

# The Huntington File

In June 1973, Samuel Huntington, Professor of Government at Harvard University, former consultant to the Secretary of Defense, and distinguished advocate of 'forced draft urbanisation' (concentration camps) in Vietnam, came to Sussex University to give a lecture and a seminar. As a result of a demonstration organised by the Sussex Indochina Solidarity Committee he could not give his lecture. A shameful betrayal of academic values? Or a brave attempt to peel off the slap from the scabby face of American imperialism?

The following are extracts from a forthcoming book about the subject.\*

## From the introduction by John Mepham

Samuel P. Huntington might count himself an unlucky man. After all he is in no way extraordinary. Considered by many to be mediocre as an intellectual, he is said by others to be 'distinguished' as an academic. The two things are not, of course, incompatible. He is no more than typical as a 'social scientist' in the service of imperialism. His sins are those of many of his colleagues. He is, as R.H.S. Crossman chose to put it, a 'Harvard man with practical experience of Vietnam'. And his name was known and his papers had been studied partly because Noam Chomsky had happened to refer to him as an example. So he happened to be the one who was invited and he happened to be the one who was stopped. Although much of this book centres on him and on that event at Sussex University this is only because the details of the concrete case are helpful in relation to the general issues. Without this concrete detail discussions of such things as academic freedom and ideology can remain abstract and superficial. The detail helps to identify the real complexities of the phenomena that need to be understood. But, as for Huntington, no apologies need to be made. He is here because he is exemplary. But being no more than an example is certainly no excuse.

The documents are worth studying not only for the information they provide about the wide range of positions and arguments that were produced on such questions as the ideological content of social science and the limits of academic freedom. They are also a record of argument in action. They represent not simply a number of abstract positions among which one could choose but the dynamic process of ideological and political struggle in which documents were produced and positions adopted in the course of attempting to achieve certain ends. The outcome of the argument was not only a conclusion in the logical sense of the word but a concrete consequence. In the course of the struggle people set themselves the task not only of evaluating arguments but of persuading people and organising actions. The concrete, effective character of discourse was apparent whether this was a matter of attempting to 'stop Huntington' or to 'discipline' those students and faculty who had participated in the 'Stop Huntington' campaign. Ideological and political struggle are not the

\* *Social Science, Ideology, Free Speech.* A collection of articles and documents about the Huntington affair, by Susan Hacker, Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Ralph Milliband, Anthony Arblaster, Roy Edgley and John Mepham. Edited by John Mepham. To be published April 1974 by Harvester Press, Brighton. About 140pp; price about £0.70. Royalties to Medical Aid for Vietnam.

same thing as (although they include) rational debate. Universities tend to talk about and to defend their activities in terms of the latter ('academic freedom', the university as a 'talking-shop') while actually practising the former, and this contradiction and self-deception are, precisely, at the heart of the problems discussed in this book.

alarmingly being eroded by the growing involvement of academics (and especially scientists and social scientists) in the formulation and implementation of Government policy, not only in the USA but also in this country, that for the University of Sussex to extend an invitation to one of the most ghoulish and notorious incarnations of this trend is a disgrace and an insult to this entire community.

We are NOT campaigning to inflict physical injury on Huntington, for this would neither be in any way commensurate with the hideousness of the acts for which, directly and indirectly, he has been responsible, nor would it begin to draw people's attention to the broader social and political forces at work which have produced a man like him. As with the Shockley affair at Leeds University, we would prefer the University to reconsider the matter, and, in the light of further evidence of the nature of Huntington's academic and 'practical' contributions to humanity, withdraw its invitation. If this does not happen, and if the University continues to align itself with Huntington - since we do not think that in this matter there can be any sitting on the fence - we shall organise our protests as loudly and as powerfully as possible.

In this connection, we should like to emphasise and re-emphasise that the campaign is NOT being conducted by a 'tiny minority' of students; that we are NOT a select and clandestine force of sinister intent; but that, on the contrary, we are an extremely broad alliance of concerned people and our sessions are entirely open, public, and democratically conducted. We have also spent much time and energy researching into Huntington's writings



## Press statement released by the Sussex Indochina Solidarity Committee, 5 June 1973

Huntington is being invited both to the University proper - to lecture to the American Studies Department on 'The Soldier in American Society' - and to the Institute of Development Studies - to present a seminar on 'American policy towards developing societies'. He is being invited in his capacity as an eminent American political scientist (he is Professor of Government at Harvard University), although the 'controversial' nature of his views and activities are to some extent appreciated by those inviting him.

Our objections to Huntington are based not simply on what could be considered unpleasant or ideologically unacceptable aspects of his work - and it's here that our campaign differs from that mounted against Professor Eysenck at the LSE. For Huntington is not simply an academic. He is also: Chairman of the Council of Vietnamese Studies of the South-East Asia Development Advisory Group (SEADAG); and a one-time Consultant to the Secretary of Defense, the Department of State and the Agency for International Development. He is therefore one of the prime examples of an academic who has moved beyond the sphere of education and scholarship and into Government - where, in the context of the Vietnam war, he has quite explicitly been involved in the decision-making process, providing guidelines, shaping policy and planning strategy. He has applied his theoretical approach to 'political order' to the practical problem of reshaping Vietnamese society in such a way as to counter rural and national uprisings. To this end he has cold-bloodedly advocated the marshalling of the rural population into towns and refugee-camps by terror-bombing - a process he calls 'forced draft urbanisation' - plus the systematic destruction of any possibility of life in the countryside.

We feel that at such a time as this, when 'academic freedom' as we understand it is increasingly and

and activities, and the more deeply we have delved the more convinced we have become that the University of Sussex would do itself - and the people of this town - something much more than an injustice by according this man the distinction of setting foot on this campus.

We utterly reject the charge that we are against 'free speech'. A prominent member of staff here has pointed out that no sane person would object to a reputation for being intolerant of what's intolerable. The substantive issue at stake is, in our view, that of Huntington's views on and role in American aggression in Vietnam. However, even if the 'free speech' argument were further pursued, and if it could be established that it is always wrong to curtail this freedom, no matter how despicable inhuman or dangerous the views that someone may hold, then Huntington himself has rejected this freedom. According to reliable sources, he has explicitly refused to take part in a public session in which he would answer questions concerning his role in Vietnam. He proposes to come here simply to deliver his lecture and to conduct his seminar, thereby maintaining a dominant position in the proceedings and curtailing the right of his critics to exercise their equal freedom of speech. We therefore feel that on no grounds whatever can Huntington's visit be supported.

## From the introduction by John Mepham

This book is about universities and about imperialism and about the connection between the two. It is also about a not unrelated problem, that of 'academic freedom'. The relation between these problems is manifested in practice in the conflict between the principle of academic freedom on the one hand and the conduct of ideological and political struggle against the universities' complicity

in imperialist oppression on the other. That the universities do make a real, concrete contribution to the conduct of imperialist policies is not something that everyone will find obvious. There are even those who put such words as imperialism and oppression between inverted commas as if to suggest that these things are merely the figments of demented extremist imagination. What is certainly true is that imperialism is a complex reality and that the character and extent of the universities' contribution to it requires serious analysis.

One of the reasons why it is not easy to understand universities, why they are such very opaque and puzzling institutions, is that by and large university people themselves talk and think about their activities in a way that is extraordinarily self-deceiving, uncritical and unscientific. Academics are not, on the whole, very good at understanding themselves. They tend to rely, when discussing their own activities, on concepts and principles which, to put it mildly, fail to meet the standards of rigour and clarity which they set themselves when they are discussing Shakespeare's sonnets or the structure of DNA. One such principle is that of academic freedom.

On the one hand, then, we have the reasonable demand that the universities, and in particular the so-called 'social scientists' within the universities, should think seriously about the nature and implications of their work, about the real, concrete relation between their work and the realities of the social and political world. On the other hand we have a certain principle of conduct and a certain ideal, encapsulated in the principle of academic freedom, which university faculties claim to set for themselves and demand of others. Hence the confrontation between the apparent simplicity of an abstract ideal on the one hand, and the complex reality of academic life, with all its concrete restrictions, exclusions and complicities on the other.

For whatever people may wish the fact is

## Closed minds at Sussex

Sussex University students have been told to join the three monkeys today. They have not been asked whether they want the blindfolds, gags and earplugs which are being handed out by the Sussex Indochina Solidarity Committee. That decision, the committee has concluded, is too important for the students to take. Having failed to persuade both the University Chancellor and the head of the American Studies Department to cancel the invitation extended to Professor Samuel Huntington to speak at Sussex, the committee has decided to do its best to disrupt the lecture. The reason is its opposition to Professor Huntington's views on Vietnam. That the Professor is not proposing to speak on Vietnam makes a senseless plan even more meaningless.

Professor Huntington is one of the most distinguished political scientists in the United States. Two issues disturb the left-wing student group. They abhor his analytical articles on Vietnam, which they claim 'cold-bloodedly advocate the marshalling of the rural population into towns and refugee camps by terror bombing'; and they claim he must accept responsibility for the policies because of his work as a consultant to the Defence and State Departments. The Professor claims his views have been misrepresented. Certainly there is nothing which convicts the Professor in the thick wad of campaign sheets forwarded to the Guardian by the students. What a man describes is not

necessarily what he prescribes.

But even if their charges were based on truth their would be no justification for the disruptive tactics they are planning for today. Not one of their four justifications stand up to any examination. First they suggest that invitation is an implicit endorsement by students and faculty of American policy in Indochina. Nothing could be more absurd. Since when has a British university as such endorsed any political policy outside the field of education? It is a depressing measure of the students' values that to invite someone to speak should be interpreted as an endorsement of his views. If free speech is to be stifled in the universities where can it flourish? Second, they suggest he has been invited to brainwash students rather than lecture them. So much for the committee's faith in the intellectual standards of their fellow students. Third, they believe the invitation 'confers academic respectability on a pseudo-scientist'. A professor from the most distinguished university in the United States does not need an added 'respectability'. Fourth, they cannot divorce the professor's academic activities from the bombing of Indochina. That smells of double standards. Were they equally upset by Communist atrocities? The best people to put the Indochina committee in its place are the rest of the student body. They should turn up in force today.

Guardian, 5 June 1973

that these things have, in practice, come into conflict. This has been dramatically so throughout the 'western world', especially since 1968. The ideal of academic freedom is continually negated in practice by the operation of all the complex mechanisms whereby universities restrict the areas of theoretical inquiry which are deemed by them to be legitimate, whereby they forcibly narrow the minds of their faculty and students. It is also sometimes negated in that more concrete manner whereby unacceptable intellectuals are removed from university faculties. The

Council for Academic Freedom and Democracy was founded in Britain in 1970 for the purpose of exposing the operation of these mechanisms and of defending academics against them. Sometimes, however, the threat to the ideal of academic freedom has appeared to come from a different direction. Student campaigns of protest have occasionally resulted in the disruption of academic activities and by and large the academic profession has reacted to this perceived threat to its freedom with concern and anger.

As for the status of the book itself, I think it should not be approached as an academic exercise. It is not merely an attempt to work out solutions to interesting but inconsequential puzzles. It is an intervention, albeit of a modest and fragmentary kind, in an ideological struggle. And it is conceived from a political standpoint and not from some mythical point of neutrality or impartiality. Having a political standpoint and knowing what it is, is no impediment to truth. And this means that it should be remembered that what all this discussion is ultimately about is Indochina, is the fascist extermination of democracy in Chile, is the system of international politico-economic relations called monopoly capitalism and imperialism. Given this it may seem to be a pity that the struggle has to pass through the tedious detour of arguments about academic freedom. But this detour is necessary whether one likes it or not. It is made necessary by the objective structure of the situation within which these arguments and struggles are conducted; by the relative autonomy of the universities, their discourses and practices, by their specificity as a site of political and ideological struggle. But it should be remembered, as the discussion in this book winds its way into the analysis of the universities, that the perspective from which the argument should be conducted is one from which one does not lose sight of those larger and more brutal realities which the universities somehow contrive so effectively to conceal.

Dear Mr. Edgley,

I've been meaning to drop you a note since first hearing that you were involved in the Huntington protest in Sussex, particularly after seeing some of the letters in the Guardian, which reminded me unpleasantly of some features of recent visits of mine to England that I found curious. I get the impression that it is considered rather gauche, in Senior Common Room circles, to become overtly emotional & critical with regard to the massacre of peasant populations by the Leader of the Free World.

When the matter broke, I was asked by Peggy Duff of UDDP to write a letter to the Guardian. Having nothing much to say, I hesitated, but decided to do it after seeing the fine letter that you and others wrote about the free speech issue. I don't know whether they ever printed it. I gather not, not having received the amount of abuse that usually follows publication of a letter on such a topic.

The whole Huntington matter is quite curious, really. His writings leave absolutely no doubt of his position, and while the left has undoubtedly exaggerated his role - he apparently was nothing more than a minor intellectual apologist for imperial crime rather than an active planner - still there can be no doubt that his views are a sort of intellectualized Eichenmannism. Yet I am quite sure that neither he or his colleagues understand at all who they are the focus of such contempt and disgust. They are, after all, merely fulfilling their academic responsibility of service to the state - the people, given liberal democratic canons and deactivating the facts - and it is, after all, the fact that driving a peasant population into refugee camps and urban slums may be 'the answer' to revolutionary nationalism. I have found discussions of this matter to be virtually an impasse. Thus, I quote Sam Huntington's horrors to someone and they listen, uncomprehendingly, failing to see what is wrong. I wonder whether educated Germans would have had the same response to technical articles on design of crematoria.

Anyway, I can guess, from experience of my own, what kind of response you are getting from distinguished academic and intellectual circles. I suspect that England is even more advanced in the arts of hypocrisy and criticism than the US, and have the impression that British intellectuals express often a degree of servility to American power that is perhaps somewhat rare here. I hope it isn't getting you down. For what it is worth, I was really pleased and impressed to see that you were willing to take up such an unpopular cause at a difficult moment and to try to inject some sanity into the 'free speech' discussion.

Actually, my own feeling is that Huntington shouldn't have been shouted down, on the grounds that even Hitler should have an opportunity to present his case - though whether Lord Arran would have been pleased to permit this during the battle of Britain is perhaps an open question. On the other hand, I find it difficult to become aroused about the matter. The full hypocrisy of the liberal academics becomes apparent only when one considers a bit of recent history. This is 1965, it was virtually impossible in Boston to gain an open hearing for opposition to the war. I recall very well in October 1965, the first occasion of a general international protest against the war, as we attempted to arrange a meeting in Boston. University sites were virtually excluded, because we were afraid the place would be torn apart. We finally settled on the Boston Common, but the meeting was quickly broken up by a combination of local thugs and MIT students marching en masse from the dormitories and fraternities. I was one of the 'speakers' - not a word was heard and we were lucky that the meeting dispersed without real violence. It was no secret. The Boston Globe - probably the most liberal paper in the US - devoted its entire front page the following day to a description of the events, quite accurate, and quite approving of the patriotic response of the red-blooded young fellows who responded in the only appropriate way to the impudence of those who were suggesting that there might be something wrong with bombing North Vietnam. The radio was devoted to virtually nothing else. There was not a peep of protest from the advocates of free speech for unpopular causes.

In March 1966, the second international day of protest was announced. This time, we gave up on an open meeting, and again ruled out the university because of fear of the reaction there. We thought a church might be the appropriate place to reduce the risk of violence. Wrong again. The Arlington St. Church was again the scene of a mob attack. The front of the Church where the meeting was held was defaced and serious violence was again averted, this time, when the Police Captain was struck in the face by a tomato and gave the order to masses of police to clear the area. Only a few minutes before, we had asked him whether it wasn't possible to at least prevent the barrage and were told that it was none of his business. Again, no protest from liberal academics. In fact, all of this was conveniently forgotten when it became fashionable to sturdily oppose the war a few years later. The academic opposition to the war in places like MIT and Harvard never reached a fraction of the scale of outrage against the 'left-wing totalitarianists' who were persecuting poor Huntington and others like him by meeting his pronouncements, and even sometimes sinking to inflicting on his right of untroubled free speech.

Sincerely,  
Noam Chomsky

Letter from Noam Chomsky to Roy Edgley, 12 June 1973