

Holbrooke: imperialist diplomat, war criminal, or both?

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Fawning eulogies that appeared in the capitalist press after Richard Holbrooke died on Dec. 13 mention that his nickname was “the bulldozer.” This fit, for more than one reason. For nearly 50 years Holbrooke “bulldozed” poor people to death all over the earth. President Obama’s “special representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan” was a war criminal.

Holbrooke is best known for his role in the Balkans and the destruction of Yugoslavia, but he carried out similar anti-popular tasks earlier regarding Vietnam, East Timor and south Korea.

Holbrooke joined the State Department in 1962, as a 22 year old. He was in charge of “pacifying” a province in Vietnam’s Mekong Delta for the United States Agency for International Development. “Pacification” meant driving peasants out of their villages into concentration camps called “strategic hamlets.”

Death squads organized through the CIA’s Operation Phoenix hunted Vietnamese liberation fighters and killed entire families. Tens of thousands of local Vietnamese organizers were killed.

Holbrooke helped carry out these bloodbaths in Vietnam. He served as an aide at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon to Ambassadors Maxwell Taylor and Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. He was also part of the U.S. delegation to the Paris peace talks in 1968 and 1969.

Covering up genocide in East Timor

Following a meeting with President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in December 1975, Indonesian dictator Suharto invaded newly independent East Timor. The occupiers eventually killed a third of the Timorese population. After Democrat Jimmy Carter was elected, Holbrooke was appointed assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs. In that job he justified U.S. delivery of A-10 Bronco airplanes to the Indonesian military that were then used to strafe people in Timor.

Holbrooke also supported the South Korean military in its killing of thousands of people during the Kwangju uprising in 1980. According to journalist Tim Shorrock, Holbrooke “took it upon himself to prevent the democratic Korean opposition from speaking out against military intervention, and then kept his mouth firmly shut when the Kwangju disaster struck.” (timshorrock.com)

Breaking up socialist Yugoslavia

Holbrooke is best known for his role as President Clinton’s point man in the project of destroying Yugoslavia, the last remaining socialist state in Eastern Europe.

Socialist Yugoslavia was a multinational country that was forged through a guerrilla resistance war against German imperialist occupation during World War II. Holbrooke was ringmaster at the 1995 negotiations at the Wright-Paterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, that ended the civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As journalist Diana Johnstone mentioned in her Dec. 15 article in CounterPunch, the same agreement could have been reached in 1992 except for U.S. sabotage. An earlier agreement would have saved years of war and hundreds of thousands of deaths.

Holbrooke backed Croatia in its expulsion of over a quarter million Serbian people from their homes in Krajina in 1995.

Bill Clinton launched 78 days of bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 after U.S. machinations failed to overthrow that country's President Slobodan Milosevic. All the NATO countries joined in this class war. The war's pretext was to "protect" Albanians in Serbia's Kosovo province, but its result was to destroy Yugoslavia and bring the most reactionary forces to power in a U.S.-occupied Kosovo.

With the acquiescence of the U.S. and other NATO occupying forces, the "Kosovo Liberation Army" was allowed to persecute and kill Serbians, Roma, Jews and other minority people in Kosovo province and to oppress and exploit Albanian-origin workers too.

The Council of Europe has charged that KLA leader Hashim Thaci — now Kosovo's prime minister — harvested body organs from Serbian prisoners of war and political opponents. The Pentagon's largest military base in the region, Camp Bondsteel, is in Kosovo.

President Milosevic died under suspicious circumstances while being held in Scheveningen Prison in The Hague, Netherlands, in 2006. The International Criminal Tribunal on the Former Yugoslavia had failed in all its attempts to prove war crimes charges against Milosevic. Holbrooke said he found Milosevic's death "a just end." The truth is that Clinton, the other NATO leaders and yes, Richard Holbrooke, should have been on trial instead.

http://www.workers.org/2010/us/holbrooke_1230/