

revolutionary transition, we must return to being “supporters” rather than “usurpers” or “abdicators.” This is the true moral position because the goals are honest and the means to achieve them are realistic.

THE TRAGEDY OF VIETNAM AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MORMONS

Eugene England

I could conceive of no greater tragedy than for the United States to become involved in an all-out war in Indochina.

Dwight D. Eisenhower (1954)

In the final analysis it is their war . . . We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisors, but they have to win it—the people of Vietnam—against the Communists.

John F. Kennedy (1963)

I don't believe that anyone in the government of South Vietnam or our own government believes that the addition of U.S. ground combat troops in South Vietnam . . . would favorably affect the situation there. That situation is one that the South Vietnamese themselves must solve.

Robert McNamara (1964)

We don't want to get tied down in a land war in Asia. . . . We are not about to send American boys nine or ten thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys should be doing for themselves.

Lyndon B. Johnson (1964)

In 1961 I completed a voluntary tour of duty as an officer in the United States Air Force. I had experienced an emotional rebirth of my patriotism as a missionary in American Samoa—seeing first hand a contrast with the advantages America had achieved, but also seeing the fine effects that U.S. efforts to teach and help were having on that “underdeveloped country.” When I went home it seemed right, despite my family obligations and already delayed educational goals, to take my turn in the cold-war defense of my country against militant communism, and I became an Air Force officer at the main West Coast overseas staging base for tactical fighters.

Occasionally, in 1960 and 1961, as events in Laos and Vietnam seemed especially ominous to the Pentagon, I was alerted and stood ready to move out with a support unit if American forces were committed to battle. Now, six years later, I find myself, despite (or actually because of) an enduring and growing love for America and her traditional values and contributions to the world, deeply alienated from the policies and practices of my government, unwilling to fight in its war in Vietnam, and convinced that the military establishment, which helped educate me and to which I once belonged, is the chief danger to American freedoms and moral values—and perhaps those of the world.¹

¹It should be clear at the beginning that what I must say in this essay in no way implies a criticism

The change is easy to explain, if not to defend. Partly in response to the continual appeals and challenges of Church leaders,² I have tried to understand the communist movement and the history of America's response to it, as well as the religious and moral bases in the Christian tradition and the Restored Gospel for opposing communism and for waging war. Looking at the evidence as objectively as possible has led me to conclude that however useful our initial policies for containing communism (including creation of a huge military establishment) and our promotion of a dogmatic anti-communism to justify those policies, the policies and the dogmatism are now obsolete, have led us into actions that violate traditional American and Mormon concepts of a just war, and are leading us increasingly into a fixed posture of destroying freedom in the name of freedom and waging continually escalated war in the name of peace.

I have become convinced by my study and the response in my deepest feelings that we have already suffered a moral defeat in Vietnam that no victory can compensate for and that we have inflicted damage to a whole people that no rebuilding effort can atone for. Perhaps we have also inflicted a wound on ourselves—on our sources of moral power as an “ensign to the nations” and on our sense of that purpose—that nothing can heal. Perhaps we have lost, or abdicated to the “experts” who compulsively lead us on, our power to repent. I can write this only because I have faith that we have not—that we still have the resources to change our perspective, even to gain some compassion and meekness, some essential new maturity for the trials ahead, from our first national experience with repentance. We can yet avoid the future which faces us if we persist unchanged.³

on my part of the ability, or courage, or good intentions of U.S. soldiers in Vietnam—or approval of various violent or sensationalist forms of opposition to the war in this country. Those matters are irrelevant to this discussion. The character and dedication and suffering of our soldiers do not sanctify the war nor validate the reasons we send them out to die; and the reprehensible and self-defeating actions of certain demonstrators do not defile all attempts for peace nor invalidate my reasons for opposing the war.

²See especially Elder Ezra Taft Benson's address in October Conference, 1966, counselling Latter-day Saints and others listening, on the authority of President David O. McKay, to study communism in all available ways so that we could understand the nature of its threat and be able to oppose it effectively.

³Theodore Sorenson, former Special Counsel to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and a man who knows whereof he speaks, recently described the future we face if we cannot change:

What concerns me now is the prospect of an endless war in which the original issues (to say nothing of the Vietnamese people) will have long been forgotten, in which each gradation of American escalation will continue to be offset by more troops from the North and less help from the South. What concerns me is the prospect of a frustrated, aggravated, bitterly divided America, irritated at its increasing isolation from the world, unable to accept its inability to bring this upstart to heel, under growing pressure from a growing military establishment, consequently pouring in more men, bombing out more targets, and finally, in desperation, mining or blockading the Haiphong harbor or even invading the North by means of a permanent excursion across the demilitarized zone or an “Inchon-type” landing behind the front line. Then the entry of Chinese and possibly Russian “volunteers” will be a very real threat and possibly . . . an inevitable fact, as inevitable as the fact that their entry will lead eventually to a world-wide nuclear war. The tragic irony of it is that all this could happen without our advancing one single step nearer to our original goal of a terror-free South Vietnam.

“The War in Vietnam, How We Can End It,” *Saturday Review of Literature*, October 21, 1967, p. 19.

MORMON TEACHINGS ON WAR

The primary source of the principles which tell me we are wrong and of the challenge and guidance for change has been the Mormon tradition, its scriptures, and the counsel of its modern prophets. But L.D.S. teachings suggest that the Gospel resources for decisions about social and political issues will tend to be general rather than specific: we do not find pronouncements by President McKay on the war in Vietnam that do our thinking and make our decisions for us. In order that we as free agents can learn to mature in the use of our ability to make judgments and decisions, the Lord teaches us correct principles through his prophets and the verifying power of the Holy Ghost in our consciences and lets us govern ourselves.

Mormons hold fundamental allegiance to Christ as the Son of God and affirm as binding upon them his teachings in favor of peace—his insistence on the ideal of loving the enemy and returning good for evil. In addition, a basic L.D.S. concept is that of a just war. L.D.S. scriptures define such war in purely defensive terms, with a tendency toward pacifism if anything. That is, the options open to a Mormon in the face of war seem to range from controlled participation (with responsibility to avoid war's vindictiveness and bloodthirstiness)⁴, *in certain narrowly defined types of war*, to non-participation despite the consequences. The Book of Mormon records a number of stirring calls to arms when the cause is just (Alma 46, 53, and 60-61), but it justifies a people's engaging in war *only* on certain clear conditions: "for they were not fighting for monarchy or power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties" (see Alma 43:45-47).

The most moving description of the pacifist ethic I have seen anywhere is in Alma 24, which tells of a group of converted Lamanites who covenant with God "that rather than shed the blood of their brethren they would give up their own lives." They "took their swords and all the weapons which they used for the shedding of man's blood and . . . buried them up deep in the earth." When they were attacked they were true to their covenant, even though many of them were massacred; but, without ignoring the high costs, the account gives powerful evidence that this ethic that most Christians affirm but are afraid to try really *works*: the attackers were in turn moved to repentance and threw down their weapons "for they were stunned for the murders which they had committed and they came down even as their brethren, relying on the mercies of those whose arms were lifted to slay them." There is, of course, no suggestion that conversion to the Gospel in itself requires this kind of covenant, but the prophet giving the account clearly views those who were conscientiously capable of such an ethical choice (made without explicit direction from their religious leaders but based on principles they had taught them) with great admiration: "Thus we see that when these Lamanites were brought to believe and to know the truth they were firm, and would suffer even unto death rather than commit sin. And thus we see that . . . they buried

⁴In a remarkable statement at the beginning of the General Conference of April, 1917, about the time the U.S. officially declared war on Germany, President Joseph F. Smith spoke powerfully against the tendency of Americans to allow patriotism to lead them to madness in time of war, exhorting the Saints to retain their full sense of brotherhood with the Germans living in this country, and admonishing those called forth to fight in the war to "do it with an eye single to the accomplishment of the good that is aimed to be accomplished, and not with a bloodthirsty desire to kill and to destroy."

the weapons of war, for peace.” I am not suggesting there is any *easy* way to transfer that experience to Vietnam or to the nuclear confrontation, but the teachings of Christ and the Book of Mormon bear witness there *is* a way if we care enough to find it. The ethic portrayed in that Book of Mormon experience stands in judgment over all that Mormons do.⁵

But a less extreme ethic stands as much in judgment upon us and is wholly sufficient to condemn America’s actions in Vietnam. In L.D.S. General Conference, April, 1942,⁶ President David O. McKay said there are conditions when entrance into war is justifiable in defense against an opposing force:

... such a condition, however, is not a real or fancied insult given by one nation to another. When this occurs proper reparation may be made by mutual understanding, apology, or by arbitration . . . nor is war justified in an attempt to enforce a new order of government, or even to impel others to a particular form of worship, however better the government or eternally true the principles of the enforced religion may be.

The question that I, as a Mormon, have had to answer is whether the U.S. involvement in Vietnam is a *defensive* war, reasonably to be construed as fighting for our own homes and *our* liberties or in response to an aggression *by one country on another*—or whether, on the other hand, it is being waged in an attempt to enforce a new order of government that we prefer. And, as a Mormon, I cannot escape the judgment of my Church’s teachings if I do not face that question personally, with a conscience informed by prayerful thought and study, and take responsibility for the implications of my answer. Like other Americans who so self-righteously, even blithely, condemned the Germans at Nuremberg, I cannot allow myself to take refuge by shifting moral responsibility to the laws of my country or the orders of my leaders; we have judged Eichmann as guilty as those who commanded him and made the laws that, however immoral, he felt as a good functionary he must obey. As a Mormon, I come from a tradition (however obscured by an extreme shift to overweening patriotism in this century) that rejects Stephen Decatur’s “My country, right or wrong” as blasphemous idolatry—as worshipping a nation in place of God. I affirm strongly a belief in being

⁵Brigham Young makes a statement which is nearly as pacifist in its implications:

Our traditions have been such that we are not apt to look upon war between two nations as murder; but suppose that one family should rise up against another and begin to slay them, would they not be taken up and tried for murder? And why not nations that rise up and slay each other in a scientific way be equally guilty of murder? “But observe the martial array—how splendid! See the furious war horses with the glittering trappings. Then the honour and glory and pride of the reigning king must be sustained, and the strength and power and wealth of the nation must be displayed in some way; and what better way than to make war upon neighbouring nations under some slight pretext?” Does it justify the slaying of men, women, and children that otherwise would have remained at home in peace, because a great army is doing the work? No! The guilty will be damned for it. (*Journal of Discourses* 7:137.)

The 98th section of the Doctrine and Covenants seems to teach as the highest ethic extreme forbearance in the face of offense by an enemy—to the point of leaving retribution entirely to the Lord unless He directly calls His people into battle (which is certainly not the case in Vietnam!).

⁶Quoted in Jerreld L. Newquist, *Prophets, Principles and National Survival* (Publishers Press, 1964), p. 475. This book contains a large selection of statements by General Authorities on the war and foreign policy.

"subject to kings, rulers, magistrates and in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law": I cannot be an anarchist. But I must have higher loyalties than man's laws and governments—to principles, to conscience, to God. In our modern efforts to be accepted into American society as good and loyal citizens we cannot purge entirely from our Mormon memory the words of Apostle Rudger Clawson, when, having persisted in polygamy after the Supreme Court upheld laws against it, he was being sentenced for unlawful cohabitation: "I may much regret that the law of my country should come in contact with the laws of God, but, whenever they do, I shall inevitably choose the latter."⁷

A Mormon cannot escape that ultimate loyalty, which must judge the present situation and his response to it. My judgment of our war in Vietnam, based on that loyalty and applying the principles that derive from it to a careful study of some of the best-informed analyses of our actions, pro and con, is that our actions deny those principles and deny that ultimate loyalty—and we must change. We have been fighting to establish and maintain (and now to expand and *gain* a popular mandate for) a minority anti-communist class, not for any legitimate national interest and not against a foreign aggressor but against the will of the majority of the people of Vietnam, whose traditional loyalty, based more in nationalism and anti-colonialism than international communism, was earned by Ho Chi Minh and the local village polity he established in the 40's. This is the judgment of an increasing number of qualified students of the evidence.

PERSISTING IN A MISTAKE

I do not claim there is unquestionable evidence that the war is not a defensive war, but that is not necessary. The burden of proof is on those who claim our war is just to justify the killing and destruction—and they have failed. Only a few hours reading in references such as those I will suggest below is enough to show that what we increasingly feel in our hearts is true, that the issues in Vietnam, political and moral, are *at least* much less clear cut than those of any other war we have been engaged in in our time. And even if we take the most charitable possible view of the claims of our government, the issues still remain so terribly ambiguous—the area of decision so gray—that we have no right to the black and white decision to destroy Vietnam as we are doing on the basis of those claims. It is only our moral lassitude that allows us to go on. And the solution for that is passionate concern and willingness to change.

But what might move us to take responsibility for changing ourselves and others—our very nation? How can we, with our feelings dulled rather than exacerbated by having front row seats at the war on TV, and by the genteel despair of much of our press and our government leaders which leads us to believe that

⁷Quoted in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History* (Deseret Book Co., 1966), p. 599. Mormons must also be guided to less than absolute loyalty to government by Section 134 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which asserts that "[God] holds men accountable for their acts . . . in making laws and administering them" and also that "all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside" *as long as they are provided by those governments with certain conditions: "While protected in their inherent and inalienable rights."* If "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" are inalienable rights, then certainly the right not to take another's life or liberty or opportunities for happiness—unjustly—is also inalienable. It would then seem that right must be insisted upon—through the legal means of conscientious objection where possible—by those Mormons who are convinced a war is unjust.

events are too large for us and that escalation, even to world destruction, is beyond our power to stop—how can we be pricked in our hearts to the point of godly sorrow and move to act intensely in accord with what we say we believe? It can only happen if we take time to re-examine our principles, look clearly at the best information, and then unflinchingly judge our actions and intentions by our principles—and face the consequences.

Nearly anyone who reads much at all in the growing literature on the history of Vietnam and the U.S. involvement there, as I have said, soon becomes, at the very least, doubtful. As even the popular press, which for so long failed in its responsibility to the American public, has exposed our moral and political failures, support for the war has dropped the past two years from nearly 75% to evidence in a recent Gallup poll (October, 1967) that for the first time more Americans are convinced that our involvement in Vietnam was a mistake (46%) than that it was not (44%).

And yet this growing plurality who are convinced that we have made a mistake seem unwilling that we should change our ways now. Our *pride* keeps us from facing the failures in ourselves that caused the mistake and *changing*. As Arnold Toynbee pointed out in his commencement address last June at the University of Utah, Americans are now saying, "We have never lost a war, and we are determined not to lose this one, come what may." I agree with him that "this seems . . . to be a morally inadequate reaction to the responsibilities of a citizen of one of the two atomic powers in this atomic age." In our hearts we know we are wrong, and yet our "honor," our need to "save face," prevent us from seriously considering those difficult, humbling alternatives that could lead to peace. Instead, we seem to think that persisting in a mistake with redoubled energy will somehow correct the mistake.

THE MIRAGE OF PACIFICATION

One of the chief deterrents to the clear thinking and feeling that *might* lead to change is our enthusiasm about the good our soldiers and civilian advisers are doing or could do in the "other war." That enthusiasm (and relief about what seems a more congenial role for our consciences) blinds us to the fact that, as much as any part of the war and therefore as wrong in principle, the "other war" is an effort to subvert the village-level party government established by Ho Chi Minh—a form of government which through successful land reform and effective organization achieved majority sanction over twenty years ago and has since maintained itself in most of Vietnam despite the French and Diem and us.

In the first essay in this Roundtable, Ray Hillam described the present form of that organization—the National Liberation Front "infrastructure":

The apparatus has demonstrated its ability to fatten itself on our economic and military assistance intended for the Saigon government, to recruit an estimated 5,000 to 7,000 men per month in the South, to acquire huge quantities of rice, to purchase medical supplies in the larger cities, to carry out an effective system of taxation, and to indoctrinate and intimidate the population.

He then, as part of his "new alternative," assumes that "all of these activities

can and must be restricted." Of course they must if we are ever to "win" the war, but on the basis of what principles do we have the *right* to restrict them? They have represented a significant gain over the past for most of the peasants,⁸ and the various alternatives that have been offered by Diem and subsequent regimes, viewed as charitably as possible, are no better in *their* activities and are often worse. Diem (quite wittingly) and we (often unwittingly) have directly aided the remnants of exploitive colonialism—especially absentee landlordism—through our "pacification" programs. In the Mekong delta, where the Viet Minh polity actually placed the land in the hands of the peasants for the first time, Diem's "land reform" program returned the land to the Saigon landlords who were then to sell it to the peasants—but having no funds the peasants were reduced to serfs again, charged much more in rents and taxing by the new government than by the Viet Minh. (Money given by the U.S. to buy this land for the peasants has in most cases not reached them.) We have recently seen on CBS News Reports the absentee landlords moving in to take over as our soldiers kill and are killed to "pacify" parts of the Delta and "free" the land from the Viet Cong. Meanwhile, the draft age youth of this privileged class—the "Saigon cowboys"—roam the streets of the capital in their Vespas. This is the new order of government we are killing and destroying in order to enforce. And we wonder why, after all the cost and cruelty, a large majority of Vietnam's villages remain unpacified, and—as Hillam admits—many villages are reported pacified for the third, or fourth, or fifth times. Hillam reports the statement of a U.S. provincial representative that "it would take close to ten years before he could effectively pacify his province at the present rate." The ultimate irony perhaps is that Hillam and many other Americans place their hopes for speeding up that process in the newest model of Diem's disastrous "strategic hamlet" program—Revolutionary Development. That program's newness and relative success are precisely related—as Mary McCarthy's book and recent CBS documentaries have shown—to the fact that Major's Be's RD teams have adopted the uniforms, the revolutionary terminology and purposes, and the very means of the Viet Cong infrastructure! There must be some moral *reason* for Hillam's program to expand the control of a government that he admits is essentially a military regime plagued with "corruption . . . and rampant inflation" in place of the NLF infrastructure—a reason other than our preference or our definition of it as the "enemy." On the contrary, in waging fantastically destructive war on a small, underdeveloped country in order to supplant one conspiratorial "apparatus" with another that is, if anything, more corrupt and less efficient we

⁸Joseph Alsop, who could hardly be accused of being pro-communist, described that village organization in 1955:

I would like to be able to report—I had hoped to be able to report—that on that long, slow canal trip to Vinh Binh (Mekong Delta) I saw all the signs of misery and oppression that have made my visits to East Germany like nightmare journeys to 1984. But it was not so.

At first it was difficult for me, as it is for any Westerner, to conceive of a Communist government's genuinely "serving the people." I could hardly imagine a Communist government that was also a popular government and almost a democratic government. But this is just the sort of government the palm-hut state actually was while the struggle with the French continued. The Vietminh could not possibly have carried on the resistance for one year, let alone nine years, without the people's strong, united support. (*The New Yorker*, June 25, 1955; quoted in Scheer, *op. cit.*, p. 47.)

are “enhancing our honor” and “fulfilling our responsibility” to men by proving unequivocally that might makes right.

I think we can persist only because we have not taken time or cared enough to face the implications of what we are doing; even when we admit we have made mistakes, we have not been willing to face the errors in our own perceptions and attitudes that have caused the mistakes. Instead we have reached almost desperately for new justifications—an escalation of goals to go with our other escalations. As Indonesia has thrown off Communism, Burma remained peaceful, and Cambodia rejected our “protection” despite its long border with South Vietnam,⁹ no longer is the original domino theory seriously discussed, even by our own government, and the chief popular justification for the destructive war has become the hope that we are thus protecting our opportunity to rebuild Vietnam as a “democracy.”

Our position was epitomized in a guest editorial written by Bayard Hooper for *Life* magazine (July 7, 1967) after he had visited Vietnam. He said he felt each day like he was “on an emotional pendulum, swinging between exhilaration at the panoply of U.S. presence [there] and despair at the slow pace of its effects.” After describing that paradox in detail he concluded:

. . . The emotional pendulum stops dead center. “A fool lies here who tried to hustle the East,” wrote Kipling, and we are attempting something even more audacious. We are trying to change its immemorial ways and shape them toward our own.

To believe that we will succeed requires, finally, an enormous act of faith—a faith that will have to be sustained (though not at the present level) for perhaps 15 or 20 years. We are entered into the brawling, corrupt arena of history, where the neat rules of a stable Anglo-Saxon society don’t apply. Do we belong here? Do we belong on the moon? Do we wish to shape history, or be shaped by it? Our presence is an act of faith.

For the American public that act of faith—that we have the right and the ability to shape Vietnam, to “change its immemorial ways” toward our own, according to our will—remains adequate justification, despite our doubts, for what we are doing in Vietnam.

⁹A contradiction to the periodic statements by our government that other leaders in Southeast Asia support our policies and see us as a bulwark against communism is the recent statement by Prince Sinahouk in connection with Mrs. John F. Kennedy’s visit to Cambodia: “The prince expressed support for the Viet Cong and North Vietnam and called the American battle against them misguided. . . . The prince disclaimed any new rapprochement with communist China, but said recent disagreements concerning Chinese support of Cambodian communism evidently have been cleared up. He described Cambodia’s relations with Peking as very close—as long as his nation’s sovereignty and integrity are respected. The U.S. is on the wrong road. She says she is fighting communism. What kind of communism? I think that the U.S. is afraid of the communists of China, but she is trying to destroy the communists of Vietnam, which is not the same thing at all. The U.S. is trying to destroy the nationalists in Vietnam, who are actually the last barrier against Chinese encroachment. Ho Chi Minh is the real representative of the Vietnamese people. We will continue to support Ho Chi Minh and the national liberation front [Viet Cong] in their fight against you.” (Quoted from the AP report, November 4, 1967.)

REALPOLITIK

But our government, which knows better than the public how badly the pacification is going (or possibly has had this in mind all along), has escalated our goals again in a recent statement (October 13, 1967) by Dean Rusk that our true purpose in Vietnam is to thwart Red China's supposed global ambitions—to contain militant Chinese Communism: "A billion Chinese soon will be armed with nuclear weapons"; they have proclaimed "a militant doctrine of the world revolution and [are] doing something about it."

Earlier evidence that, behind a public justification based on reluctant involvement through moral responsibility to Vietnam and Southeast Asia, our leaders are engaged in calculated, visionary, and extremely dangerous power politics with Russia and Red China, was documented by John McDermott in *The Nation*, February 13, 1967, in an essay titled "Vietnam Is No Mistake." He asserts that the current myths propounded by our government and existing in the popular mind that our interest is in *containing* communism and maintaining a balance of power with it are not even faintly true. We are not using the blatant rhetoric of John Foster Dulles, but it seems we are just as determined as he to *cripple* communist power and "roll it back," and are willing to sacrifice Vietnam in order to produce divisions between Russia and Red China and embarrass them because of their inability to produce a victory for their Vietnamese allies. He says, "The administration is quite consciously destroying Vietnam and its people in order to gain a marginal advantage elsewhere. This is a rational choice, not a mistake or a miscalculation." If that is true, and the evidence is strong, including those recent remarks of Dean Rusk, then the American people have been grossly misled, and are indeed betrayed into the tragic situation Eisenhower feared—a land war in Asia which China and Russia may not be able to win but certainly will not let us win; and we face a continuing war with the immense reserves of North Vietnam and then Red China, which will, in the fifteen to twenty years Hooper talks about, bleed us to death if it does not lead to nuclear war.

And all this on the basis of little if any overt aggression by Red China—certainly less than we have committed in our own sphere of influence, to say nothing of our threatening actions in China's. Chinese armies have not yet stepped over her ancient boundaries. (As much as we might deplore her actions in Tibet, she has more *right* to claim Tibet by force than Israel does Palestine—and much more right by virtue of previous possession and immediate threat to her own borders to use armed force in Korea or India or even eventually Vietnam than we have had in Guatemala or Cuba or the Dominican Republic.) How can we be so paranoid about Russia's aggressive intentions when we were willing to risk nuclear war to deny Russia nuclear weapons on our borders after we had *already* put them on hers—or be shocked at China's belligerence now that we are putting them on *hers* in Vietnam and Thailand? We have an amazing double standard that will continue to thwart our efforts for peace and understanding until we change.

The outrageousness of Rusk's position is perhaps more clear if we remember that such a tenuous justification, based on taking literally another country's propaganda rather than its actions, was used by Hitler to attack Poland, could be used by China to attack us (on the basis of our *actions* as well as our words), by Canada to attack France ("*Vive Quebec Libre*"), or by any country to attack just about any

other country—because they *might* some day be a threat to them. Actually, we don't even have the moral courage to confront our imagined threat directly, by attacking China; instead we have made Vietnam expendable to our fantasies.

These two goals, the forceful rebuilding of a country's politics and economy and village life according to our own desires of what they should be and preventive attack based on a speculative fear of possible future danger to our national interest, if not obviously outrageous, are extremely questionable by any standards of a just war; they can in no case be used to justify the outrageous destruction and suffering we are directly responsible for in Vietnam.

THE BASES OF DECISION

In such a situation, *no one* can escape the responsibility to do some reading in basic sources.¹⁰ If he does that reading, he will see that Vietnam has a history of nearly 400 years of civil war between the North and the South and that we have entered into merely one phase of that war with a single-minded anti-communism that seems to make us incapable of understanding either the war or possible solutions to it. And he will see that Vietnam has a history of at least a thousand years of resistance to the power of China which still motivates its leaders and its people (even those who call themselves communists take pride in that history of resistance), and our interference is having the general effect if anything of forcing the country more and more into the power of Red China.

He will see evidence, that, however good our original intentions for trying to aid the government in South Vietnam (which we in effect established ourselves)

¹⁰The most up-to-date and responsibly documented history and critical analysis of the war is probably Theodore Draper's *Abuse of Power* (Viking, 1967). But there are many other source books of varying length and emphasis: Robert Scheer's *How the U.S. Got Involved in Vietnam*, a report to the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions made in 1965, is especially interesting because of its use of interviews with those involved in this country and in Vietnam to reveal how the Diem government misled and manipulated both the American public and its leaders to achieve the support which led to our escalating involvement; Bernard B. Fall's *The Two Vietnams, A Political and Military History* (Praeger, 1965—an excellent, balanced work by one of the best informed scholars and first-hand witnesses (he was recently killed by a land mine in Vietnam), brings the special perspective of a Frenchman who fought as a guerilla against the Germans and who knows the whole bitter heritage of his and our countries' attempts to defeat a similarly dedicated force of guerillas in Vietnam. David Halberstam's *The Making of a Quagmire* (Random House, 1965) is a Pulitzer prize-winning report of events in the early 60's, especially during the fall of the Diem regime; Jean Lacouture, *Vietnam: Between Two Truces* (Vintage, 1966) gives another valuable non-American perspective and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Bitter Heritage* (Houghton Mifflin, 1967), is a well-written history and presentation of an alternative "middle course" to our present policies.

For an analysis in depth of attempts at negotiation see *The Politics of Escalation in Vietnam* (Fawcett, 1966), by F. Schurmann, *et al.*, or a shorter, more up-to-date account in Theodore Draper's "Vietnam, How Not to Negotiate" in the *New York Review of Books*, May 4, 1967. The best sourcebook for essays pro and con and the essential documents involved, such as the Geneva accords and various position statements by the U.S., the N.L.F., and Hanoi, see *The Vietnam Reader*, (Vintage, 1966) edited by Marcus J. Raskin and Bernard B. Fall. The most powerful indictments of the U.S. position, on both moral and practical grounds, are to be found in the American Friends Service Committee Report, *Peace in Vietnam*, in *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience*, (Association Press, 1967) by Robert McAfee Brown, Abraham J. Heschel, and Michael Novak, and in Noam Chomsky's essays in the *New York Review of Books*, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals" (February 23, 1967), Frank M. Trager's *Why Vietnam?* (Praeger, 1966) is one of the few non-governmental sources supporting the Administration's policies. For a penetrating and disillusioning account by a first hand observer of our much heralded "other war" see Mary McCarthy's new book, *Vietnam*. And finally, perhaps the most devastating reading one can do is merely a systematic review backwards in time in the public press of the disparity between reported actions and results and our government's earlier plans, promises, and expectations.

to maintain itself, we have failed to stimulate that government to sufficient social reforms for the achievement of legitimate political stability and control, and as a substitute have escalated our military involvement until we are truly aggressors in what was originally a revolution against the repressive regime we supported and then a civil war when North Vietnam came to the aid of the NLF. He will be reminded that there is no legal basis anywhere for calling North Vietnam and South Vietnam separate countries and thus no moral basis for condemning the involvement of North Vietnam as "aggression," especially after we had blocked the intent of the Geneva accords that there be nationwide elections to reunite the country in 1956, an intent which the North fully supported because it had good cause to expect to win them—and which we blocked for the same reason. But our own state department does not even *claim* the involvement of North Vietnam aid on any significant scale until 1960, after *we* had been involved on a very large scale with personnel for six years and with economic and military aid for fifteen. When the North Vietnamese sent in their first troops (about 400), late in 1964, the U.S. already had over 20,000 troops. (Today there are at most 100,000 North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam and approximately 500,000 American troops.)

Thus the North Vietnamese legitimately feel that they are fighting on the side of their countrymen in South Vietnam against a white neo-colonial power—our own America!—whose actions are described in this way by a South Vietnamese, "You have always managed to back the wrong men here, the ones whose only qualification is being anti-communist, the ones who think like you because they have been rich enough to spend most of their lives in the West, and who will lose the most if the Viet Cong wins. They are not Vietnamese, except their faces" (quoted by Malcolm Browne in *The New Face of War*). As Robert F. Kennedy reminds us in his book, *To Seek a Newer World*, the successive governments of South Vietnam have been and are "largely made up of, or allied with, a privileged class to whom it seems that the war is not worth winning if the price is the sacrifice of their land, wealth, and power." It seems clear that the effect of our fighting is to enforce such governments on the people of Vietnam.

And there is evidence that we are using such a questionable end to justify increasingly questionable means: In our escalation of the war—in our turning to military solutions in our frustration at political failure—we have produced a situation in which civilian casualties are much more numerous than military ones. Our bombing and our search and destroy operations on South Vietnam villages are reported to cause (and it seems likely, given the techniques required¹¹) at least six civilian casualties for every "enemy" casualty, and some reports place the ratio

¹¹Our own experts say a military superiority of about ten to one is needed to win—that is, to root them out one by one—against guerillas who can merge into the populace and who have significant civilian aid such as they do in Vietnam (it would take just one friendly civilian to give away a Viet Cong ambush or troop location or supply dump, but in most areas that one man is lacking). Since they know the American public will not commit the two million men needed for such a victory, our leaders have substituted massive firepower—B-52's with saturation bombing, napalm, village leveling—which does not discriminate civilians from guerillas because it *cannot*. As a result, we alienate the civilian population even more and increase the source of guerilla strength—an impossible dilemma which explains why we are not winning any victory that matters. The "victories" at places like Dak To, where we kill and are killed by the hundreds to "gain" a useless hilltop through our superior fire power without affecting in the least the Viet Cong control of the populace, and the

as high as thirty to forty civilians treated in hospitals as a result of U.S. military operations for every one wounded by the Viet Cong. In this self-righteous "liberation" of the people of South Vietnam we have sustained a war in which possibly a million of these Vietnamese have been killed and we have been the major party in creating the most devastating and permanently freedom-destroying by-product of war—millions of hungry, homeless, landless, and therefore helpless refugees, only part of which are afforded the questionable hospitality of the new Revolutionary Development Centers.

A little reading will provide evidence that we have responded to the brutality of our enemy by participating in (and condoning by our presence) torture, degradation, and murder of prisoners and mutilation of enemy dead—as well as the brainwashing of captives and civilians who are suspected Viet Cong,¹² and that we have turned some of the richest areas of the world into wastelands through our defoliation of the countryside to deny the enemy cover and food.

There is in the readings impressive evidence that the Viet Minh village polity I described earlier is at least as viable and more legitimate than the alternatives that have been offered or enforced by Diem or his successors. There is evidence that Ho Chi Minh, who built that polity throughout Vietnam while he led his people in revolution against the French and in the fight against the Japanese in World War II, is rightly recognized throughout Vietnam as the father of his country.¹³ The evidence cannot be ignored that in aiding the totalitarian Diem against all who opposed him (most of whom were not communists) until he tore apart the fabric of Vietnamese society;¹⁴ in protecting and supporting a succession of totalitarian successors from the same minority ruling class; in subjecting Vietnam to mounting destruction; and in putting our faith in the newest in a long series of attempts at pacification which have largely failed—that in doing all this

"panoply of U.S. power" at bases like Danang, which cannot improve in the least the security of a village a mile away, are part of a terribly destructive war that the U.S. has created and is winning—but that is totally irrelevant. Our generals go on vainly predicting the end of the war in a year or so (as they have done each year for many years and as Westmoreland just did again) because they are blind to the relevant war.

¹²For first hand evidence from soldiers themselves see Glenn Mudson, ed., *Letters from Vietnam* (1966) or see photographic evidence in Felix Greene's *Vietnam! Vietnam!*—or merely the increasing admissions in the public press.

¹³In 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared his country independent and, in the preamble to that declaration of independence, said this, "All men are created equal . . . and they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights. Among them are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." He looked to the U.S. as example and champion, which was clearly the role intended by President Roosevelt, but, in the initial ignorance and confusion of the new Truman administration, at Potsdam Vietnam was returned to the French. In the following years, in response to the growing anti-communist hysteria in our country, the U.S. committed itself to involvement in France's reinvasion, so that by 1954 when the French were defeated we were supplying 80% of the economic costs of the war. If we had offered patience and aid to Ho Chi Minh—in full recognition that he was a communist—rather than twice betraying him after he had won his country, he would quite likely have been able to forge a united Vietnam into the strongest kind of buffer against Chinese expansion—an independent, neutralist leftist state much like Burma, constituting no threat to Red China and none to us. Our failure of mind and heart during the cold war is epitomized in our having turned that man into a bitter enemy, while preserving Batista and Diem (and now the colonels who are destroying the freedoms of Greece) as our friends.

¹⁴See Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong, The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (M.I.T., 1966).

we are enforcing a new order of government in violation of all Mormon standards for a just war. And that we are in the process *increasing* the real dangers of communism.

DELUSIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Why have we persisted in such a course? The answer may tell us what we must now change. As I have tried to understand communism and our response to it I have come to these conclusions:

Our dogmatic anti-communism, based in fear rather than knowledge, has led us to persist in a delusion that the war is essentially an act of aggression from North Vietnam, controlled by Peking as part of some international communist conspiracy for world conquest, and that the National Liberation Front and North Vietnam, motivated only by such aggressive intentions, can be bombed, burned and starved into submission and a settlement that will "end the war." This overlooks thirty years of determined struggle against Japan, France, and the U.S. by a people who are fired with crusading zeal through a unique combination of communism and their own indigenous nationalistic desires and hatred of colonialism. They quite probably would not give up if Kosygin, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, and even their NLF leaders wanted them to, and we are in serious trouble as long as we persist in thinking that all such popularly supported guerilla wars can be started and stopped by ambitious communist leaders in Russia and China. Supporters of our policies claim that we must win in Vietnam to discourage those leaders from starting "wars of liberation" elsewhere. *We* are the fools—tragic fools—if we believe communist masterminds are such incredible fools as to be sitting around waiting on the results in Vietnam. The results are already in. What more could they want to win in their supposed thirst for world domination than to tie up a quarter of our national budget and seriously strain our manpower, to cause immense disruption in American society and destroy its reputation abroad. If communist leaders had the power and will to start such wars as the one in Vietnam, they would immediately start four more—say Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, and India—and we would be *finished*. But they cannot, because the insurrection in Vietnam is unique in its integration of communism with popularly-based nationalism and social revolution—an integration we have helped to force by neglecting to understand or support anything to the left of the loudly anti-communist ruling class.

Conditions which tend to make inevitable some kind of communist involvement in any truly representative government in Vietnam (one which will therefore not be constantly revolted against as all American-chosen regimes have been) do not exist in other South East Asian countries. Malaya and the Philippines (and more recently Indonesia) have defeated communist insurrections because the overwhelming majority of the people supported an anti-communist (though leftist) central government, and Red China was prevented from all-out support (assuming she wished to give it) by her unwillingness to risk a run-in with U.S. power residing in the Seventh Fleet—over something *not in her own vital national interest*. This last is important to a consideration of Burma, which has a 1000-mile border with China and has been neither subverted nor invaded. In fact, China has settled her border disputes largely to Burma's advantage and refused to give open support

to left-wing attempts at insurrection (which have failed therefore because of the leftist central government's popular support) in a situation where she *could* have interfered with little risk of having to confront U.S. power. It seems that this is because Burma has remained strictly neutral, has refused to be a site for U.S. bases or to align with the U.S. through SEATO, and therefore constitutes no threat to China's *national* interests. Conversely, Thailand is in growing trouble partially because she *has* harbored American military buildup threatening to China. *Of course*, China would hope to see Thailand subverted—for precisely the same reason that we have tried to subvert Cuba, to the point of invasion and the risk of world destruction; measured by our own standards for ourselves, China's restraint has been remarkable.

It is quite possible that *our* actions, since they have destroyed the economic and social strength of all of Vietnam and increasingly threaten the legitimate national interests of China, are the major *encouragement* to the subversion of South East Asia.

As a result of our actions we have lost credibility and moral prestige throughout most of the world. In our immature concern to sustain the world's confidence in our ability to fight (though no one doubts we could obliterate Vietnam) we have destroyed a much more important confidence in our ability to understand and to use judgment and restraint. We have neglected our traditional role as an *example* of revolution against unrepresentative or exploitive government and misused the power and wealth and opportunity we have had available to solve the great freedom-destroying problems of poverty, prejudice, and ignorance in our own country as well as abroad.

Through its actions our government has lost the moral confidence of an increasing number of its own citizens, something no free government can endure without. This is James Reston's description of what has happened.

The Johnson administration said it was not seeking a military solution to the war, and it is now obviously seeking precisely that. It said it was there merely to help a legitimate government defend itself, and it has ended up by replacing a military clique that is not a government, not legitimate, and is not really defending itself.

Even when allowances are made for the uncertainties and moral ambiguities of warfare, the guile of this Administration, exercised in the name of high and even noble principle, is hard to match. It was not going beyond the Seventeenth Parallel in Vietnam, but went beyond. It was merely going to respond to enemy attacks on its bases, but it went over to the offensive. It was not going to get involved in a major war on the Asian land mass, but it did.

The President was not even faithful to his bad resolves, he said he would not negotiate, but then offered to do so, and spoiled that by refusing to negotiate with the major elements of the enemy he faces. He has not merely misled his enemies but his friends. His old colleagues in the Congress have not forgiven him yet for tricking them into support of a blank check defense of all Southeast Asia under circumstances they could not possibly oppose. . . .

A great deal [hangs] on whether the American people can trust the

pronouncements of their Government, whether they can remain united on purposes they understand and respect, whether the allies believe Washington really wants a compromise settlement in Vietnam, or merely a surrender on its own terms. . . . There is certainly little faith here in the official spoken word.¹⁵

Perhaps the most discouraging if not frightening discrepancy in our government's public claims is in the area of negotiations. A compilation of instances supported by publicly available evidence shows quite clearly that our government has consistently responded to peace feelers from the other side with military escalation or verbal rebuff, and that our government refuses to deny or explain these facts. Our government has deliberately created the impression of willingness to negotiate unconditionally, and yet its constant falling back on previously unstated conditions (such as its inability to detect "serious intent" on the part of the other side) has destroyed *at least five* documented opportunities for meaningful negotiation—most recently in January and February of 1967, when, over-confident of military victory, we refused negotiation on terms that we had said before we would accept. (See Robert F. Kennedy's analysis of this in the November, 1967, *Look* and Theodore Draper's essay "How Not to Negotiate," *op. cit.*)

And we have moved in the direction of decreasing our own precious freedoms and moral sensibility as we have been party to the brutalities of guerilla war and mass bombing and experienced increasing frustration at home. More dangerous perhaps than the threat of a resurgent McCarthyism, or the totalitarian tendencies revealed in such recent actions as General Hershey's directive to draft boards to punish those who oppose the war by inducting them, is the conditioning of America to increasing and continuous brutality.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MORMONS

It may be that our country, this chosen land, has already failed the great destiny promised it in the Book of Mormon—if its people obeyed the God of this land, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace; it may be that men like Paul Goodman are right and our country has become "like a conquered province," with rulers diabolically opposed to the popular will, or leaders and "experts" who are immobilized by past mistakes and can do nothing but persist in making things worse.

Some are saying the time has come for revolution, but I do not believe that time has come. The Constitution may be already hanging by a thread, but there is still real, meaningful work to be done which can lead to new understanding—to

¹⁵*New York Times*, July 1, 1966. The list of discrepancies between statements by our government and the facts might continue: our leaders invoke our nation's respect for law and condemn the civilly disobedient as a shame to America, but these same leaders have manifestly violated the Geneva Accords (which, regrettably or not, we verbally assented to), the U.N. Charter (which is the supreme law of our land and demands that any member nation submit its case to the U.N. *before* taking military action), and in the judgment of some competent authorities have violated our own Constitutional provisions governing the waging of war; we were not bombing Hanoi or civilian areas—but Harrison Salisbury went to Hanoi and found that we *were* (and we have already forgotten the shock that caused a year ago as we have become inured to falsehood); we were not using bases in Thailand—but reporters found we *were*. Some cynics say the way to gauge what the administration is doing or is about to do is by the volume of denials. If so, we can confidently assume that McNamara was kicked upstairs to give greater freedom to the militarists and can predict that we will soon invade North Vietnam.

reconciliation in our own country, and to policies that can lead to peace abroad. But such things are impossible without our truly facing the *causes* of our tragic errors and opening ourselves in meekness to the changes that must be made.

There are particular strengths from the Mormon tradition and its prophetic voices to help us reconsider our own attitudes and to move ourselves and others toward repentance. We Mormons have been particularly outspoken about freedom and against communism. We need to think through the way we speak out much better than we have done. What does it mean for us to pick up the popular rhetoric about defending freedom in Vietnam, giving it our own special force, when we support a regime which closes newspapers critical of it and passes laws condemning as traitors liable to execution those who speak out in any way for peace or negotiation with the communists? There is absolutely no evidence that any of the minority governments we have supported in South Vietnam have been less repressive or more conducive to freedom (measured by *any* criteria) than Ho Chi Minh's government in North Vietnam. How can we be so arrogant as to subject people to killing, to destruction of crops, to mass deportation, all of which certainly are freedom-destroying in the extreme, in an attempt to force them to choose the version of despotism we favor rather than the communist version. We certainly have the right personally (and possibly the moral responsibility) to choose to be dead rather than to be red, but we have absolutely no moral right to make that choice for millions of other people, to tell them that it is better for them that we kill them, or put them in what amounts to concentration camps, or insist that they be under a regime which allows little or no political freedom, rather than that they be communists—or even more leftist than we prefer.

Many Mormons have been in the forefront of militant anti-communism in this country. Much of this has been insensitive to changes that have taken place in communism in the last fifty years. We need to reconsider why we continue to clamor for policies that work against the very underlying principles which justify anti-communism in the first place. We need to realize that communism is in part what we make it—through our responses, our actions, our ability to offer alternatives. But our responses have most often encouraged the very conditions which produce communism and have forced communistic countries, which in our time have begun to separate into nationalist groupings, to cling to each other for support in the face of our militance, and to cling to their own dangerous paranoia and militance. We need to change.

But what can we do? We must read and then think through the available evidence in terms of the principles that motivate us in our feelings about other men and our sense of the meaning of life in this world with the rest of God's children. And we must take time to search in our hearts for the patience and meekness that can allow for change. As Arnold Toynbee reminded the commencement convocation at the University of Utah, the chief of our sins is pride, a special temptation for Americans, with their special kind of nationalism, and perhaps for Mormons, who have an extra dimension of nationalist fervor lent by the Book of Mormon scriptures¹⁶ and a twentieth century emphasis on patriotism.

¹⁶That is, when those scriptures are *misunderstood* to imply that America is a chosen land because we have been given special favors rather than special responsibilities.

Toynbee also reminded us that Americans have a special proclivity for the sin of impatience. The tendency of Americans to tragically underestimate what is involved in Vietnam was revealed in the quote from Bayard Hooper earlier, in part of which he almost off-handedly compared our efforts in Vietnam to our race to the moon. As Toynbee pointed out, America's impatience was particularly useful in the nineteenth century in the battle to conquer a new continent—working against *non-human* nature. But the great problems America faces now require it to deal with *human* nature, with other children of God who have their own agency and values, and as Toynbee says, in this situation “the man of action's impatience is no virtue at all. On the contrary it is a failing that leads one into making those mistakes that can be worse than crimes.” We must have the courage to break with our ancestors' impatience, to understand that changing the minds and hearts of the Vietnamese is not the same thing as going to the moon, and not amenable to the same impatient, inhuman use of power—military or political. Mormons, perhaps above all others, ought to understand, with their doctrine of free agency, the impossibility as well as immorality of forcing a new government, a new polity on a people, “no matter how superior that government may be.”

Without succumbing to illusions about the honor or intentions of militant forms of communism, we must still be deeply ashamed that we can do little other than copy, or outdo, its own immoral methods in opposing it. If the Gospel of Jesus Christ means anything it means that there are resources other than retaliation and mass destruction for dealing with what we oppose. We must insist on the patient and long-suffering use of these resources rather than allowing ourselves to give in to the garrison mentality of a powerful military establishment or to accept the rhetoric of the Air Force's morally and pragmatically bankrupt doctrine of “victory through airpower” (which amounts to destruction of the populace's will to fight by destruction of the populace).

Those with lingering doubts about the *barbarity* of that doctrine and the damage it has done our nation's moral perceptions should read Lewis Mumford's “The Morals of Extermination,” in the October, 1959, *Atlantic Monthly*, which documents how, slowly surrendering to its own military leaders, America turned from abhorrence at the German practice of bombing civilians in the beginning of World War II to retaliation in kind, and finally to acceptance without a qualm of the obliteration of Dresden and Berlin and Hiroshima. Anyone with lingering doubts about the *ineffectiveness* should ponder the following “prophecy”¹⁷ by former Commander of the Strategic Air Command, Thomas S. Powers, which was published early in 1965:

Let us assume that, in the fall of 1964, we would have warned the communists that unless they ceased supporting the guerillas in South Vietnam, we would destroy a major military depot in North Vietnam. Through radio and leaflets, we would have advised the civilian population living near the depot of our ultimatum and of the exact time of our attack so that civilians could be evacuated. If the communists failed to heed our warning and continued to support the rebels, we would have gone through with the threatened attack and destroyed the depot. And if this act of

¹⁷*Design for Survival*, pp. 224-225.

“persuasive deterrence” had not sufficed, we would have threatened the destruction of another critical target, and if necessary would have destroyed it also. We would have continued this strategy until the communists had found their support of the rebels in South Vietnam too expensive and agreed to stop it. Thus, within a few days and with minimum force, the conflict in South Vietnam would have been ended in our favor.

Just after this statement was published, on February 8, 1965, American jets began the bombing of North Vietnam which has continued, essentially without letup, for *nearly three years*. Such prophets continue to guide our policies in Vietnam and greatly influence, if they do not determine, the kind of country we are building at home.

As Mormons we could do no better in turning from such false prophets to true than to reflect carefully on the following statement of the First Presidency in 1946 against Universal Compulsory Military Training (quoted more fully in the Autumn, 1967, *Dialogue*, p. 164):

We shall give opportunity to teach our sons not only the way to kill but also, in too many cases, the desire to kill, thereby increasing lawlessness and disorder to the consequent upsetting of the stability of our national society. God said at Sinai, thou shalt not kill. . . .

By creating an immense standing army, we shall create to our liberties and free institutions a threat foreseen and condemned by the founders of the republic, and by the people of this country from that time till now. . . .

By the creation of a great war machine, we shall invite and tempt the waging of war against foreign countries, upon little or no provocation; for the possession of great military power always breeds thirst for domination, for empire, and for a rule by might not right. . . .

Should it be urged that our complete armament is necessary for our safety, it may confidently be replied that a proper foreign policy, implemented by an effective diplomacy can avert the dangers that are feared. What this country needs and what the world needs, is a will for peace, not war.

That impressive example from the rich Mormon heritage of prophetic judgment on the moral implications of social and political issues gives detailed and passionate foresight into the subsequent twenty years of various forms of military conscription and the formation of what Eisenhower named (in warning against its “disastrous rise of misplaced power”) the “military-industrial complex.”

Truly, what this country needs is a “will for peace.” We have not seriously tried non-military solutions to the threat of communism. Those solutions require a frame of mind different from the one we have allowed to lead and condition us—a non-military frame of mind, which can only emerge if the military power is put in its proper place and we can find the strength to turn with some seriousness to the ways of the Prince of Peace, to rationality instead of fear, to patience instead of vindictive impulse, to meekness instead of arrogance.¹⁸

¹⁸A good measure of the comparative strength of our faith in the power of the means taught by Christ to bring peace, as opposed to the ways of force and retaliation, is our expenditure on armaments

SOLUTIONS AND TRAGIC PRIDE

I insist that, as so often happens in current discussion of the war, no reader has the right at this point to say, "Yes, but what is your *solution*," satisfied that because I cannot come up with such a "solution," my indictment is not valid. This is a bit like saying that it is not valid to indict man on moral grounds for trying to injure or kill his wife unless one can also provide solutions to his marital problems. There *are* solutions—perhaps too many of them. The greatest danger to the world and to the American soul may very well be that now it has become almost the popular thing to do to admit we have made some mistakes in Vietnam and to then offer a "solution" (see, for instance, recent articles and editorials in popular national magazines, such as Theodore Sorenson's in the *Saturday Review* and Robert Kennedy's in *Look*, and the first article in this Roundtable); we will be tempted to choose a solution that allows us to persist in our delusions—rather than to find the creative energy to truly change our ways. Most of these solutions allow rationalization rather than moving us to repentance, and, even if they were workable (and most are not because they underestimate the will of those opposing us) they are immoral if they do not face the strong possibility that the will we oppose was, if it is not still, the majority will in Vietnam. If, as a nation, we again allow our moral judgment to be numbed by militarism, as it was in the vindictive insistence on unconditional surrender and the acceptance of mass bombing in World War II, we face a long succession of Vietnams—which is horrible enough to contemplate without the added assurance that they will lead inevitably to nuclear war.

As we consider (as Mormons and Americans) whether this is a time for outrage and change or a time for despair or passive going-along-with-things, it is important to recall this prophetic denunciation by President J. Reuben Clark:

*... as the crowning savagery of the war, we Americans wiped out hundreds of thousands of civilian population with the atom bomb in Japan, few if any of the ordinary civilians being any more responsible for the war than were we. . . . Military men are now saying that the atom bomb was a mistake. It was more than that; it was a world tragedy. . . . And the worst of this atomic bomb tragedy is not that not only did the people of the United States not rise up in protest against this savagery, not only did it not shock us to read of this wholesale destruction of men, women, and children, and cripples, but that it actually drew from the nation at large a general approval of this fiendish butchery.*¹⁹

President Clark's was almost a lone voice during the moral lethargy following WWII, when America capitulated to decisions influenced by a growing militarism, and despite the vigor of the condemnation the Mormon people have not been vigorous in following its lead. If we take at all seriously our presumed role as a saving remnant in this chosen land, we must find the means *now* to have sufficient faith unto repentance—faith enough in our principles and the counsel of our leaders to try them. We must lead out in condemning the chief sin that besets modern

of many times the amount we spend on positive means for waging peace. We lack the courage to seriously try what we continually say we believe.

¹⁹General Conference, October, 1946. (Italics in text.) Quoted in Newquist, *op. cit.*, p. 471.

America—the sin of pride in our might and in our innocence. Our war in Vietnam has literally taken on the dimensions of a Greek tragedy; we have become over-reachers, blindly committing ourselves to tasks beyond our right or capacity and persisting against all reason and experience, presuming to play God in a faraway land when we have not yet learned to be human in our own country.

If peace is to come and is not to be followed by a succession of Vietnams, we must lead out in helping America break through the fearful mask of popular anti-communism to see where the real problems lie behind the labels. We must follow the lead of President David O. McKay in perceiving our real enemies and values:

No matter how excellent [Nazism, Fascism, Communism, or Capitalism] may seem in the minds of their advocates, none will ameliorate the ills of mankind unless its operation in government be impregnated with the basic principles promulgated by the Savior of Men. On the contrary, even a defective economic system will produce good results if the men who direct it will be guided by the spirit of Christ.

Actuated by that spirit, leaders will think more of men than of the success of a system. Kindness, mercy, and justice will be substituted for hatred, suspicion, and greed. There is no road to universal peace, which does not lead to the heart of humanity.²⁰

Only when we gain that perspective can we find solutions.

I know the issues are more complex than I have had space to indicate—*why* we got so terribly involved despite our good intentions, *what* the communists have done or would do if we were not there, *how* we could possibly leave after committing ourselves so thoroughly in words and actions. But I must absolutely reject the plodding fatalism infesting our country now—that comes from perceiving the complexities and surrendering in despair to the same old ways. We must have a change of mind—a new perspective and will for peace that can release us from the limitations of those old ways of thinking—and *then* solutions will come. We can *create* solutions in such an atmosphere. *Of course* we cannot just withdraw from Vietnam; our responsibilities are too great to the country whose economy and countryside and common life we have helped despoil—and to the privileged class we have sustained who would most surely receive little mercy from a communist government. But we cannot just go on. No expert has been able to demonstrate that a military “solution” is possible short of our own version of Hitler’s final solution of the Jewish problem—complete obliteration of the peninsula. And the political “solutions” of the kind Hillam has championed require that we go on for ten or fifteen or twenty years paying 20,000 American lives and perhaps 100,000 Vietnamese lives per year for the privilege of destroying one “infrastructure” and replacing it with another not demonstrably different in appearance, principles, or effects.

There are possible efforts toward solutions that have not yet been tried (such as stopping the bombing, unconditionally, or bringing in an international body with absolute power to arbitrate or encouraging those leaders in South Vietnam,

²⁰General Conference, October, 1944. Quoted in “Statements on Communism and the Constitution by President David O. McKay” (Deseret Book Co., 1967) p. 9.