DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

DR. JOHN C. BENNETT DR. HENRY STEELE COMMAGER RABBI ABRAHAM HESCHEL

speak on the war in vietnam

a foreword by DR. REINHOLD NIEBUHR

On the occasion of the naming of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a co-Chairman of this Committee, and because of widespread interest in the subject of the war in Vietnam, as a public service we have reprinted several addresses and statements of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and of other distinguished Americans.

The addresses of Dr. King in Los Angeles and at Riverside Church in New York, have been selected from among many he has delivered on the subject because the Los Angeles address concerns the many casualties which the Vietnam war has inflicted on America, whereas the Riverside Church address reflects an effort by Dr. King, in the spirit of nonviolence, to see this war through the eyes of those who are our adversaries despite his disagreement with their philosophies.

Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam is a national committee of Protestant, Catholic and Jewish clergy and laymen which was formed in December 1965. We have come together on an ad hoc basis in opposition to the role our Government has played, particularly in its military involvement, in recent Vietnam history.

We feel that a time comes when silence is betrayal. That time has come for us in relation to Vietnam. As members of American churches and synagogues, we voice not only our own convictions, but seek also to articulate the unexpressed fears and longings of millions of Americans.

Our share of responsibility haunts us today and prompts our outcry. We confess that we should have spoken out sooner and with clearer voice. Our allegiance to our nation is held under a higher allegiance to the God who is sovereign over all nations. Each day we find allegiance to our nation's policy more difficult to reconcile with allegiance to our God.

We speak in full awareness that no easy answers are available. But we believe that issues must be pressed and questions forced, if new answers are to be forthcoming. For the old answers no longer satisfy us.

a foreword by DR. REINHOLD NIEBUHR

I am happy and honored in being asked to write a foreword for the significant volume which contains the four eloquent addresses delivered at the Riverside Church mass meeting sponsored by the committee of Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam.

My illness prevented me from attending the meeting, but I am deeply persuaded by its concern about our bloody, costly and essentially futile involvement in a civil war in Vietnam. Some of our citizens regard our involvement as an expression of our sense of responsibility, but we are among those who regard it as an example of the "illusion of American omnipotence."

We are quite certain that the churches are not the only source of discontent. All university centers have expressed dissidence and so have the journalists. It is difficult to make criticism of a war in which so many patriotic emotions are involved. But we think it must be done; and we hope the churches now will make a common cause of this undertaking.

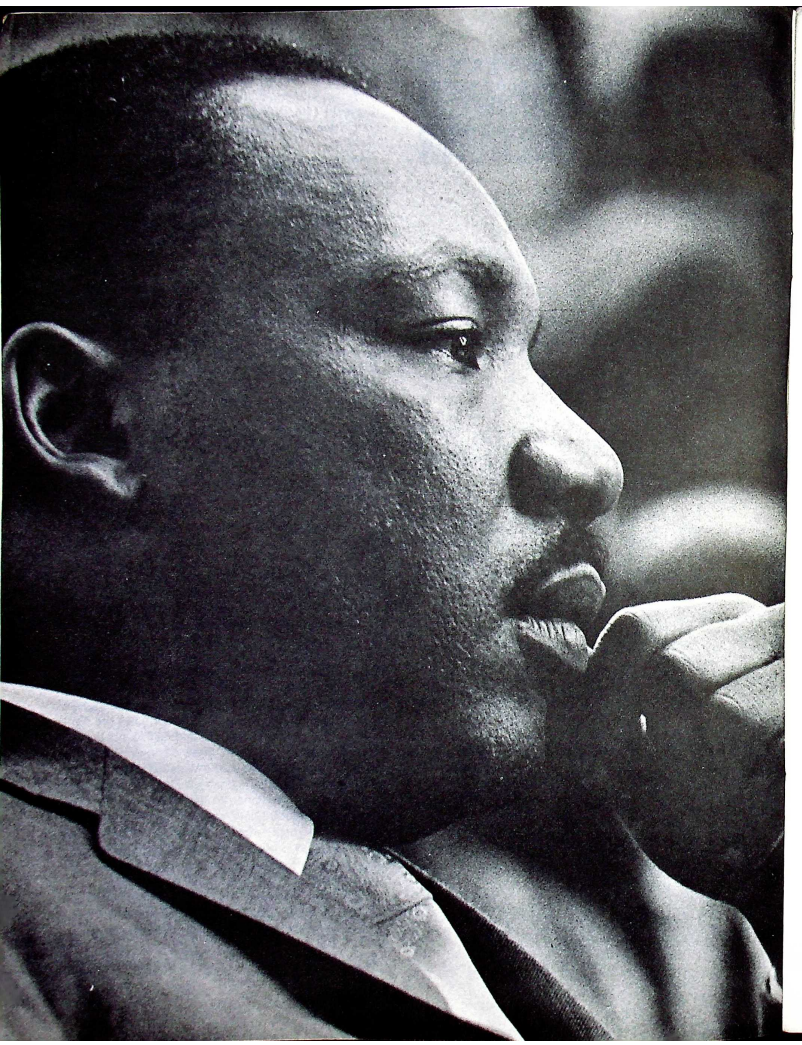
I will not write of the four memorable addresses made by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Prof. Henry Steele Commager, of Amherst College, Dr. John C. Bennett, President of the Union Theological Seminary, and Dr. Abraham Heschel, Professor of Ethics, of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. But I must say a word about Dr. King's opening remarks because they have been the subject of controversy and misunderstanding ever since they were delivered.

We quite appreciate that some of the civil rights leaders have disassociated themselves from Dr. King's opposition to the Vietnam war, in part because of fear that the civil rights movement itself will be confused by this opposition view. Dr. King knows this to be a hazard. But after all he is one of the great religious leaders of our time and he has a right to speak on any issue which concerns mankind. These two causes are interrelated not by reason of Dr. King's championing of them. Both causes must be pursued. Let us simply say that Dr. King has the right and a duty, as both a religious and civil rights leader, to express his concern in these days about such a major human problem as the Vietnam war.

The second concern is about Dr. King's position on nonviolent resistance to evil. Many of the journals and the public have confused his position with absolute pacifism, which they reject. I think, as a rather dedicated anti-pacifist, that Dr. King's conception of the nonviolent resistance to evil is a real contribution to our civil, moral and political life.

We hope therefore that this volume will have a wide reading among thoughtful persons of our churches, of our schools, and of the entire land.

April 11, 1967 Reinhold Niebuhr



An address by
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
The Nation Institute
Los Angeles, California
February 25, 1967

THE CASUALTIES OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM

I would like to speak to you candidly and forthrightly this afternoon about our present involvement in Viet Nam. I have chosen as a subject, "The Casualties of the War in Vietnam." We are all aware of the nightmarish **physical casualties.** We see them in our living rooms in all of their tragic dimensions on television screens, and we read about them on our subway and bus rides in daily newspaper accounts. We see the rice fields of a small Asian country being trampled at will and burned at whim: we see grief-stricken mothers with crying babies clutched in their arms as they watch their little huts burst forth into flames; we see the fields and valleys of battle being painted with humankind's blood; we see the broken bodies left prostrate in countless fields; we see young men being sent home half-men—physically handicapped and mentally deranged. Most tragic of all is the casualty list among children; so many Vietnamese children have been mutilated and incinerated by napalm and by bombs. A war in which children are incinerated, in which American soldiers die in mounting numbers is a war that mutilates the conscience. *These casualties are enough to cause all men to rise up with righteous indignation and oppose the very nature of this war.*

But the physical casualties of the war in Vietnam *are not alone* the catastrophies. **The casualties of principles and values are equally disastrous and injurious.** Indeed, they are ultimately more harmful because they are self-perpetuating. If the casualties of principle are not healed, the physical casualties will continue to mount.

One of the first casualties of the war in Vietnam was the Charter of the United Nations. In taking armed action against the Vietcong and North Vietnam, the United States clearly violated the United Nations charter which provides, in Chapter I, Article II (4)

> All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

and in Chapter VII, (39)

> The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression, and shall make recommendations or shall decide what measures shall be taken . . . to maintain or restore international peace and security.

It is very obvious that our government blatantly violated its obligation under the charter of the United Nations to submit to the Security Council its charge of aggression against North Vietnam. Instead we unilaterally launched an all-out war on Asian soil. In the process we have undermined the purpose of the United Nations and caused its effectiveness to atrophy. We have also placed our nation in the position of being morally and politically isolated. Even the long standing allies of our nation have adamantly refused to join our government in this ugly war. As Americans and lovers of Democracy we should carefully ponder the consequences of our nation's **declining** *moral status* in the world.

The second casualty of the war in Vietnam is the principle of self-determination. By entering a war that is little more than a domestic civil war, America has ended up supporting **a new form of colonialism** covered up by certain niceties of complexity. Whether we realize it or not our participation in the war in Vietnam is an ominous expres-

sion of our lack of sympathy for the oppressed, our paranoid anti-Communism, our failure to feel the ache and anguish of the have nots. It reveals our willingness to continue participating in neo-colonialist adventures.

A brief look at the background and history of this war reveals with brutal clarity the ugliness of our policy. The Vietnamese people proclaimed their own independence in 1945 after a combined French and Japanese occupation, and before the Communist revolution in China. They were led by the now well-known Ho Chi Minh. Even though they quoted the American Declaration of Independence in their own document of freedom, we refused to recognize them. **Instead, we decided to support France in its re-conquest of her former colony.** With that tragic decision we rejected a revolutionary government seeking self-determination, and a government that had been established not by China (for whom the Vietnamese have no great love) but by clearly indigenous forces that included some Communists.

For nine years following 1945 we denied the people of Vietnam the right to independence. For nine years we financially supported the French in their abortive effort to re-colonize Vietnam. Before the end of the war we were meeting 80% of the French war costs. Even before the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu, they began to despair of their reckless action, but we did not. We encouraged them with our huge financial and military supplies to continue the war even after they had lost the will.

When a negotiated settlement of the war was reached in 1954, through the Geneva Accord, it was *done against* **our will.** After doing all that we could to sabotage the planning for the Geneva Accord, we finally refused to sign it.

Soon after this we helped install Ngo Dhim Diem. We supported him in his betrayal of the Geneva Accord and his refusal to have the promised 1956 elections. We watched with approval as he engaged in ruthless and bloody persecution of all opposition forces. When Diem's infamous actions finally led to the formation of The National Liberation Front, the American public was duped into believing that the civil rebellion was being waged by puppets from Hanoi. As Douglas Pike wrote: "In horror, Americans helplessly watched Diem tear apart the fabric of Vietnamese society more effectively than the Communists had ever been able to do it. It was the most efficient act of his entire career."

Since Diem's death we have actively supported military **dictatorships** all in the name of fighting for freedom. When it became evident that these regimes could not defeat the Vietcong, we began to steadily increase our forces, calling them "military advisers" rather than fighting soldiers.

Today we are fighting an all-out war—undeclared by Congress. We have well over 500,000 American servicemen fighting in that benighted and unhappy country. American planes based in other countries are bombing the territory of their neighbor.

The greatest irony and tragedy of all is that our nation which initiated so much of the revolutionary spirit of the modern world, is now cast in the mold of being an arch anti-revolutionary. We are engaged in a war that seeks to turn the clock of history back and perpetuate white colonialism.

A third casualty of the war in Vietnam is the Great Society. This confused war has played havoc with our domestic destinies. Despite feeble protestations to the contrary, the promises of the Great Society have been shot down on the battlefield of Vietnam. The pursuit of this widened war has narrowed domestic welfare programs, making the poor, white and Negro, bear the heaviest burdens both at the front and at home.

While the anti-poverty program is cautiously initiated and zealously supervised, billions are liberally expended for this ill-considered war. The recently revealed misestimate of the war budget amounts to ten billions of dollars for a single year. This error alone is more than five times the amount committed to anti-poverty programs. The security we profess to seek in foreign adventures we will lose in our decaying cities. The bombs in Viet Nam explode at home: they destroy the hopes and possibilities for a decent America.

If we reversed investments and gave the armed forces the antipoverty budget, the generals could be forgiven if they walked off the battlefield in disgust. Poverty, urban problems and social progress generally are ignored when the guns of war become a national obsession.

It is estimated that we spend $322,000 for each enemy we kill, while we spend in the so-called war on poverty in America only about $53.00 for each person classified as "poor." And much of that 53 dollars goes for salaries of people who are not poor. We have escalated the war in Vietnam and de-escalated the skirmish against poverty. It challenges the imagination to contemplate what lives we could transform if we were to cease killing.

At this moment in history it is irrefutable that our world prestige is pathetically frail. Our war policy excites pronounced contempt and aversion virtually everywhere. Even when some national governments, for reasons of economic and diplomatic interest do not condemn us, their people in surprising measure have made clear they do not share the official policy.

Another casualty of the war in Vietnam is the humility of our nation. Through rugged determination, scientific and technological progress and dazzling achievements, America has become the richest and most powerful nation in the world. But honesty impels me to admit that our power has often made us arrogant. *We feel that our money can do anything.* We arrogantly feel that we have everything to teach other nations and nothing to learn from them. We often arrogantly feel that we have some divine, messianic mission to police the whole world. We are arrogant in not allowing young nations to go through the same growing pains, turbulence and revolution that characterized our history. We are arrogant in our contention that we have some sacred mission to protect people from totalitarian rule, while we make little use of our power to end the evils of South Africa and Rhodesia, and while we are in fact supporting dictatorships with guns and money under the guise of fighting Communism.

We are arrogant in professing to be concerned about the freedom of foreign nations while not setting our own house in order. Many of our Senators and Congressmen vote joyously to appropriate billions of dollars for war in Vietnam, and these same Senators and Congressmen vote loudly against a Fair Housing Bill to make it possible for a Negro veteran of Vietnam to purchase a decent home. We arm Negro soldiers to kill on foreign battlefields, but offer little protection for their relatives from beatings and killings in our own south. We are willing to make the Negro 100% of a citizen in warfare, but reduce him to 50% of a citizen on American soil. Of all the good things in life the Negro has approximately one half those of whites, of the bad he has twice that of whites. Thus, half of all Negroes live in substandard housing and Negroes have half the income of whites. When we turn to the negative experiences of life, the Negro has a double share. There are twice as many unemployed. The infant mortality rate is double that of whites. There are twice as many Negroes in combat in Vietnam at the beginning of 1967 and twice as many Negro soldiers died in action (20.6%) in proportion to their numbers in the population as whites.

All of this reveals that our nation has not yet used its vast resources of power to end the long night of poverty, racism and man's inhumanity to man. Enlarged power means enlarged peril if there is not concomitant growth of the soul. Constructive power is the right use of strength. Our arrogance can be our doom. It can bring the curtain down on our national drama. Ultimately a great nation is a compassionate nation. We are challenged in these turbulent days to use our power to speed up the day when "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain."

A fifth casualty of the war in Vietnam is the principle of **dissent.** An ugly repressive sentiment to silence peace-seekers depicts advocates of immediate negotiation and persons who call for a cessation of bombings in the north as quasi-traitors, fools and venal enemies of our soldiers and institutions. When those who stand for peace are so vilified it is time to consider where we are going and whether free speech has not become one of the major casualties of the war.

Curtailment of free speech is rationalized on grounds that American tradition forbids criticism of our government when the nation is at war. More than a century ago when we were in a declared state of war with Mexico, a first term congressman by the name of Abraham Lincoln stood in the halls of Congress and fearlessly and scathingly denounced that war. Abraham Lincoln of Illinois had not heard of this tradition or he was not inclined to respect it. Nor had Thoreau and Emerson and many other philosophers who shaped our democratic traditions.

A sixth casualty of the war in Vietnam is the prospect of mankind's survival. This war has created the climate for greater armament and further expansion of destructive nuclear power.

One of the most persistent ambiguities that we face is that everybody talks about peace as a goal. However, it does not take sharpest-eyed sophistication to discern that while everybody talks about peace, peace has become practically **nobody's business among the power-wielders.** Many men cry peace! peace! but they refuse to do the things that make for peace.

The large power blocs of the world talk passionately of pursuing peace while burgeoning **defense budgets bulge,** enlarging already awesome armies, and devising even more devastating weapons. Call the roll of those who sing the glad tidings of peace and one's ears will be surprised by the responding sounds. The heads of all of the nations

issue clarion calls for peace yet these destiny determiners come accompanied by a band and a brigand of national choristers, each bearing unsheathed swords rather than olive branches.

So when I see in this day the leaders of nations talking peace while preparing for war, I take frightful pause. When I see our country today intervening in what is basically a civil war, destroying hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese children with napalm, leaving broken bodies in countless fields and sending home half-men, mutilated, mentally and physically; when I see the recalcitrant unwillingness of our government to create the atmosphere for a negotiated settlement of this awful conflict by halting bombings in the north and agreeing to talk with the Vietcong—and all this in the name of pursuing the goal of peace—**I tremble for our world.** I do so not only from dire recall of the nightmares wreaked in the wars of yesterday, but also from dreadful realization of today's possible nuclear destructiveness, and tomorrow's even more damnable prospects.

The past is prophetic in that it asserts loudly that wars are poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows. One day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means. How much longer must we play at deadly war games before we heed the plaintive pleas of the unnumbered dead and maimed of past wars?

President John F. Kennedy said on one occasion, **"Mankind must** put an end to war or **war will put an end to mankind."** Wisdom born of experience should tell us that war is obsolete. There may have been a time when war served as a negative good by preventing the spread and growth of an evil force, but the destructive power of modern weapons eliminates even the possibility that war may serve as a negative good. If we assume that life is worth living and that man has a right to survive, then we must find an alternative to war. In a day when vehicles hurtle through outer space and guided ballistic missiles carve highways of death through the stratosphere, no nation can claim victory in war. A so-called limited war will leave little more than a calamitous legacy of human suffering, political turmoil, and spiritual disillusionment. A world war—God forbid!—will leave only smouldering ashes as a mute testimony of a human race whose folly led inexorably to ultimate death. So if modern man continues to flirt unhesitatingly with war, he will transform his earthly habitat into an inferno such as even the mind of Dante could not imagine.

Let me say finally that I oppose the war in Vietnam because I love America. I speak out against it not in anger but with anxiety and sorrow in my heart, and above all with a passionate desire to see our beloved country stand as the moral example of the world. I speak out against this war because I am disappointed with America. There can be no great disappointment where there is no great love. I am disappointed with our failure to deal positively and forthrightly with the triple evils of racism, extreme materialism and militarism. **We are presently moving down a dead-end road that can lead to national disaster.**

It is time for all people of conscience to call upon America to return to her true home of brotherhood and peaceful pursuits. We cannot remain silent as our nation engages in one of **history's most cruel and senseless wars.** During these days of human travail we must encourage creative dissenters. We need them because the thunder of their fearless voices will be the only sound stronger than the blasts of bombs and the clamour of war hysteria.

Those of us who love peace must organize as effectively as the war hawks. As they spread the propaganda of war we must spread the propaganda of peace. We must combine the *fervor* of the civil rights movement with the peace movement. We must demonstrate, teach and preach, until the very **foundations of our nation are shaken.** We must work unceasingly to lift this nation that we love to a higher destiny, to a new plateau of compassion, to a more noble expression of humane-ness.

I have tried to be honest. To be honest is to confront the truth. To be honest is to realize that the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of convenience and moments of comfort, but where he stands in moments of challenge and moments of controversy. However unpleasant and inconvenient the truth may be, I believe we must expose and face it if we are to achieve a better quality of American life.

Just the other day, the distinguished American historian, Henry Steele Commager, told a Senate Committee: "Justice Holmes used to say that the first lesson a judge had to learn was that he was not God . . . we do tend perhaps more than other nations, to transform our wars into crusades . . . our current involvement in Vietnam is cast, increasingly, into a moral mold . . . It is my feeling that we do not have the resources, material, intellectual or moral, to be at once an American power, a European power and an Asian power."

I agree with Mr. Commager. And I would suggest that there is, however, another kind of power that America can and should be. **It is a moral power,** a power harnessed to the service of peace and human beings, not an inhumane power unleashed against defenseless people. All the world knows that America is a great military power. We need not be diligent in seeking to prove it. We must now show the world our moral power.
We still have a choice today: nonviolent co-existence or violent co-annihilation. History will record the choice we made. It is still not too late to make the proper choice. If we decide to become a moral power we will be able to transform the jangling discords of this world into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. If we make the wise decision we will be able to transform our pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of peace. This will be a glorious day. In reaching it we can fulfill the noblest of American dreams.

Addresses given at Riverside Church Meeting, New York City, Tuesday April 4, 1967
Sponsored by: CLERGY AND LAYMEN CONCERNED ABOUT VIETNAM

BEYOND VIETNAM

I come to this magnificent house of worship tonight because my conscience leaves me no other choice. I join you in this meeting because I am in deepest agreement with the aims and work of the organization which has brought us together: Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam. The recent statement of your executive committee are the sentiments of my own heart and I found myself in full accord when I read its opening lines: "A time comes when silence is betrayal." That time has come for us in relation to Vietnam.

The truth of these words is beyond doubt, but the mission to which they call us is a most difficult one. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world. Moreover when the issues at hand seem as perplexing as they often do in the case of this dreadful conflict we are always on the verge of being mesmerized by uncertainty: but we must move on.

Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. And we must rejoice as well, for surely this is the first time in our nation's history that a significant number of its religious leaders have chosen to move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history. Perhaps a new spirit is rising among us. If it is, let us trace its movements well and pray that our own inner being may be sensitive to its guidance, for we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us.

Over the past two years, as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart, as I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam, many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path. At the heart of their concerns this query has often loomed large and loud: Why are **you** speaking about the war, Dr. King? Why are **you** joining the voices of dissent? Peace and civil rights don't mix, they say. Aren't you hurting the cause of your people, they ask? And when I hear them, though I often understand the sources of their concern, I am nevertheless greatly saddened, for such questions mean that the inquirers have not really known me, my commitment or my calling. Indeed, their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live.

In the light of such tragic misunderstanding, I deem it of signal importance to try to state clearly, and I trust concisely, why I believe that the path from Dexter Avenue Baptist Church — the church in Montgomery, Alabama where I began my pastorate — leads clearly to this sanctuary tonight.

I come to this platform tonight to make a passionate plea to my beloved nation. This speech is not addressed to Hanoi or to the National Liberation Front. It is not addressed to China or to Russia.

Nor is it an attempt to overlook the ambiguity of the total situation and the need for a collective solution to the tragedy of Vietnam. Neither is it an attempt to make North Vietnam or the National Liberation Front paragons of virtue, nor to overlook the role they can play in a successful resolution of the problem. While they both may have justifiable reason to be suspicious of the good faith of the United States, life and history give eloquent testimony to the fact that conflicts are never resolved without trustful give and take on both sides.

Tonight, however, I wish not to speak with Hanoi and the NLF, but rather to my fellow Americans who, with me, bear the greatest responsibility in ending a conflict that has exacted a heavy price on both continents.

Since I am a preacher by trade, I suppose it is not surprising that I have several reasons for bringing Vietnam into the field of my moral vision. There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I, and others, have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor—both black and white—through the Poverty Program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the build-up in Vietnam and I watched the program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demoniacal destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.

Perhaps the more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them 8,000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village but we realize that they would never live on the same block in Detroit. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.

My third reason moves to an even deeper level of awareness, for it grows out of my experience in the ghettos of the north over the last three years—especially the last three summers. As I have walked among the desperate, rejected and angry young men I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through non-violent action. But they asked—and rightly so—what about Vietnam? They asked if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government. For the sake of those boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of the hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent.

For those who ask the question, "Aren't you a Civil Rights leader?" and thereby mean to exclude me from the movement for peace, I have this further answer. In 1957 when a group of us formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, we chose as our motto: "To save the soul of America." We were convinced that we could not limit our vision to certain rights for black people, but instead affirmed the conviction that America would never be free or saved from itself unless the descendants of its slaves were loosed completely from the shackles they still wear. In a way we were agreeing with Langston Hughes, that black bard of Harlem, who had written earlier:

> O, yes,
> I say it plain,
> America never was America to me,
> And yet I swear this oath—
> America will be!

Now, it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war. If America's soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read Vietnam. It can never be saved so long as it destroys the deepest hopes of men the world over. So it is that those of us who are yet determined that America **will** be are led down the path of protest and dissent, working for the health of our land.

As if the weight of such a commitment to the life and health of America were not enough, another burden of responsibility was placed upon me in 1964; and I cannot forget that the Nobel Prize for Peace was also a commis-

sion—a commission to work harder than I had ever worked before for "the brotherhood of man." This is a calling that takes me beyond national allegiances, but even if it were not present I would yet have to live with the meaning of my commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ. To me the relationship of this ministry to the making of peace is so obvious that I sometimes marvel at those who ask me why I am speaking against the war. Could it be that they do not know that the good news was meant for all men—for communist and capitalist, for their children and ours, for black and for white, for revolutionary and conservative? Have they forgotten that my ministry is in obedience to the one who loved his enemies so fully that he died for them? What then can I say to the Vietcong or to Castro or to Mao as a faithful minister of this one? Can I threaten them with death or must I not share with them my life?

Finally, as I try to delineate for you and for myself the road that leads from Montgomery to this place I would have offered all that was most valid if I simply said that I must be true to my conviction that I share with all men the calling to be a son of the Living God. Beyond the calling of race or nation or creed is this vocation of sonship and brotherhood, and because I believe that the Father is deeply concerned especially for his suffering and helpless and outcast children, I come tonight to speak for them.

This I believe to be the privilege and the burden of all of us who deem ourselves bound by allegiances and loyalties which are broader and deeper than nationalism and which go beyond our nation's self-defined goals and positions. We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for victims of our nation and for those it calls enemy, for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers.

And as I ponder the madness of Vietnam and search within myself for ways to understand and respond in compassion my mind goes constantly to the people of that peninsula. I speak now not of the soldiers of each side, not of the junta in Saigon, but simply of the people who have been living under the curse of war for almost three continuous decades now. I think of them too because it is clear to me that there will be no meaningful solution there until some attempt is made to know them and hear their broken cries.

They must see Americans as strange liberators. The Vietnamese people proclaimed their own independence in 1945 after a combined French and Japanese occupation, and before the communist revolution in China. They were led by Ho Chi Minh. Even though they quoted the American Declaration of Independence in their own document of freedom, we refused to recognize them. Instead, we decided to support France in its re-conquest of her former colony.

Our government felt then that the Vietnamese people were not "ready" for independence, and we again fell victim to the deadly western arrogance that has poisoned the international atmosphere for so long. With that tragic decision we rejected a revolutionary government seeking self-determination, and a government that had been established not by China (for whom the Vietnamese have no great love) but by clearly indigenous forces that included some communists. For the peasants this new government meant real land reform, one of the most important needs in their lives.

For nine years following 1945 we denied the people of Vietnam the right of independence. For nine years we vigorously supported the French in their abortive effort to re-colonize Vietnam.

Before the end of the war we were meeting 80% of the French war costs. Even before the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu, they began to despair of the reckless action, but we did not. We encouraged them with our huge financial and military supplies to continue the war even after they had lost the will. Soon we would be paying almost the full costs of this tragic attempt at re-colonization.

After the French were defeated it looked as if independence and land reform would come again through the Geneva agreements. But instead there came the United States, determined that Ho should not unify the temporarily divided nation, and the peasants watched again as we supported one of the most vicious modern dictators —our chosen man, Premier Diem. The peasants watched and cringed as Diem ruthlessly routed out all opposition, supported their extortionist landlords and refused even to discuss re-unification with the North. The peasants watched as all this was presided over by U.S. influence and then by increasing numbers of U.S. troops who came to help quell the insurgency that Diem's methods had aroused. When Diem was overthrown they may have been happy, but the long line of military dictatorships seemed to offer no real change—especially in terms of their need for land and peace.

The only change came from America as we increased our troop commitments in support of governments which were singularly corrupt, inept and without popular support. All the while the people read our leaflets and received regular promises of peace and democracy — and land reform. Now they languish under our bombs and consider us—not their fellow Vietnamese—the real enemy. They move sadly and apathetically as we herd them off the land of their fathers into concentration camps where minimal social needs are rarely met. They know they must move or be destroyed by our bombs. So they go—primarily women and children and the aged.

They watch as we poison their water, as we kill a million acres of their crops. They must weep as the bulldozers roar through their areas preparing to destroy the precious trees. They wander into the hospitals, with at least 20 casualties from American firepower for one Vietcong-inflicted injury. They wander into the towns and see thousands of the children, homeless, without clothes, running in packs on the streets like animals. They see the children degraded by our soldiers as they beg for food. They see the children selling their sisters to our soldiers, soliciting for their mothers.

What do the peasants think as we ally ourselves with the landlords and as we refuse to put any action into our many words concerning land reform? What do they think as we test out our latest weapons on them, just as the Germans tested out new medicine and new tortures in the concentration camps of Europe? Where are the roots of the independent Vietnam we claim to be building? Is it among these voiceless ones?

We have destroyed their two most cherished institutions: the family and the village. We have destroyed their land and their crops. We have cooperated in the crushing of the nation's only non-communist revolutionary political force—the unified Buddhist Church. We have supported the enemies of the peasants of Saigon. We have corrupted their women and children and killed their men. What liberators!

Now there is little left to build on—save bitterness. Soon the only solid physical foundations remaining will be found at our military bases and in the concrete of the concentration camps we call fortified hamlets. The peasants may well wonder if we plan to build our new Vietnam on such grounds as these? Could we blame them for such thoughts? We must speak for them and raise the questions they cannot raise. These too are our brothers.

Perhaps the more difficult but no less necessary task is to speak for those who have been designated as our enemies. What of the National Liberation Front — that strangely anonymous group we call VC or Communists? What must they think of us in America when they realize that we permitted the repression and cruelty of Diem which helped to bring them into being as a resistance group in the south? What do they think of our condoning the violence which led to their own taking up of arms? How can they believe in our integrity when now we speak of "aggression from the North" as if there were nothing more essential to the war? How can they trust us when now we charge them with violence after the murderous reign of Diem, and charge them with violence while we pour every new weapon of death into their land? Surely we must understand their feelings even if we do not condone their actions. Surely we must see that the men we supported pressed them to their violence. Surely we must see that our own computerized plans of destruction simply dwarf their greatest acts.

How do they judge us when our officials know that their membership is less than 25 per cent communist and yet insist on giving them the blanket name? What must they be thinking when they know that we are aware of their control of major sections of Vietnam and yet we appear ready to allow national elections in which this highly organized political parallel government will have no part? They ask how we can speak of free elections when the Saigon press is censored and controlled by the military junta. And they are surely right to wonder what kind of new government we plan to help form without them—the only party in real touch with the peasants. They question our political goals and they deny the reality of a peace settlement from which they will be excluded. Their questions are frighteningly relevant. Is our nation planning to build on political myth again and then shore it up with the power of new violence?

Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and non-violence when it helps us to see the enemy's point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.

So, too, with Hanoi. In the North, where our bombs now pummel the land, and our mines endanger the waterways, we are met by a deep but understandable mistrust. To speak for them is to explain this lack of confidence in western words, and especially their distrust of American intentions now. In Hanoi are the men who led the nation to independence against the Japanese and the French, the men who sought membership in the French commonwealth and were betrayed by the weakness of Paris and the willfulness of the colonial armies. It was they who led a second struggle against French domination at tremen-

dous costs, and then were persuaded to give up the land they controlled between the 13th and 17th parallel as a temporary measure at Geneva. After 1954 they watched us conspire with Diem to prevent elections which would have surely brought Ho Chi Minh to power over a united Vietnam, and they realized they had been betrayed again.

When we ask why they do not leap to negotiate, these things must be remembered. Also it must be clear that the leaders of Hanoi considered the presence of American troops in support of the Diem regime to have been the initial military breach of the Geneva Agreements concerning foreign troops, and they remind us that they did not begin to send in any large number of supplies or men until American forces had moved into the tens of thousands.

Hanoi remembers how our leaders refused to tell us the truth about the earlier North Vietnamese overtures for peace, how we claimed that none existed when they had clearly been made. Ho Chi Minh has watched as America has spoken of peace and built up its forces, and now he has surely heard the increasing international rumors of American plans for an invasion of the North. Perhaps only his sense of humor and irony can save him when he hears the most powerful nation of the world speaking of his aggression as it drops thousands of bombs on a poor weak nation more than 8,000 miles away from its shores.

At this point I should make it clear that while I have tried in these last few minutes to give a voice to the voiceless on Vietnam and to understand the arguments of those who are called enemy, I am as deeply concerned about our own troops there as anything else. For it occurs to me that what we are submitting them to in Vietnam is not simply the brutalizing process that goes on in any war where armies face each other and seek to destroy. We are adding cynicism to the process of death, for they must know after a short period there that none of the things we claim to be fighting for are really involved. Before long they must know that their government has sent them into a struggle among Vietnamese, and the more sophisticated surely realize that we are on the side of the wealthy and the secure while we create a hell for the poor.

Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as an American to the leaders of my own nation. The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop it must be ours.

This is the message of the great Buddhist leaders of Vietnam. Recently one of them wrote these words: "Each day the war goes on, the hatred increases in the heart of the Vietnamese and in the hearts of those of humanitarian instinct. The Americans are forcing even their friends into becoming their enemies. It is curious that the Americans, who calculate so carefully on the possibilities of military victory, do not realize that in the process they are incurring deep psychological and political defeat. The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism."

If we continue there will be no doubt in my mind and in the mind of the world that we have no honorable intentions in Vietnam. It will become clear that our minimal expectation is to occupy it as an American colony and men will not refrain from thinking that our maximum hope is to goad China into a war so that we may bomb her nuclear installations. If we do not stop our war against the people of Vietnam immediately the world will be left with no other alternative than to see this as some horribly clumsy and deadly game we have decided to play.

The world now demands a maturity of America that we may not be able to achieve. It demands that we admit that we have been wrong from the beginning of our adventure in Vietnam, that we have been detrimental to the life of the Vietnamese people.

In order to atone for our sins and errors in Vietnam, we should take the initiative in bringing a halt to this tragic war. I would like to suggest five concrete things that our government should do immediately to begin the long and difficult process of extricating ourselves from this nightmarish conflict:

1. End all bombing in North and South Vietnam.
2. Declare a unilateral cease-fire in the hope that such action will create the atmosphere for negotiation.
3. Take immediate steps to prevent other battlegrounds in Southeast Asia by curtailing our military build-up in Thailand and our interference in Laos.
4. Realistically accept the fact that the National Liberation Front has substantial support in South Vietnam and must thereby play a role in any meaningful negotiations and in any future Vietnam government.
5. Set a date that we will remove all foreign troops from Vietnam in accordance with the 1954 Geneva Agreement.

Part of our ongoing commitment might well express itself in an offer to grant asylum to any Vietnamese who fears for his life under a new regime which included the Liberation Front. Then we must make what reparations we can for the damage we have done. We must provide the medical aid that is badly needed, making it available in this country if necessary.

Meanwhile we in the churches and synagogues have a continuing task while we urge our government to disengage itself from a disgraceful commitment. We must continue to raise our voices if our nation persists in its perverse ways in Vietnam. We must be prepared to match actions with words by seeking out every creative means of protest possible.

As we counsel young men concerning military service we must clarify for them our nation's role in Vietnam and challenge them with the alternative of conscientious objection. I am pleased to say that this is the path now being chosen by more than seventy students at my own Alma Mater, Morehouse College, and I recommend it to all who find the American course in Vietnam a dishonorable and unjust one. Moreover I would encourage all ministers of draft age to give up their ministerial exemptions and seek status as conscientious objectors. These are the times for real choices and not false ones. We are at the moment when our lives must be placed on the line if our nation is to survive its own folly. Every man of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits his convictions, but we must all protest.

There is something seductively tempting about stopping there and sending us all off on what in some circles has become a popular crusade against the war in Vietnam. I say we must enter that struggle, but I wish to go on now to say something even more disturbing. The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality we will find ourselves organizing clergy and laymen-concerned committees for the next generation. They will be concerned about Guatemala and Peru. They will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia. They will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa. We will be marching for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies without end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy. Such thoughts take us beyond Vietnam, but not beyond our calling as sons of the living God.

In 1957 a sensitive American official overseas said that it seemed to him that our nation was on the wrong side of a world revolution. During the past 10 years we have seen emerge a pattern of suppression which now has justified the presence of U.S. military "advisors" in Venezuela. This need to maintain social stability for our investments accounts for the counter-revolutionary action of American forces in Guatemala. It tells why American helicopters are being used against guerrillas in Colombia and why American napalm and green beret forces have already been active against rebels in Peru. It is with such activity in mind that the words of the late John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Five years ago he said, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable."

Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken—the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investment.

I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a "thing-oriented" society to a "person-oriented" society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

A true revolution of value will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. On the one hand we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho Road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on Life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs re-structuring. A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say: "This is not just." It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of Latin America and say: "This is not just." The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just. A true revolution of values will lay hands on the world order and say of war: "This way of settling differences is not just." This business of burning human beings

with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of peoples normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice, and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values. There is nothing, except a tragic death wish, to prevent us from re-ordering our priorities, so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. There is nothing to keep us from molding a recalcitrant status-quo with bruised hands until we have fashioned it into a brotherhood.

This kind of positive revolution of values is our best defense against Communism. War is not the answer. Communism will never be defeated by the use of atomic bombs or nuclear weapons. Let us not join those who shout war and through their misguided passions urge the United States to relinquish its participation in the United Nations. These are days which demand wise restraint and calm reasonableness. We must not call everyone a Communist or an appeaser who advocates the seating of Red China in the United Nations and who recognizes that hate and hysteria are not the final answers to the problem of these turbulent days. We must not engage in a negative anti-Communism, but rather in a positive thrust for democracy, realizing that our greatest defense against Communism is to take offensive action in behalf of justice. We must with positive action seek to remove those conditions of poverty, insecurity and injustice which are the fertile soil in which the seed of Communism grows and develops.

These are revolutionary times. All over the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression and out of the womb of a frail world new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as never before. "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light." We in the West must support these revolutions. It is a sad fact that, because of comfort, complacency, a morbid fear of Communism, and our proneness to adjust to injustice, the Western nations that initiated so much of the revolutionary spirit of the modern world have now become the arch anti-revolutionaries. This has driven many to feel that only Marxism has the revolutionary spirit. Therefore, Communism is a judgment against our failure to make democracy real and follow through on the revolutions that we initiated. Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism. With this powerful commitment we shall boldly challenge the status-quo and unjust mores and thereby speed the day when "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain."

A genuine revolution of values means in the final analysis that our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies.

This call for a world-wide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all men. This oft misunderstood and misinterpreted concept so readily dismissed by the Nietzsches of the world as a weak and cowardly force—has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of man. When I speak of love I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I am speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality. This Hindu-Moslem-Christian-Jewish-Buddhist belief about ultimate reality is beautifully summed up in the first epistle of Saint John:

> Let us love one another; for love is God and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Let us hope that this spirit will become the order of the day. We can no longer afford to worship the God of Hate or bow before the altar of retaliation. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of hate. History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path of hate. As Arnold Toynbee says: "Love is the ultimate force that makes for the saving choice of life and good against the damning choice of death and evil. Therefore the first hope in our inventory must be the hope that love is going to have the last word."

We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked and dejected with a lost opportunity. The "tide in the affairs of men" does not remain at the flood; it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residue of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: "Too late." There is an invisible book of life that faithfully records our vigilance or our neglect. "The moving finger writes, and having written moves on. . . ." We still have a choice today: non-violent co-existence or violent co-annihilation.

We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the develòping world—a world that borders on our doors. If we do not act we shall surely be dragged down the long dark and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.

Now let us begin. Now let us re-dedicate ourselves to the long and bitter—but beautiful—struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the sons of God, and our brothers wait eagerly for our response. Shall we say the odds are too great? Shall we tell them the struggle is too hard? Will our message be that the forces of American life militate against their arrival as full men, and we send our deepest regrets? Or will there be another message, of longing, of hope, of solidarity with their yearnings, of commitment to their cause, whatever the cost? The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise we **must** choose in this crucial moment of human history.

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It is important to put our intervention in Vietnam—and in the whole of Southeast Asia—in historical perspective; important if we are to find our way out of the labyrinth into which we have wandered and in which we appear to be lost; important if we are to avoid involving ourselves in other and even larger catastrophes—catastrophes which would, needless to say, engulf much of the world.

Writing of that curious war which we waged against the Filipino rebels at the close of the century, a war we somehow prefer to forget, the poet William Vaughan Moody (It was in his "To a Soldier Fallen in The Philippines").

> "Let him never dream that his bullet's scream
> Went wide of its island mark
> Home to the heart of his darling land
> Where she stumbled and sinned in the dark."

Alas, it cannot even be said, in extenuation of this monstrous war in Vietnam, that we have merely stumbled and sinned in the dark. We have embarked upon this war with our eyes wide open. We know what we are about—or boast that we do—and we are apparently proud of it. The Administration and its supporters not only fight this war with defiant determination, they are self-righteous about it and proclaim to an incredulous world that we are fighting the battle of freedom and of peace. Worse yet, we are prepared not only to justify and defend our conduct, we are prepared to rationalize it and generalize it, and to make it a central part of a larger and more ominous body of principles. Some of us, inclined to find excuses for the complexities facing the administration, regard the war as somehow an aberration, something into which we have indeed blundered without quite meaning to do so, something for which no one is really responsible because the escalation has been unplanned and imperceptible. But it is not that. We have used even that sorry excuse. We quite deliberately sabotaged the Geneva agreements calling for elections in South Vietnam and providing that the 17th parallel was but a temporary military line. We quite deliberately put up Diem and maintained him as long as we could, just as we deliberately put up and maintain and endure Premier Ky, endure him even when he repudiates our own policies. We quite deliberately stepped up the war, transformed advisors into soldiers, increased the soldiers from some ten thousand to a half a million, launched bombing raids upon the north on a scale as great as that in World War II against Germany or Japan.

And we have quite deliberately justified all of this not on ground of military necessity but on ground of far-reaching policy. It is this which is most ominous. It is this which is—unless we can somehow persuade the administration to change its course—it is this which is the shadow of things to come.

The war itself is a product of a body of political and historical miscalculations, of moral and psychological obsessions. It is the product of an obsession with Communism—we call it communist conspiracy just as the communists used to talk about capitalist conspiracies—something that is, therefore, not merely a rival political or economic system, but an ineradicable moral evil. Something that is not local and temporary, but permanent and universal: something that is not organic—like all other forms of government, and therefore subject to change, but monolithic and unchanging.

The war is a product of a gigantic miscalculation, or series of miscalculations: that the world, after 1945 was and would remain divided into two great blocs, one representing light and the other darkness, and that we—who represented the light—stood at Armageddon and battled for the Lord. This involved a second great miscalculation:

that the Lord, or Providence or history had somehow selected the American people to do the battling and to save mankind from ruin.

It is the product of a gigantic miscalculation about China and about Asia, probably the largest and most fateful miscalculation in diplomatic history: the notion that Chiang Kai Shek represented the true China, that the communists did not represent China, and were not really here to stay, and need not therefore be recognized: it was as if Britain and France had gone on recognizing the Confederacy as the legitimate government of the United States twenty years after Appomattox!

It is the product of an almost demonic delusion that we were not only called upon to set and keep the rest of the world straight, but that we had the material, intellectual, and moral resources to do this.

It is a product of grave miscalculations that because we were a world power we had power and could use it everywhere in the world, and that nations and peoples everywhere would recognize the validity of our claims and our pretentions.

Out of this melancholy body of obsessions and miscalculations have come those notions, now so familiar, that we—not the United Nations—are the peace-keeping instrument of the modern world. That **we** are called upon, nay required, to resist what we consider "communist aggression" everywhere on the globe: that **we** have, therefore, a vital interest everywhere—not only in South East Asia, but everywhere in Asia, and that **we** are somehow in a position to impose our will, our ideas, our principles, on that vast and turbulent continent of a dozen different peoples, and with a population of half the globe.

Once accept these assumptions—assumptions almost paranoid in their sweep and vastness—and our war in Vietnam takes on a kind of nightmare logic. Once accept these assumptions and we have entered upon a new era in our history—an era in which we are irretrievably committed to be an Asian power as well as an Atlantic power. Once accept these assumptions and—given American power and recklessness—not only we, but the rest of the world is launched upon uncharted and perilous ways.

For as you accept the principle that we are responsible for the rest of the world, that we are required to resist communism everywhere, that we are not only a north Atlantic power and a western hemisphere power, but an Asian power and presumably an African power as well, we will enter upon a long age of involvement and warfare which will distract the whole of mankind from the business of solving those problems which glare upon us from all sides, and which may end all problems by a nuclear **holocaust.**

All of this has the dimensions of a Greek tragedy. For we do in fact have the resources not to impose our will on all mankind, but to help mankind towards peace and prosperity and progress. Our power is not primarily military: it is material, it is technological, it is scientific, it is intellectual: it might be moral.

What we have here is a gigantic failure of sympathy and of imagination, one which forces the peoples of other continents to question America's credentials to world leadership. We witness today the greatest revolution in five centuries—the greatest since the Renaissance and Reformation and the Age of Discovery and the shift in the center of gravity from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. That is the upsurge of two-thirds of the peoples of the globe towards independence and prosperity—the convulsive effort of two-billions of men and women to achieve in one or two generations what the European peoples achieved over a period of four or five centuries.

The vast populations of Asia, Africa, Latin America—peoples who greatly outnumber the western peoples, or the European peoples—are throwing off the subjugation of centuries, throwing off colonialism, throwing off exploitation, clamoring for equality of status and equality of opportunity. All but forgotten now is that chapter in which we took such pride—the chapter of American aid to these peoples; forgotten because our eyes are turned on the spectacle in Vietnam, all ears are attuned to the cries of anguish coming up from that tortured country; all minds preoccupied with this new gesture towards asserting the right of western, European man to dominate the peoples of Asia.

We have been involved now in Vietnam for over thirteen years and at war for over three. What have we achieved in this time?

1. We have torn up the Geneva Agreement and ousted, as it were, the signatories of that agreement.
2. We have damaged or destroyed our system of alliances—SEATO, NATO, and CENTO.
3. We have seriously impaired the United Nations.
4. We have forfeited the support of our allies and associates throughout the globe and find ourselves now with no friends except puppet states—Thailand, Taiwan, South Korea.
5. We have discouraged the detente with Russia, and seriously prolonged the cold war.
6. We have exacerbated the hatreds between continents and, worse still, between races.
7. We have greatly strengthened the forces of reaction in America, and excited violence and hatred among our own people.
8. We have frustrated the Great Society, seriously and perhaps fatally stopping its progress and making clear to our own people and above all to the victims of our social and industrial order that we place the insatiable demands of the military far above their own needs.
9. We have immensely strengthened that industrial-military complex against which President Eisenhower solemnly warned us.
10. We have poisoned much of American society, and politics, and drawn off our energies, material, intellectual, and moral, into this single vortex.
11. We have destroyed and are in process of destroying Vietnam, North and South.
12. We have exposed the world to the risk of a nuclear war and attuned our own thinking to nuclear warfare.

Two generations ago the great Justice Holmes could say of the Civil War generation that saved the Union and freed the slave, that "in our youth our Hearts were touched with fire. It was given us to learn that life is a profound and passionate thing. We have seen with our own eyes the snowy heights of honor. . . ."

It is not certain that our generation can reach the snowy heights of honor. We will not reach them if we permit ourselves to be distracted from our responsibilities and deflected from our traditions by the temptation of power. We will not reach them if we allow ourselves to be drawn into a war of continents, a war of races, in order to satisfy our own notions of self-righteousness. We may reach them and dwell upon them if we keep ever in mind that nothing so becomes a great people as magnanimity.

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There is no one who can speak to the conscience of the American people as powerfully as Martin Luther King. I hope that he will make us see the monstrous evil of what we are doing in Vietnam.

There is no one who knows more than Professor Commager about the history of American self-deceptions, about our difficulty in seeing what we do as it appears to others because of our assurance that we are right and know what is good for other nations.

If we could see ourselves and our policies stripped of the official illusions that now surround them, our people on all sides would cry out in protest. Indeed the very stones in our churches would cry out.

They would cry out because we sacrifice young Americans in an unjust war and because of our brutal destruction of helpless people in North and South Vietnam. Our leaders may have begun our intervention with good intentions but now they are carried along by the momentum of our power. The men who make decisions for us are prisoners of their past mistakes and instead of admitting it they use more of the same power that has brought us to our present woeful situation and they increase the sacrifice of Americans and Vietnamese. Recently Reinhold Niebuhr said in this connection that a government cannot admit that it is wrong.

Is there any end to the price that we will ask the people of South Vietnam to pay as we use our enormous power to force our will upon them with fire and sword in the name of an unrepresentative government in Saigon?

I am impressed by the cruel wrongs that we inflict on this helpless people but I am also impressed by the futility as well as the immorality of it all. Now our government seems to be pressing for what is called a "military solution." We are most likely to find that military success will produce moral and political failure.

No one has expressed this more vividly than Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish scholar whose book, **The American Dilemma,** shows so well how he understands and loves our country. He said recently:

> "There might today even be a majority of Americans in favor of escalating the Vietnam war in order to get it over with. They don't see that having then overrun and destroyed a very poor country, the real hell for Americans would begin. A people having already been at war against foreign domination for a quarter of a century will not quietly submit. And in their quest for getting rid of the intruders they would have the sympathy of the whole world."

More than a year ago the General Board of the National Council of Churches expressed much the same thing in a message to the American churches in these words:

> "We believe that if the United States follows a unilateral policy in Vietnam, no conceivable victory there can compensate for the distrust and hatred of the United States that is being generated each day throughout the world because we are seen as a predominantly white nation using our overwhelming military strength to kill more and more Asians."

These words are more obviously true now than they were when they were first written.

It is often suggested that only a small minority on the fringe of American society shares the views expressed here tonight. On the contrary these views or views similar to them are commonly held in most of what we might call the articulate communities in our nation, in the academic world, among the clergy, among writers and artists, among journalists. There is a surprising number of critics of the war among politicians. I keep wondering: when will other professions, business men, college presidents break their silence? They live in view of the same human realities.

If the war continues much longer we shall have the greatest conflict between the churches and our government that we have ever had in time of war.

One of the most telling criticisms of our policy has come from a group of student leaders, not persons on the fringe, but the presidents, originally 100, now 200, of the student bodies of our leading colleges and universities, representatives of the generation that is being sent to fight.

In addition to raising questions about the presuppositions of policy these student leaders said the following:

> "A great many of those faced with the prospect of military duty find it hard to square performance of that duty with concepts of personal integrity and conscience. . . . Unless this conflict can be eased, the United States will find some of her most loyal and courageous young people choosing to go to jail rather than to bear their country's arms."

It is an unheard of thing for such words to come from the responsible student leaders in our country in time of war.

In these gravest matters of life and death how large a minority does it take to raise doubts in the minds of those who make policy? When will that small group of men who decide the fate of so many listen? When will they reconsider decisions that commit a country divided in mind and conscience to the escalation of this unjust and futile war? When will their own consciences stop them from drafting American sons to kill and die?

RABBI ABRAHAM HESCHEL
Professor of Ethics and Mysticism
Jewish Theological Seminary
New York City

To repeat the words of Dr. Bennett: "There is no one who can speak to the conscience of the American people as powerfully as Martin Luther King." Our gratitude to him is deep. It is a source of comfort and strength to witness his leadership in the cause of justice and peace.

This war is a supreme example of extreme absurdity. Men all over the world detest it. To men and women all over the United States it is a source of dismay, while those who participate in it are plagued by the awareness of being involved in a bitter Sisyphean battle. We are rolling up a hill a huge stone, which is constantly rolled back. What's the use of running, if you're on the wrong road?

We have thrown ourselves into this war because of self-indoctrination, nurtured on stereotypes. The longer we stay in Vietnam the more we lose morally. The higher the escalation, the more difficult to disengage. Its sheer folly and futility are only surpassed by its immorality. It is a war that cannot be waged according to minimum standards of civilized warfare. It is a war the aims of which are both confused and questionable.

The state requires that the citizen risks his life for it. The acceptance of sacrifice is one of our essential duties. But it is also the duty of the citizen who after careful study becomes convinced that a war his country is involved in is both morally wrong and politically absurd to do his utmost to stop it.

Except anguish and love of America we have no other feelings. Our thoughts on Vietnam are sores destroying our trust, ruining our most cherished commitments with burns of shame. We are pierced to the core with pain, and it is our duty as citizens to say "no" to the subversiveness of our government, which is ruining the values we cherish, the American promise to say "no" to a policy which moves from folly to madness.

The blood we shed in Vietnam makes a mockery of all our proclamations, dedications, celebrations.

Has our conscience become a fossil? Is all mercy gone? If mercy, the mother of humility, is still alive as a demand, how can we say "yes" to our bringing agony to that tormented country?

It is a war we can never win. For, indeed, our superior weapons may well destroy the cities and the hamlets, the fighting forces and the villagers who support them. However, what will our army have left behind? Tombs, tears, havoc, acrimony, and vast incentives to hatred and rage.

We are here because our own integrity as human beings is decaying in the agony and merciless killing done in our name. In a free society, some are guilty, and all are responsible. We are here to call upon the government of the United States as well as North Vietnam to stand still and to consider: no victory is worth the price of the terror which all parties commit in Vietnam, North and South.

Remember, the blood of the innocent cries for ever. Should that blood stop to cry, humanity will cease to be.

?QUESTIONS & ANSWERS!

1. The first question is addressed to Dr. King. IF PRESENT AMERICAN POLICY DOES NOT CHANGE, WILL YOU ADVOCATE WHOLESALE RESISTANCE TO THE DRAFT, ESPECIALLY BY BLACK MEN, IN KEEPING WITH YOUR PHILOSOPHY OF NON-VIOLENCE? WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH A POLICY?

DR. KING:

As I said earlier in the speech, I think the time has come for those of us who feel that this war is immoral and unjust to advise young men of the alternative to the draft, which is to serve as conscientious objector. I think this will do a great deal to arouse the conscience of the nation on this whole situation, and certainly if the war is continually escalated I think this will be absolutely necessary. I must also point out that we are not only caught up in a situation where I feel we are wrong in Vietnam, but if there are not some changes in our national direction and character, we are going to be in several more wars like this. There are many potential Vietnams in Latin America, in Africa, and in other places in Asia. And the young men of our generation and other generations will continually confront this problem of going into armed service that is really serving as the counter-revolutionary force of the world. I think somewhere this has to stop, and that is why I have already advised many young men that I have talked with to serve as conscientious objectors. And if things continue to go on, it is something that won't only have to be advised, but many will do it anyway, as was quoted in Dr. Bennett's speech: college students have already started responding with the kind of disenchantment and the kind of dismay that causes many to say that they will go to jail if it continues like this before they will fight in an unjust war. It is my conviction that we must do everything in our power to bring an end to this tragic conflict.

2. The next question is also addressed to Dr. King. WOULD YOU PLEASE COMMENT ON VICE-PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY'S POSITION THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR PEOPLE WHO CRITICIZE OUR BOMBING TO CONDEMN INSTEAD VIETCONG TERROR.

DR. KING:

Well, let me say first that I am opposed to violence. I think that I have said that often enough now over these last twelve years so that people know my philosophy on that point. I happen to be a pacifist on this whole matter of war; I am not a self-righteous pacifist because I understand the moral dilemma of the non-pacifist, but I do think we have reached a stage where war can no longer serve as a negative good that it may have served against a tragically evil and sick force like Hitler. Because of the potential destructiveness of weapons of nuclear warfare, we have to find some alternative to war. I would advise everybody to seek this alternative—including the Vietcong. I don't want to give anybody the impression that I am saying that this is the best way for anybody. I would prefer that we would come to the day when we can deal with all of these problems around the peace table and through the U.N. and end the long night of war we have faced so long.

But I do think, as I tried to say in my talk, that there are many things that we have done that must be condemned with all of the might that we have, and I think

that there are some things that the Vietcong can say, if we only listen to them, to explain why they are acting as they are acting. I think, as I said earlier, that we initiated this. After all, the Vietcong only came into being during the period when Diem was reigning, at a time when Diem was resorting to oppressive and ruthless methods of dealing with his opposition. I think it is necessary for us to honestly say this. The Vietcong, as many have tried to say all along, did not represent forces coming from the North, but represented forces from the South—which certainly gained support as time went on from the North—but they were basically forces right there in the South seeking to overthrow a government that had proved to be unjust and committed to evil ends. This is why many of us say that this is basically a civil war, and the United States should not have been there in the beginning. So I am very sorry, but I have to disagree with our Vice President, and I must say very strongly that we who took the initiative in this war had ought to continue the initiative by stopping the bombings in the North and in the South.

DR. COMMAGER

I want merely to add a word, because this particular point, ladies and gentlemen, is raised all the time. President Johnson has raised it so it should be taken seriously. It is one of these arguments that comes up throughout history. As Dr. King well knows, the favorite argument of the slave owners in the South was a *Tu quoque* argument: they said, "What are you people talking about slavery for? How about your industrial workers? How about your sins?" Those guilty and aware of their guilt are always asking the rest of us to look somewhere else. We are saying, "Don't look at us—look at the Vietcong." But our morals are our affair. The Vietcong morals are their affair. Even if they are as guilty as Mr. Johnson and Mr. Humphrey think they are, that would not excuse a Christian people —a humane people—for their guilt in this matter. We ought not model our moral conduct on that of an Asiatic people or a foreign people or an enemy. It makes no difference how they conduct war. We do not conduct war or conduct diplomacy or conduct anything else on the lowest level that some other nation sets for us. We must square our conduct with our own morality. Not with the Vietcong.

3. There is a question addressed to Professor Commager. THERE IS WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE OF OUR GOVERNMENT'S CLAIM THAT WE HAVE DONE EVERYTHING POSSIBLE FOR PEACE, BUT HANOI DOES NOT WANT IT AND MUST BE PUNISHED ENOUGH TO ACCEPT IT. WHAT ARE THE FACTS AS SEEN BY AN OBJECTIVE AUTHORITY SUCH AS YOURSELF?
DR. COMMAGER:

Even if I knew all the facts, I couldn't tell them in two or three minutes. This is a very large and complex story. On the surface it is quite preposterous to suppose that Hanoi does not want peace. Do you suppose that they welcome a bombing heavier than that which we poured on Japan and Germany? Is it to be supposed that they welcome the intrusion of a great Western power after fighting for ten years to get rid of France? They have made a number of overtures of one kind or another for negotiations. None of them have been found satisfactory to the administration because they do not carry that element of reciprocity that our government requires. Our government requires reciprocity not on any fair standards whatsoever. They say first, "If we stop bombing you must stop everything else." And they charge that when we have stopped the bombing, their infiltration (that is part of the corruption of language that is going on; we "land soldiers" but they "infiltrate," we "fight" but they "carry on terrorist tactics") goes right on. Our infiltration goes right on too, on a ten-fold larger scale than that of the North Vietnamese. What would we say if we were told to stop supplying our troops while negotiations went on? Now, of course the first thing to do is to stop the bombing. Then we can square off and see what other reciprocity may be called for. And I suspect some might.

There is no doubt whatsoever that the initiative for peace, as Dr. King said, must come from us. The initiative for war came from us. The initiative of power comes from us. We can afford to make any gestures. They can't.

There is one other thing, and I confess, ladies and gentlemen, that I am astonished at the lack of imagination on the part of people high in power. They expect Hanoi to come to the peace table under a rain of bombs. What would we have said had Churchill ceased supplying troops in the Mediterranean and Africa while the Nazis were bombing London? What would we have said had George Washington agreed to negotiate with the British while the British occupied New York? He didn't agree; he refused to talk to them. Churchill refused to deal with the Nazis while bombs were raining down on Britain. No proud, self-respecting people is going to come to the peace table while it is being bombed. And it is extraordinary that anyone with American traditions and experience should expect this and should require it. This is to require an act of subjugation. It is to require an act of humiliation that we have no right to impose on any other people.

4. A question addressed to Rabbi Heschel. AS A JEWISH LEADER, HOW CAN YOU POSSIBLY AGREE WITH DR. KING'S ANALOGY BETWEEN THE NAZI TREATMENT OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE AND THE PRESENT TREATMENT OF THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE BY THE UNITED STATES?
RABBI HESCHEL:

I am not aware that Dr. King made such an analogy. He made only reference to concentration camps, which apparently in the mind of this listener conjured up such an analogy. Certainly Dr. King does not equate United States policies with those of the Hitler regime. On the contrary, Dr. King drew even a sharp line by saying that, for all his pacifism, he would be, or he was ready to approve of the war against Hitler.

Supplemental Questions and Answers

Q. To Drs. Bennett, Commager and Rabbi Heschel.

The New York Times in an editorial entitled "Dr. King's Error," which appeared April 7, 1967, two days after his address at the Riverside Church, cited as error Dr. King's "argument" that the "war should be stopped not only because it is a futile war waged for the wrong ends but also because it is a barrier to social progress in this country and therefore prevents Negroes from achieving their just place in American life." The editorial claims that this "is a fusing of two public problems that are distinct and separate;" that it is "a disservice to both;" and that "Linking these hard, complex problems will lead not to solutions but to deeper confusion."

A: We who shared the platform with Dr. King at Riverside Church on April 5th are jointly commenting because we admire and applaud Dr. King's profound statement and believe that if there be error it does not lie with Dr. King.

We believe it is obvious that these two "problems" have been "fused" independently of—and without the assistance of—Dr. King. Throughout modern history, whenever a nation commits any part of its resources to militarism or war it of necessity confronts this dilemma. In slogans, it has been referred to as "guns versus butter."

This nation by committing more and more of its resources to the Vietnam war places ever increasing pressures upon its domestic programs. This inextricably "links" the "two public problems."

We firmly believe that our involvement in Vietnam for 13 years, and in the war itself for over three years, has seriously frustated the Great Society and perhaps fatally stopped its progress. It has made clear to our own people and to the victims of our social and industrial order that we give priority to the insatiable demands of the military, subordinating—if not entirely overlooking—the prime needs at home . . . the human needs.

The Executive Committee of Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam, in their February 1967 statement, said:

> "At home, we find the war threatening the very goals we claim to be defending in Vietnam. Programs to help members of minority groups realize their own human dignity are jeopardized if not destroyed. A spurious type of patriotism is challenging the right of dissent and the open debate of public issues. Financial and psychological preoccupation with the war is destroying creative plans to alleviate poverty, overcome disease, extend education, replace city slums and exalt human dignity. We grieve over lost opportunities that may never be reclaimed."

Finally, these are not the only alternatives; a great or good society needs more than guns and butter. It needs things of the mind and of the spirit. A fatal objection to this war is that it distracts intellectual and moral forces of the nation from the urgent tasks of construction. When all energies are concentrated on the conduct of war there are inadequate energies left for the great problems, material, intellectual and moral, which glare upon us from every corner of the horizon.

Dr. King was **not** in error when he said: "The bombs in Vietnam explode at home; they destroy the dream and possibility for a decent America."

INTERVIEW: DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. APPEARING IN NEW YORK TIMES APRIL 2, 1967

Q. Dr. King, in recent days you have become increasingly outspoken against the war in Vietnam. Why the increased opposition at this particular time?

A. Well, I would say there are at least three reasons why I felt compelled to take a stronger stand against the war in Vietnam. First, I feel this war is playing havoc with our domestic destinies. As long as the war in Vietnam goes on, the more difficult it will be to implement the programs that will deal with the economic and social problems that Negro people confront in our country and poor people generally.

So in a real sense, the Great Society has been shot down on the battlefields of Vietnam. I feel it is necessary to take a stand against it or at least arouse the conscience of the nation against it so that at least we can move more and more toward a negotiated settlement of that terrible conflict.

There is another reason why I feel compelled at this time to take a stand against the war and that is that the constant escalation of the war in Vietnam can lead to a grand war with China and to a kind of full world war that could mean the annihilation of the human race.

And I think those of us who are concerned about the survival of mankind, those of us who feel and know that mankind should survive must take a stand against this war because it is more than just a local conflict on Asian soil. It is a conflict that in a real sense affects the whole world and makes possible, at least brings into being the possibility of, the destruction of all mankind, so because of my concern for mankind and the survival of mankind, I feel the need to take a stand.

The other reason is I have preached nonviolence in the movement in our country, and I think it is very consistent for me to follow a nonviolent approach in international affairs. It would be very inconsistent for me to teach and preach nonviolence in this situation and then applaud violence when thousands and thousands of people, both adults and children, are being maimed and mutilated and many killed in this war, so that I still feel and live by the principle, "Thou shalt not kill."

And it is out of this moral commitment to dignity and the worth of human personality that I feel it is necessary to stand up against the war in Vietnam.

Rights Drive Migration

Q. In 1965, there was an influx of civil rights workers, mostly those identified with the more radical groups such as the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, into the peace movement. At that time I believe you condemned the war but kept your organizations and energies pretty well channeled in the civil rights movement.

Recently, one of your assistants, the Rev. James Bevel, moved full time into the peace movement and is now organizing a protest in New York April 15 in which he will participate. Do you foresee a mass migration from civil rights to the peace movement?

A. No. I don't think there will be a mass migration from the civil rights movement if by that you mean leaving civil rights. I think more and more of them will become involved in both kinds of programatic action.

There are many Negroes who now feel the two problems, the two issues, are inextricably bound together and that you can't really have freedom without justice, you can't have peace without justice, and you can't have justice without peace, so it is more of a realization of the interrelatedness of racism and militarism and the need to attack both problems rather than leaving one.

Certainly we will continue to work in both areas, but I feel, and many others that I have talked to agree, that we are merely marking time in the civil rights movement if we do not take a stand against the war. The fact is that while it may be true technically and from a monetary point of view that you can have guns and butter, it is a fact of life that where your heart is there your money will go, and the heart of the Administration is in that war in Vietnam.

The heart of the Congress is in that war. As long as that is true, that is where the money will go, and I feel that we are in need of a radical reorientation of our national priorities. This war is keeping us to the point where we aren't really reordering things.

Q. If the war continues and worsens despite peaceful demonstrations against it in this country, do you think the peace movement should engage in civil disobedience of the kind the civil rights movement has used with some success in the past?

A. I have not yet gone that far. But I wouldn't say it won't be necessary. It depends on developments over the next few months. I feel like the United States must take the first steps, I mean the initiative, to create an atmosphere for negotiations. We are so much more powerful than Vietnam.

We are the greatest military power and we don't need to prove our military power. I think we are superbly well placed, equipped to take the initiative in this and create the atmosphere for negotiations by ceasing bombings and some of the other things we are doing. Now if our nation insists on escalating the war and if we don't see any changes it may be necessary to engage in civil disobedience to further arouse the conscience of the nation and make it clear we feel this is hurting our country.

And I might say this is another basic reason why I am involved and concerned. It is because I love America. I am not engaged in a hate America campaign. I would hope that the people of this country standing up against the war are standing up against it because they love America and because they want to see our great nation really stand up as the moral example of the world.

The fact is we have alienated ourselves from so much of the world and have become morally and politically isolated as the result of our involvement in the war in Vietnam.

Peace Demonstrations

Q. Do you think civil rights organizations as such should join in peace demonstrations?

A. I would certainly say that individuals in the civil rights movement should join in peace demonstrations. I have to make a distinction at this point because of my own involvement, and that is I made a decision to become involved as an individual, as a clergyman, as one who is greatly concerned about peace.

S. C. L. C. as an organization has not yet become actively involved in the peace movement. There are many individuals in S.C.L.C. who are involved, but organizationally S.C.L.C. has backed me in all the decisions I have made and all the stands I have taken without becoming a peace organization.

Now this may be the way it will have to continue, but civil rights organizations will continue engaging in purely civil rights activities, leaving the way open for persons on staffs and persons on boards, and what have you, and the membership can, as individuals, feel free to participate.

I do feel that organizationally we are limited in terms of resources and energies in what we can do, and this means we probably will have to continue to give our prime time and work to civil rights activities through the civil rights organizations. But I as an individual will continue to stand up on the issue of peace and against the war in Vietnam.

Q. Dr. King, I understand you have been away for some time writing a new book and contemplating where to go from here. Did you reach any conclusions on where the civil rights movement is headed?

A. Well, I reached several conclusions which will be stated in the book. One of the things I tried to state in the first chapter is that for more than a decade we worked mainly to remove the stigma and humiliation of legal segregation. We have made some significant victories in this area. Many people in the nation, whites, joined in taking a stand against this kind of humiliation of the Negro.

But what we are faced with now is the fact that the struggle must be and actually is at this point a struggle for genuine equality. The struggle over the last 10 or 12 years has been a struggle for decency, a struggle to get rid of

extremist behavior towards Negroes, and I think we are moving into a period which is much more difficult because it is dealing with hard economic problems which will cost the nation something to solve.

It did not cost the nation anything to integrate lunch counters or public accommodations. It did not cost the nation anything to guarantee the right to vote. The problem is now in order—to end the long night of poverty and economic insecurity—it would mean billions of dollars. In order to end slums it would mean billions of dollars. In order to get rid of bad education, education devoid of poverty, it means lifting the educational level of the whole public school system, which would mean billions of dollars.

This, I feel, is much more difficult than the period we have gone through. There will be more resistance because it means the privileged groups will have to give up some of their billions. And I think the so-called white backlash is expressed right here.

It is a reaction to the demands that are presently being made by Negroes now demanding genuine equality, and not just integration of the lunch counters but an adequate wage; not just integration of the classrooms, but a decent sanitary house in which to live. It is much easier to integrate a restaurant than it is to demand an annual income. I think the growing debate is recognition of this difficulty.

The next conclusion I reached is that the great need in the Negro community and the civil rights movements is to organize the Negro community for the amassing of real political and economic power. The question now is not merely developing programs because we have put many programs on paper.

What is needed now is the undergirding power to bring about enough pressure so that these programs can become a reality, that they can become concretized in our everyday lives; not only under the legislative process but under all the processes necessary to make them real. This just means the hard job of organizing tenants, organizing welfare recipients, organizing the unemployed and the underemployed.

It is for this reason that I am recommending to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference that we begin to train more field organizers so that we can really go out and organize these people and thereby move into the area of political action. I think the Negro can improve his economic resources much more if these resources are pooled, and I intend to do much more in this area so that we can make an economic thrust.

Q. Dr. King, you have been called to the White House on many occasions to confer with the President about civil rights matters. Has your opposition to the war altered your relations in any way with President Johnson?

A. Not as far as I am concerned. I go to the White House when he invites me. I have followed a policy of being very honest with the President when he has consulted me about civil rights.

I have made it very clear to him why I have taken a stand against the war in Vietnam. I had a long talk with him on the telephone not too many months ago about this and made it clear to him I would be standing up against it even more. I am not centering this on President Johnson. I think there is collective guilt.

Civil Rights Bills

Four Presidents participated in some way leading us to the war in Vietnam. So I am not going to put it all on President Johnson. What I am concerned about now is that we end this nightmarish war and free our souls. I think that our souls are so terribly scarred now that as long as we are involved they get scarred more.

I will continue to be concened, and if the President invites me to the White House on civil rights I will respond to it.

Q. What about the President's civil rights bills now before Congress? Are they relevant to today's problems?

A. They are all relevant to today's problems, but they are not adequate. One aspect of the inadequacy is the failure to call for immediacy.

The housing problem, I believe, is one of the greatest problems facing our nation. There is a no more dangerous trend than the constant growth of predominantly Negro central cities ringed by white suburbs. I think this is only inviting social disaster.

I don't see any answer to it but an open housing law that is vigorously enforced. The Administration's bill does not call this year for a housing bill that is immediately enforcible. It would take three years to become nationally and universally applicable.

I don't think that is recognition of the urgency, and there is so much urgency about it that the more we stall on it the more the ghetto intensifies, the more the frustrations of the ghetto will intensify, so I don't think it is adequate because it does not call for immediate implementation.

The legislation on the administration of justice is necessary and relevant because we know that in the South, Negroes and white civil rights workers are still being murdered and brutalized at whim, and trampled over at will and a lot of this happens because they think they can get by with it, because they feel they are aided and abetted by the law enforcement agencies in those particular areas.

Q. What in your opinion is the current state of race relations in this country? Have there been gains? Do you still have hope?

A. We have certainly made some gains. The greatest gain is that we have brought the issue out into the open so that nobody can say there isn't a race problem.

For years, many people deluded themselves and argued that the Negro was satisfied, that conditions were good. But now everybody knows that things aren't right and the Negro is not satisfied. We have exposed the injustices and brought the evils out in the open. This is probably the greatest achievement.

The other is a psychological achievement and many people overlook this, and that is the new sense of dignity, the new sense of manhood within the Negro himself. And I think this is probably the greatest victory, that the Negro has a new sense of dignity, a new sense of destiny, a new sense of self-respect as the result of the struggle over the last few years.

Also, we have made very significant legislative strides. The Civil Rights Bill of 1964 represented progress; the Voting Rights Bill of 1965 represented real progress. The problem is that these particular gains are legislative victories that did very little to rectify conditions facing millions of Negroes in the teeming ghettos of the North.

They rectified wrongs and evils in the South, but did very little to penetrate the lower depths of Negro deprivation in the North. Consequently, we do see worse slums today in many parts. The schools in the North are more segregated today than they were in 1954. And, as I said earlier, the Negroes' economic problem is at many points worse today because of Negro unemployment and growing gulfs between white and Negro income.

Now this tells us that we still have a long way to go. But I'm not one to lose faith in the future or lose hope because I think the minute you do that you defeat the force that makes a revolution powerful. A revolution cannot survive on despair. It always must move on a wave of rising expectations and the feeling that you can win.

The minute you begin to feel that you can't win, you begin to adopt a no-win policy and to develop a nihilistic approach. I refuse to engage in that kind of hopelessness.

I still believe that we have in this country forces of goodwill that can be mobilized and that can direct the condition of conscience that will finally bring about the day when racism is no longer at the center of our society.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Comments on NAACP Resolution April 12, 1967

I have lived and worked in ghettoes throughout the nation, and I travel tens of thousands of miles each month which takes me into dozens of Northern and Southern Negro communities. My direct personal experience with Negroes in all walks of life convinces me that there is deep and widespread disenchantment with the war in Vietnam; first, because they are against war itself, and secondly, because they feel it has caused a significant and alarming diminishing of concern and attention to civil rights progress. I have held these views myself for a long time but I have spoken more frequently in the recent period because Negroes in so many circles have explicitly urged me to articulate their concern and frustration. They feel civil rights is well on its way to becoming a neglected and forgotten issue long before it is even partially solved.

Recently, a myth about my views on Vietnam has confused these clear issues. The myth credits me with advocating the fusion of the civil rights and peace movements and I am criticized for authoring such a "serious tactical mistake."

I hold no such view. Only a few weeks ago in a formal public resolution, my organization, S.C.L.C., and I explicitly declared that we have no intention of diverting or diminishing in any respect our activities in civil rights, and we outlined extensive programs for the immediate future in the South as well as in Chicago.

I am saddened that the Board of Directors of the NAACP, a fellow civil rights organization, would join in the perpetuation of the myth about my views. They have challenged and repudiated a non-existent proposition. S.C.L.C. and I have expressed our views on the war and drawn attention to its damaging effects on civil rights programs, a fact we believe to be incontrovertible and therefore mandatory to express in the interest of the struggle for equality.

I challenge the NAACP and other critics of my position to take a forthright stand on the rightness or wrongness of this war, rather than going off creating a non-existent issue.

We do not believe in any merger or fusion of movements, but we equally believe that no one can pretend that the existence of the war is not profoundly affecting the destiny of civil rights progress. We believe that despite the war our efforts can produce results and our strength is fully committed to that end. But it would be misleading and shallow to suggest that the role of the war is not hampering it substantially and can be ignored as a factor.

Loud and raucous voices have already been raised in Congress and elsewhere suggesting that the nation cannot afford to finance a war against poverty and inequality on an expanding scale and a shooting war at the same time. It is perfectly clear the nation has the resources to do both, but those who oppose civil rights and favor a war policy have seized the opportunity to pose a false issue to the public. This should not be ignored by civil rights organizations. The basic elements in common between the peace movement and the civil rights movement are human elements.

I am a clergyman as well as a civil rights leader and the moral roots of our war policy are not unimportant to me. I do not believe that our nation can be a moral leader of justice, equality, and democracy if it is trapped in the role of self-appointed world policeman. Throughout my career in the civil rights movement I have been concerned about justice for all people. For instance, I strongly feel that we must end not merely poverty among Negroes but poverty among white people. Likewise, I have always insisted on justice for all the world over, because justice is indivisible and injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. I will not stand idly by when I see an unjust war taking place and fail to take a stand against it. I will continue to express my opposition to this wrong policy without in any way diminishing my activity in civil rights, just as millions of Negro and White people are doing day in and day out.

Letters to the Editor Printed in The New York Times

Dr. King's Place in Civil-Rights Tradition

To the Editor:

Dr. Martin Luther King's argument that the war in Vietnam has precluded meaningful attempts to cope with poverty and discrimination at home may or may not be correct. His conclusion that, as a civil-rights leader, he must therefore oppose that war may or may not be wise. But the implication made by many of his critics that, as a civil-rights leader, Dr. King departs radically from precedent in speaking out against American foreign policy, cannot bear historical examination.

The fact is, though some seem to have forgotten it, that many of the initial leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People were men who devoted much of their public careers openly to attacking American foreign policy. The first president of the association, Moorfield Storey, assumed that office already known as a persistent critic of the American acquisition of the Philippines.

While serving as president between 1910 and 1929, Storey continued his anti-imperialism, publicly condemning American interventions in the Dominican Republic, in Haiti, and in Nicaragua.

No Criticism of Leaders

Oswald Garrison Villard, the first treasurer of the association, was one of the staunchest critics of the Treaty of Versailles and remained an opponent of "foreign entanglements" throughout his life. Though the situation of the Negro American was even more perilous then than now, neither Storey nor Villard was, to the best of my knowledge, attacked for speaking out on foreign-policy issues while serving with the association, nor was it suggested that their positions somehow hurt the cause of civil rights.

Neither Storey nor Villard, it is true, involved the association in their foreign-policy statements: Villard spoke from his position as editor of The Nation, Storey as a private citizen.

But it has also been forgotten that the precedent of a civil-rights organization, as an organization, criticizing American foreign policy, was set not by Stokely Carmichael and the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee, let alone by Dr. King, but by the N.A.A.C.P. through its executive secretary, James Weldon Johnson, in connection with the American occupation in Haiti and the intervention in Vietnam may be different in intent, but surely they are equally "foreign policy"— as distinguished from "civil-rights"— issues.

Whatever the merits of Dr. King's position, in short, he stands in a solid historical tradition when, as a civil-rights leader, he speaks out against American foreign policy.

WILLIAM B. HIXON, JR.
Instructor in History, Michigan State University
East Lansing,Michigan, April 10, 1967

Dr. King's Peace Stand Supported

To the Editor:

By commenting as it did in the editorial "Dr. King's Error" (April 7) The Times has, in my estimation, committed an error it will want later to rectify and done an unfortunate disservice to a great American and a great Christian.

Perhaps you allowed Dr. King's harsh charges ("recklessly comparing American military methods to those of the Nazis") to distract you from the main thrust of his action. The objection, however, to his "fusing of two public problems that are quite distinct and separate" has an odd ring to it, coming as it does from a newspaper which has always stressed integrity and the indivisibility of freedom.

The two issues are fused in Dr. King because he is a man of peace who said on April 2: "It would be very inconsistent of me to teach and preach non-violence . . . and then applaud violence when thousands of thousands of people, both adults and children, are being maimed and mutilated and many killed in this war."

The reason Dr. King says "the Great Society has been shot down on the battlefields of Vietnam" is not because he contests your assertion that "the nation could afford to make more funds available to combat poverty even while the war in Vietnam continues." It is rather because he knows that Congress will not make more funds available so long as this war continues. Dr. King uses the old Biblical saying: "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," and maintains that the heart of Congress and of the Administration is in this war.

Speaks as Individual

The fact that our then new Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare had to spend several weeks of his valuable time in Saigon last spring getting to know the problems of that country when he should have been concentrating on getting to know the vast problems of H.E.W. and the Great Society programs in Washington is but one case in point.

The Times says Dr. King has every right and obligation to explore the ethical implications of the war "as an individual," yet it is only "as an individual" that he has spoken out. He has not committed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference as an organization to participate in any action. Moreover, his reasons for speaking out go far beyond his feeling that "the two issues are inextricably bound together" and his insight into "the interrelatedness of racism and militarism." It is because as he says, "I love America and want to see our great nation really stand up as the moral example of the world."

It is because he wants "to arouse the conscience of the nation . . . so that at least we can move more and more toward a negotiated settlement of that terrible conflict . . . and it is out of this moral commitment to dignity and the worth of human personality that I feel it is necessary to stand up against the war in Vietnam."

Quite rightly Dr. King insists "the United States must take the first steps, I mean the initiative, to create an atmosphere for negotiation. . . ."

Are we, as a nation, so lacking in self-confidence, courage and faith that we, in all our might, cannot bring ourselves to launch such a crucial initiative?

JOHN P. C. MATTHEWS
Princeton, N. J., April 8, 1967

Civil Rights and War

To the Editor:

I disagree with your editorial (April 7) which declared that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s linking of the civil rights struggle and the war in Vietnam is an error which will lead to deeper confusion.

Our mistreatment of Negroes and our lawlessness in Vietnam are both manifestations of the same self-deceptive kinds of thinking. And they require similar solutions.

For three hundred years white Americans have abused Negroes, scorned them for the characteristics which resulted from the abuse, accused them of aggression when they protested and used the protest as an excuse for further oppression.

For thirteen years the United States Government has been trying to impose its domination on South Vietnam, increasing the fury of its attack after each failure and blaming the aggression on its Communist opponents.

Close Cooperation

Fundamental changes will have to be made: Our children must be raised with a horror instead of a delight in raw violence, and with much more respect for laws and for other people's feelings. Adults and children must learn to do without the dangerous comfort of blaming their own hostility on others. More people and more leaders who recognize injustice must find the courage to speak out against it.

I believe that the civil rights and peace movements should cooperate closely in their educational and organization work. Their common aim is to save the world—literally—by fostering the brotherhood of man. In the long run their greatest gains will come, I think, from patient political organization beginning at the grass roots, within or outside the existing parties.

BENJAMIN SPOCK
Cleveland, April 10, 1967

The writer is co-chairman of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy.