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Cleveland, the Vietnam War and the antiwar movement : the beginnings from inner-city protest to resistance, 1960-1968

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A Thesis

entitled

Cleveland, the Vietnam War and the Antiwar Movement:

The Beginnings from Inner-city Protest to Resistance, 1960-1968

by

John J Gleason

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Liberal Studies Degree in Liberal Studies

Todd Michney, Ph.D., Committee Chair

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May 2016

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An Abstract of

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The overall configuration of the antiwar movement will be explored through a local study of Cleveland, Ohio as this was an important center for the movement's genesis and of antiwar activity. The historical beginnings of the war will be covered while outlining how, why, when and where the movement against it developed. Northeast Ohio had strong cultural and active liberal campuses at the time, which organized the first formal antiwar conference protest meetings in 1966. The organizational conferences in Cleveland led to the first massive antiwar protest demonstration in New York City and San Francisco on April 15, 1967, and from that day changed the direction of the United States war policy in Vietnam.

For Katie and Kayla. I appreciate all the hours you gave up for me to achieve this accomplishment, and I truly meant that this was a team effort.

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This thesis would not have been possible without the mentoring and comments received from Todd Michney, Ph.D. His contributions of material, advice, worthwhile criticisms, patience and generosity were deeply appreciated. Dr. Jerry Van Hoy was also instrumental in assisting me on my pursuit of the Master of Liberal Studies Degree.

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List of Abbreviations

AFL-CIO.....	American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
AFSC.....	American Friends Service Committee
ASC.....	American Security Council
CAPAC	Cleveland Area Peace Action Council
CIA.....	Central Intelligence Agency
CLCV	Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam
CORE.....	Congress of Racial Equality
ERAP	Economic Research and Action Project
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigations
FSM.....	Free Speech Movement
ICPP	Inner City Protestant Parish
MFDP.....	Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party
NAACP.....	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NCC	National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam
NOW.....	Non-Committee Opposing War
NSA.....	National Student Association
SANE	National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy
SASS.....	Case Western Reserve School of Applied Sciences
SCLC.....	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
SWP	Socialist Workers Party
UFM.....	United Freedom Movement
WRL.....	War Resisters League
WRU	Western Reserve University
WRUCEWV	Western Reserve University Committee to End the War in Vietnam
WSP	Women Strike for Peace
YAF.....	Young Americans for Freedom
YAWF.....	Youth Against War and Fascism
YIPPIES	Youth International Party
YSA.....	Young Socialist Alliance

Preface

Americans maintained a posture of global activism after World War II, aimed at the containment of Communism. President Kennedy said in his inaugural address that America would “pay any price” and “bear any burden” to defend freedom everywhere. This would come back to haunt the country later in the decade.

During the same time, the need for industrial labor and poor rural conditions in the South encouraged Black migration to western and northern cities which caused demands for economic and social equality. The demands for change helped spawn a vigorous civil rights movement throughout the country. Kennedy’s assassination brought President Johnson into office, a longtime supporter of economic opportunity for the poor. Johnson was determined to promote progressive legislation called the Great Society.

The war in Vietnam, America’s obligation to stop the spread of Communism, intensified until it consumed the Johnson presidency. The hope of having a limited conflict in Vietnam without sacrificing his domestic war on poverty, disappeared. The war started out with a small minority protesting against it on moral grounds. They included students, teachers, and clergy while later being joined with prominent black leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. Black leaders believed their men were doing more of the fighting and dying in Vietnam in proportion to white people, and fighting for a people’s freedom in another country when they did not have freedom in their own. A substantial group of Americans objected to President Johnson’s conduct of the war, that he was not acting strongly or decisively enough.

As the Vietnam War progressed, most Americans became more uncertain, confused, and frustrated. The mounting casualty figures, rising costs, and endless

prospect of war gave many in America the feeling “I want to get out, but I don’t want us to give up.” The effort to achieve “peace with honor,” with only a minority of protestors expressing dissent in the beginning of the war, had become a significant political factor until soldiers stopped dying in Vietnam.

Every history project has a history. This one dates back to my childhood of the 1960s and 70s. I have many memories from those early days such as playing on sports teams, school, TV shows, and then every night seeing the war on the news in our home. Helicopters dropping off soldiers, wounded troops, jungle fighting, every day on all three channels, the war. Protests and demonstrations became more frequent as the war grew more unfavorable. The draft ended, the war stopped and Watergate ended Nixon’s time in office. As North Vietnam finally took over South Vietnam, the country’s long journey to healing from the war began. I always thought about what choices I would have made if presented with the draft. I signed up as every male has to with the Selective Service Commission on his eighteenth birthday which was under the Carter presidency, while hoping they never enact the draft again.

America got entrenched in a civil war in Vietnam where it did not understand that the Vietnamese people would never stop fighting until its country was unified. The military strength of the United States could never destroy the will of Vietnam. Eventually, America came to understand it needed to bring its soldiers home, as it was fighting an endless war.

My project was to better understand the formation of the Vietnam antiwar movement and how events and circumstances specifically dealing with Cleveland, Ohio,

my hometown, took part. Cleveland proved to be the movement's genesis, with many liberal campuses leading to the first organized mass demonstration against the war.

Chapter One

Beginnings

The editor of the magazine *U.S. News and World Report* published a book in 1970 entitled *Communism and the New Left* which fed into the portrayal and misconceptions about those who opposed the Vietnam War in the United States. It grouped together the New Left, Old Left, Civil Rights and urban disorders and suggested that those involved belonged to an evil organization only interested in the destruction of the United States.¹ The book pandered to the fears of many older Americans and really had only a grain of truth in it. In actuality, pacifists, students, clergy, and intellectuals opposed the Vietnam War first, then were later joined by parents, hippies and groups from ecologists to women's liberationists that marched later. The Vietnam antiwar movement was amorphous and changed throughout the decade but always retained some common aspects and participants.² Vietnam War protestors saw the war as a moral, ethical and socioeconomic wrong which was deeply damaging the country.³ Many opponents of the war had links to the civil rights movement, and brought a common spirit from the civil rights struggles into the student movement. Civil Rights groups such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC),

¹ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1987), 3; Joseph Newman, *Communism and the New Left* (Washington, DC: Books by U.S. News and World Report, 1970), 13, 15.

² Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 170; Terry Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5, 7.

³ David Chalmers, *And the Crooked Places Made Straight: The Struggle for Social Change in the 1960s* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 74; Howard Brick, *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), 153; Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 5, 7.

Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), and the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) based their early opposition to the Vietnam War on the disproportionate numbers of blacks drafted compared to white inductees. These groups also protested because of the hypocrisy of fighting for a people's freedom in another country while African Americans were being treated as second class citizens at home.⁴

In Cleveland, Ohio, local war protest groups like Cleveland Area Peace Action Council (CAPAC), National Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Non-Committee Opposing War (NOW) faced enormous obstacles in winning the American people to their point of view, as did antiwar protest groups all across America, especially early on in the war, and faced the same challenges. A sizable portion of American citizens eventually turned against the Vietnam War because they considered it unwinnable, but like most movements throughout American history, only a minority ever participated in the protests. Only two or three percent of students actively opposed the Vietnam War while only twenty percent ever participated in an antiwar demonstration.⁵

This thesis discusses the origins of the antiwar movement of the Vietnam era, with specific reference to Cleveland, Ohio. It covers the historical beginnings of the war, and outline how, why, when and where the movement against it developed. The overall configuration of the Vietnam antiwar movement can be productively explored through a local study, as Cleveland was an important center for the movement's genesis and of

⁴ Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now! American Society and the Ending of the Vietnam War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 35, 36; Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 2, 10, 11, 25.

⁵ Fred Halstead, *Out Now!* (New York: Monad Press, 1978), 188-192; Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 6-7.

antiwar activity. Northeast Ohio had strong cultural institutions and active liberal campuses at the time. Student newspapers such as the *Tribune* at Western Reserve University, the *Carroll News* at John Carroll University and the Cleveland State University *Cauldron* were very influential locally in stirring up student sentiment opposing the war.⁶

Protesters' first problem was that the American government was unified and intent on pursuing a foreign war. Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy first sent advisors and equipment to Vietnam and the war was then dramatically escalated by President Johnson and President Nixon. After two days of discussion, Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, based on false claims of North Vietnamese aggression. The Resolution gave President Johnson a free hand to do what he wanted to in Vietnam, as the House and Senate passed the measure. Only two senators having anti-imperialistic and anti-militaristic viewpoints dissented, Wayne Morse and Earnest Gruening, and they subsequently lost their re-election bids.⁷

A second problem protesters faced was that American workers led by the top leadership of the U.S. labor movement lined up squarely behind the war, which they believed was part of the fight against communist aggression. The strong backing by labor gave Johnson and especially Nixon support for his war amongst his base electorate. Labor was the "great silent majority" that President Nixon spoke of in favor of the Vietnam War, supporting it in the beginning. Even earlier, George Meany, President of

⁶ Hall, *Peace and Freedom*, 153.

⁷ Jerry Gordon, *Cleveland Labor and the Vietnam War* (Cleveland: Cleveland Labor History Society, 1990), Special Collections, Cleveland State University; Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 118, 119; Randall Woods, *Vietnam and the American Political Tradition: The Politics of Dissent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 77, 78.

the AFL-CIO stated in a May 3, 1965 speech to his Building Construction Trades Department: “we can disagree here, but outside the boundaries of this nation we must have one policy, and have an effective foreign policy.” He went on to urge people in the audience to “go to their communities and follow the AFL-CIO position, to back up the commander in chief. There is no other way for freedom to survive.” Labor leaders dismissed the protesters’ argument that Vietnam should be left to work out its own destiny. American protesters saw the Vietnam War as propping up a right-wing, anti-labor military dictatorship where working class and minority youth were the ones fighting and dying. The war was undermining living standards in America and wasting resources that should have been spent for jobs and social programs here at home.⁸

According to journalist Michael Arlen, a third issue that confronted antiwar protesters throughout the Vietnam War was the way media helped the government support the war early on. The media commonly portrayed protesters as kooks, draft dodgers, cowards, “reds,” and even traitors. The majority of Americans were influenced by this image of the protesters that they were presented through the media, at least early on in the war. Whereas many believed Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. brought dignity to the Civil Rights struggle, he now took flak for his antiwar stance as “rag tag protesters” shown on television were seen as undisciplined and incapable of resisting the urge to torment authority figures. The protest leaders usually were ignored by the press but also believed there was some value in presenting themselves as the victims of police brutality. However, the viewers who had seen riots, the 1968 Democratic National

⁸ Ibid.; Gordon, *Cleveland Labor and the Vietnam War*, 1.

Convention in Chicago, and the war every night in their living rooms were not filled with compassion for suffering protesters, at least not until later in the war.⁹

The media fostered perceptions of the antiwar movement that groups like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Youth International Party (Yippies) and activists like the Chicago Seven (including Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin) were treasonous, violent cowards who would not fight for their country. In many Americans' minds, the young were becoming communist sympathizers, scorning their middle class lifestyle. However, in truth, the movement was representative of America in all its diversity.¹⁰

The antiwar movement on the whole was a non-violent movement. The membership began with mostly pacifists, who practiced non-violence as their faith. In the beginning, the movement was largely conceived and directed by adults, people over thirty. They made up most of the membership especially its older leaders. However, youths gave the movement its energy, the hundreds of thousands of troops on the ground.¹¹

After the Tet Offensive in 1968, a majority of Americans came to perceive Vietnam as the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time. The perception grew that American citizens of draft age refusing to go to war were not cowards or afraid to fight for their country – in part because they were facing harassment, court trials, jailing,

⁹ Michael J. Arlen, *Living Room War* (New York: Viking Press, 1969).

¹⁰ Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 7, 145; Maurice Isserman, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 189, 190.

¹¹ Hall, *Peace and Freedom*, 4-6; Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 49; Andrew Hunt, *David Dellinger: The Life and Times of a Nonviolent Revolutionary* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 146-148.

and for those draft deserters or resisters, separation from home and family. Eventually, Americans found out the Selective Service was a system whereby poor boys were selected to go to Vietnam and rich boys were selected to go to college, at least until President Nixon's shift to a lottery system.

The antiwar movement was a constantly loose, shifting, uneasy coalition of groups and people who disagreed on most every issue except their hatred of the Vietnam War. Most activists were not just a bunch of counterculturals living licentious lifestyles, but for the most part, straight-living ordinary citizens. The groups frequently fell apart, only to come together again to oppose the government policy on the war, and constantly disagreed over tactics, policy, action programs and basic philosophy. At the very height of the protest movement there were several hundred groups while at times only a few were the major supporters.¹²

Many protestors joined the antiwar movement because they said it was the most patriotic thing they could do; in other words, they did it out of profound patriotism. In most countries where the freedom to protest does not exist, protest movements would have been silenced. The willingness to question and challenge all that we are and all we do, constituted a higher patriotism on the left, enforcing their belief that dissent formed the marrow of American citizenship.¹³ As our government tried to discredit antiwar protestors and some members of Congress at every turn by eavesdropping, infiltration and harassment usually at the express instructions of FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, the movement nonetheless survived to save the nation's honor, to let its citizens speak about

¹² Halstead, *Out Now!* 187; Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1984), 91-94.

¹³ Woods, *Vietnam and the American Political Tradition*, 113.

its truth and hostilities nobody wanted to hear, and possibly brought a sooner end to the war.¹⁴

President Kennedy's assassination in November 1963 gave Vice-President Lyndon Johnson the presidency but it also transferred America's commitment to support the anti-communist government in South Vietnam. Kennedy had believed that the Cold War was a global struggle, events were interconnected, and weakness shown in the face of Communist aggression would only embolden it elsewhere. President Johnson was initially ambivalent towards the commitment, as he wanted to steer the United States into a period of vast social reforms, The Great Society. However, military gains by the communists showed that without greater United States involvement, South Vietnam would be lost.¹⁵

President Johnson concluded – much like President Truman in the past – that appeasement only encouraged the appetite of aggressors and the only way to deter expansion was by counterforce. This understanding had led to America's commitment in South Korea in 1950, the first time Americans engaged in a shooting war against the communists. In June 1950, the United States began to provide military supplies to the French in Indonesia. By 1954, when the French ended their war, the United States was funding 80 percent of the war effort.

President Eisenhower, shortly before the French defeat by the communists in Indochina, characterized the loss as a “falling domino, [because] after the first country

¹⁴ Isserman, *America Divided*, 240, 241.

¹⁵ Steven Cohen, *Vietnam: Anthology and Guide to a Television History* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 89; Robert Schulzinger, *A Time for War: The United States and Vietnam, 1941-1975* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 97.

falls to the communists in South East Asia the others will go more quickly, as there will be no more strong support against it. The losses are incalculable to the free world.” Over the next few years, President Eisenhower committed substantial economic and military aid to prop up an independent anti-communist regime in South Vietnam.¹⁶

The Soviet Union challenged freedom worldwide as Cold War competition shifted from Western Europe in the late 1950s to the third world nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The Communists saw this as their way to shift the balance of power. The Soviet Union continued supporting communism and “wars of liberation” like Castro’s in Cuba. President Kennedy believed firmly in the domino theory, but also knew that the South Vietnamese would have to win the war themselves. He did not want an all-out land war in Asia but warned of consequences of defeat, fearing the entirety of Southeast Asia would come under domination of the Chinese or Soviet Union. President Kennedy had 11,000 American advisors in South Vietnam as of January 1, 1963, but at this point only seventy-seven had been killed.¹⁷

In 1964, a train of events in Vietnam confronted the United States with four choices to make about its Vietnam policy. The first was to withdraw and run and forget about Southeast Asia. The thought at the time was that this would adversely affect the entire Cold War, East-West conflict which had been ongoing for decades. The communists would seem to gain a victory in the case of a withdrawal and as Secretary of

¹⁶ Isserman, *America Divided*, 71-73.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

State, Dean Rusk stated, “Such a strategy would bring us much closer to a major conflagration” since it would embolden the communists.¹⁸

The second choice was to expand the war, take it to the North Vietcong guerrillas and deprive them of their sanctuary in North Vietnam. Carrying the war to the North would ease the communist pressure on South Vietnam. However, President Johnson was reluctant to expand the war. He feared this would bring quarreling Russia and China together and lead to a general war in Southeast Asia, possibly spreading into peaceful Thailand. Johnson also greatly feared a possible second Korean-type conflict.¹⁹

A third choice was to allow Vietnam to become neutral, an idea pushed by French President Charles de Gaulle.²⁰ The United States’ view was that this was not necessary because all that was needed was for the communists to stop their aggression, after which the United States would withdraw its forces from South Vietnam. “Our forces are solely in Southeast Asia in response to the threat and reality of communist aggression from the North,” Johnson declared.²¹

The fourth choice was the path the United States took, which was to give more aid to South Vietnam and try to help defeat the communist guerillas. President Johnson sent 5,000 more advisers, sent General Maxwell D. Taylor as the ambassador to South Vietnam, and provided military supplies, but the war situation had “unquestionably been growing worse.” At the time Johnson took over, about forty percent of the countryside

¹⁸ Lowell A. Martin, ed., *The Young Peoples Book of the Year 1965*, Arnold C. Brackman, Asia, (New York: Grolier Inc., 1965), 146.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*; Melvin Small, *Johnson, Nixon and the Doves* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 29; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam, A History: The First Complete Account of Vietnam at War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 198.

²⁰ Martin, ed.: *The Young Peoples Book of the Year 1965*, 147; Karnow, *Vietnam, A History*, 327-328.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 147.

was now under communist control or influence and in some regions was as high as ninety percent.²²

In August 1964, the destroyers USS Maddox and USS Turner Joy were falsely claimed to have been fired upon by North Vietnamese torpedo boats, after which President Johnson instructed the Navy to destroy future attackers. On August 4, the USS Maddox and USS Turner Joy were attacked by North Vietnamese torpedoes and the Navy responded by destroying twenty-five boats, oil depots, and harbor facilities.²³ President Johnson appeared on television at midnight declaring “There can be no peace by aggression, and no immunity from reply.” Congress quickly passed and backed the President’s resolution, authorizing the President to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the U.S. and asserting Southeast Asia as vital to American national interests.²⁴

The Vietnam War affected the internal life of the United States in two ways: it diverted the energies from the Great Society programs which began so enthusiastically, and it generated a war fever amongst the people and the leaders. Americans heard the Johnson administration’s brave talk of having both guns and butter for America with no apparent realization of the destructive effect it would have on the Great Society. President Kennedy’s initiatives and strong economy had improved health and education, as well as lessened poverty, pollution and blight. Americans elected President Johnson by a large popular majority in 1964, and with a great leadership and harmony towards the 89th Congress he promoted sweeping legislation which almost seemed like something of a

²² Ibid.; Karnow, *Vietnam, A History*, 342.

²³ Ibid., 370.

²⁴ Ibid., 370, 372.

social revolution.²⁵ The Great Society's programs passed which included expanding education, providing health care to the aged, combating urban and rural poverty, renewing our cities and purifying our streams, as well as addressing other long neglected problems.²⁶

Then came Vietnam. The war was small and distant for many years before 1965, because as the American leaders stated it would be won or lost by the Vietnamese people. As the year 1965, progressed, however it became apparent the South Vietnamese government would likely lose the war without a large U.S. military intervention. The 89th Congress subsequently enacted very little legislation on domestic issues in 1966 as they lost interest in the Great Society programs and became politically and psychologically, a War Congress.²⁷

The Vietnam War was a war within a war. It was a battlefield in the Cold War against the Soviet Union and its allies. It was a civil war that polarized American citizens into being either pro-war or antiwar. The rationale for fighting the war was constantly shifting, from supporting a pro-western regime to defending the Cold War credibility of the United States and the domino theory. In 1964, President Johnson campaigned as the candidate of national prosperity and international peace. Americans felt confident about their nation's role in the world as having "never lost a war" and for the first time in decades had a president whose attention was not entirely fixed upon the danger abroad, but on the problems and prospects at home. American soldiers, meanwhile, were

²⁵ Isserman. *America Divided*, 203, 204.

²⁶ Cohen, *Vietnam*, 350.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 351.

continuing to die in Vietnam in small numbers before Lyndon B. Johnson escalated American involvement.

At the same time, the civil rights struggle and the rise of the student New Left merged during the early 1960s. The middle of the decade saw a new generation of students on campus, with activists still marching for civil rights, strikes for student power and beginning pickets against the Vietnam War. Race and war related issues eventually alienated enough citizens that it felt like the country was being torn apart.

The activism of the era stirred deep personal emotions which shaped the protest movement. The movement was amorphous throughout the decade and kept changing, but kept some common aspects. The participants felt they were fighting against an unjust cause or a flawed establishment. Anyone could participate and appeared protests if they held a similar position on an issue. The protest movement was a loose coalition, often defined mainly by its alliances. The early years' demonstrators were part of the struggle for civil rights; later, students gave power to the peace movement which continued on into rejection of the draft, "the resistance" against the Vietnam War.

Social activism was strong during the 1960s decade, with a significant portion of Americans being involved in some way on one side or the other of the movement. Although it seemed to be a mass protest, only two or three percent of students considered themselves activists while only twenty percent ever went to even one demonstration. Activist students were always in the minority, as the movement followed civil rights protests, spreading from the South to the North. Around the time that Johnson escalated the war, attention was still focused on voting rights in Selma, but the student movement soon spread up the East and West coasts where chapters of New Left organizations

proliferated in universities. The heartland of America then caught on as men started going off to war and getting killed.

Movement is a term for all those who participated for social change. This thesis recounts activism as it developed, and is structured basically chronologically – each event building upon the next as they unfolded nationally – with specific references to Cleveland as the movement expanded and became complex with emotion. People of all races, sexual orientations, ethnic backgrounds and ages came to form the protest movement.

In Cleveland, Dr. Benjamin Spock and Professor Sidney Peck, two of the antiwar movement's most prominent leaders, coordinated activities for a future mass demonstration. The massive nationwide organized demonstrations in April 1967, came from three successful antiwar group conferences held in Cleveland during 1966. This thesis will examine the reasons for the demonstration, the internal workings of the Cleveland conferences along with the coverage and analysis of what happened.

Chapter Two

An Amorphous and Pervasive Social Current

Educational reform and racial integration of the public schools were two of Cleveland's most important issues in the early 1960s. Those that were involved in that movement eventually found it necessary to participate in the antiwar movement and to criticize President Johnson's war policies. As the President's federal action or "war" on discrimination, poverty, illiteracy and social decay gave way to a shooting war on the other side of the world, most civil rights workers saw that social and cultural resources would be redirected. America's domestic issues receded as its foreign policy, the Vietnam War, took an increased prominence.

Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) of Cleveland was founded in Cleveland in 1964 as part of the Cleveland Community Project. The project was part of a broad based national organization of college students who wanted to build a new political left. In Cleveland, the local SDS operation was loosely tied to the national organization with two Case Western Reserve Medical Students, Charlotte Phillips and Ollie Fein, creating a Welfare Rights Movement that helped train local leaders. Sharon Jeffry Carol McEldowney, Cathy Boudin, and Paul Potter of SDS also founded the Cleveland Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP) to unite poor whites and black civil rights groups around economic issues. SDS promoted welfare rights, civil rights, draft resistance and opposition to the Vietnam War. SDS chapters began forming at local universities, such as Western Reserve in 1965, and the group established a local branch of its Draft Resistance Union in 1967.²⁸

²⁸ Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 114,135.

John Carroll University on Cleveland's eastside, a small Catholic university with a focus on social activism, posed difficulties for its SDS members to demonstrate themselves as a unique protest culture to the community. Many of the campus student activists were already united in opposition to the war in Vietnam and the desire to end poverty in America through social justice because of the Jesuit brothers, who promoted activist sentiment. The individual SDS members at John Carroll decided not to seek official university recognition for their organization, as they feared potential investigations or prosecution from campus police or the federal government. These fears were not unfounded, as more radical SDS chapters, like the one at Kent State University an hour east of Cleveland, were investigated by the federal government. John Carroll had a group of thirty individual SDS members affiliated with both the local and national SDS movement. The group called themselves The Students for a Free Society and participated in minor ROTC protests or aligned with other chapters in the region.²⁹

On April 17, 1965, National SDS held an antiwar march in Washington linking Vietnam with the civil rights movement. The organization's previous focus on the struggle for black rights and attempt to organize an "internal movement of the poor" finally became enmeshed with the national issue of Vietnam. SNCC leader Bob Moses spoke and compared the killing in Vietnam to the killing in Mississippi, thereby using his experiences from the Deep South in reference to the war in Vietnam.

SDS President and Cleveland ERAP project member Paul Potter closed the Washington march with a fiery speech. Potter asked how could America fight a war for a

²⁹ Michael Daniel Goodnough, "Peace Be With You: Leftist Activism at John Carroll University, 1967-69," *Ohio History* 122 (2015): 49-64.

people's freedom while disenfranchising its own people back home, and then called for the creation of a massive social movement to address the country's malaise. The march was endorsed by SANE and CORE's national leader James Farmer.³⁰

In Cleveland locally, prominent speakers discussed civil rights and Vietnam throughout the next few years. For example, CORE held a rally at Cory Methodist Church on August 5, 1966 where 600 people, half of them students, heard CORE Vice President Arthur Evans speak about the organization's new policy direction. He stated CORE was adopting Black Power ideology, reevaluating their non-violence stance opposing the war in Vietnam, and calling for the unity of black militants. Baxter Hill, chairman of Cleveland CORE spoke next and said the "Cleveland riots that just happened were just a get ready party." He also confirmed Malcolm X's statement that "It's either the ballot or [the bullet.] I ain't got nothing else to say." Stanley Toliver, a local activist, spoke about Black Power before the rally concluded with Stokely Carmichael, head of the SNCC speaking.³¹

Cleveland also combined domestic issues on a national level. Malcolm X, the country's most prominent black nationalist, had in fact delivered his famous "The Ballot or the Bullet" speech on April 3, 1964 in the city. He had stated that black people should start voting in their own people to office with their population numbers, and in fact, Cleveland became the first major city to elect an African American mayor, Carl Stokes,

³⁰ Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements of the 1960s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 24, 25.

³¹ Burt Collins, "Core Rally Held," *CSU Cauldron*, August 17, 1966, 3-4.

in 1967.³² A fierce critic of the Vietnam War, Malcolm X believed the war and domestic racism to be related. Martin Luther King Jr. also soon came to believe this, and by linking the oppression of African Americans with the use of military force against people of color in Asia, alienated President Johnson.³³

Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s the local NAACP set up picket lines and boycotts for equal employment and to end discrimination in schools. The Urban League helped confront discrimination in employment and assist black migrants from the south get factory skills. The League eventually focused more on the civil rights arena. The traditional black leadership in Cleveland was conservative on its social problems to begin with but became much more active in sympathy with the civil rights movement through fund raising and protests. National leadership such as Martin Luther King Jr. and the city's black weekly newspaper called the *Call and Post* raised civil rights activity and consciousness within the black Cleveland population.³⁴

A newly formed United Freedom Movement, mostly active around school segregation, was organized to join all of the city's civil rights activity. The organization joined all the ministers, politicians, and middle class black people of the NAACP and Urban League for the first time as a united front. The United Freedom Movement kept the frustrations of the community focused on symbolic issues. However, the city's white

³² Ibid. For an in-depth account of the Cleveland Branch of the NAACP, see Russell H. Davis, "An Account of the Cleveland Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1973," in Russell H. Davis Papers. Courtesy of Western Reserve Historical Society.

³³ Hall, *Peace and Freedom*, 8.

³⁴ Leonard N. Moore, *Carl Stokes and the Rise of Black Political Power* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 29.

leadership and middle class preferred a gradualist approach to racial issues, as they usually were not expecting too much progress too soon.³⁵

Cleveland's black poor looked to another nationally-prominent civil rights group for support, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). CORE's Cleveland Chapter was young and militant which gave a voice to the black poor and working class. CORE defined the inner city problems for African Americans like jobs, housing, and schools while the NAACP and middle class typically celebrated individual successes. In contrast, CORE believed individual success was irrelevant compared to the collective nature of black life in Cleveland which was the most important.³⁶

As groups and individuals were fighting for their rights in the inner cities, students additionally wanted to be heard and be part of their educational future. During the 1964 school year "The Free Speech" Movement" arrived at various universities and campuses around the country. Students started to demand change in the way they were governed on campus and became more outspoken. As the rebellious transition was taking place against older authority figures, the Vietnam War seemed to be the perfect fit for the students to turn their rebellious tendencies towards.³⁷

Students were awakening to their collective social responsibility. Many of those who became part of the antiwar movement were involved in civil rights work and free speech reforms before the war issue. Clevelanders were faced with issues of poverty programs like welfare assistance, hunger relief, job training, education and racial

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 31; For more on Cleveland CORE, see Warren, *Who Speaks for the Negro?*, 380-390.

³⁷ William Scranton, *Campus Unrest: The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, September 26, 1970), 19, 20.

integration. President Johnson's social legislation addressing these concerns was being threatened by the diversion of federal dollars to the fighting in Vietnam.

Northeast Ohio had strong established universities and other institutions of higher learning with active antiwar movements. Western Reserve University (Reserve) and Case Institute of Technology (Case) were located in the city's University Circle area, with Case being an engineering school. Cuyahoga Community College opened in 1963 and began full time in 1964 in downtown Cleveland. Cleveland State University began operations in 1965 in the downtown area. Other suburban schools included Baldwin Wallace College, John Carroll University, and Oberlin College. More distant Northeastern Ohio schools also with active antiwar movements included Kent State University and the University of Akron. But during the time frame discussed radicalism and antiwar activities is mostly associated with Reserve University.³⁸

In the early 1960s students wanted to make changes in the quality of their own lives and create a better place to live for everyone. Many young students joined the New Left before the war began after coming to believe the fabric of American society was in crisis and they no longer could trust their elders. The youth of the 1960s did not trust the institutions that they grew up which nurtured them.³⁹ These were not working the way they were supposed to and students found them severely lacking in substance or passion. Students became extremely vocal about the "lousy social environment and were upset at their rubber stamping and being pigeonholed into accepting their certain niches in

³⁸ "Antiwar Groups Keep on Warring," *Plain Dealer*, April 10, 1965. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

³⁹ Scranton, *Campus Unrest*, 17-19.

society.”⁴⁰ The students believed the draft had a major impact on their lives, the choices they made and that it conflicted with the educational mission of the college they attended. Through a process called channeling, the draft influenced students on career choices also. A 1965 Internal U. S. Government document explained that the Selective Service System functioned not only to provide manpower for the war, but also to control manpower for civilian activities which are in the national interest. A student going to engineering school as a graduate had a much greater chance of maintaining deferment than a graduate going to school for English. Similarly, a student finding a job in the national interest faced a far better chance of avoiding the draft. Thus, the threat of induction played a large role in a student’s choice about field of study or accept your fate.⁴¹

Social reformers in Cleveland at the time were very concerned with the inadequate education being provided to black children in the public schools, many of them living in neighborhoods close to the Reserve campus. The United Freedom Movement (UFM), an umbrella organization including black and white Protestant ministers and Jewish rabbis became the vehicle to pursue an effort to force the Cleveland School Board to integrate its schools. A group of social work students from Reserve’s School of Applied Sciences (SASS) joined the United Freedom Movement in 1964 to demonstrate against the school board policies. In one demonstration at the school board’s headquarters, the president of SASS was arrested on a trumped up charge for blocking a

⁴⁰ *Reserve Tribune*, March 12, 1964, 10. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve Archives.

⁴¹ Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, eds., *A Sixties Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 240-241.

fire exit. The demonstrators saw this as the school board trying to eliminate opposition to its policies.⁴²

The Student Christian Union became dedicated to pursuing social problems and subsequently recruited young men and women for civil rights and antiwar protests. Lynn Alkire, a Reserve student, became its president in 1963, and tried to goad fellow students to participate in civil rights efforts. Her letter to the *Reserve Tribune* on February 6, 1964 discussed the “Freedom March” the past August in Washington, D.C. and argued that everyone should help in social justice programs in Cleveland.⁴³ Bruce Klunder, a Protestant minister, student Christian Union staff member, and member of both CORE and the UFM, wrote a letter published in the *Tribune* that day outlining the problems he had in negotiations with the Cleveland School Board, and local black parents’ issues that formed the foundation for a civil rights lawsuit that forced busing-based desegregation in the 1970s. Klunder’s sole purpose for his letter was to try and convince the *Tribune* newspaper to publish more information about relevant community events and happenings, which they did especially as the Vietnam War came into focus.⁴⁴ Klunder’s interests lay in educational equality and organizing in the black community. As the first quarter of 1964 was ending the Student Christian Union left its original form – a narrow, focused religious social club – to be more active and socially responsible in the community. Bruce Klunder stated “We will be an organization of direct, concrete involvement.” College students will be moved into community organizing and learn how

⁴² *Reserve Tribune*, February 6, 1964, 1, 3. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve Archives.

⁴³ *Reserve Tribune*, February 6, 1964, 2. Courtesy of Case Western University Archives.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

to be socially active. He became a model for a young minister leading people into social action and then later into antiwar activity.⁴⁵

Bruce Klunder died on April 7, 1964 after he was run over by a bulldozer while trying to stop school construction that would have reinforced Cleveland's pattern of segregated neighborhood school enrollment. Klunder's wife Joanne had fought for racial justice and equality on the picket lines and in the South when they were in the struggle together. As Vietnam came into focus, Mrs. Klunder and Mrs. Louise Peck formed a group of Cleveland women dedicated to protesting for peace and justice against war, racism, injustice and inequalities in society. The group was focused on the younger suburban woman with a perspective on the issue of war and the issues of human concern. It focused mainly on protesting the Vietnam War and the military draft.⁴⁶

Two of the antiwar movement's most prominent leaders were physician Benjamin Spock and sociology professor Sidney Peck. They both lived and worked in Cleveland. Dr. Spock, author of the best-selling book, *Baby and Child Care, a Manual on Practical Pediatrics* which had sold millions of copies, came to Reserve Medical School in 1955. Dr. Spock taught undergraduate courses and said "while he made a career of trying to reassure parents, the issues of denying war and the possibility of nuclear destruction led him to join the committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy (SANE), and take an active vocal part in the peace movement." Dr. Spock attended Yale and Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons where he found his calling. He first practiced and taught pediatrics medicine at Cornell Medical College. During this time he wrote his

⁴⁵ Karen Proznik, "Student Christian Union: Club Changes Its Format," *Reserve Tribune*, March 1, 1964, 10. Courtesy of Case Western University Archives.

⁴⁶ Joan Klunder, "My Husband Died for Democracy," *Ebony*, June 1964, 27-35.

famous book and became a medical officer in the Navy. After the Navy he became associated with the Mayo Clinic, the University of Pittsburgh and then joined Case Western Reserve as a Professor of Child Development in 1955.⁴⁷

Dr. Spock stayed out of politics until 1961 when he made the connection between pediatrics and politics. The informal moratorium on atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons between the United States and the Soviet Union was broken in 1961, and Spock thought it was clear that a buildup would continue until there was a nuclear war or accident. He realized there would not be peace and disarmament unless people demanded it. Spock joined SANE and entered into the world of social activism. His first public demonstration for peace and a halt in arms testing with a small group was in Cleveland on Easter weekend, 1962.⁴⁸

Sidney Peck was the sixth and youngest child of a poor immigrant family which moved to St. Paul Minnesota during the Great Depression. He lived in a community with a large Irish Catholic and sizable black community. The schools he attended were largely integrated and he went to the University of Minnesota on the GI Bill after World War II, with interests in social work, community organizing and politics. Peck was a former left wing trade unionist, and amateur prize fighter. He met his wife Louise at an organizing event in 1948, who became an activist in her own right. Peck was trained as a psychotherapist and entered his academic career as a sociologist. During the 1950s, Peck taught at another college and was disturbed by the McCarthy era “Red Scare” period, which pulled him towards radical politics and away from academic matters. Vietnam was

⁴⁷ Barnabas Johnson, “Dr. Spock leaving Reserve to devote time to SANE,” *Reserve Tribune*, October 18, 1966, 1-3. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

⁴⁸ Thomas Maier, *Dr. Spock, An American Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1998), 223.

about to do the same thing to him in the 1960s.⁴⁹ He and his wife moved to Case Western Reserve in 1964, where he devoted himself to teaching, writing and research.⁵⁰

On January 16, 1964 at Thwing Hall on the Reserve campus, Dr. Spock gave a lecture titled “Why a Peace Movement?” He voiced his fears over a nuclear test ban treaty that was just signed into law by President Johnson. Conflict in Vietnam was not a front page news story quite yet, but the treaty Dr. Spock considered too weak. Spock said our leaders could not have an honest dialogue with Soviet officials and accused the Johnson administration of raising the fears of Americans citizens to irrational heights. Dr. Spock said he was expressing the hopes and fears of many in his statements.⁵¹

In late April, 1964, Dr. Spock and 300 peace movement supporters took to Public Square in downtown Cleveland. Many in the group were students who joined a demonstration sponsored by CORE and a short-lived group known as the Cleveland Organization for Peace Education. Their purpose was to hand out literature on nuclear wars and to warn of the possible dangers coming in Southeast Asia. The theme was to demonstrate for peace and disarmament in the most responsible way. Very few had heard of Vietnam before this in a way that remotely would matter to them, but as the 1964 school year ended, and the national elections began to heat up in the media, Vietnam and the military draft increasingly became a topic of conversation.⁵² Local draft boards announced plans to test all eighteen-year-old males by administering physical and

⁴⁹ Sidney M. Peck, “Thanks, but...” letter to the editor, *Reserve Tribune*, November 18, 1965. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

⁵⁰ Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1984), 89-90; Hall, *Peace and Freedom*, 154.

⁵¹ *Reserve Tribune*, January 16, 1964, 1, 2. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve Archives.

⁵² Susan Abrams, “WRU Students, Dr. Spock in Peace, Freedom March,” *Reserve Tribune*, April 30, 1964, 1, 8.

Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

mental tests. The selective service said it would not necessarily call anyone up for service based on the tests, but a month later announced a new feasibility study to determine whether the draft would be replaced by a new selection method. Major changes in voluntary and involuntary recruitment were clearly of the horizon from the American Defense Department. After the April body count, almost 600 U.S. soldiers had died in Vietnam.⁵³

The War Resisters League (WRL) was formed in 1923 to help pacifists and conscientious objectors without religious ties. They follow the Gandhian example of non-violent direct action civil disobedience. The WRL sponsored the first peacetime conscription in 1947 with a draft card turn-in burning that saw 400 men participate. WRL then joined other groups to form the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors. They concerned themselves with many social issues concerning civil rights and disarmament, along with conscription. WRL executive secretary Bayard Rustin later organized the massive civil rights march on Washington, for jobs and freedom in August, 1963.⁵⁴

Nationally on April 25, 1964 a weekly leftist paper, *The National Guardian*, carried an advertisement signed by eighty-seven youths stating that they would not fight in Vietnam. Many other papers would not carry the ad, as it read “We see no justification for our involvement” in the war. The men were enrolled at Harvard, Columbia, New York University and many other institutions. In early May, 400 students recently organized at Yale University and calling themselves the May 2 Movement, marched in

⁵³ *Plain Dealer*, June 21, 1964, A18; *Plain Dealer*, July 22, 1964, 1, 8; Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up*, 9.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Manhattan to demand withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam and an end of military aid to South Vietnam. Later that month in the *New York Herald Tribune*, an advertisement signed by 149 men of draft age, stated that they would not fight if called to do so in Vietnam.⁵⁵

David Dellinger, a peace activist since World War II, called for a demonstration against the Vietnam War in the square across from the White House, the day the Civil Rights Act was signed, July 3, 1964. The purpose for the demonstration was to publicize “a written statement the “Declaration of Conscience” by well-known pacifists David Dellinger, Reverend A.J. Muste, Bayard Rustin and others. Singer Joan Baez performed at the event. The document proclaimed a “conscientious refusal to cooperate with the United States government in the prosecution of the war in Vietnam.” The statement said “We also shall encourage the development of non-violent acts, which include civil disobedience to stop the flow of soldiers and munitions to Vietnam.” Dellinger recalled that Bayard Rustin, because of his civil rights work, was with President Johnson when he signed the act into law that day and was given one of the pens. The rally leaders hoped Bayard Rustin would leave the White House after the event with the President, come to the podium at the demonstration and sign the non-violence statement with the same pen, linking the early antiwar movement up with the Civil Rights Movement, but he did not.⁵⁶

The administration called for 5,000 more troops to be sent to Vietnam by early August, increasing the total there to 21,000. On August 4, the Gulf of Tonkin incident occurred, the actuality of which even to this very day remains unclear. Democratic

⁵⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

senators Wane Morse from Oregon and Ernest Gruening from Alaska registered the only no votes against the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, with Senator Morse declaring “Senators who vote for it will live to regret it.” Gruening stated “All Vietnam is not worth the life of a single American boy and that we have lost too many lives already.”⁵⁷ A peace and disarmament demonstration took place on August 6 in New York City to mark the nineteenth anniversary of the atomic explosion at Hiroshima, Japan. Bayard Rustin was one of the featured speakers, and amongst the demonstrator’s signs, one said U.S. troops belonged in Mississippi, not Vietnam – a reference was to the killing of three civil rights workers in Mississippi and that the government was refusing to send federal marshals there to protect them but ready to force violence in Vietnam. Clearly the Civil Rights Movement and the antiwar movement were starting to come together.⁵⁸

The 1964 Free Speech Movement and pattern of college student protests began at the University of California at Berkeley. University President Clark Kerr had told students that college was part of the knowledge industry used for business interest and defense contractors. Clark’s statement was offensive to those who thought it had something to do with acquiring wisdom and finding personal meaning in life. A civil rights worker named Mario Savio, who was previously working in Mississippi, led a revolt against the university after it began enforcing an old rule which prohibited political groups from soliciting memberships on campus and from using its facilities to support or oppose particular candidates or issues.⁵⁹ The activity had been allowed by University administration officials up until then by the designation of an area at the edge of campus

⁵⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁹ Scranton, *Campus Unrest*, 10.

for this purpose. After the campus activists decided to violate the new prohibition, the university then suspended eight of them. Eventually, when a non-student was arrested for trespassing on October 1, students conducted a spontaneous sit-in and trapped a police car for thirty-two hours. The university agreed not to press charges and everything returned to normal but the issue of political advocacy on campus remain unsettled. After Thanksgiving a few months later, the protest resumed and the Free Speech Movement- which included groups from all political persuasions to defend their right to organize on campus-began a massive, two-day sit-in at the Berkeley Administration building. Governor Brown of California called in the police who made hundreds of arrests. The police were charged with beatings and brutality.⁶⁰

Before the police intervention, only a small fraction of the student population supported The Free Speech Movement actions. The police action mobilized huge numbers of students and faculty in support of the Free Speech Movement's goals. A strike against classes and all normal activity was the result of this unprecedented activity. Student activism would be altered from this point forward, its character changing in the most fundamental way. The FSM protest, regardless of how it started, never would have succeeded without the support of many liberal, non-extremist students. Student protest reflected a desire of sincere, constructive idealism and not a desire to destroy. The students only became violent when provoked or in direct response to police violence. The Scranton Commission which President Nixon later established to study the cause of campus unrest, dissent and disorder at universities, called this prototype 1960s protest demonstration "The Berkeley Invention." The high spirits of defiance and authority that

⁶⁰ Ibid., 11.

had characterized the traditional school riot were now joined with youthful idealism and social objectives of the highest importance.⁶¹ Students' protests were beginning to take place throughout the country.

During the campaign for president in 1964, President Johnson kept saying he was the peace candidate, while republican Barry Goldwater was the trigger-happy warmonger. Goldwater had suggested using atomic weapons in Vietnam to defoliate the jungle which hid the Viet Cong supply trails. In contrast, Johnson said "We want no wider war" and people believed him.⁶² On August 29, the president said the war "ought to be fought by the boys of Asia to help protect their own land."⁶³ In September Johnson's commercial showing a little girl counting daisy petals "one, two, three, four" followed by another voice counting "four, three, two, one" as the picture dissolved into a mushroom cloud all but sealed the election for Johnson. The commercial was shown only once because of Republican protests, but that was enough because it was picked up and replayed as a news item for days. Johnson refused to tell the public he intended to widen the war, hoping they would not notice the events happening while manipulating the media.⁶⁴ Johnson won the election in the fall of 1964 because if he was not the peace candidate, he at least was the vote against nuclear war. For the moment, the country must have thought the war candidate had been defeated.

Furthermore, as resources and funding from social programs were diverted to the Vietnam War after 1965, Clevelanders involved in the Civil Rights Movement found it

⁶¹ Ibid., 13; Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up*, 26.

⁶² Ibid., 26.

⁶³ Melvin Small, *Johnson, Nixon and the Doves* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 28.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 28; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin, 1983), 320-321.

necessary to protest. Educational reform and racial integration of the Cleveland Public Schools were the most important civil rights issues in Cleveland locally in the early 1960s. The protests of the 1960s may have seemed to be of a single form but they lacked unity. There were various groups conjoined and active at the same time, such as the Old Left, New Left, and organizations with religious leanings. Historian Charles DeBenedetti saw the antiwar movement as “an amorphous and pervasive social current that connected the war in Vietnam to domestic struggles.” The Vietnam antiwar movement obscured domestic issues, rather than crystallized them, and consisted of a loose alliance of social combatants whose personal links were often ephemeral.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Charles DeBenedetti with Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 1.

Chapter Three

From Teach-Ins to Cleveland Antiwar Conferences

In 1965 Clevelanders became more aware of the Vietnam War as the news media focused on the conflict and provided a greater amount of information to the public. Every president from Harry Truman to John F. Kennedy refused to permit the use of American troops in Vietnam, although Kennedy did send Green Beret advisers to assist the South Vietnamese Army. President Johnson was the first to send large numbers of troops.⁶⁶ As the war attracted the public's attention in 1965, some in the academic community became alarmed.⁶⁷ The year 1966 was a significant time because a nucleus of ordinary citizens gathered in Cleveland to construct a network from a collection of fractious groups, determined to oppose the escalation of American involvement in the war.⁶⁸ In a pattern seen elsewhere, those in attendance were not all pacifists, but they all disapproved of American military intervention in Vietnam.⁶⁹ The most important reasons for such opposition were their convictions that a commitment to war would divert money funds from social needs, and that any war should not be an American war. Therefore three separate conferences were held in Cleveland in 1966 to discuss what could be done to take America out of the war.⁷⁰ The conference's results culminated in the formation of a Spring Mobilization Committee to end the war in Vietnam with the first mass demonstration against the war held on April 15, 1967.

⁶⁶ Roger Hilsman, "How Kennedy Viewed the Vietnam Conflict," *New York Times*, January 20, 1992.

⁶⁷ Abraham J. Moore, "The Movement to Stop the War in Vietnam," and Steve Weissman, "The National Coordinating Committee Convention," *Liberation* 10, no. 10 (January 1966): 34-38, 48-50.

⁶⁸ Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960's* (New York: Harper, 1984), 196-198, 203-208.

⁶⁹ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983).

⁷⁰ DeBenedetti, with Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 160-164.

The Spring Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam believed Cleveland to be a great centralized area for conferences and planning for its national demonstration. Two of the antiwar protest movement's leaders, Dr. Benjamin Spock and Professor Sidney Peck, already lived and worked there. Cleveland already had an active student antiwar base on some campuses, especially at Western Reserve. Professor Peck was the actual man with the vision, and the driving force behind the whole April 15 mass demonstration movement. The Cleveland conferences could be characterized by many splits and disputes amongst groups whether Old Left, New Left, or religious during the demonstration planning. The conference's goal, as it was non exclusionary, was to allow groups to hammer out differences during the conference if they could, but as long as they all had the same common goal of trying to end the war, their strength in numbers on the whole is what ultimately mattered in the culminating April 15, 1967 demonstration.

In March 1965, Michigan university professors planned a midnight teach-in for students about the Vietnam War. The event was to take place on the Michigan University campus, and be a test run as it was to be the first ever student-teacher teach-in of its kind. The teach-in brought two innovations to American education. It first established a genuine communication between students and a segment of the faculty, thus alleviating the alienation that often happens in large, mass educational institutions. Second, it infused a scholarly analysis and deep personal concern into the students' and faculty's lives.⁷¹

⁷¹ Louis Menashe and Ronald Radosh, eds., *Teach-Ins U.S.A.: Reports, Opinions, Documents* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 7.

That same month, a colleague of Professor Peck's at Western Reserve University learned of the teach-in at Michigan and wanted Peck to help him do the same at their campus. Peck consulted with his wife and the University Circle Teach-In Committee was born. Benjamin Spock was its most famous member and also a faculty member at Case. Spock stated of Sidney Peck "He taught me how to organize, raise money and how to have courage."⁷² Peck would commit the group to spend money then go out and raise it. Spock was acknowledging his support for Peck, having the great skills to be the leader of the antiwar group.

The committee's first teach-in shortly after the Michigan event was well planned with nearly three thousand attending. Sidney Peck and his committee joined with other teach-in committees from across the country, leading to a national debate aired from Washington in which international relations scholar Hans Morgenthau and other professors took on U.S. government administration spokespersons. According to Peck, "the debate turned teach-in committee members off and made it clear our movement was not going to be a force unless we got off the campuses, so we decided to build a protest movement in Cleveland." The committee knew the government was not going to give the antiwar movement any truthful answer or perceive them as a threat until they had the media or the public's attention. The Cleveland Area Peace Action Council (CAPAC) became the antiwar group formed by Sidney Peck with Dr. Spock and many other prominent Western Reserve professors. An all-night vigil in October 1965 at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in downtown Cleveland was its first action.⁷³ The Vietnam War

⁷² Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1984), 90.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

was also being protested in numerous major cities across the United States on October 15 and 16, 1965.⁷⁴

Cleveland held a Friday evening speak-out in opposition to the war for the protest at the Unitarian Society of Cleveland Heights. Dr. Benjamin Spock spoke about the aspects of the Vietnam War, as did Dr. Helen Lamb from Radcliffe, a specialist in Far Eastern Affairs and author of *The Tragedy of Vietnam*. Other speakers included Dr. Marshall Sahlins, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Michigan, who had recently returned from a trip to Vietnam.⁷⁵ Various other speakers expressed their opposing, present-day view of foreign policy which drew scattered boos from the right wing and standing ovations from the sympathizers.⁷⁶

Speakers and students at the event also organized workshops along with question and answer sessions addressing U.S. involvement in the war, asking why we are in Vietnam, what is the best program for peace, and how to achieve peace. There was a midnight protest vigil at Public Square and a rally Saturday at noon. The protestors after the rally marched to the Army Induction Center, meeting counter protesters along the way where police were on hand to make sure no violence erupted. The Vietnam Day Committee's goal was to have their voice heard, "to stop the death and destruction," but there were many on hand who supported the President's policy also.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ "Demonstrators Protest," *Reserve Tribune*, October 14, 1965, 6. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

⁷⁵ "Extended Teach-In," *Reserve Tribune*, October 14, 1965, 6. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

⁷⁶ "Demonstrators Protest," *Reserve Tribune*, October 21, 1965, 1. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

The Reserve Tribune on October 21, 1965 presented the Induction Center protest from two angles, the left wing and the right wing, the left wing being the protesters view against the Vietnam War and the right wing being the demonstrators view on the Vietnam War. The left view was given by Phil Passen, where he cited several incidents in which right-wing violence went unchecked by police. He said demonstrators were accosted and continually harassed by groups like the Hungarian Freedom Fighters, and Young Americans for Freedom. Cleveland at the time had the second largest population of Hungarians in the world after Budapest, and some of the Freedom Fighters had fought Soviet oppression in 1956, coming to the understanding that “freedom is not free.” They considered the antiwar protesters to be communist sympathizers and therefore, protested back.⁷⁸ Passen stated protesters had met all harassment with passive resistance. Demonstrators intended to hand out leaflets to draft inductees at the Induction Center, but one protester claimed to overhear the police collaborating with the right wingers; police would let the demonstrators into the Induction Center but then push them out to get beaten up by the right wingers. Passen believed all the activities over the weekend only strengthened the protest cause in Cleveland and nationally. He also noted that the press “did not give a fair and accurate coverage of the events.”⁷⁹

The right wing side in support of the war was headed by sophomore Mathew W. Schulman, who stated “The fact that we are involved in the war is unfortunate, but since we are, it is our duty to support our military effort.” Schulman, a Western Reserve

⁷⁸ Susan M. Papp, *Hungarian Americans and their Communities of Cleveland*, Special Collections, Cleveland State University, 1981.

⁷⁹ Pat Rizzollo, “Demonstrators Protest, the Left,” *Reserve Tribune*, October 21, 1965, 1, 4. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

student leading the pro-war demonstrators said his purpose was not to silence those against the war but rather to demonstrate to those Americans fighting there that the position of the antiwar groups was not that of the public in general.⁸⁰ Schulman refused to look at the moral question of the conflict and argued that the withdrawal of troops would not end the war in Southeast Asia. He labeled the antiwar demonstration as a “cheap stunt” and remarked it was the duty of citizens to support the war effort regardless of their personal feelings concerning the legitimacy of the struggle.⁸¹

The Vietnam Day Demonstration was a very well planned event, said Schulman, who pointed out “the left wing, antiwar protesters also had many identical printed signs,” which he inferred was indicative of a large organization. His own group had produced their lettered signs, slogans, and personal feelings in spontaneity. Schulman was a member of the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), a conservative youth group, and admitted he considered some college protesters actions as treasonous.⁸²

At about the time the antiwar movement appeared on the horizon it seemed destined to increase in importance along with the local and national civil rights movement. Students involved in both civil rights and antiwar work would soon face the possibility that increasingly focusing on the war would eclipse their former civil rights work fall. One such example was the “Freedom Christmas” project to work on voter registration in Mississippi organized by the National Student Association (NSA). The project was made available at Reserve University but was open to any student at any

⁸⁰ Dan Kacian, “Demonstrators Protest, the Right,” *Reserve Tribune*, October 21, 1965, 1, 4. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

institution, faculty, or non-students. Students and faculty helped to raise money for all expenses and transportation. The brochure also stated hundreds of college students from across the country would go to help the civil rights movement in Mississippi with voter registration under the recently passed Federal Voting Rights Act. The sponsors were listed as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). The brochure also said to contact Don Gurewitz at Western Reserve.⁸³ Gurewitz was chairman of the SDS chapter at Western Reserve and also a member of the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA).⁸⁴ National projects such as the Freedom Christmas event allowed Cleveland students to support the African American struggle for civil rights in the South. This was a prelude to eventual demonstrations against the government's Vietnam War policy, raising questions about fighting for people's rights in a foreign land when Blacks lacked rights here at home.

In early February, 1966, director of the Selective Service System announced that local draft boards would soon be free to start inducting into the armed services college students who were in the lower rank of their classes. The Selective Services planned two methods to be used to determine individual inductions. One was for university administrations to submit their male students' past academic records and the other was for the government to give a national draft examination in May to all male

⁸³ SNCC Flyer (1965), in SNCC Files, "Freedom Christmas Mississippi Voter Registration Project," Series 4S11, Box 1, Folder 1. Courtesy of Case Western University Archives.

⁸⁴ Fred Halstead. *Out Now!* (New York: Monad Press, 1978), 307.

undergraduates, in order to assess their overall intelligence and achievement.⁸⁵ The war had finally hit home, at campuses all over America. No longer was fighting in Vietnam something that just working class youth would have to do. The University Registrar at Western Reserve John C. Brayton made public the information concerning the Selective Service exemption exam for spring 1966 in the Tribune on April 14. He stated that “the test was voluntary, was to be taken only once in a student’s career, and students must score 70 or better on the test. Anyone wanting deferment when he goes to graduate or professional school must score 80 or better, and the test dates would be in May at Western Reserve and Case University.”⁸⁶

As the draft’s prominence grew for ordinary students, the war increasingly seemed like more than a temporary situation. A perception grew that the United States and the Free World’s vital interests were not threatened by the country of Vietnam; instead, those threatening young people’s well-being were the United States government and the Selective Service System. Conscription suddenly became a very hot issue throughout the war and was addressed by many authors. *Bitter Greetings*, a book by author Jean Carper, discussed her moral outrage at how the military literally scared young men into submission. Carper also described the consequences of being drafted, sent to war, and possibly dying in a far off land for no apparent reason.⁸⁷ In addition, she mentioned the shame many students had to deal with the rest of their lives for seeking deceptive deferments for physicals or by other means, while many of their high school classmates went to war. Similarly, “What did you do in the class war, daddy?” is a very

⁸⁵ Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 253.

⁸⁶ “Draft Exam Explained,” *Reserve Tribune*, Thursday, April 14, 1966, 1.

⁸⁷ Jean Carper, *Bitter Greetings: The Scandal of the Military Draft* (New York: Grossman, 1967), 15-16.

descriptive article that James Fallows retrospectively wrote about the actions he and his fellow Harvard students had taken to escape the draft. Fallows' article appeared in *Washington Monthly* in October, 1975, describing his continuing feelings of shame as a result of taking the thinking man's route to escape the draft.⁸⁸ Fallows argued that while privileged men like him believed at the time that they were fighting the government war machine by escaping military service on technicalities, draft deferments actually prolonged the conflict by lowering the stakes for the elites who could have done something about the war (which is why the Johnson administration quietly allowed them).

Local clergy along with their usual agenda of helping the poor also became influential in the draft issue. Reverend Milan Brenkus, director of the local Inner City Protestant Parish (ICPP), in Cleveland, helped the poor but when time allowed also gave assistance to antiwar projects. Brenkus received many letters from students who were seeking, or had obtained conscientious objector status after the Vietnam War began. In one letter, a young man inquired whether Brenkus could supply him with a job as a counselor, as the ICPP was listed with the Selective Service System as an accredited agency approved to employ conscientious objectors performing work in lieu of military induction and service. Jim Brenkus willingly accepted volunteers, but a sparse budget hardly allowed him to hire anyone.⁸⁹ The Western Reserve Historical Society and

⁸⁸ Cohen, *Vietnam*, Document 12, 381-385; James Fallows, "What Did You Do in the Class War Daddy?" *The Washington Monthly* (Washington D.C.: The Washington Monthly Co., October 1975).

⁸⁹ W. Davidson to Milan Brenkus, February 2, 1966 and Milan Brenkus to W. Davidson, March 22, 1966, both in Inner City Protestant Parish Records. Courtesy of Western Reserve Historical Society.

Cleveland Draft Counseling Association hold many letters indicating the same questions, convictions and attitudes by students hoping for answers to draft alternatives.⁹⁰

By the end of 1965, a few antiwar committees had been formed in the Cleveland area. The groups were either student-led or formed by small bands of citizenry outside the universities. Eventually, all committees came under the direction of the Cleveland Area Peace Action Council, headed by Sidney Peck, who was also the faculty advisor of WRUCEWV, or the Western Reserve University Committee to End the War. The WRU Committee sponsored debates on the Vietnam War throughout 1966 in which proponents would take positions in favor of the war and opponents would speak against the war. In one debate, Sidney Peck, stated, “The U.S. was involved in a civil war in Vietnam which American troops had no reason to be fighting and dying in.”⁹¹

Cleveland held three antiwar conferences during 1966, and by mid-year, teach-ins and the antiwar movement had succeeded in making the war an issue of debate. The war continued to escalate and Johnson seemed in control of the majority of American people who still seemed to support the Vietnam War. In the course of discussions within the Cleveland committee, Western Reserve Professor Richard Reck Nagel along with Sidney Peck suggested the idea of having a conference and joining forces of moderate activity with the combination of more radical forces, to develop a new bolder front for change the movement lacked.⁹² The Cleveland Committee called The University Circle Teach-In

⁹⁰ File Number 4474, Folders 71, 137, 153, 154, 295, and “Draft Counseling Association,” File Number 104, both in *ibid*.

⁹¹ “WRU Committee to End the War in Vietnam Organized,” *Reserve Tribune*, April 1, 1966. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

⁹² Fred Halstead, *Out Now! A Participants Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War* (New York: Monad Press, 1978), 188.

Committee sent invitations to fifteen organizations, both national and local to discuss the possible mobilization of antiwar forces in the fall.⁹³

On July 22, 1966 thirty people for the first conference came from a variety of local organizations: American Friends Service Committee, CORE, the University Committee on the Problems of War and Peace, the National Emergency Committee of Clergy Concerned about Vietnam, Women Strike for Peace, the Women's International League for Foreign Policy, The National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE), SDS, and the Committee for Non-violent Action and the Parade Committee represented by A.J. Muste.⁹⁴ Reverend Muste was a native of Holland who came to the United States as a child. After graduating from seminary, he helped in labor struggles for two decades. Muste was a friend of the Quakers, a socialist in the 1930s, and a long-time pacifist who refused to serve in the armed forces because of matters of conscience. Referred to by some as the white people's Martin Luther King, he was a founding member of CORE and forced the Cleveland Conference's non-exclusionary policy. Muste insisted that the antiwar movement should be non-exclusionary. He believed the mobilization would only work if it was broad based, incorporating the Old Left, the New Left, civil rights, religious and labor groups. Differences could be worked out between groups if they had a common goal to end the war.⁹⁵ SDS was represented by Paul Potter, an Oberlin graduate and former SDS president, who invited Hugh Fowler of the Communist Party-affiliated DuBois Clubs; this led Sidney Peck to also add a representative of the Young

⁹³ Ibid., 189.

⁹⁴ Jo Ann O. Robinson, *Abraham Went Out: A Biography of A.J. Muste* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982).

⁹⁵ Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*, 89.

Socialist Alliance, a Clevelander named Paul Lodico.⁹⁶ The Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) was a Trotskyist campus youth group of the Socialist Workers Party.

As all antiwar groups were included, no matter their political orientation, antiwar leaders ignored the need to draw the bulk of the nation together, and appeared to invite individuals running the political gamut from moderate to liberal and even radical. Large national marches apparently frightened many Americans at this time, who also considered fringe groups like those participating in the conferences to be irresponsible.⁹⁷ The effort to gain the aid of the American public was tainted because of the so-called radical groups. Public perceptions of huge crowds of Vietnam protestors were likened to blacks rioting in decaying urban centers. The public made the connection between civil right dissent and Vietnam protest. As researchers at the time discovered, antiwar protestors risked alienating the citizenry, to which they could not afford to do if to become successful.⁹⁸

The first Cleveland Conference was a long, fourteen-hour day of speeches and analysis on U.S. policy, with most in attendance not feeling too optimistic. Participants generally agreed that the U.S. wanted military victory and permanent bases in Southeast Asia. The more definite conclusion was that the war spelled the end of the promised domestic reforms of President Johnson's Great Society. Sidney Peck explained why they had the first conference for the peace movement and presented the idea that all groups should join forces instead of wasting energy through fragmentation and duplication. In

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ E.M. Schrieber "Antiwar Demonstrations and American Public Opinion on the War in Vietnam," *British Journal of Sociology* 27, no. 2 (June 1976): 225-236.

⁹⁸ Howard Schuman, "Two Sources of Antiwar Sentiments in America," *American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 3 (November 1972): 513-536.

Cleveland they could become a catalytic agent to bring together all groups that opposed the war in Vietnam and which might open the way for coordinated activities. A.J. Muste raised the possibility of getting a million people together for a mobilization in the fall for immediate withdrawal out of Vietnam, with anybody welcome to join their march. The meeting ended with an agreement to hold a second, larger Cleveland conference a month later, also hosted by the University Circle Teach-In Committee.⁹⁹

The second conference, September 10-11, 1966, was held at Western Reserve University's Baker Building as was billed as a "National Leadership Conference." More than 140 participants registered, offering numerous ideas and suggestions. Sidney Peck and A.J. Muste provided leadership and chaired the conference. One idea that came out was the possibility of a strike in which people might call their work places and tell their supervisors they were staying home because they were sick of the war. The Conference Committee considered many ideas, to which many were rejected, some modified and some accepted.¹⁰⁰ Sidney Peck spoke about his vision for a major mass mobilization on a scale beyond any action ever previously mounted by the peace movement. Although not written down, Peck described his proposal as "like a painting on a canvas you see, then the visions begin to emerge."¹⁰¹ The first plan was to engage in localized educational activities scheduled for November 5-8, 1966, around Election Day. Muste also drafted a document to be sent out to call for a meeting later in November 1966, titled

⁹⁹ Halstead, *Out Now!*, 189-190.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁰¹ Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*, 94.

“Calling for a Mobilization.” The meeting was presented as tentative as the organizers wanted to wait and see how their Election Day activities turned out.¹⁰²

All the groups from the first conference attended the second as well as many more, including additional local antiwar committees and groups. National SANE did not send a representative, nor did SDS send a national office member; only some members of local chapters came. Hugh Fowler, chairman for the DuBois Clubs of America and Jack Barnes of the Young Socialist alliance were also invited to attend. Tremendously respected by all, Reverend Muste chaired the second conference and arbitrated the disputes which arose, as political in-fighting had actually almost caused the first conference to be stopped. Cornell assistant professor Robert Greenblatt opened the meeting as the Inter-University Committee’s vice-president. Sidney Peck opened discussions with the proposed mass mobilization initiative, on which he hoped to have some agreement when the conference was over, that is, the decision about what could be done on a national level and when.¹⁰³

At the second conference an ad hoc steering committee was formed to implement the fall program and plan for the future. The mantle of leadership fell mostly on A.J. Muste, where the committee had a goal but no direction.¹⁰⁴ Despite the fact that he was quite old, at the time being eighty-two, Muste retained chairmanship and established the headquarters for the Spring Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam in New York City. Patricia Griffith from Ithaca, New York with the Inter -University Committee for Debate on Foreign Policy became administrative secretary, and Frank Emspack from

¹⁰² *Out Now!*, 195.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁰⁴ Zaroulis and Sullivan: *Who Spoke Up?*, 91-93.

the National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam (NCC) became field secretary.¹⁰⁵

Speeches on the Vietnam War were held on Reserve's campus all through the fall of 1966 leading up to the November demonstrations. Speakers for and against the war were invited to speak at the university, as with other events and speakers. A member of the British Labour Party, John Mendelsohn, spoke at Hatch Auditorium who was sponsored by national SANE.¹⁰⁶ Several candidates running for office also spoke at Hatch, most notably Republican Governor James Rhodes who was running for reelection and was a supporter of the President's war position.¹⁰⁷

On November 1, 1966, 200 students, faculty members and staff signed a full-page ad publicized by the *Reserve Tribune* containing the upcoming demonstrations slogan across the top "Sick of the War in Vietnam?" The ad was designed to attract Western Reserve students to the schedule for local activities which would be happening in Cleveland. Seminars, meetings on the war and a silent vigil on Public Square on Election Day were the main highlights.¹⁰⁸

The staged local and national demonstrations and marches on and around Election Day were called "Sick of the War in Vietnam." They also included teach-ins, street carnivals, workshops and conferences. The actions were to help engage the public interest in thinking about the war. Street demonstrations were modest in size, but in a few places

¹⁰⁵ Halstead, *Out Now!* 196-197.

¹⁰⁶ Labour MP Talks on War," *Reserve Tribune*, September 20, 1966, 5; Courtesy of Case Western University Archives.

¹⁰⁷ Barbara Wexler, "Rhodes a Shoo-In Newman; Young Republicans Organize," *Reserve Tribune*, October 6, 1966, 1. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

¹⁰⁸ "Sick of the War in Vietnam" (advertisement), *Reserve Tribune*, November 1, 1966, 8. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

they were larger than ever before. In Cleveland there was a cold rain, but 1,200 people marched behind Dr. Benjamin Spock. In Detroit, Michigan, a thousand antiwar demonstrators marched in an early snowstorm led by the Afro American Unity Movement. At another rally in New York City, Ruth Turner and poet Alan Ginsburg spoke. Ruth Turner was executive secretary of Cleveland CORE, while Ginsburg was the prophetic, famous beatnik poet and author of *Howl*. They addressed a much larger crowd of protestors estimated at around 20,000 people.¹⁰⁹

The agenda for the November 5-8 mobilization commenced with dialogue about “What is the best political formula for peace in Vietnam?” The Saturday morning events included sermons by Cleveland rabbis with a silent vigil at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument on the city’s Public Square at noon. Dr. Benjamin Spock from SANE spoke, while Lincoln Lynch (assistant director of CORE) also spoke along with Professor Marshall Windmiller of Western Reserve. After the speeches, a march proceeded along the city’s main thoroughfares to the Peace Fountain at Public Square. The rally concluded with an inter-faith prayer for peace.¹¹⁰ Several student organizations at Western Reserve sponsored an “evening for peace.” Students at the event listened to folk music and a play by the October Theatre in the ballroom of the student union.

The Cleveland Clergy on Sunday, November 6, held many workshops consisting of small group discussions on the Encyclical of Pope Paul VI to preach the Vietnam issue during the mobilization weekend. David Gordon from Case Tech announced interfaith groups would distribute leaflets after mass outside Catholic churches in an effort to

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 202-204.

¹¹⁰ Minutes of the Third Planning Session, Mobilization Effort Greater Cleveland Area, November 5-8, 1966, in Ohio Area Peace Action Coalition Records. Courtesy of Ohio Historical Society.

provoke concern about the war. During the conference, Bea Laibman and Ethel Garfield were exploring the possibility that the McGheon Company in Cleveland, a subsidiary of the Dow Chemical Company which was still producing napalm, would require a picket line or a future leafleting drive. On the last day of the mobilization, Tuesday, November 8, Election Day, the groups represented by the Cleveland Area Peace Action Council planned to sell and distribute Felix Greene's book *Vietnam! Vietnam!* all over the city. A British journalist, Greene was one of the first foreign correspondents to visit North Vietnam while working for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, whose highly critical analysis of the Vietnam War helped radicalize some readers' opinions. Organizers of the mobilization aimed to get out the truth and real information to the American people.¹¹¹

The November 5-8 mobilization during the election did not have that large of an impact. In effect, the activities did keep the war issue from being buried during the mid-term elections, in which the Democratic Party lost forty-seven seats in the House of Representatives. Most candidates wanted to forget the war, which helped weaken the movement. The positive effect that came from the November mobilization drive was that organizationally it did bring together many area groups in response to the war, consolidating feelings of cooperation. This also resulted in the organizers wanting to do more and meet again.

On November 26, 1966, a third Cleveland conference took place at Reserve's Baker Building, where again over 180 people gathered. The meeting registered some seventy local and national groups. The conference contained more youths this time and fewer older people. The proceedings were filled with a large number of Young Socialist

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Alliance (YSA) members who came to argue tactics against their rivals among activist youths, the SDS. SDS pushed for community-level organizing at the conference while YSA wanted a national mobilization against the war; the expected confrontation never came, however, because SDS declined to send even one representative to the conference. Sidney Peck urged Dr. Benjamin Spock to address the conference co-chairman of National SANE; Spock did give a friendly, encouraging speech to boost morale and lend authority to its hesitant participants, although he declined to make any commitment on behalf of SANE or join in committee deliberations.¹¹²

Dave Dellinger, a nationally-known pacifist, gave a report to the third conference on his recent trip to Saigon and Hanoi. His report strengthened the resolve of the movement as he told of suffering, bombings and atrocities. Pat Griffith reported on the November 5-8 demonstrations and their evaluations. The third conference was still undecided about community organizing or mass demonstrations. Fred Halstead, a leader of the Socialist Party, eventual author of *Out Now: A Participant's Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War* (1978), and Socialist Workers Party candidate for United States president in 1968 spoke about the Vietnam situation. Fred Halstead presented the three forces in the United States which have the power to stop the war. He stated "The American ruling class which started it, the working class which makes and transports the war material, and the GI's who fight it." Halstead believed if they reached the last two, the rulers would have to stop the war or lose the whole country. The Conference Committee believed it should use whatever base it had at the time to

¹¹² Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up*, 97.

reach out and involve the unions, workers and GI's. They should involve anyone who could help their cause, with the preferred outcome being a mass mobilization.¹¹³

Sidney Peck during the conference was trying to reconcile two approaches: to mobilize nationally or to keep organizing on a local community level which SDS preferred. Hugh Fowler of the DuBois Club agreed with SDS and wanted nothing done in a large national way. The socialists, and a friend of A.J. Muste from the Old Left Communist Party, Arnold Johnson, argued for hours and eventually swayed the conference into setting a date for a major spring mobilization. The socialists or YSAers lined up with the Communists as they had the majority in the room and took the conference more seriously than the other radical youth groups.¹¹⁴

Reverend A.J. Muste and Sydney Peck became chairman and vice chairman of the Spring Mobilization Committee to end the war in Vietnam. The date its organizers chose for the mass demonstration was April 15, 1967. The Spring Mobilization Committee picked New York and San Francisco as protest sites because one was the seat of the United Nations and the other was where the United Nations was first convened. Peck worked out the details of the plans with an estimated 5,000 people to attend the New York rally from Ohio. The April 15th demonstration in San Francisco had protesters attending from as far away as Chicago and the crowd was estimated to be around 50,000 people. The theme for mobilization was "END THE WAR IN VIETNAM-BRING OUR GI'S HOME; STOP THE BOMBING; ABOLISH THE DRAFT; FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS." The committee also promoted silent vigils for

¹¹³ Fred Halstead, *Out Now! A Participants Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War* (New York: Monad Press, 1978), 211-212.

¹¹⁴ DeBenedetti, with Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 163-164.

Christmas 1966, in as many localities as possible. The Spring Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam believed Cleveland to be a great centralized area for conference meetings and planning national demonstrations, but San Francisco and New York should be the focal points for the mass demonstrations because of the United Nations and the increased likelihood of media attention.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Halstead, *Out Now*, 215-216.

Chapter Four

Winter 1967

By the beginning of the year 1967, American troop strength in the Vietnam War was nearing 400,000. South Vietnamese troops were deserting at a rate of 144,000 per year, with civilian casualties numbering six to one in many operations. The war was costing the United States up to one million dollars per hour, and by that time the annual spending for the war was thirty billion, which was already two and a half times more than the twelve and a half billion allotted for the Great Society Programs.¹¹⁶ The Johnson Administration continued to maintain that we could have both guns and butter which was absurd, asking Congress to exact a ten percent surcharge on personal and corporate taxes, which they refused.¹¹⁷ In 1967, the Johnson administration spent \$300,000 to kill each Vietcong soldier, and about fifty dollars to help each poverty-stricken American. Senator William Fulbright stated that fighting wars both at home and abroad were failures, since we were not winning either!¹¹⁸ Opposition was attracting stronger student interest as the Spring Mobilization came onto the horizon. Race riots, demonstrations against the draft, and Martin Luther King Jr.'s first public words against the Vietnam War supercharged the atmosphere leading up to the massive antiwar protest on April 15.

Both the soldiers and the protesters believed in the absurdity that American servicemen were fighting for our freedoms. WRU students signed and placed an

¹¹⁶ "Sick of the War" (advertisement), *Reserve Tribune*, November 1, 1966, 8, Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

¹¹⁷ Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975*, (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1984), 120-121.

¹¹⁸ Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 169.

advertisement in the *Reserve Tribune* during the first week of January 1967 announcing the slogan of the November 1966 protests, “Sick of the Vietnam War?” The ad was signed by over one hundred students and said to contact Cathy Perkus for more information. Ads were an established approach used by the protesters to give students and the public information. One copy of the issue reached a Marine Private First Class named Nick Mandics in Vietnam, inspiring him to write a letter published in the *Tribune* in which he wrote, “All of you believe life is a game.” While condemning war itself, he believed that communism was worth fighting, but for no other reason than that our government said it should be fought. Mandics also believed he was there so the protesters could continue to do what they were doing, making clear the younger generation was divided over the war.¹¹⁹

As not all campus happenings involved protesting the war, Hitchcock House, the girls’ dorm at Mather College, sponsored a campus wide campaign to send Christmas packages to servicemen in Vietnam. In the “We Thank You” and Dear Debby section of the *Reserve Tribune*, some of the men responded and were happy to know that people over in the States did care about and support them. The letters were all appreciative and positive, except for one that expressed anger at the “Vietniks” and protesters who marched. Even this writer, however, stated that protesters were entitled to their opinion; after all, he wrote, the right to assembly is one of our basic freedoms.¹²⁰ Soldiers were told to fight the Communists protesting, to keep freedom for South Vietnam. In contrast,

¹¹⁹ Nick Mandics, “Marine Protests,” *Reserve Tribune*, January 6, 1967, 2. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

¹²⁰ “We Thank You” and “Dear Debby” (letters to the editor), *Reserve Tribune*, February 17, 1966. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

the protesters wanted our troops home, to spend our money on domestic needs and to extend civil rights freedoms in America.

Opposition to the war generated stronger student interest as the spring mobilizations came onto the horizon. Student opposition to the war was reinforced by increasing awareness of what the United States was doing in Vietnam. Established students were giving more attention to the issues posed by the war and the reasons for the opposition. Four Western Reserve student government representatives went to Cornell University for an antiwar conference on February 15th, 1966. It was determined by the Western Reserve students that the conference would report with recommendations to its committee to have greater involvement in teach-ins and educational programs.¹²¹ “The Credibility Gap” was one of the topics of the national student conference held at Cornell. The conference delegates wanted to discuss the gap between the lies the Johnson administration was telling the American people and the truth. The delegates from Reserve heard lectures on Vietnamese elections, the C.I.A. and aspects of Vietnamese society. The delegates were concerned as to why America was in Vietnam, military tactics and government distortions.

From Yale to Berkeley, 121 representatives of college student governments and other campus organizations came to Cornell University with various political views. Activists sponsored a conference assembly to draft resolutions on the Vietnam crisis over four days with speeches and discussion sessions. Three pro-administration and six anti-Vietnam policy people spoke. The delegates passed a resolution for an immediate

¹²¹ Minutes, February 12, 1967 and February 19, 1967, Mather Student Government Records. Courtesy of Case Western University Archives.

cessation of bombing, withdrawal of troops, campus activities to continue to help end the war, emphasis for the U.S. stay out of Cambodia and to abolish the Selective Service System. Delegates from Western Reserve University included Judd Crosby, Don Gurewitz, Dan Steinberg, John Tucker, Steffie Bernstein, Lynn Glixon, Lynn Lieberman and Debby Wagner.¹²²

At the same time, the Vietnam War came under increased criticism in February, 1967 as Nobel Peace prize winner Martin Luther King Jr. spoke out publicly against it. King came to grips with the belief that the war was an absolute wrong and a death threat to the hopes of black Americans. King raised the question “Do we love the war on poverty or do we love the war in Vietnam?” The draft quotas were constantly being raised so King said, “that the black man was being drafted to fight the white man’s war against yellow men.” King addressed a conference put on by the *Nation* magazine in Beverly Hills, California on February 25, 1967, saying “The promises of the Great Society have been shot down on the battlefield of Vietnam.” He gave three reasons to oppose the war: it violated the United Nations Charter, it was crippling the war on poverty, and it endangered the right of dissent in the United States. Four Dovish Senators joined King that day at the conference: George McGovern, Eugene McCarthy, Ernest Gruening and Mark Hatfield of Oregon as the only Republican.¹²³ King led a march of five thousand in Chicago a month later, on Easter, terming the war in Vietnam a “blasphemy against all that America stands for.” In a convention five days later in Louisville, King told the SCLC that civil disobedience might be necessary to “arouse the

¹²² “Vietnam and the Draft Discussed at the National Student Conference,” *Reserve Tribune*, February 24, 1967, 3. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

¹²³ Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up*, 108.

conscience of the nation” and bring an end to the war. King said “We are merely marking time in the civil rights movement if we do not take a stand against the war.”¹²⁴

The draft became a hotter issue in the first part of 1967 as the war intensified. Clevelanders were inundated almost daily with news-clips from other parts of the nation about racial conflict in other cities. The race riots in Cleveland’s Hough district from 1966 were still fresh in everyone’s memory. The prospect of violence was making local whites very nervous because of Mayor Ralph Locher’s incompetent response to the previous summer’s riots and the possibility that a black man, Carl Stokes, might become the next mayor with a promise he could keep urban unrest under control. Stokes was elected in November but his promises turned into false hopes with another outbreak of rioting in 1968.¹²⁵

The draft entered the news as fifty students and ex-students from northern Ohio campuses picketed the Armed Forces Induction Center in the Standard building on the city’s Public Square in the heart of downtown Cleveland. A twenty-two year old former Toledo University student Phil Urbanski, arrived for induction, but planned on refusing to take the oath. Picketers walked into the center with him, and were asked to wait in the visitor’s area but created no disturbance. However, a slight argument ensued during his processing when the other fifteen inductees told Urbanski to grow up and be a man. The sergeant stated that as with all previous objectors, he would give Urbanski three opportunities to take the oath, after telling him of his obligations and the consequences of his refusal. Urbanski would then be free to leave the center, and the matter turned over to

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Carl Stokes, *Promises of Power, Then and Now* (Cleveland: Friends of Carl Stokes, 1989; 1973)

federal authorities. Tim Hall of West 26th Street, one of the protest leaders that day, said students came from Baldwin Wallace, Bowling Green, Oberlin, and Toledo to join students from Greater Cleveland Campuses. “Urbanski is just a political objector opposed to the Vietnam war,” Hall said.¹²⁶ The *Cleveland Press* included photos of picketers on the front and back page along with a photo of Urbanski.¹²⁷ Accompanying photographs depicted protest signs that read “Choice-Not-Chance-Resist,” “We Won’t Go,” and “Organize and Strike Against the Draft.” A small child even carried a sign saying “Not with our lives you don’t.” The *Cleveland Press* gave a fair and accurate account of a sizable demonstration against the draft, actually favoring Urbanski.

Promotion for the draft picketing began Sunday, April 9, 1967 at a “Be-In” near Western Reserve Campus in University Circle where leaflets were passed out, announcing the time and place for the demonstration. Picketing by college students was considered a serious event that the reasons for it were explained to passers-by. Few of those approached said they knew Urbanski, but they did say his actions were symbolic. Mark Ederer, a graduate student at Bowling Green University added, “He is showing us a demonstration that in a democracy there is still a choice not to kill.” Ron Taylor, twenty-two, a freshman at Bowling Green who had volunteered and served for three years, showed his Army discharge papers. Taylor said, “When he saw children with arms blown off from napalm bombs in Saigon, I knew America was wrong.” He believed it to be the same as if an African country would send its marines in to stop the Hough riots in Cleveland. As three young men from Sandusky appeared for induction, the *Cleveland*

¹²⁶ “Students Picket Induction Center as Draftee Refuses to Take Oath,” *Cleveland Press*, April 11, 1967, A1-12.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

Press asked the inductees if the pickets were doing the right thing. The three new inductees said “I don’t blame them for following their conscience.”¹²⁸

On April 6, 1967, the *Cleveland Press* ran an article entitled “Not All Clevelanders Oppose the War, However.” Authored by conservative journalist Albert Prudence, it highlighted the peace movement and claimed it was being manipulated by leftist elements bent on the destruction of America. Prudence got much of his information from the American Security Council (ASC), a conservative think tank in Washington that was always constantly hunting alleged communists. The ASC said that left-wing organizations were very active in the student mobilization committee and the Spring Mobilization Committee to end the war in Vietnam. The ASC believed professors, students, theologians and professional people at rallies were being duped. Prudence stated “Our country has been called the aggressor, our leaders have been branded power monsters. We have been pictured by antiwar protesters as totally wrong and the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese have been pictured by protesters as totally right.” He stated “All of those who have lent their names and influence to the monstrous falsehood about their own country bitterly resent being described as communist dupes but what other description fits them?”¹²⁹

In his article Prudence confessed he doubted peace marches and rallies would have much of an effect on United States policy in Vietnam. In a few years Prudence and the country would discover, with the release of the Pentagon Papers, that this statement was incorrect. However, the article made clear demonstrations were already having a

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ “Albert Prudence, Peace Exponents to Hold Many Antiwar Rallies,” *Cleveland Press*, April 6, 1967, 20.

significant effect on college campus life. College students had recently blocked an Air Force recruiting station at Oberlin College and students at Howard University, a traditional black college, almost mobbed selective service director Lewis Hershey. The Prudence article also reported that the army had imprisoned three servicemen at Fort Leavenworth because they refused to go to Vietnam and that an Air Force Captain wanted out of the service because he objected to the war. Prudence ended his article by saying all these dissenters would be called heroes at the rallies next week in New York and San Francisco but that the 400,000 Americans fighting in Vietnam for their right to dissent considered them something else. The dissenters believed our troops were fighting another country's war while blacks did not even have freedoms in America. Many of the troops in Vietnam had been drafted against their will, and were just trying to stay alive until they could come home.¹³⁰

A number of studies were produced during the Vietnam War attempting to estimate how many professors were opposed to the war. A research group led by David Armour wrote, "Observers assume just being a professor is evidence you have antiwar sentiments and the universities are centers of the entire antiwar movement." In the face of such exaggerations the Armour study set out to find the truth, citing several previous articles which were inconclusive. Armour's study also wanted to see if all colleges and universities were hotbeds of radical antiwar agitation as some previously concluded. The study used professors from the liberal area of Boston, Massachusetts where professors were reputedly more opposed to the war.¹³¹

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹ David Armour et al., "Professors Attitudes toward the Vietnam War," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (Summer 1967): 159-175.

The Armour target group reflected the attitudes of most professors at Western Reserve, Case, John Carroll, Baldwin Wallace, Cleveland State, and other campuses in Northeast Ohio. All the teachers in Boston were full time, at accredited institutions and were within a twenty-mile radius of the city center. The instructor population size was 2,075, from which the study group drew a sample size of 152 subjects. Interviews were carried out during the end of April and the beginning of May 1966. A definite conflict in views among members of the sample group was shown as some believed the war should continue while others believed a decrease in the scale of fighting should be considered. Some believed the war should be ended immediately, while some wanted an escalation in order to win and get out. Armour concluded "These results do not establish professors as a whole as radicals, much less pacifists. They are more antiwar than the public. The practical orientation may emerge in the tendency of our sample to oppose policies that fail and support those that succeed."¹³² A similar ambivalence existed in Cleveland.

Ian Haberman, a Reserve student, added another twist to the debate in his letter to the editor of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. Haberman determined that there were about 2,200 college instructors among ten of the colleges and universities in Northeast Ohio. He claimed that one hundred instructors or less than five percent spoke for all of them. His letter to the editor left many unanswered questions, such as who were the one hundred and what were their views. However, Haberman did indicate some underlying discord at Reserve and other colleges inasmuch as some professors appeared to have undue influence over the attitudes of their colleagues. In fact, there was a small informal organization that supported a moderate cause in Vietnam and signed a statement to that

¹³² Ibid., 163.

effect. That organization's spokesman was Harvey Wish, an eminent Reserve History professor, and these "Citizens for a Free Vietnam" claimed that a majority of professors from the area opposed both the extreme positions of those on the far left and the far right. "Citizens for a Free Vietnam" confined their comments to the campus newspapers and were not reported on in the mainstream media. The professors debated and discussed the issues but it did not mean these professors wholeheartedly supported the antiwar movement.¹³³

The assessment made by Harvey Wish and Citizens for a Free Vietnam with regard to most faculty views being moderate was correct, and is supported by the Armour study. The study done in Boston concluded that although many faculty members were sympathetic to ending the war, they were on the whole responsible and cautious individuals. Few were willing to join poorly organized groups; moreover, their motivation to oppose the war had more to do with how it was working out. In other words, the instructors in the study might have supported the war effort if it appeared to be headed for success. As it was, the war looked to be going badly for the United States, and so did not encourage a supportive outlook on the future.¹³⁴

On April 15, 1967, more than 250,000 Americans planned to come together and demand an end to the war in Vietnam at the United Nations in New York as well as at the United Nation's birthplace in San Francisco, and at Dumbarton Oaks, New Hampshire, site of an important 1944 international conference. The Western Reserve students and

¹³³ Ian Haberman, "Where is Voice of Majority" (letter to the editor), *The Plain Dealer*, March 3, 1967, 10; "Area Professors Support Moderate Foreign Policy for Free Vietnam," *Reserve Tribune*, March 3, 1967; "JCU Professors Join Cleveland Educators in Support of Johnson Vietnam Policy," *Carroll News*, March 17, 1967.

¹³⁴ Armour et al., "Professors Attitudes toward the Vietnam War," 159-160.

faculty who went to New York were over 300 in number. Dan Gurewitz, a spokesman for the WRU committee to end the war in Vietnam, also said they had a goal of raising enough money to send everyone who wanted to go to the mobilization because it was the responsibility of everyone opposed to the war in Vietnam to participate in the massive international protest.¹³⁵

Dr. Sidney Peck, at an Ohio Valley Regional Conference held at Western Reserve University to coordinate activities for building the mobilization, said “The effectiveness of the April 15 Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam will depend largely on the extent to which it represents unprecedented unity, in spite of differences in the antiwar movement.” The mobilization had a lot of tactical disputes amongst its participants, but Peck believed their strength lay in a unified massive demonstration. Peck, speaking as a University Circle Teach-In Committee member and also as one of four national vice-chairman of the Spring Mobilization Committee, also stated “The demonstrations in New York, San Francisco, and at Dumbarton Oaks along with simultaneous demonstrations in major foreign capitals would emphasize the international character of the protest against the war and would strengthen ties of solidarity with people everywhere.” Peck believed the mobilization would affirm the will of the American people to rally for peace in Vietnam, America, and everywhere. The committee wanted to get their message out that this was a new beginning in the antiwar movement and that they did not want to compete or replace ongoing activities of existing antiwar, peace and civil rights organizations, but rather to stimulate and increase more antiwar activities everywhere.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ “University Circle Students Join Mobilization to N.Y.C.,” *Reserve Tribune*, March 7, 1967, 5. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

The Spring Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam believed massive demonstrations would encourage a mood of popular opposition to the war and channel that opposition into viable political acts of dissent. Leaders of the protest movement thought a massive antiwar demonstration would only become bigger as people saw how many were against the war. A great variety of Cleveland organizations and individuals including unions, civil rights groups, traditional peace organizations, radical political parties and clergymen were emphasizing their point of agreement by working together to end the war and by supporting the April 15 demonstrations.¹³⁷ Sam Pollock, president of Meat Cutters Union Local #427, spoke on the contention that trade unions have always supported people's right to establish their own interests in government. Reverend Kuby stated "We spend 135 million a week to fight in Vietnam. Why don't we spend 135 million to pacify the Hough area?"¹³⁸

Cleveland's Spring Mobilization Committee hoped to send over 3,000 people to New York on April 15. The travel arrangements included a seventeen-car chartered train and the Committee worked to raise money for those who could not afford to pay for the trip themselves. The mobilization committee had an Ohio regional campus traveling program in which pairs of Cleveland college students and professors visited other campuses to provide education about the war, encourage antiwar activity and to build the mobilization. The committee opened an office at 10616 Euclid Avenue on the WRU campus. They urged everyone interested in the local or national mobilization to contact them. Participants in the touring group included Reverend Ray Mikelthun of the

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ "Dr. Spock, Other Antiwar Leaders Will Lead the Spring Mobilization," *Reserve Tribune*, March 24, 1967, 7, Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

University Christian Movement; John Garfield, a WRU student; James Katz, a Cuyahoga Community College student; and Dan Rosenshine, chairman of the Cleveland Student Mobilization Committee.¹³⁹

The massive April 15, 1967 antiwar demonstrations were finally planned amongst a great variety of organizations and individuals including unions, civil rights groups, traditional peace organizations, radical political parties and clergymen. Through the many issues posed by the war, The Spring Committee to End the War in Vietnam coalesced the whole antiwar opposition into a movement of uniform political strength. Demonstrators believed Martin Luther King Jr. joining the antiwar movement was of great benefit to their cause's stature. Americans were becoming perplexed with the war in Vietnam, and how it was being conducted. In 1967, the United States had half a million troops in South Vietnam, and the Pentagon wanted 200,000 more. Secretary of State McNamara, disillusioned stated, "Most Americans don't know why we're in Vietnam, most know we shouldn't have gotten so deeply in, and know they just want their President to end it."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ "Group Is Visiting Campuses Urging Protests against the War," *Cleveland Press*, April 12, 1967, B5.

¹⁴⁰ Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 162.

Chapter Five

“Civil Rights and Peace People are Natural Allies”

The draft issue heated up during 1967 as United States involvement in Vietnam intensified. Meanwhile, Clevelanders were inundated daily with news reports about racial conflicts in other cities. The antiwar movement was growing as the President's support began to erode in the intellectual community, the news media began questioning his policies and not only Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., but also Senator Robert Kennedy broke with him over his war policy. Immediately after the winter break ended in January, preparations began at Western Reserve for the upcoming, April 15 mass protest demonstration to be held in New York. Local events, seminars, and protracted debates along with the infusion of national events lent an urgency to the weeks preceding what was shaping up as the largest antiwar action to date.

“Civil rights and peace people are natural allies,” said Dr. Spock at a March 22, 1967 Union Terminal press conference. He and other prominent Cleveland residents spoke at downtown's main train station, the site for the departure of the “Peacemaker,” a train which would carry area residents to the Spring Mobilization. Dr. Spock also stated that Reverend Martin Luther King would speak on peace for the first time and that King could be a prospective leader of the Peace Movement, which he believed would aid in majority acceptance of the movement in this country. “Since North Vietnam did not enter the conflict until the United States began escalation in 1965,” Spock said, “there would be no complaint of North Vietnamese intervention with the protest because he

does not see North Vietnam and South Vietnam as two separate countries.”¹⁴¹ This statement, however, went directly against United States foreign policy and the United Nations mandated division of Vietnam. Dr. George Hampsch, associate professor of philosophy at John Carroll University, was against the war on moral grounds and commented that everyone should stand up and be counted. In general, antiwar liberals worried about the morality of the war, agreeing that they would rather see America save her soul than her face. Liberals opposed escalation and advocated for a cease fire and negotiated settlement, but were divided on other issues. Groups like SANE supported a new foreign policy but were concerned that if they opposed President Johnson publicly, he would be unable to pass more civil rights or Great Society legislation. Mrs. Kathryn Marshall, associate coordinator of the University Circle Teach-In Committee, believed Americans were too remote and disconnected. Marshall thought the American people did not understand the war itself, and could not see the South Vietnamese did not want us there. Americans could not face the reality that our leaders had blundered, that we had become involved in a war our citizens did not understand or comprehend. President Johnson said if he could only sit down with Ho Chi Minh, he would be able to cut a deal. The outstanding issue that our President or his top officials never seemed to grasp was that North Vietnam was fighting for the unification of their nation. The War in Vietnam remained more about credibility for the United States than importance for its national security.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ “Dr. Spock, Other Antiwar Leaders Will Lead the Spring Mobilization,” *Reserve Tribune*, March 24, 1967, 7. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

¹⁴² Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 147.

A three quarter page advertisement published in the *Tribune* on March 24, 1967 declared, “END THE WAR IN VIETNAM NOW.” Below the caption were hundreds of names of faculty, students, and prominent Cleveland residents who opposed the Vietnam War. The advertisement defined the April 15 mobilization as a chance for everyone to make a qualitative step forward in building a mass movement to end the war. It stated that every person opposed to the war should make every effort to be in New York to make the mobilization the antiwar movement’s most significant political show of strength to date. Dr. Spock and Sidney Peck were included on the “mobilization” ad. The advertisement was intended to be clipped, filled out with respondent’s name and address, and then mailed to the address at Western Reserve University. The *Tribune* was circulated among WRU students, the target audience.¹⁴³

With two proposed mass peace demonstrations for New York and San Francisco only a week away, Dr. Benjamin Spock became more prominent in the news. On April 7, 1967 he confirmed reports in an interview conducted at his home “that a very serious argument is going on in the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy over how much SANE should cooperate with other peace groups.”¹⁴⁴ Spock suggested that SANE should be more cordial in its dealings with other, radical peace groups. National SANE had always been more cautious than its local chapters in dealing with peace organizations, thus it did not endorse the large April 15 Spring Mobilization like Dr. Spock and its other members. In an interview from his office, Dr. Spock said “if the demonstrations are successful he would favor the formation of a permanent national

¹⁴³ “End the War in Vietnam Now,” *Reserve Tribune*, March 24, 1967, 8. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

¹⁴⁴ Louise Lind, “Standing U.S. Peace Body Possible,” *The Plain Dealer*, April 18, 19A.

committee, which might include me, if it is a movement with serious political ambitions and if it claims the allegiance of and appreciable number of Negroes and Dr. Martin Luther King.”¹⁴⁵

Dr. Spock believed the SANE membership could work in the areas of peace, anti-poverty and civil rights since there was no such organization like it on the national level. Spock believed Martin Luther King would bring a whole new aspect to the peace movement side as they entered into the 1968 electoral campaign. As the nation’s most prominent civil rights leader, Dr. King was head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and just a few weeks before had announced his opposition to the Vietnam War.¹⁴⁶

The Plain Dealer on April 9, 1967 reported a serious rift between SANE and Dr. Spock and said it should be settled by June. It also stated Dr. Spock would be retiring as a baby specialist, although he had not resigned from his national SANE board position. However, Spock stated “They’ll have to choose between their policy or my non-exclusionary policy.”¹⁴⁷ He and some other SANE members believed the national SANE board should endorse the April 15, 1967 peace demonstrations and also be more friendly to radical peace organizations, following the example of local SANE chapters which were more cordial to radical peace groups. National SANE actually had an exclusionary policy, refusing to allow or work jointly with communists or socialists in its membership. National SANE leaders favored responsible criticism that would enlist broad support,

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.; Fred Halstead, *Out Now!* (New York: Monad Press, 1978), 317.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ “Dr. Spock, SANE Split on Policy,” *The Plain Dealer*, April 9, 1967, 5A.

fearing a public backlash against radicalism. They did not want to be perpetually associated with the word protest.¹⁴⁸

The Cleveland Chapters of SANE did back Dr. Spock completely, according to local chairman, Dr. Paul Olynyk, who stated “We hope the national board does too and avoids a split, because with splits, you have fragments. We want peace groups, not pieces.”¹⁴⁹ Dr. Spock had stated he would be going to the demonstrations and acting as an individual and not as a part of any group. Local SANE chapters were given the choice to join the demonstration, even though the national leadership did not endorse the march. Nevertheless, the march looked on the verge of a tremendous success as it was endorsed by a broad spectrum to ensure participation and legitimacy: church and religious groups, political groups, antiwar groups and pacifists.¹⁵⁰

Dr. Spock publicly supported his new ally against the war shortly before the New York demonstration, telling reporters of his admiration for Dr. King’s decision to link the antiwar cause with the civil rights movement.¹⁵¹ Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1967 gave a speech at Riverside Church in New York City, sponsored by the clergy and layman concerned about Vietnam and became cochairman the next week. His words came from his own torment about the subject and were intended for the whole nation to hear, as he said “to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my heart.”¹⁵² King’s concern was for both Americans and Vietnamese, blacks and whites who “kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together

¹⁴⁸ Anderson, *The Movement*, 146.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up*, 111.

¹⁵¹ Thomas Maier, *Dr. Spock: An American Life* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1998), 281.

¹⁵² Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up*, 108.

in the same schools.”¹⁵³ “The Viet Cong must see Americans as strange liberators, as we are the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today,” said King. To the young men who consider American policy unjust or dishonorable, King recommended a boycott by conscientious objection. King also suggested in his Riverside Church speech a five-point disengagement plan, including a halt to bombing and a unilateral cease-fire.¹⁵⁴

The antiwar movement was glad to have a national figure like Martin Luther King Jr. on their side. Although many blacks were already against the war, many mainstream civil rights organizations feared alienating the white majority and opposed Dr. King and his speech. On April 12 the sixty board members of the National NAACP voted unanimously not to unite the civil rights and antiwar movements.¹⁵⁵ The NAACP was mostly made up of older members who favored a gradual, legalistic approach. Meanwhile, younger black leaders such as Floyd McKissick of CORE were opposed to the war and praised Dr. King, commenting “White Americans are not going to deal in the problems of colored people when they’re exterminating a whole nation of colored people.” Movies, debates, panel discussions and mock tribunals all dealing with the subject of Vietnam and war and peace began in Cleveland and across the nation on April 8, 1967. The events went on for seven days of what was called Vietnam week with the culmination being the mass peace protests in New York and San Francisco. Events were sponsored by the Spring Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam nationally

¹⁵³ Ibid., 109.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ “NAACP Out of Peace Movement,” *Cleveland Press*, April 13, 1967, 14A; Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up*, 109.

with local groups at individual campuses organizing the activities. The Non-Committee Opposing War (NOW) made all the events possible at John Carroll University.¹⁵⁶

On April 14, 1967, as many as 5,000 war protesters from Northern Ohio headed for New York by train, bus, chartered plane, and auto. The estimate of the Cleveland area crowd came from the coordinator and national vice chairman of the mass demonstration, Professor Sydney Peck.¹⁵⁷ Over a hundred students and thirty professors from Reserve began the trip at 7:30 as part of the Spring Mobilization to end the war in Vietnam, and many more from the area arrived by other means. Professor Esper, a member of the University Circle Teach-In Committee and transportation chairman of the Mobilization for the Northeastern Ohio region did most of the work to charter and coordinate the train – which joined another in Buffalo and then picked up passengers in Rochester and Syracuse, arriving in New York City on the morning of April 15 in time for and picketing began in the afternoon. A similar train originated in Chicago and went to the mass demonstration taking place at the same time in San Francisco.¹⁵⁸

Organizers considered the Spring Mobilization very important by its committee leaders because while the American press did not cover local war demonstrations, a national one of this size could not be ignored. The international press gave a lot of attention to this kind of dissent. The foreign press would always give ample space to their citizens protesting their foreign or domestic policies, whereas the United States press was hesitant to report on antiwar demonstrations and portrayed them as un-

¹⁵⁶ “Vietnam War Debated Nationally, Apr. 8-15,” *Carroll News*, April 14, 1967, 3.

¹⁵⁷ “5000 Protesters Head for N.Y. Rally,” *Cleveland Press*, April 14, 1967, 12A.

¹⁵⁸ “Students Depart for Mobilization,” *Reserve Tribune*, Friday, April 14, 1967, 1. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

American. The purpose of the demonstration in front of the United Nations building was to “show all the opposition to Johnson’s policy on the dove side,” said Professor Gorovitz, also on the University Circle Teach-In Committee. The professor said “We have students and families all coming to support our disagreement over the government’s policies.”¹⁵⁹

Despite the urgency in Vietnam and the need for open discussion, such protests were often ridiculed. This reality motivated David J. Fortunato to pen a letter to the editor of the *Tribune*, answering all the critics for the Mobilization’s motives on April 14. Fortunato wrote “We are not so presumptuous as to believe that the bombs will stop falling the next day, but on the other hand we do not consider the Mobilization an exercise in futility.” Continuing on, he stated “We are not trying to brainwash the public like the Pentagon has already done but create an interest in the United States involvement and tell the truth.” Fortunato observed that half the ballots cast in a Dearborn, Michigan referendum had wanted an immediate withdrawal from Vietnam, before adding “This is not an attack on the American soldier, as President Johnson would have you believe, but on the policy and Vietnam’s puppet dictator.” The entire antiwar movement was indeed significant for the questions it had already raised. Fortunato ended his letter with a few questions: “Must an end to human misery be found in and end to human life and are we so hard up for courageous statesman that our number one diplomatic asset is the U. S. Marines? Can the only way one serve his country is by wearing a uniform?”¹⁶⁰ Like many opponents of the war, Fortunato believed public protest was patriotic.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ David J. Fortunato, “Mobilization” (letter to the editor), *Reserve Tribune*, April 14, 1967, 7. Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives.

The headline for the *Reserve Tribune* said “300,000 Join Mobilization to Protest War in Vietnam.” The paper sent reporter Marv Wigder to record his impressions, who was overwhelmed by the sheer number and diversity of the demonstrators. People came from all walks of life including priests and nuns, straights and middle class liberals. People carried many signs and banners with slogans like “Children are not Born to Burn,” “Stop the Bombing,” “Bring the Troops Home,” “No Vietnamese ever called me Nigger,” “Hell No, We Won’t Go!,” and “Hey, Hey, LBJ, How many kids did you kill today?”¹⁶¹ There were college students, high school kids, infants, small children with their parents, and many, many elders. There were crew cuts and hippies. Marchers came from all walks of life. There were groups such as Veterans for Peace and Women’s Strike for Peace (WSP), which provided breakfast at their homes for some of the Cleveland entourage. WSP were typically respectable, suburban, middle-class mothers worried about their children’s prospects in a nuclear world. WSP had expressed concern about Vietnam from its earliest days and in 1965 made the war the main focus of its protest activities. In 1966, WSP drew attention to the fate of children in the war as they tried to block napalm shipments out of California in a protest against the indiscriminate American use of defoliants which caused horrifying injuries to Vietnamese children. WSP also created paper daisies and the heralded “Flower Power” slogan.¹⁶² Evidence of this new theme resonated through the crowd, evident in flowers in hair or tucked behind ears to protest the United States defoliation tactics in Vietnam.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ “300,000 Join Mobilization to Protest War in Vietnam,” *Reserve Tribune*, April 18, 1967, 1, Courtesy of Case Western Reserve University Archives; Zaroulis and Sullivan. *Who Spoke Up*, 111.

¹⁶² Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 156.

¹⁶³ “300,000 Join Mobilization to Protest War in Vietnam,” 1.

A contingent of 500 demonstrators came from Cleveland, including a third of the residents from a woman's dorm at Mathers College, Andrews House. A chapter of a Non-Committee of Opposing War (NOW) sent twenty students from John Carroll University.¹⁶⁴ Businessmen, teachers, and black residents from Hough came. A union local sent four representatives. A uniformed Green Beret took part in the Midwest section of the march and was asked if he could get into trouble, and he said, "Oh yes, a lot."¹⁶⁵ The Spring Mobilization was endorsed by a broad spectrum of groups and individuals to ensure both participation and legitimacy: church and religious, political, antiwar and pacifist. They included the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Women Strike for Peace, Youth Against War and Fascism (YAWF), Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam, and local chapters of SANE from around the country. Sponsors also came from the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and the Catholic Worker. The marchers exhibited a wide range of political views throughout the Mobilization as SANE, SCLC, WSP, AFSC, CLCV, and the Catholic Workers had moderate positions. CORE, SCLC, and SNCC were considered civil rights groups and more on the radical side while the national student and campus group SDS was considered the radical "New Left." The YAWF were members of the Communist Party and carried Viet Cong flags. While the nature of the mass demonstration allowed for a few extremes, for the most part onlookers saw a crowd of dignified marchers there to object to the Vietnam policy. The ranks of

¹⁶⁴ "Vietnam War Debated Nationally – April 8-15," *Carroll News*, April 14, 1967, 3.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1-8; Maier, *Dr. Spock*, 279.

everyday Americans marching implied a broad-based, growing unpopularity of the war. Columnist Jimmy Breslin described “the marchers as generally people in raincoats, parents, hippies, or members of various organizations but mostly members of nothing. Folk singer Pete Seeger sang “This Land is Your Land” with a chorus of children. They were out in a parade because “they don’t like war.”¹⁶⁶

Professor Thomas Esper of Western Reserve University considered the Spring Mobilization a great success, and more than he could have hoped for, “besides the bad weather.” As usual, the national press deemphasized the size of the demonstration, with publicity made harder to get because the marches were at no time all in one place. By late afternoon the Dag Hammarskjold Plaza in front of the United Nations was full, as were all the streets leading to it. The plans called for the massing of protesters into twenty different areas in Central Park, which was jammed for hours while people waited to march. The first section of marchers started walking at 11:00 a.m. and by 4:00 p.m. not all the sections had gotten started yet.

Dr. Sidney Peck along with the Mobilization Committee’s detailed planning included posting marshals along the parade route and instructing the marchers not to respond to hecklers, as well as giving directions. There was little, if any violence, at these rallies. The police were out in force and there were only a few incidents, most of which involved people throwing objects out of windows at the demonstrators.¹⁶⁷

Dr. Spock spoke in front of the United Nations and told the crowd “All Americans who are opposed to the war were welcome, people of all ages, color or

¹⁶⁶ Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up*, 111; Maier, *Dr. Spock*, 279.

¹⁶⁷ “300,000 Join Mobilization to Protest War in Vietnam,” 1-8; Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up*, 112.

political opinion.” Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke and urged a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam; Stokely Carmichael of SNCC, the nation’s leading black militant, even spoke and praised Dr. King with accompanying shouts of “Black Power,” indicating some cohesion amongst the civil rights movement’s various factions. James Bevel of SCLC and Floyd McKissick of CORE also spoke.¹⁶⁸

One of the most significant events of the day occurred in Central Park before the march began when about seventy men mostly from Cornell University stood on a rock in a place called Sheep Meadow and burned their draft cards. The Spring Mobilization had opposed the draft card-burning action because like national SANE in similar situations, it feared frightening away potential new support. The Mobilization’s leadership would not let them burn the cards at the podium, so these activists felt abandoned by the movement. Eventually about 175 demonstrators burned their draft cards in a Maxwell House coffee tin, saying it was a statement to enhance the militancy and commitment of the resistance movement. They were later arrested, including one who served a year and a half in prison for draft evasion.¹⁶⁹

Remaining very civil and essentially non-violent, the April 15 marches were the last organized war demonstrations of the Vietnam War era to maintain this distinction. New Yorkers were on edge throughout the weekend as a “small group of Cleveland protestors” were not permitted to enter the Pan-Am building for sightseeing purposes as they waited for the march to begin. The people at the building, like some others that day, subscribed to the notion that the protesters were drug crazed hippies, unkempt and bent

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ “100 Burn Draft Cards, Start N.Y. Peace Rally,” *Cleveland Press*, April 15, 1967, 1A; Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up*, 112-113; “300,000 Join Mobilization to Protest War in Vietnam,” 1.

on destroying America. In actuality, the movement included good cross section of American society.¹⁷⁰

The crowd at San Francisco's Kezar Stadium consisted of 50,000 people. They heard from speakers like Coretta Scott King, Julian Bond, Paul Schrade of the United Auto Workers, and Edward Keating, the publisher of *Ramparts*, a New Left monthly magazine. The speakers announced there was a new group formed to resist the selective service system and its unfair deferments, called "the Resistance." That group was calling for a national draft card turn-in day, to be held later in the year on October 16.

The Johnson administration's response to the demonstration was predictable, as the White House announced afterward that J. Edgar Hoover's FBI was monitoring antiwar activity. On April 24, President Johnson sent General William Westmoreland to Washington to speak at a joint session of Congress; fresh from the battlefield, he spoke about how "he and his men had been dismayed by recent unpatriotic acts here at home."¹⁷¹ Having achieved its goal of mobilizing almost 400,000 marchers, Sidney Peck stated "The demonstration was successful beyond all expectations."¹⁷²

Following the success of the April mass Mobilization, the leaders and the movement were faced with the question, "What now?" The next month, some members of the Spring Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam went to Washington to present a "demand" to President Johnson "to stop the genocide and mass butchery." Martin Luther King, Coretta Scott King, Reverend James Bevel, Dr. Benjamin Spock and others went to the White House gates for three days in a row, but President Johnson

¹⁷⁰ "Clevelanders Barred from N.Y. Building," *Cleveland Press*, April 15, 1967, A1-20.

¹⁷¹ Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up*, 114.

¹⁷² Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom*, 106.

refused their request to speak with them.¹⁷³ Despite Reverend Bevel and Martin Luther King's leadership of the civil rights movement, the president was unwilling to even hear their pleas.

On May 19, as members of the Spring Mobilization were waiting outside the White House gates, the President received a secret memorandum titled "Future Actions in Vietnam," appraising the new intensified bombing of the North. The conclusions were that the bombings were in fact "unifying" North Vietnam. The escalation in bombing, mining of harbors, and serious injury or killing of one thousand non-combatants a week while trying to pound a tiny backward nation into submission would prove too costly to America's image. That surely was fostering a negative image of America around the world and some imagined there might be a limit to how far the war would be permitted to go. Escalating further would likely raise this cost even higher, with the possibility of Soviet and Chinese intervention.¹⁷⁴

The Spring Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam had very ambitious plans for its first formal event. The April 15 Demonstration was a well-planned event that Co-chairman Sidney Peck believed would arouse the public to oppose the war, in his view the only way to end it. Peck also outlined the "great variety of organizations and individuals who had to be coordinated together to make the march a reality." He said "There were unions, civil rights groups, radical political parties, traditional peace organizations and clergymen. Then of course there was the bulk of the

¹⁷³ Ibid., 116.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 117.

marchers, and ordinary citizens to whom we appealed for support.”¹⁷⁵ The day after the April 15 Spring Mobilization, representatives finished their vigil at the White House gates. The representatives held a conference on May 20-21 to assess the results of the April demonstration and to discuss any future activity. Seven hundred people attended the conference, resulting in a call for a major civil disobedience action and a confrontation on October 21, 1967. The vote was approved by the conference to take action in Washington D.C. by the Spring Mobilization Committee to end the war in Vietnam. The group subsequently changed its name to the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam.¹⁷⁶

On April 16, 1967 in response to a question on *Meet the Press*, Secretary of State Dean Rusk called the protest demonstrations huge, and expressed concern that North Vietnam might misunderstand the United States’ willingness to continue the war. Rusk believed the net effect of the protests would be to prolong the war, not to shorten it. General Westmoreland, commander of United States Forces in Vietnam, gave a similar speech around the same time in Washington April, 1967. He called the protestors’ acts unpatriotic and suggested they were trying to help North Vietnam win success in the world arena which it could not match on the battlefield. The United States government’s argument rested on the premise that it would be good for America to quickly win the war. The demonstrators who marched on April 15, 1967 thought differently and were there to express their opinion. The major reason to be there and protest active opposition to a morally bankrupt government was to stop the Vietnam War. The demonstrators did not

¹⁷⁵ “University Circle Students Join Mobilization to N.Y.C.,” *Reserve Tribune*, March 7, 1967, 5. Courtesy Case Western University Archives.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

consider their actions to be unpatriotic, but rather, the most patriotic thing they could do. The policy they wanted the United States to take was to get out of Vietnam and let the Vietnamese settle their own affairs.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ Fred Halstead, *Out Now! A Participant's Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War* (New York: Monad Press, 1978), 298-99.

Chapter Six

April 15, 1967, the Beginning of the Long End

Cleveland's history in the Vietnam antiwar movement was prominent as it was where Dr. Benjamin Spock and Professor Sidney Peck, two of its leaders lived and worked. Both were part of a moderate University Circle Teach-in Committee confined to educational activity and electoral politics. In the course of discussions, the Committee decided to combine moderate forces with additional street, radical-oriented forces, and develop a mass breadth that the antiwar movement lacked. The peace movement up to this point had been highly fragmented with only local or individualized protests occurring. In Cleveland, the University Circle Teach-in Committee believed they could act as a catalytic agent to bring together a number of groups who oppose the war in Vietnam and who might consider ways and means for coordinated activities. The professors, being of a moderate position, figured they were the right choice to encourage this development. The first of three Cleveland conferences the Committee organized began on July 22, 1966 and resulted in the Spring Mobilization Committee.¹⁷⁸

The massive demonstrations in New York and San Francisco organized by the Spring Mobilization Committee had been, according to Sidney Peck, "successful beyond all expectations." Historian Tom Wells later credited the April protests with "showing the Johnson administration and public that the antiwar movement had carved out a large political base in the United States." The 1967 protests happened within a context of deepening crisis at home and abroad, as urban riots and the ongoing war in Vietnam

¹⁷⁸ Fred Halstead, *Out Now! A Participant's Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War* (New York: Monad Press, 1978), 189.

undermined Lyndon Johnson's presidency. As a result, Johnson's approval rating dropped by twenty percent, with decreasing support for his Vietnam policy. The president was in some much trouble politically that he could not leave the White House without encountering fierce demonstrations.¹⁷⁹

The Spring Mobilization Committee itself had no direct economic or political power, consisting of many different group ideologies. Because these groups each had their own mass following, the demonstration that attracted huge numbers of people on April 15, 1967 was itself an indication of the increasing breadth of the antiwar sentiment. "The demonstration was bigger than the 1963 Civil Rights march in Washington," said Martin Luther King Jr., and up to that time was the largest march of any kind ever held in the United States.¹⁸⁰ The march in San Francisco consisted of 50,000 people, while in New York the demonstration was estimated to have been more than 300,000 marchers. The success of the Spring Mobilization was due to the process of several thousand activists working with ordinary people, brainstorming ideas together, arguing differences out and then making adjustments. The antiwar movement began with people who were already radicalized such as pacifists, socialists, communists, rebellious students and morally outraged individuals. When the movement started there had been just a small minority of people, convinced their cause was just, who did not care how unpopular they were.

The Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam marked the first significant coalition between the peace and civil rights movements on a national level. The

¹⁷⁹ Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movement in the 1960's* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2005), 106.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 118.

prominence of Black leaders and civil rights groups at the April 15 protest was very encouraging for those seeking to forge the two movements together. The goals established throughout the Cleveland Conferences and the April 15 spring demonstration was to stimulate increased antiwar activity everywhere within the African community. As Martin Luther King Jr. began to openly criticize the war, antiwar sentiment was also growing amongst ordinary African Americans. A national poll taken after the Spring Mobilization showed a majority of Blacks agreed with Dr. King's position against the war. On an organizational level, the civil rights movement was integrated into the structure of the Spring Mobilization Committee as James Bevel, a close aide of Martin Luther King, became national director of the organization. Bevel was a Baptist minister who had been recruited to achieve greater participation of civil rights organizations, and he now announced his desire to involve the entire black community in a movement to end the war. Martin Luther King and James Bevel were making bids to the younger black generation with their increasingly outspoken public views that Vietnam was a racist conflict. The two also reemphasized how the war was having negative implications on African Americans for the Great Society.¹⁸¹

The effects of the massive demonstration in 1967 caused President Johnson's national security advisor McGeorge Bundy to tell him, "Public discontent with the war is now wide and deep." Defense Secretary Robert McNamara was already convinced of the war's failure by 1967, but refrained from any public dissent. Thus when General Westmoreland requested 200,000 more troops to Vietnam in August President Johnson sent 50,000, deciding on a limited escalation. The increasing unpopularity of the war led

¹⁸¹ Hall, *Peace and Freedom*, 107.

the President to choose a middle course of neither unleashing the full might of America's military power nor withdrawing. However, if there was a debate within the movement that demonstrations were powerless to affect events significantly, internal administration documents prove otherwise. On May 19, 1967, McNamara sent a memorandum to the President giving a discouraging picture of the military situation and a pessimistic view of the American public's impatience with the war. This was a then-secret memorandum on discussions the administration had over Westmoreland's request and antiwar sentiment and the effect additional troop calls would have on the American people.¹⁸² The May 19 memorandum would later be revealed in *The Pentagon Papers*, a collection of documents about United States involvement in Vietnam from 1945 to 1968 leaked to *Time* magazine in 1971 by a former marine. Secretly prepared at the request of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, the papers revealed that early on, military leaders knew the war could not be won, and that continuing the war would lead to many times more casualties than was admitted publicly. Further, the papers showed a deep cynicism toward the public and a disregard for the loss of life suffered by soldiers and civilians. Democratic Senator Mike Gravel of Alaska wrote about the papers, "No one who reads this study can fail to conclude that, had the true facts been known earlier, the war would have long ago ended, and the needless deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans and Vietnamese have been averted."¹⁸³

¹⁸² *The Pentagon Papers: As Published by the New York Times* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971).

¹⁸³ Hall, *Peace and Freedom*, 106; Halstead, *Out Now*, 290.

Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1984), 367-368.

The debate over Vietnam can be characterized as a despoiler of other legitimate social forces in the community. It was a destructive social disease whose effects are felt to this day.¹⁸⁴ The purpose of the antiwar movement was to put pressure on the United States government to end the war and to convince the public that such pressure was essential for the benefit of the nation. The demonstrations were intended to keep the issue alive against an imperialist government. The 1968 Tet Offensive, My Lai Massacre, and finally the 1970 Kent State and Jackson State killings were required to turn a majority of ordinary citizens against the government's Vietnam policy. But the constant pressure from protesting Americans deescalated the war and eventually ended it. Most Clevelanders, as well as others across the nation, did not endorse the behavior of radicals who disrupted the 1968 Democratic Convention and burned down a university computer center. As the war went on year after year, Americans came to realize for themselves that their government was lying to them, the conflict had no end in sight and they were fed up while their sons and daughters were being threatened and killed in a war whose purpose appeared to be increasingly vague. On Vietnam, the antiwar movement advocated for that country's self-determination by its people, the freedom even to choose communism if they wanted to.¹⁸⁵

The antiwar movement was a generational occurrence, since the youth were being drafted and doing the fighting and dying. This was the most urgent aspect to all the protest movement to which the establishment had to compete for the allegiance of the American youth. The government had to conscript young men or force them to enlist by

¹⁸⁴ Barbara Crossette, "Senator Challenges Tally of Vietnam POW's," *New York Times*, January 25, 1992, A7.

¹⁸⁵ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 24, 523-45.

means of the draft. The protest movement gained the youth's voluntary participation and backing by appealing to their sense of self preservation, their consciences, and their deep convictions. Although many students were beneficiaries of draft deferments, college and some high school campuses from coast to coast served as the main organizing centers for the movement. Colleges also played such a large role in American history at this time because of the immense expanse of higher education following World War II and growth in student population to almost eight million. The antiwar movement also did not proceed at an even rate but experienced ebbs and flows built by major political and military events. Activity slackened during national election periods and picked up momentum with each new turn in the military situation or policy pronouncement in Washington.¹⁸⁶

The Vietnam War was not always opposed by a large population of American society. Initially, the war was only opposed by pacifists, liberals and students. As the war dragged on, Americans' patience and tempers shortened. Stories of torture and the use of napalm and Agent Orange in Vietnam disgusted people back home. The United States' policy of claiming success on the battlefield by tallying an enemy body count, instead of occupying land and holding it, was another war policy Americans did not understand. The parents, groups, hippies and individuals who joined in opposition against the war later saw the war as a moral, ethical or socioeconomic wrong which was deeply damaging the country. The soldiers even had their own views as between 1963-

¹⁸⁶ Halstead, *Out Now*, 718.

1973, over 9,000 men were disciplined for refusing to be drafted, while the number of soldiers who deserted from 1960-1973, was nearly 504,000.¹⁸⁷

As the place where two of its leading activists, Dr. Benjamin Spock and Professor Sidney Peck, lived and worked, Cleveland was an important focal point for the Vietnam antiwar movement's genesis. The University Circle Teach-In Committee they formed invited 30 people from fifteen organizations to a conference in Cleveland in 1966 to discuss protesting the war. Groups such as CORE, SANE, SDS, the clergy, pacifists and Quakers were there. The successful first conference led to two more conferences held in Cleveland, in fall of 1966. The massive April 15, 1967 demonstrations in New York and San Francisco were decided upon at the third Cleveland conference, instead of holding many smaller, localized events across the country which some groups wanted. The demonstration had many groups and individuals with different views on why they were against the war, but for purposes of cohesion, a show of strength, and all agreeing that the war must be stopped, a mass demonstration was formed.

The Vietnam War became increasingly important to Cleveland students as it progressed. Opposition to the war, once a marginal position on many campuses across the United States, grew dramatically. Case Western Reserve, somewhat more liberal than other Northeast Ohio campuses at the time, was no exception. The draft had a unique impact on student and campus life. Students believed that people everywhere, in their everyday lives, should be trying to do things to end the war and to stop the machinery of war. The war added urgency with which students approached all activism. In civil rights, patience could be tolerated, but when people were dying in Vietnam every day, it

¹⁸⁷ <http://vietnamwarprotests1.weebly.com/>

was much harder, especially if you or someone you cared for was called upon to fight the unjust war. In Cleveland, smaller protest demonstrations and vigils were held, picketing of an induction center and draft opposition being part of student early antiwar activism. College students already protesting against the selective service system came to terms with the effect of the war effort on their lives, including the relationship of college to the war in Vietnam. Colleges began cooperating with the draft over student's grades and class rankings while students demanded a role in determining college policy. Activists believed cooperating with the draft conflicted with the educational mission of the college because student might be drafted to kill and die.

Civil Rights groups were probably more opposed to the Vietnam War all along since Blacks were drafted disproportionately more than whites and experienced higher death and casualty rates. Pacifists were always members against the war as matters of conscience. Liberals were against the moral, ethical, or economical toll it was costing our country with blood and treasure. American citizens were becoming tired of a never-ending war that seemed to be going in the wrong direction. The April 15, 1967 committee's goal was to start a movement, to be seen and heard, and to make a difference. The antiwar movements did help in ending the war by 1973, as de-escalation from protesters' pressure sped that result. The 1967 demonstration did change the path of troop buildup into Vietnam, as Johnson soon after slowed down the pace of troop buildup. Released later, the Pentagon Papers detailed internal memos that revealed that antiwar demonstrations had had an appreciable effect. The protesters, at least, could see that the Vietnamese would not stop fighting until their country was unified, while

Washington was getting people killed and only seemed interested in trying to save respectability, or peace with honor.

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