left by its mass killing of innocents there.

To venerate Mr. Kissinger is also Orwellian, as it promotes an untrue, officially-approved government version of history that falsifies the past so as to justify current and future policy-makers' illegal war-making. It makes a mockery of the "democracy" and "freedom" that so many have died fighting for.

Thirty-eight years have passed since the war ended in Indochina, and the historical evidence since has overwhelmingly revealed that:

(1) **Mr. Kissinger was the major architect of the most massive bombing of civilian targets in human history**, bombing which violated the laws of war and the most basic tenets of human decency and civilization. The 3,984,563 tons he dropped on Indochina between 1969 and 1973 was 50% more than the 2,742,521 tons dropped by Lyndon Johnson and twice the 2 million tons dropped on hundreds of millions of people throughout all of Europe and the Pacific in World War II. The historical evidence is also overwhelming that this massive bombing killed countless civilians in violation of the laws of war which the U.S. has signed and ratified, and for which as Secretary of State he was responsible for enforcing rather than violating.

(2) **Mr. Kissinger bears a major responsibility for orchestrating a bombing campaign in the previously neutral nation of Cambodia** that not only killed countless Cambodian

villagers but drove millions more underground for years on end.

As he launched the bombing campaign he told General Alexander Haig to undertake "*a massive bombing campaign in Cambodia. Anything that flies on anything that moves.*"

This statement is evidence of intent to commit violations of the U.S.-supported international laws protecting civilians in times of war.

Mr. Kissinger's bombing of Cambodia also played a major role in bringing the genocidal Khmer Rouge to power. He then compounded his crimes against Cambodia after the victory of the Khmer Rouge, when he told the Thai Foreign Minister on November 26, 1975, that "*you should also tell the Cambodians (i.e. Khmer Rouge Government) that we will be friends with them. They are murderous thugs, but we won't let that stand in the way. We are prepared to improve relations with them. Tell them the latter part, but don't tell them what I said before.*"

The historical record is replete with similar incidences of Mr. Kissinger's cynicism, callousness and viciousness.

His behavior shamed America, and today shames the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum for honoring him.

(3) Mr. Kissinger also bears a major responsibility for illegally increasing the bombing of civilian targets in Laos , dropping 1,628,900 million tons of bombs - four times the 454,200 tons dropped by Lyndon Johnson. On July 9,

1973, N.Y. Times columnist Anthony Lewis wrote that

"the most appalling episode of lawless cruelty in American history (is) the bombing of Laos. The human results of being the most heavily bombed country in the history of the world were expectably pitiful. They are described without rancor - almost unbearably so - in a small book that will go down as a classic. It is

Voices From the Plain of Jars

, in which the villagers of Laos themselves describe what the bombers did to their civilization.

No American should be able to read that book without weeping at his country's arrogance."

(4) Mr. Kissinger also vastly increased the bombing of civilian targets in North Vietnam. I n an

April 15, 1972 telephone conversation with Richard Nixon, he stated:

"It's wave after wave of planes. You see, they can't see the B-52 and they dropped a million pounds of bombs ... I bet you we will have had more planes over there in one day than Johnson had in a month ... each p

lane can carry about 10 times the load of World War II plane could carry."

This bombing was largely directed at civilian targets previously placed off-limits by the Johnson Administration, including the city of Haiphong, dikes and Bach Mai Hospital.

(5) All told Mr. Kissinger bears a major responsibility for murdering, maiming and making homeless more than 10,770,000 Indochinese , including countless civilians, as officially estimated by the U.S. Government, between January 20, 1969 and April 30, 1975. (Please see "Indochina War Statistics", Congressional Record , May 14, 1975, p. 14265.) Few postwar U.S. leaders have as much innocents' blood on their hands. These facts reveal that he is largely responsible for the mass murder of civilians in Indochina. To dispense with euphemisms and speak the simple truth: Henry Kissinger is a mass murderer.

(6) Mr. Kissinger's overall record in Indochina constitutes some of the most massive violations of the Nuremberg Principles, Geneva Conventions and U.N. Charter since World War II – particularly those provisions requiring protection of civilians in time of war. There is no serious doubt that if these laws of war had been applied to Mr. Kissinger massive and indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets in Indochina he would have been indicted, convicted and executed for having committed crimes of war.

(7) Mr. Kissinger has consistently lied to Congress and the public about his bombing of civilian targets both during and after the war, claiming that the U.S. only struck legitimate military targets. He dispatched William Sullivan, representing the State Department, to commit perjury before the Senate Subcommittee on Refugees on April 22, 1971, when he testified that in Laos "*the policy of the U.S. is deliberately to avoid hitting inhabited villages.*" Seven months earlier, the Subcommittee's staff had issued a report stating that "*the United States has undertaken a large-scale air war over Laos to destroy the physical and social infrastructure of Pathet Lao areas. The bombing has taken and is taking a heavy toll among civilians.*" He also misled Congress and the public when he secretly began bombing Cambodia without Congressional authorization in 1969. And he has consistently denied bombing civilian targets in his writings ever since, disgracing himself as an historian as well as policy-maker. When an Executive Branch leader misleads Congress it is the most serious possible violation of the U.S. Constitution, makes a mockery of democracy, and constitutes autocratic rule. He has betrayed, not served, his nation and its values.

This is only a brief list of Mr. Kissinger's innumerable crimes and deceptions during his years in power. By honoring a man who has so violated not only the laws of war but every value America stands for, foremost among them "freedom and democracy", makes a mockery of freedom, democracy and history itself.

History is sacred. Telling the truth about our history is the least we owe those who die - or are maimed for life - fighting our wars. Continuing to deny U.S. responsibility for the countless civilians who died from U.S. firepower during the war, continues to stain our national soul and prevent the possibility of moral renewal.

And, most importantly, falsifying history abuses our young people and children. When we rob them of their history we doom them to repeating it. We owe them far better.