A CALL TO ALL STUDENTS TO

March on Washington to end the war in Vietnam

April 17, 1965

The current war in Vietnam is being waged in behalf of a succession of unpopular South Vietnamese dictatorships, not in behalf of freedom. No American-supported South Vietnamese regime in the past few years has gained the support of its people, for the simple reason that the people overwhelmingly want peace, self-determination, and the opportunity for development. American prosecution of the war has deprived them of all three.

• The war is fundamentally a *civil* war, waged by South Vietnamese against their government; it is not a "war of aggression." Military assistance from North Vietnam and China has been minimal; most guerrilla weapons are home-made or are captured American arms. The areas of strongest guerrilla control are not the areas adjacent to North Vietnam. And the people could not and cannot be isolated from the guerrillas by forced settlement in "strategic hamlets"; again and again Government military attacks fail because the people tip off the guerrillas; the people and the guerrillas are inseparable. Each repressive Government policy, each napalm bomb, each instance of torture, creates more guerrillas. Further, what foreign weapons the guerrillas have obtained are small arms, and are no match for the bombers and helicopters operated by the Americans. The U.S. government is the only foreign government that has sent major weapons to Vietnam.

• It is a *losing* war. Well over half of the area of South Vietnam is already governed by the National Liberation Front—the political arm of the "Viet Cong." In the guerrillas the peasants see relief from dictatorial Government agents; from the United States they get napalm, the jellied gasoline that burns into the flesh. The highly touted "counter-insurgency" the U.S. is applying in its "pilot project war" is only new weaponry, which cannot substitute for popular government. Thousands of Government troops have defected—the traditional signal of a losing counter-guerrilla war. *How many more lives must be lost before the Johnson Administration accepts the foregone conclusion?*

• It is a *self-defeating* war. If the U.S. objective is to guarantee self-determination in South Vietnam, that objective is far better served by allowing the South Vietnamese to choose their own government—something provided for by the 1954 Geneva Agreement but sabotaged in 1956 by the American-supported dictator Ngo Dinh Diem and never allowed since. The Diem government that invited U.S. intervention was thus illegitimate, having violated the agreement that established it. The Vietnamese, North and South, have no taste for Chinese domination—these two countries have fought one another for over a thousand years. Moreover, South Vietnam is not a "domino"—the "threat" to it is internal, not Chinese, and the greater threat to stability in other Southeast Asian countries is U.S.-inspired provocation of China, not China's own plans.

• It is a *dangerous* war. Every passing month of hostilities increases the risk of America escalating and widening the war. Since the '50s U.S.-trained South Vietnamese commando teams have been penetrating North Vietnam, considerably provoking the North Vietnamese. We all know of the presence of American destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf, a body of water surrounded on three sides by North Vietnamese and Chinese territory. How calm would the United States be if Cuban commandos were being sent into Florida, and Chinese ships were "guarding" Cape Cod Bay?

• It is a war never declared by Congress, although it costs almost two million dollars a day and has cost billions of dollars since the U.S. began its involvement. The facts of the war have been systematically concealed by the U.S. government for years, making it appear as if those expenditures have been helping the Vietnamese people. These factors erode the honesty and decency of American political life, and make democracy at home impossible. We are outraged that two million dollars a day is expended for a war on the poor in Vietnam, while government financing is so desperately needed to abolish poverty at home. *What kind of America is it whose response to poverty and oppression in South Vietnam is napalm and defoliation, whose response to poverty and oppression in Mississippi is . . . silence?*

• It is a hideously *immoral* war. America is committing pointless murder.

But the signs are plain that Americans are increasingly disaffected by this state of affairs. To draw together, express, and enlarge the number of these voices of protest, and to make this sentiment visible, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) is calling for a

MARCH ON WASHINGTON
TO END THE WAR
IN VIETNAM

We urge the participation of all students who agree with us that the war in Vietnam injures both Vietnamese and Americans, and should be stopped.

The March, to be held on Saturday, April 17, 1965, will include a picketing of the White House, a march down the Mall to the Capitol Building to present a statement to Congress, and a meeting with both student and adult speakers. Senator Ernest Gruening of Alaska and journalist I. F. Stone have already agreed to address the body.

Thousands of us can be heard.

We dare not remain silent

For more information, contact:
STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY, 119 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. Al 4-2176

What You Can Do!!

- *form a march committee on your campus*
- *organize debates and discussions on U.S. Vietnam policy*
- *write letters to local papers and Congressmen*
- *plan local demonstrations*

for more information contact:

Students for a Democratic Society
119 Fifth Ave., New York, NY

___ I enclose $_____to support the March
___ I am interested in helping to organize the March
___ I am interested in learning more about SDS

Name _____
Address _____
_____
School _____

cover design by Vera Williams

March on Washington to end the war in Vietnam

April 17, 1965

students for a democratic society

How long can the Johnson Administration be allowed to pursue this anti-popular, illegal and doomed war in Vietnam?

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On April 17, 1965,

25,000 people participated in a

MARCH ON WASHINGTON

TO END THE WAR IN VIETNAM.

After two hours of picketing

the White House,

the President of the

Students for a Democratic Society,

Paul Potter, closed a meeting

in front of the Washington Monument

with the following speech:

MOST OF US grew up thinking that the United States was a strong but humble nation, that involved itself in world affairs only reluctantly, that respected the integrity of other nations and other systems, and that engaged in wars only as a last resort. This was a nation with no large standing army, with no design for external conquest, that sought primarily the opportunity to develop its own resources and its own mode of living. If at some point we began to hear vague and disturbing things about what this country had done in Latin America, China, Spain and other places, we somehow remained confident about the basic integrity of this nation's foreign policy. The Cold War with all of its neat categories and black and white descriptions did much to assure us that what we had been taught to believe was true.

But in recent years, the withdrawal from the hysteria of the Cold War era and the development of a more aggressive, activist foreign policy have done much to force many of us to rethink attitudes that were deep and basic sentiments about our country. The incredible war in Vietnam has provided the razor, the terrifying sharp cutting edge that has finally severed the last vestige of illusion that morality and democracy are the guiding principles of American foreign policy. The saccharine self-righteous moralism that promises the Vietnamese a billion dollars of economic aid at the very moment we are delivering billions for economic and social destruction and political repression is rapidly losing what power it might ever have had to reassure us about the decency of our foreign policy. The further we explore the reality of what this country is doing and planning in Vietnam the more we are driven toward the conclusion of Senator Morse that the United States may well be the greatest threat to peace in the world today. That is a terrible and bitter insight for people who grew up as we did —and our revulsion at that insight, our refusal to accept it as inevitable or necessary, is one of the reasons that so many people have come here today.

The President says that we are defending freedom in Vietnam. Whose freedom? Not the freedom of the Vietnamese. The first act of the first dictator, Diem, the United States installed in Vietnam, was to systematically begin the persecution of all political opposition, non-Communist as well as Communist. The first American military supplies were not used to fight Communist insurgents; they were used to control, imprison or kill any who sought something better for Vietnam than the personal aggrandizement, political corruption and the profiteering of the Diem regime. The elite of the forces that we have trained and equipped are *still* used to control political unrest in Saigon and defend the latest dictator from the people.

And yet in a world where dictatorships are so commonplace and popular control of government so rare, people become callous to the misery that is implied by dictatorial power. The rationalizations that are used to defend political despotism have been drummed into us so long that we have somehow become numb to the possibility that some-

First printing: 25,000 New York, May, 1965
Distributed by: STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY
1103 East 63rd Street, Chicago 37, Ill.

thing else might exist. And it is only the kind of terror we see now in Vietnam that awakens conscience and reminds us that there is something deep in us that cries out against dictatorial suppression.

The pattern of repression and destruction that we have developed and justified in the war is so thorough that it can only be called cultural genocide. I am not simply talking about napalm or gas or crop destruction or torture, hurled indiscriminately on women and children, insurgent and neutral, upon the first suspicion of rebel activity. That in itself is horrendous and incredible beyond belief. But it is only part of a larger pattern of destruction to the very fabric of the country. We have uprooted the people from the land and imprisoned them in concentration camps called "sunrise villages." Through conscription and direct political intervention and control, we have destroyed local customs and traditions, trampled upon those things of value which give dignity and purpose to life.

What is left to the people of Vietnam after 20 years of war? What part of themselves and their own lives will those who survive be able to salvage from the wreckage of their country or build on the "peace" and "security" our Great Society offers them in reward for their allegiance? How can anyone be surprised that people who have had total war waged on themselves and their culture rebel in increasing numbers against that tyranny? What other course is available? And still our only response to rebellion is more vigorous repression, more merciless opposition to the social and cultural institutions which sustain dignity and the will to resist.

Not even the President can say that this is a war to defend the freedom of the Vietnamese people. Perhaps what the President means when he speaks of freedom is the freedom of the American people.

WHAT IN FACT has the war done for freedom in America? It has led to even more vigorous governmental efforts to control information, manipulate the press and pressure and persuade the public through distorted or downright dishonest documents such as the White Paper on Vietnam. It has led to the confiscation of films and other anti-war material and the vigorous harassment by the FBI of some of the people who have been most outspokenly active in their criticism of the war. As the war escalates and the administration seeks more actively to gain support for any initiative it may choose to take, there has been the beginnings of a war psychology unlike anything that has burdened this country since the 1950's. How much more of Mr. Johnson's freedom can we stand? How much freedom will be left in this country if there is a major war in Asia? By what weird logic can it be said that the freedom of one people can only be maintained by crushing another?

In many ways this is an unusual march because the large majority of people here are not involved in a peace movement as their primary basis of concern. What is exciting about the participants in this march is that so many of us view ourselves consciously as participants as well in a movement to build a more decent society. There are students here who have been involved in protests over the quality and kind of education they are receiving in growingly bureaucratized, depersonalized institutions called universities; there are Negroes from Mississippi and

Alabama who are struggling against the tyranny and repression of those states; there are poor people here—Negro and white—from Northern urban areas who are attempting to build movements that abolish poverty and secure democracy; there are faculty who are beginning to question the relevance of their institutions to the critical problems facing the society. Where will these people and the movements they are a part of be if the President is allowed to expand the war in Asia? What happens to the hopeful beginnings of expressed discontent that are trying to shift American attention to long-neglected internal priorities of shared abundance, democracy and decency at home when those priorities have to compete with the all-consuming priorities and psychology of a war against an enemy thousands of miles away?

The President mocks freedom if he insists that the war in Vietnam is a defense of American freedom. Perhaps the only freedom that this war protects is the freedom of the warhawks in the Pentagon and the State Department to experiment with counter-insurgency and guerilla warfare in Vietnam.

Vietnam, we may say, is a laboratory run by a new breed of gamesmen who approach war as a kind of rational exercise in international power politics. It is the testing ground and staging area for a new American response to the social revolution that is sweeping through the impoverished downtrodden areas of the world. It is the beginning of the American counter-revolution, and so far no one—none of us—not the *N.Y. Times,* nor 17 Neutral Nations, nor dozens of worried allies, nor the United States Congress have been able to interfere with the freedom of the President and the Pentagon to carry out that experiment.

THUS FAR the war in Vietnam has only dramatized the demand of ordinary people to have some opportunity to make their own lives, and of their unwillingness, even under incredible odds, to give up the struggle against external domination. We are told, however, that the struggle can be legitimately suppressed since it might lead to the development of a Communist system, and before that ultimate menace all criticism is supposed to melt.

This is a critical point and there are several things that must be said here—not by way of celebration, but because I think they are the truth. First, if this country were serious about giving the people of Vietnam some alternative to a Communist social revolution, that opportunity was sacrificed in 1954 when we helped to install Diem and his repression of non-Communist movements. There is no indication that we were serious about that goal—that we were ever willing to contemplate the risks of allowing the Vietnamese to choose their own destinies. Second, those people who insist now that Vietnam can be neutralized are for the most part looking for a sugar coating to cover the bitter bill. We must accept the consequences that calling for an end of the war in Vietnam is in fact allowing for the likelihood that a Vietnam without war will be a self-styled Communist Vietnam. Third, this country must come to understand that creation of a Communist country in the world today is not an ultimate defeat. If people are

given the opportunity to choose their own lives it is likely that some of them will choose what we have called "Communist systems." We are not powerless in that situation. Recent years have finally and indisputably broken the myth that the Communist world is monolithic and have conclusively shown that American power can be significant in aiding countries dominated by greater powers to become more independent and self-determined. And yet the war that we are creating and escalating in Southeast Asia is rapidly eroding the base of independence of North Vietnam as it is forced to turn to China and the Soviet Union, involving them in the war and involving itself in the compromises that that implies. Fourth, I must say to you that I would rather see Vietnam Communist than see it under continuous subjugation of the ruin that American domination has brought.

But the war goes on; the freedom to conduct that war depends on the dehumanization not only of Vietnamese people but of Americans as well; it depends on the construction of a system of premises and thinking that insulates the President and his advisors thoroughly and completely from the human consequences of the decisions they make. I do not believe that the President or Mr. Rusk or Mr. McNamara or even McGeorge Bundy are particularly evil men. If asked to throw napalm on the back of a ten-year-old child they would shrink in horror—but their decisions have led to mutilation and death of thousands and thousands of people.

What kind of system is it that allows good men to make those kinds of decisions? What kind of system is it that justifies the United States or any country seizing the destinies of the Vietnamese people and using them callously for its own purpose? What kind of system is it that disenfranchises people in the South, leaves millions upon millions of people throughout the country impoverished and excluded from the mainstream and promise of American society, that creates faceless and terrible bureaucracies and makes those the place where people spend their lives and do their work, that consistently puts material values before human values—and still persists in calling itself free and still persists in finding itself fit to police the world? What place is there for ordinary men in that system and how are they to control it, make it bend itself to their wills rather than bending them to its?

We must name that system. We must name it, describe it, analyze it, understand it and change it. For it is only when that system is changed and brought under control that there can be any hope for stopping the forces that create a war in Vietnam today or a murder in the South tomorrow or all the incalculable, innumerable more subtle atrocities that are worked on people all over—all the time.

How do you stop a war then? If the war has its roots deep in the institutions of American society, how do you stop it? Do you march to Washington? Is that enough? Who will hear us? How can you make the decision makers hear us, insulated as they are, if they cannot hear the screams of a little girl burnt by napalm?

I believe that the administration is serious about expanding the war in Asia. The question is whether the people here are as serious about ending it. I wonder what it means for each of us to say we want to end the war in Vietnam—whether, if we accept the full meaning of

that statement and the gravity of the situation, we can simply leave the march and go back to the routines of a society that acts as if it were not in the midst of a grave crisis. Maybe we, like the President, are insulated from the consequenses of our own decision to end the war. Maybe we have yet really to listen to the screams of a burning child and decide that we cannot go back to whatever it is we did before today until that war has ended.

There is no simple plan, no scheme or gimmick that can be proposed here. There is no simple way to attack something that is deeply rooted in the society. If the people of this country are to end the war in Vietnam, and to change the institutions which create it, then the people of this country must create a massive social movement—and if that can be built around the issue of Vietnam then that is what we must do.

By a social movement I mean more than petitions or letters of protest, or tacit support of dissident Congressmen; I mean people who are willing to change their lives, who are willing to challenge the system, to take the problem of change seriously. By a social movement I mean an effort that is powerful enough to make the country understand that our problems are not in Vietnam, or China or Brazil or outer space or at the bottom of the ocean, but are here in the United States. What we must do is begin to build a democratic and humane society in which Vietnams are unthinkable, in which human life and initiative are precious. The reason there are twenty thousand people here today and not a hundred or none at all is because five years ago in the South students began to build a social movement to change the system. The reason there are poor people, Negro and white, housewives, faculty members, and many others here in Washington is because that movement has grown and spread and changed and reached out as an expression of the broad concerns of people throughout the society. The reason the war and the system it represents will be stopped, if it is stopped before it destroys all of us, will be because the movement has become strong enough to exact change in the society. Twenty thousand people, the people here, if they were serious, if they were willing to break out of their isolation and to accept the consequences of a decision to end the war and commit themselves to building a movement wherever they are and in whatever way they effectively can, would be, I'm convinced, enough.

To build a movement rather than a protest or some series of protests, to break out of our insulations and accept the consequences of our decisions, in effect to change our lives, means that we can open ourselves to the reactions of a society that believes that it is moral and just, that we open ourselves to libelling and persecution, that we dare to be really seen as wrong in a society that doesn't tolerate fundamental challenges.

It means that we desert the security of our riches and reach out to people who are tied to the mythology of American power and make them part of our movement. We must reach out to every organization and individual in the country and make them part of our movement.

But that means that we build a movement that works not simply in Washington but in communities and with the problems that face people throughout the society. That means that we build a movement that

understands Vietnam in all its horror as but a symptom of a deeper malaise, that we build a movement that makes possible the implementation of the values that would have prevented Vietnam, a movement based on the integrity of man and a belief in man's capacity to tolerate all the weird formulations of society that men may choose to strive for; a movement that will build on the new and creative forms of protest that are beginning to emerge, such as the teach-in, and extend their efforts and intensify them; that we will build a movement that will find ways to support the increasing numbers of young men who are unwilling to and will not fight in Vietnam; a movement that will not tolerate the escalation or prolongation of this war but will, if necessary, respond to the administration war effort with massive civil disobedience all over the country, that will wrench the country into a confrontation with the issues of the war; a movement that must of necessity reach out to all these people in Vietnam or elsewhere who are struggling to find decency and control for their lives.

For in a strange way the people of Vietnam and the people on this demonstration are united in much more than a common concern that the war be ended. In both countries there are people struggling to build a movement that has the power to change their condition. The system that frustrates these movements is the same. All our lives, our destinies, our very hopes to live, depend on our ability to overcome that system.

PAUL POTTER, President of Students for a Democratic Society, is a graduate of Oberlin College. After a year as National Affairs Vice President of the National Student Association, he spent two years doing graduate work in sociology and anthropology at the University of Michigan. He is currently on the staff of SDS's community organizing project in Cleveland, Ohio.

STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

is an educational and social action organization dedicated to increasing democracy in all phases of our common life. It seeks to promote the active participation of young people in the formation of a movement to build a society free from poverty, ignorance, war, exploitation and the inhumanity of man to man. Won't you join with us?

detach and mail to

Students for a Democratic Society
1103 East 63rd Street, Chicago 37, Ill.

☐ I would like to join SDS and enclose
☐ $1 initiation ☐ $2/yr. dues.

☐ I would like more information about SDS.

☐ I am interested in joining the SDS staff.

Name.....

School address.....

.....

Permanent address.....

.....

MARCH AGENDA

The schedule for the March on Washington to End the War in Vietnam is as follows:

10 AM--We will assemble at the White House for the picket line

1:30AM--We will march down 15th Street to the Sylvan Theater, beneath the Washington Monument, to hear speeches by:
I.F. Stone, publisher of I.F. Stone's Weekly
Senator Gruening, Democrat from Alaska
Bob Parris, SNCC field Secretary
Iva Pearce, mother of five from the Cleveland Community Project
Paul Potter, President of Students for a Democratic Society
Chairman, Staughton Lynd, Professor of History, Yale University

3:30PM--We will walk down the mall to the Capitol Building to present our petition to Congress

5:00PM--Buses and trains will begin to depart from Washington

PETITION TO CONGRESS

We, the participants in the March on Washington to End the War in Vietnam, petition Congress to act immediately to end the war. You currently have at your disposal many schemes, including reconvening of the Geneval Conference, negotiation with the National Liberation Front and North Vietnam, immediate withdrawal, and UN-supervised elections. Although those among us might differ as to which of these is most desirable, we are unanimously of the opinion that the war must be brought to a halt.

This war is inflicting untold harm on the people of Vietnam. It is being fought in behalf of a succession of unpopular regimes, not for the ideals you proclaim. Our military are obviously being defeated; yet we persist in extending the war. The problems of America cry out for attention, and our entanglement in South Vietnam postpones the confrontation of these issues while prolonging the misery of the people of that war-torn land.

You must act now to reverse this sorry state of affairs. We call on you to end, not extend, the war in Vietnam.

DISCIPLINE

1) This is a peaceful petition, and we ask people to please obey this decision.

2) Obey the instructions of picket captains and the police.

3) Literature may be distributed subject only to police regulations.

4) We will have several large banners identifying the March. Smaller signs will be printed slogans—"End the War in Vietnam Now," "Withdraw Now," "Cease Fire—Negotiate," "War on Poverty—Not on People," "I won't Fight in Vietnam," "Ballots not Bombs in Vietnam," "Vietnam for the Vietnamese," "Stop the Killing," "Freedom Now in Vietnam," "Unconditional Negotiations—Yes, Killing Vietnamese Children—No."

We ask that people bring only signs identifying their cities and schools, and not their organizations. No Sale of literature is allowed by the Washington police. Literature may be distributed.

OFFICE OF THE DAY
Lafayette Hotel
16th and I St. NW

EMERGENCY INFIRMARY
Hay Adams Hotel
800 16th Street

April 16, 1965

For Immediate Release

Statement on Student March on Washington

BY:

Norman Thomas, A. J. Muste, Bayard Rustin, Robert W. Gilmore, H. Stuart Hughes, Ed Clark, Roget Lockard, Emily Parker Simon, Alfred Hassler, Charles Bloomstein, Harold Taylor

On the eve of the March on Washington, we look with interest and sympathy on this manifestation of many students' concern about Vietnam. As persons long involved in work on problems of democracy and peace, we hope many more Americans will also concern themselves about this crucial situation in Asia.

We join in the concern about developments in Vietnam, even though we disagree with particular positions expressed by some of the elements in the March.

We are concerned, as they are, to see an end to the killing and destruction in Vietnam. We are concerned also to help create a society in which the Vietnamese will be masters of their own political destiny, free from interference from any outside forces, in which the expression of dissenting opinion may become progressively safer. The latter part of the President's April 7 speech suggested the possibility of a healthy shift of American policy in this direction. We encourage the further development of such a shift, and particularly urge the recognition that all interested parties, including the National Liberation Front, must be included in any effective negotiations.

In the effort to register such concerns with our government and people, we welcome the cooperation of all those groups and individuals who, like ourselves, believe in the need for an independent peace movement, not committed to any form of totalitarianism nor drawing inspiration or direction from the foreign policy of any government.

* * * *

NEW YORK POST EDITORIAL

April 17, 1965

On the eve of this weekend's "peace march" on Washington, several leaders of the peace movement have taken clear note of attempts to convert the event into a pro-Communist production. In a joint statement, Norman Thomas, A. J. Muste, H. Stuart Hughes, Robert Gillmore, Bayard Rustin and others have pointed out that President Johnson's April 7 speech "suggested the possibility of a healthy shift in American foreign policy" toward the goal of a negotiated settlement. While welcoming the march as a sign of American concern about the Asian crisis and reiterating their plea for "an end to the killing and destruction in Viet Nam," they have pointedly added:

"in an effort to register such concern with our government and people, we welcome the cooperation of all these groups and individuals who, like ourselves, believe in the need for any independent peace movement, not committed to any form of totalitarianism or drawing inspiration from the foreign policy of any government."

Many dedicated, earnest young men and woman are taking part in the march. It is our hope that they will get the meaning of this message from men who have long served in the front-lines of the battle against war. Americans may reasonably differ with some aspects of the President's course. But, especially in the aftermath of Mr. Johnson's call for "unconditional" negotiations, there is no justification for transforming the march into a frenzied one-sided anti-American show. Some of the banners advertised in advance are being carried to the wrong place at the wrong time.