

these questions have been asked . . .

does

Martin Luther King, Jr. have

**THE RIGHT?**

**THE QUALIFICATIONS?**

**THE DUTY?**

**to speak out on Peace**

In recent weeks some of the press has headlined several attacks on Dr. King's expressions on peace. Most people do not have an opportunity to read rebuttals which are always less prominently presented. They are particularly important because more than a few of the attacks were based on misconceptions of Dr. King's positions. An example is Dr. Bunche's criticism which was trumpeted on T.V. & Radio and beneath monster newspaper headlines. When Dr. Bunche withdrew his criticism with characteristic forthrightness and speed, his remarks were almost universally ignored by the press.

I think you will find this small sampling of perceptive observations as fascinating as I did and these reprints may help to redress the imbalance in the way news commentary reaches us.

**Andrew Young**  
*National Executive Director, SCLC*

## Another Opinion Dr. King's Moral Stand

*The following defense of Dr. Martin Luther King's anti-Vietnam war stand was written by James P. Brown, an editorial writer for The Providence Journal. It appeared in that paper last week as the column One Man's Opinion under the title "Dr. King's Critics Don't Understand."*

Dr. King's critics don't understand the situation. They don't understand Dr. King. They don't understand the civil-rights movement. They don't understand the war in Vietnam. Above all, they fail to perceive the moral thread that ties this man and these causes inescapably together. . . .

Although Dr. King's estimates of civilian deaths in Vietnam may be exaggerated, there can be no question in the mind of any reasonable person that American forces in Vietnam, no matter how honorable their intentions, are heaping hideous destruction on many thousands of innocent people. Although Americans are not committing the deliberate atrocities that the Nazis committed, our leaders have argued that our ends in Vietnam justify means that are clearly contrary to conscience. We once condemned Hitler for embracing this immoral doctrine.

### Compelled to Speak Out

As to the harm Dr. King's unpopular stand on Vietnam may do the civil-rights cause, this is, indeed, tragic. It would have been expedient for Dr. King to keep silent. But Dr. King is not just another Negro fighting for his rights. He is a minister of God, a disciple of the Prince of Peace and of Gandhi. His leadership of the civil-rights movement springs from his moral integrity, not from his skill as a political tactician. As a man of conscience, he is compelled to speak out against the wrong of the Vietnam war just as he has been compelled to stand against the wrong of racial injustice. . . .

Until recently, racial injustice was the central moral issue confronting the conscience of Americans. This issue remains. But it is being overshadowed, and in many ways ad-

versely affected, by the larger moral issue posed by our actions in Vietnam.

There are many for whom it would be expedient not to speak out against the Vietnam war. Politicians, businessmen, teachers, clergymen, editors—all might argue that they have other important tasks that would be compromised if they embraced this unpopular cause. This is no excuse for silence.

Explaining his own strong stand on the Vietnam issue in a recent issue of the Yale Alumni Magazine, Yale Chaplain William Sloane Coffin Jr. wrote:

"Now let us suppose that a man has conscientiously done his homework on the war in Vietnam, and that his homework has led him to the following conclusions: that while it is true that we are fighting Communists, it is more profound to say that we have been intervening in another country's civil war; that despite the billions of dollars of aid, the heroic labor and blood of many Americans, the Saigon Government from Diem to Ky has been unable to talk convincingly to its people of national independence, land reform and other forms of social justice; that the war is being waged in a fashion so out of character with American instincts of decency that it is seriously undermining them (which is not to say that the V.C.'s are Boy Scouts, which they, clearly are not); that the strains of the war have cut the funds that might otherwise be applied to anti-poverty efforts at home and abroad (which is the intelligent way to fight Communism); and finally, that the war would have a good chance of being negotiated to an end were we to stop the bombing in North Vietnam.

"If a man's homework leads him to these conclusions, then surely it is not his patriotic duty to cheer or stand silent as good Americans die bravely in a bad cause. . . ."

Like Mr. Coffin, like Rhode Island's Rev. Albert Q. Perry and a growing number of other religious leaders here and elsewhere, Dr. King has answered the call of a higher power. He has put his body on the line.

## As We See It

# Dr. King Strengthens An Anti-War Coalition

HE RECALLED HOW this nation first became involved in Vietnam and got on the "wrong side of the world revolution" by sending aid in 1945 to the French who were seeking to perpetrate colonial rule over what was then Indochina.

He quoted from the Epistle of Saint John on the power of love.

He recited lines from a poem by James Russell Lowell:

*Once to very man and nation  
Comes the moment to decide  
In the strife of truth and falsehood  
For the good or evil side . . .*

Thus, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called on Americans to protest this nation's war in Vietnam. In a major address at Riverside Church in New York, the Negro civil rights leader committed himself to a crusade against a war which he says is immoral in many ways.

He went further than many Americans opposing the war may be willing to go; he went further than this newspaper is willing to go. He advocated a boycott of the war effort and suggested that draft-age men declare themselves conscientious objectors.

But his stand holds clear political implications.

Dr. King articulates latent Negro opposition to a war which Negroes feel takes a disproportionate number of their sons to the jungles of Vietnam, which diverts the nation's attention from civil rights problems and its coin from the tasks of rebuilding cities and improving the lot of the ghetto dwellers.

Dr. King bases his dissent from the Johnson administration's Vietnam policies on "the mandates of conscience and the reading of history." He asserts that in Vietnam "we are adding cynicism to the process of death . . . 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."

According to Dr. King this nation should atone for its sins and errors by taking the initiative in bringing peace. He proposes five things for the government to do:

- End all bombing in North and South Vietnam.
- Declare a unilateral cease-fire in the

hope of creating an atmosphere for negotiation.

- Curtail military build-ups in Thailand and our interference in Laos to prevent new wars.

- Accept the fact that the National Liberation Front, the political arm of the Vietcong, has considerable support in South Vietnam and must play a role in its government.

- Set a date for removing all foreign troops from Vietnam as required by the Geneva Accords of 1954.

If the Johnson administration may consider Dr. King's proposals wholly unacceptable, this newspaper does not. Nor, we trust, will others. His proposals are similar to ones put forward by world leaders in other capitals; they comply with the terms of the Geneva Accords which the administration so often insists it is only seeking to implement.

Dr. King's speech is important for reasons other than his specific criticisms or his suggestions. It is important because it signals what may become widespread Negro opposition to the Vietnam war.

If it comes, this Negro opposition will not be isolated. Much of the nation's intellectual community—its articulate university scholars and students—also oppose the war and these campus-oriented groups may become more active in the months ahead. On Monday this newspaper reprinted a hard hitting speech in which Emil Mazey, secretary-treasurer of the United Auto Workers, vigorously criticized the war and urged the administration to take new peace initiatives and to attach no preconditions on negotiations.

The Negroes. The liberal intellectuals. The labor movement.

These groups helped form the coalition which has kept the Democratic Party in power for most of the last third of a century.

The implication Dr. King's speech holds is that the Vietnam war may become an even larger issue for Americans in the months ahead and that the old Democratic coalition may remain fairly solidified but no longer in the Democratic Party as led by President Johnson.

It's an implication Gov. Romney, as he prepares his remarks on the Vietnam war, ought to weigh.

## The Color of War

MAX LERNER

It is important to get it settled in our thinking once and for all: Is the Vietnam war a war of color or isn't it? If it is, then the belief of American Negroes in it is bound to be seriously compromised. If it isn't, then all that talk about its being a white man's war fought by black men is inexcusably irresponsible.

The current debate about the color of the war has been swirling around Dr. Martin Luther King, but it is unfair to tag him with it. What King did was to lend his voice and moral backing to the mass anti-war demonstration at the UN Plaza and in Central Park. Without him the speakers' list would have been a good deal thinner in substance, and the crowd not as massive. But King's views on the color of the war are different from those of Floyd McKissick and Stokely Carmichael. The difference is an important one.

\* \* \*

King says that the Vietnam war is immoral because it involves no American national interest that couldn't have been negotiated short of war. It is a perfectly defensible position, no different from that of Sen. Fulbright. It is also understandable how King, holding this view, should say that the war is linked with the civil rights movement—that the absorption with so expensive a war means less money and less psychic energy available for civil rights and the inner city. If King were white, not black, no one could deny his right to make this connection. Why then fault him as a black? Why ask him to decide which movement—peace or civil rights—he wants to fight for? Clearly he wants to fight for both.

\* \* \*

I find this kind of talk, as well as the talk about American genocide, pretty dreary. The war is bad enough without distorting it to make it worse than it is. You can be against the war on a variety of grounds, but when you see it as a war of color you give a wild intensity to color hatreds, and you sharpen that line of color militancy which alone can divide America and set human being against human being in a senseless irrational color struggle.

\* \* \*

As for King himself, it was inevitable that he should broaden out from his civil rights leadership to an anti-war militancy. As a Nobel Peace Prize laureate he couldn't stay out of the peace movement, especially when so many of his fellow clergymen are active in it. . .

. . . There have been disputes about the size of the New York demonstration, whether it was a hundred thousand or a quarter of a million or more. Yet what counted about it was not only its size but the fact that it was held, and that most of the people who came to it were not either color-conscious or politics-conscious, but only wanted to make their presence felt for peace.

\* \* \*

Dr. King knows this, and knows how to avoid being used. But can one say this equally about some of the people at whose side he spoke, in a very different language?

Dr. King is certainly no firebrand, and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference has served as a bridge between the moderate civil rights organizations, such as the NAACP and the Urban League, and the militant Congress of Racial Equality and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Hence, as in all such cases, the chastisement begins with a tone more in sorrow than in anger, in the hope that the erring sinner, having learned his lesson, will return to the fold. Dr. King's "friends" have spoken of his "tragic" (or "monumental") mistake, the "sorrowful occasion" which compels them to part from him, the "grave injury" he has done to the civil rights movement and to himself. "Many who have listened to him with respect," *The Washington Post* editorializes, "will never again accord him the same confidence." His usefulness, in this view, is all but over, unless he repairs quickly to the mourners' bench.

What has happened, what is going to happen, tells much about Dr. King as a man and a moral leader; it tells even more about the Establishment. What did its officers expect him to do? Stand still, with summer coming up and tensions rising? The more sensible voices among those who deplore Dr. King's declaration are compelled to concede that the civil rights movement has been stymied, and that the war, if not the sole cause, is the principal one. So once again they expect the Negro to wait, despite the fact that the President could (*The Nation* does not advocate it), by imposing wage and price controls, carry on both the war and civil rights programs. But that would reduce the prospects for a continuance of profit at the level to which business has become accustomed—the more so because some slight faltering in the onrush of "prosperity" has become evident. This course does not appeal to Mr. Johnson, who, under his Populist cloak, is about as business-minded a President as any we have had in this century. Thus we behold once more the familiar spectacle of pseudo-liberalism seizing on a war in order to avoid expenditures it never liked and to which it yielded only under duress.

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The leaders of the moderate civil rights organizations have played along with the powers that be, hoping to placate them and to receive a measure of continued support, while giving their own members an impression of practicality merged with aggressiveness. This dual role

Dr. King has now made more difficult, and the leaders don't like it.

One of the biggest myths of U.S. politics, and the most convenient for the Establishment, is that foreign policy has no relation to domestic need. The fact is, quite apart from Vietnam, that one cannot push a reform movement as significant as the Negro's demand for full equality, and at the same time pursue a policy which makes us the world's policeman. The whole history of the civil rights movement shows the incompatibility. In the darkest days of the cold war, say from 1947 to 1955, Negro rights were shelved. There were splendid opportunities, as when Eisenhower came into office in 1952 and the Supreme Court made its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, but he did not act, nor did Congress. The 1955-65 decade saw a slight breather in the cold war, enough to make civil rights gains possible. Now, with the deepening involvement in Vietnam, things are at a standstill once more. The whole history refutes King's critics.

Equally to the point, King spoke because he cannot play fast and loose with the moral issues which American power and the zooming technology of war have forced on public notice. He could not urge his people to practice nonviolence in the streets of American cities and condone violence in the jungles and rice paddies of Vietnam. It is significant that the NAACP did not attack King's moral stand, only his operational strategy. They would like to keep moral conviction and public action apart. But the time is past when the separation could be maintained. The partition has been broken, and it will not be rebuilt.

The critics who were never friends of King's, and who never made common cause with him, are more severe than those who have lost an ally—and the storm is only beginning. We are told that in proposing a boycott of the war he is stopping just short of sedition. The next step will be to accuse him of outright sedition, which is the verbal form of treason, and to try to shut him up. Dr. King has offered himself as the symbol of the moral force which got him his present prominence and the Nobel Prize. The imminent showdown may well center upon him. Whatever the consequences may be for King himself, the issues will be clearer for Negroes and whites alike by the time the voters go to the polls in 1968.

# The New York Times

FRIDAY, APRIL 14, 1967

## Letters to the Editor of The Times

### 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.

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

### DR. KING DISAVOWAL ACCEPTED BY BUNCHE

Special to The New York Times

UNITED NATIONS, N. Y., April 13—Dr. Ralph J. Bunche said today he accepted "at face value" the disavowal by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. of any effort to merge the civil rights movement and the campaign against United States involvement in Vietnam.

Later in the day, speaking in Los Angeles, Dr. King declared:

"We do not believe in any merger or fusion of movements, but we can equally believe that no one can pretend that the existence of the war is not profoundly affecting the destiny of civil rights progress."

Dr. Bunche, in a statement today, responded:

"I am very happy to see this statement by Dr. King." Dr. Bunche added:

"So far as I'm concerned—and I speak only for myself—Dr. King's disavowal of any such intent takes care of the issue to which my statement had been directed."

# An Un-Patriot?

**JAMES A. WECHSLER**

In a small, crowded room at the Biltmore, three hours before Gen. Westmoreland delivered his pep talk at the Associated Press luncheon not many blocks away, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King was reaffirming his refusal to be intimidated by the flag-waving binge foreshadowed by the Westmoreland mission here.

The occasion was a news conference to announce the largest coalition of religious, civic and public leaders so far organized in protest against U.S. escalation in Vietnam. It is launching a campaign under the slogan "Negotiation Now"—with cessation of our bombings described as the first step.

Presumably Gen. Westmoreland was unaware, when he applied the label "unpatriotic acts" to home-front dissent, that such groups as the National Council of Churches, the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Christian Citizenship Dept. of the Episcopal Church had joined hands with SANE, ADA, the Friends Service Committee, the American Jewish Congress and numerous others in broadening the base of the anti-escalation movement.

\* \* \*

There has been a concerted drive in recent weeks, quietly encouraged by Administration spokesmen, to isolate King as a "far-out" figure and depict him as the captive of the fringe unilateral-withdrawal faction. His designation as major spokesman for the new coalition was an answer to that attack.

King's agreement to undertake the assignment reflected his own resolve to impart an ecumenical quality to the anti-war protest. He is deeply convinced there is a great unease in the country about the war. While he recognizes, as he sadly observed yesterday, that there are also many who favor new and more adventurous military action, he believes that "never in the history of our nation" have so many Americans been afflicted by conscientious doubts.

Inevitably he was asked about the charge that peace marches may reduce rather than enhance Hanoi's willingness to negotiate a settlement.

"I am sure that our bombings do much more to harden resistance in Vietnam than any peace demonstration possibly could," he said quietly. He conceded he could offer no assurance that a bombing-halt would lead to negotiations, but he noted that both U Thant and Soviet spokesmen have said that it would.

"We can take the chance because of the vast power we have as a nation," he said. Then, almost as if anticipating Westmoreland's rhetoric, he said solemnly: "I speak not out of a hatred for America but a love for America. We have morally and politically isolated ourselves from much of humanity . . . I want to see us set a moral example."

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Some pro-Administration journalists have again written King's obituary. It has been said that his involvement in the Vietnam conflict has fatally injured his stature as a civil rights leader. Yet he remains a curiously resilient figure with a special capacity for communicating with wide varieties of people. His judgment now is that the war shadows all other events, and that no one with any pretension to leadership can ignore its existence. And non-violence remains his fighting faith.

To those who say he should have stuck to his civil rights role, he answers: "I don't believe in segregating any principles."

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# The New York Times

## Letters to the Editor of The 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.

. . .

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 Coordinating 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 of Haiti. The intervention 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, Mich.

April 10, 1967

## A CLOSING NOTE . . .

Although SCLC engages its primary attention in civil rights, its board unanimously supports Dr. King's right to speak as well as his position on the war. We do not feel that Dr. King will injure the civil rights movement by his stand on peace. He believes the civil rights movement stands on its own merits and does not believe people will withhold support from it, nor give support to it, based on his positions on peace. His integrity and moral leadership would both be corrupted if he kept a dishonest silence.

Since he believes the existence of the war is profoundly damaging domestic democratic progress, both his sense of responsibility and his moral conscience impel him to express his views even as he continues unabated in his vigorous civil rights work.