

# VIETNAM: CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE?

Two surveyors of the American politico-religious scene were asked to comment on *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience*, the small volume which has been brought together by Robert McAfee Brown, Abraham J. Heschel, and Michael Novak representing the "major religious traditions of this country." (Association Press, Behrman House, Herder & Herder. 127 pp. 95¢ [paper].)

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## AMERICAN RELIGION AND THE WAR

*Richard John Neuhaus*

Before discussing *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience* and the effort it represents, it is well to say something about the diversity within the religious community and its concern for peace. Most of what follows does not deal, for instance, with those who espouse the position of absolute pacifism nor with the historic "peace churches" such as the Friends, Mennonites and others. (But even in these instances discretion is necessary since some of the "peace churches" [e.g., the Friends] are active in the political sphere and some of the groups originally formed by pacifist impetus [e.g., Fellowship of Reconciliation] are increasingly open to those who enter the quest for world peace from a different direction.)

*Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience* reflects the ferment within the mainstream of the American religious establishment. Its three authors are not outriders, but progressive "influentials" within the councils of religious thought. The assumptions and patterns of thought, if not every conclusion, in this book are similar to what one finds in the Synagogue Council of America, the National Council of Churches and at least among those who are considered the more progressive members of the Roman Catholic Bishops Conference in the United States.

The term "religious leader" also needs comment. As

in most organized communities, the spokesmen and most influential members are usually professionals. In religion this means they are generally clergy. This generalization is decreasingly accurate, however, as increasing numbers of laymen take an active role in theological statement and in charting the course of organized religion. One of the authors of this book, Michael Novak, is a Roman Catholic layman who through his extensive writing and through his teaching at Stanford University wields considerable influence in the theological reflection of American Catholicism. The term "religious leader," then, does not necessarily mean the men who hold the highest positions in the several hierarchies but, rather, those who exercise actual influence in the thought and practice of organized religion in this country.

On the Vietnam question, the most accurate configuration of religious influentials is the National Emergency Committee of Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam with headquarters in New York City. All three authors are active in the leadership of this national group which is also the unofficial sponsor and initiator of the volume. Professor Brown's contribution to the book is actually an elaboration of the Committee's statement issued at the Clergy Mobilization in Washington, D.C., February 1966.

There are six characteristics of this new configuration of American religion. Most of these marks are explicit, others are implicit, in the book at hand.

1. *The religious protest against Administration policy in Vietnam conceives itself to be politically realistic.* While the public tends to make a sharp dis-

inction between politico-military questions and "moral questions," these religious leaders insist the two are one and the same. Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam (CLCAV) is influenced enormously by the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr and John C. Bennett, both of Union Theological Seminary, New York, and founders of the influential journal of opinion, *Christianity and Crisis*. This position of religious "realism" on social questions was hammered out in the late 30's in opposition to the prevailing pacifism in liberal Protestant circles. It rejects every form of absolutism, whether it be the fundamentalist absolutism which would identify America with God's chosen people or the absolutism of the radical pacifist.

The key term in John Bennett's thought on Vietnam is prudence. That is moral which is prudent. Prudence must be distinguished carefully from simple expedience. Politico-military decisions are prey to expediences and to national-ideological absolutes which militate against the prudent course. The ethical enterprise is not so much to supply a different point of reference for decision making as it is to enlarge the horizons within which political decisions must be responsible. In the unfolding of the Vietnam tragedy, Bennett and his colleagues have been saddened to see their position of ethical realism exploited in support of ethical cynicism and enlisted in the service of what seems politically expedient to the present Administration in Washington. This was pictured dramatically when Vice President Humphrey spoke at last year's 25th anniversary celebration of *Christianity and Crisis*. He acknowledged his debt to Dr. Niebuhr as, with frequent allusions to the writings of Niebuhr and Bennett, he proceeded to offer an ethical defense of the Administration's course in Vietnam. Needless to say, Bennett and Niebuhr were quick to disown the ethical offspring which the Vice President presented them.

The incident underscores the difficulty many religious folk have with the Niebuhr-Bennett perspective: it is not simple, it offers no easily applicable universal principles, and it is readily susceptible to distortion. Ethical "realism" can be, and has been, enlisted in the service of *Realpolitik* with a vengeance. Nevertheless, most of the leaders of CLCAV continue to follow the precarious path, insisting that the religious community must help provide the counsel and provocation of a prudence that is so comprehensive in its concern that it has a claim upon all who care about the survival of mankind and the making of human life human. In *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience*, Brown and Novak pursue this analytical course of caution, while Heschel's comments are marked by a more traditional religious tone of the emphatic, "Thus saith the Lord."

2. *The protest reflects the full spectrum of the re-*

*ligious community.* There is, of course, a difference between reflecting and representing. Unquestionably there are many religious leaders who support Administration policy, or are willing to give Washington the benefit of the doubt, or are indifferent to the Vietnam question. But with few exceptions, such as Cardinal Spellman, the men in the first two groups are not vocal or, as in the case of the Southern Baptists, have little influence outside their own denominational or regional groupings. The public voices of the religious community who address the Vietnam issue are overwhelmingly opposed to the Administration course.

The clergy of the country can be grouped in terms of parish or synagogue clergy, denominational or associational executives, academics, and members of the hierarchies. Although policies must generally be approved by the hierarchies and carried out by the parish clergy, the executives and academics no doubt have the greatest influence in setting directions for the religious community. This is particularly the case on social questions where the point is not so much to implement a program as to place an issue on the agenda of general religious concern. Where programs are called for on controversial questions, it is usually necessary, at least at the start, to develop an organization outside the denominational structures. Hence, the birth of CLCAV. Much of the actual programing of concern and action on Vietnam, however, is also being done through the social action departments of the various denominations. In some cases, such as the Methodist Church, protest programing is clearly part of the denomination's work. In other instances, social action departments which are far in advance of their hierarchies can program protest in a more oblique way by providing clergy with selective information and viewpoints. While most official statements of the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches have been something less than forthright in their criticism of the Administration, there is little question but that clergy have been educated to a more specific protest through quasi-official statements of position and through unofficial materials sent through official channels.

In the past two years it appears that almost all the prominent academic figures in religion have expressed themselves in favor of peaceful alternatives to present Vietnam actions. Indeed, theologians such as Paul Ramsey of Princeton are lonely figures and much in demand at high-level religious conferences that want to present "both sides of the question." Among the hierarchical types, a discrete silence is more common. In some instances (several of the Orthodox churches, pockets in the orthodox Jewish community, Billy Graham and many Southern Baptists, and, of course, Cardinal Spellman) there is public support for Presi-

dent Johnson on Vietnam and even calls for further escalation. A remarkable development on the most official level, however, is the growing number of Roman Catholic bishops who have declared themselves in favor of an unconditional halt in the bombing of the North and other steps advocated by U Thant as necessary prerequisites for negotiation. Bishop Fulton J. Sheen's advocacy of American withdrawal is certainly beyond most of his episcopal colleagues, but probably not so out of step that it can be dismissed as idiosyncratic. Equally significant is the action of the arch-conservative Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod this past July in resisting the impulse to give blanket endorsement to the state. The body encouraged its member churches to examine and debate the moral questions raised by the Vietnam conflict and to enter vigorously into public discussion of national policy.

It was not until Selma 1965 that official religion in America threw its weight unequivocally on the side of civil rights. Concern about Vietnam is now at a pre-Selma level. In the past year Roman Catholic Archbishop Hallinan of Atlanta called for a "Selma on Vietnam." *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience* is an effective instrument in poisoning the religious community for that moment. Whether that moment will arrive as unambiguously as it did with civil rights remains an open question although, like other groups opposed to the war, CLCAV is alert to the possible opportunities of an election year.

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3. *The religious protest is passionately concerned to be informed and "responsible."* Perhaps because they are acutely sensitive to the charge that "moral concerns" are irrelevant to practical decision-making, the religious leaders in question have worked assiduously to develop research and information channels. At the same time they have generally eschewed identification with the more free-swinging protest stance of, for instance, the National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam. *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience* and the literature of CLCAV is informed by all the publicly available pertinent literature, ranging from Trager to Hilsman, Goodwin, Fall and Lacouture. Also, there are numerous informal contacts with the Department of State, the United Nations, and various leaders of the N.I.F. and of North Vietnam. Discussions with top officials in the Pentagon, White House and elsewhere are not infrequent. CLVAC and some of the denominational departments are persuaded that the vigor of their protest has not been inhibited by their policy of preserving bridges to the political and diplomatic establishments.

In addition, there is an effective network of infor-

mation within the various American and international groupings of the "peace movement," and especially through the various tie-ins with the World Council of Churches in Geneva. Such information and coordination of contacts has been strengthened by the establishment of the National Council of Churches' International Affairs Programs under the direction of Dr. Robert Billheimer. Reports from clergy who have participated in the several fact-finding missions to Vietnam have been an additional influence in the formulation of the religious protest.

Reflecting the scholarly seriousness of the religious community on the Vietnam issue is an eleven-month study commissioned by CLCAV and involving the full-time labor of four researchers at Columbia University on the American conduct of the war in the light of international law. More than 5,000 reports were carefully combed, resulting in a 400-page documentation, "Behavior of the U.S. in Vietnam: The Conduct of the War and Law," which is planned for release this Fall. CLVAC believes the evidence clearly indicates U.S. war crimes, grave violations of moral constraint and, therefore, a challenge to human survival. This study is entirely independent from, and presented as a responsible alternative to, the recent Lord Russell "War Crimes Tribunal" which was so severely crippled by the prevalence of anti-American invective. In the CLCAV study, the evidence is permitted to speak for itself. The force of the indictment of U.S. actions is not weakened.

It is too early to offer a thorough evaluation of the effect of the Vietnam debate upon American religion. But it is certain that the development in the last two years of experience and machinery for forming sophisticated judgments on foreign affairs holds enormous implications for the future of the religious role in society.

4. *The religious protest is conditioned by an international perspective.* This point is implicit in the remarks above, but deserves separate listing as a major characteristic of the religious protest. Especially Heschel's contribution in *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience* underscores this universal point of reference. Christian literature of recent years has leveled a vigorous polemic against Western hegemony of the world. While the polemic finds obvious theological support in the biblical tradition, its immediate impetus is in the "mission crisis" which has gripped the churches as a consequence of the collapse of 19th century patterns of expansion, patterns inexorably tied to colonialism. Thus the churches are familiar with the language of revolution, not through Marxist-oriented political reflection but through their experience with world missions. The irony is that, through

the essentially conservative enterprise of "mission work," many religious leaders have been brought to a position regarding world revolution not dissimilar from that held by more radical political groupings in America. As one prominent theologian remarked, "It seems Dean Rusk is the last true believer in Christian America's mission to the poor pagans."

There are a few American religious sects that have welcomed the Vietnam conflict as a great mission opportunity and are enthusiastically distributing scripture portions among the Montagnard tribesmen. But most churchmen are completely disillusioned with that scene and are seeking new understandings of world order in what it means for the Church to be "one, holy and catholic." This understanding is more readily grasped in the Jewish community as a result of Jewry's being forced historically to view itself as a "world people."

While aspects of neo-isolationism crop up in every protest against the Vietnam conflict, I think it fair to say that the quest for a new internationalism is more characteristic of the religious protest. The religious leadership discussed here finds its concerns articulated, for instance, in Pope Paul's *Populorum Progressio* which calls not only for help from the richer nations to the poorer but also insists upon the importance of people being "the artisans of their own destiny." It is the failure to respect this last imperative that many religious leaders find most objectionable in U.S. Vietnam policy.

5. *The religious protest is a call for humility.* Reinhold Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932) and other writings were directed against what he believed to be the naive optimism of the American social gospel movement. This emphasis upon a more modest evaluation of man's ability to structure the world as he would wish it to be continues to mark the religious community, particularly as it is represented by CLCAV. Herbert Butterfield, the British historian, is frequently cited, as he is by Brown in *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience*:

"The hardest strokes of heaven fall in history upon those who imagine that they can control things in a sovereign manner, as though they were kings of the earth, playing Providence not only for themselves but for the far future—reaching out into the future with the wrong kind of farsightedness, and gambling on a lot of risky calculations in which there must never be a single mistake."

This theme in the religious protest is familiar also to readers of William Fulbright's *The Arrogance of Power* (1967). It has a correlate in the rejection of the various conspiracy or devil theories about U.S. involvement in Vietnam which seem to fascinate so

much of the radical Left. The title of Michael Novak's chapter in *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience*, "Stumbling Into War and Stumbling Out," is an accurate reflection of mainline religious thought on the Why of U.S. involvement. The first stumbling, it is asserted, is not the result of a failure of nerve but the failure of humility in the face of man's limitations in controlling the future. While the literature of CLCAV holds President Johnson and his colleagues responsible for the unfolding tragedy of Vietnam, it also views the Administration as a victim of its own miscalculations, pitifully unwilling to confront its errors and seek new alternatives. The attitude toward Washington is not so much one of anger and denunciation as it is one of compassion toward figures trapped in the web of arrogance.

6. *The religious protest is emphatically American.* I believe it is possible to draw a distinction in the "peace movement" between those who think U.S. action in Vietnam is what America is all about and those who think U.S. action in Vietnam is a gross distortion of America. The first attitude marks many protestors of the radical Left, while the second is more characteristic of the religious protest. CLCAV, *Christian Century*, *Commonweal* and *Christianity and Crisis* are all articulate about what C. Wright Mills termed the "power elite," what Eisenhower called the "military-industrial complex," and about the consequent confusion in national priorities and dislocation of political decision making. Nevertheless, the religious voice seems not to despair of the possibilities of American democracy. The undeclared Presidential war in Vietnam has dealt a severe, but by no means fatal, blow to confidence in the operation of the democratic process. Religious leaders understand their protest as being within that process. It is an American protest. In the religious protest, the frustrated anger against Washington is also tempered by a sense of complicity. This is a common theme, well expressed by Rabbi Heschel in this book: "We must continue to remind ourselves that in a free society, all are involved in what some are doing. Some are guilty, all are responsible."

These, then, are six characteristics of *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience* and of the religious protest it represents. Brown, Heschel, Novak and a host of others in the religious community are hopeful their protest will help to turn America and the world away from madness. Whether or not the hope is realized, it is certain that the Vietnam question has already changed the role of religion in American society. The effect of the change will become evident as the perspectives now articulated by the main stream leadership are digested in the seminaries and parishes.

Almost every note of the religious protest against the Vietnam war which we have discussed here is struck by Robert McAfee Brown in the conclusion of *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience*:

"We who are so deeply involved in the immensity of the present war must have the courage to initiate new steps that will lead to peace. If we do not take those steps, we can be sure that God will judge us harshly and that he will hold us accountable for the horror we continue to unleash.

"But if we do turn about, if we do seek to undo whatever measure we can of the wrong that has been done, then we can also be sure that as we begin to walk that long and hard and often discouraging road, God himself will be with us, to guide and chasten and sustain us, and that he will deign to use even us in restoring some portion of the divine creation we have so grievously misused."

## FACTS AND FALLACIES

*Norma Krause Herzfeld*

This triple-authored, triple-published polemic against the war in Vietnam, shared by a Protestant, Jew and Catholic, is an attempt to rally the organized churches and synagogues of America to lead condemnation of what the writers consider an unequivocally immoral role the U.S. plays in this Southeast Asian conflict. As spokesmen for Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam, the arguments generally sum up the sense of "a clergy mobilization" by the group in Washington last January and February. Lots of people come away from Washington with odd impressions. After visiting government officials and legislators at that time, the authors came away with the impression that these policymakers would like to "engage in bold initiatives for a negotiated peace" but they were afraid to do so because they weren't sure public opinion "as a whole" would back them. The religious establishment, these religionists feel, should secure this backing. In any case, it is difficult to see how they could believe these policymakers, because throughout the book they vilify them. The U.S. Vietnam efforts are probably full of more flaws, mistakes and wrong-headedness than anyone could imagine, but I still think it inaccurate to say, as Professor Novak does, that "at every step, American political acumen has been defective and American political performance maladroit." Or again that "Americans appear in the

role of clumsy wielders of destruction, men made afraid by their own fantasies, men who act violently and then invent reasons afterwards, men caught up in countless lies in order to justify the process." How could we ever have become involved in such "moral degradation," he says, if Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson had acted in good faith? Dr. Brown says these men have "used power more irresponsibly and cruelly than any other nation in history." (Professor Novak calls Vietnam "one of the four or five most destructive wars in all history." Nonsense.)

Novak carries the major burden of the book, writing of the "historical development" of U.S. involvement and its moral dilemmas. He aims to give us facts, figures and real history. He tells us what a group of people believe, but for real history one would have to look elsewhere. He says he is not against war in principle, only against this war. Rabbi Heschel engages in an emotional plea to the conscience of the individual to shake off his "moral numbness." He is an all-out pacifist. Dr. Brown, also pacifist, repeats the Novak arguments, suggesting ways in which Americans can change U.S. policies.

I happen to belong to the eighty per cent of Americans, many (according to Novak) shirking their responsibility and suffering from an information gap, who, he says, want neither just to pull out from Vietnam soonest nor to destroy North Vietnam or China in order to "win." His discussion, he says, is addressed to us so we can see what is being done in our name. "Those who study events in Southeast Asia in this century," he says, "and particularly the history of the United States involvement in the affairs of Vietnam, seem [emphasis mine] to be those most pained and most shamed by the continuance of the war." What can one say to such an incredible statement? Novak points out that it is difficult to be holy. All I can say is that it seems (note that clever word) very easy to be holier-than-thou.

Novak's historical perspective is presented in three parts: the meaning of the cold war, the role of China, the civil war in Vietnam.

Some Americans think of the cold war, says Novak, as an apocalyptic struggle between the Communists and anti-Communists, the bad guys and the good guys, possibly because of the American "western" tradition. He has a tendency to use this mode himself, except the bad guys are always Americans, and while everyone else may not be "good" they are at least better. He takes the increasingly popular view that the Communist world is a lot more dead than red, the cold war nearly over and gone because there has been some loosening in the Bloc. He attempts to analyze Communists, whatever their variety, as if they no

longer possessed an ideology. Novak sees communism and "modified capitalism" mainly as two "rival strategies" for dealing with poverty. This is certainly true in a sense—a pity it is not more true. I believe the cold war has changed its shape and we should stop dealing with it by outmoded methods and thought patterns. But communism remains a powerful world force more united than divided, and we should remember that there really was a deadly serious confrontation which began in 1945-46 almost at the same time the "current" Vietnam tragedy began. We must see the origins of this tragedy in the context of the times. (A little hindsight is a dangerous thing.)

China, says Novak, we endow with fantasy and myth. Our China policy from way back undoubtedly lacked realism. We have contributed to China's fierce paranoia and our rigidity has left us with almost no policy at all. Novak maintains that China has been "restrained and judicious" in its "foreign adventures." Its only large-scale military involvement was in Korea, he points out. But he says it has not seriously molested Macao or Hong Kong. On the contrary, the Chinese now hold Macao in the palm of their hand and are putting a fearfully tight squeeze on Hong Kong. They were restrained, he says euphemistically, in "their attempt to clarify a disputed boundary with India." Some people call it, more correctly I think, an invasion of India. They have inhibited the flow of Russian aid to Vietnam, he says, and given "relatively little aid themselves." This is quite inaccurate. They have been "rational and clear," he says, in their statement that they will not become involved in Vietnam unless the U.S. invades North Vietnam or China. This, Novak believes, is a clearer statement of intentions than the U.S. has ever issued. And, he says, they "used military means in Tibet to reacquire territory Chinese have long believed theirs." This last euphemism (and I use the word euphemism euphemistically) I find incredible coming from one so eager to denounce the horrors of war. China's "foreign adventure" in Tibet was fully studied by the International Inquiry Commission of Jurists which published its report in Geneva in 1960. It tells of sickening horrors deliberately committed by the Chinese which make Vietnam pale by comparison. One can read about the Tibet adventure in Joseph Campbell's *The Masks of God: Oriental Mythology*; and, speaking of fantasy and myth as we are, it is an interesting coincidence that Campbell calls the Tibet horror "the materialization of mythology in life." And remember—Novak points out—China has "never controlled all of Asia—not even all of Vietnam." Who has, and so what?

And now we come to the myth of the good guy, Ho Chi Minh, and his "capable guerrillas." Ho, whose

hero is George Washington and who put words from the U.S. Declaration of Independence into North Vietnam's Declaration of Independence, says Novak, had "liberated" all of Vietnam from the French in 1954 and had to "surrender" half of it at Geneva. Then we let Diem take over the South and cancel the 1956 elections which were to reunite Vietnam, Novak continues. The facts are that most of the fighting against the French was in the North. The Vietminh, Ho's forces, had control mostly of the North. Many other Vietnamese nationalists, non-Communists, were dismayed at Ho's takeover. The French had saddled Vietnam with Bao Dai, a useless chief of state who spent most of his time on the Riviera, but just before the Geneva Accords, Diem took over as Premier. The French worked very hard to keep any but North Vietnamese Communists out of the negotiations, and there is some evidence that the French made deals with Ho to protect their colonialist economic holdings after they pulled out. French Premier Mendes-France even asked the U.S. to keep Diem from obstructing a truce. I believe Diem was a very capable leader who made surprising economic progress in the South before he grew isolated and tyrannical. Novak has no use whatever for Diem and calls his American support "an almost total political misjudgment." The Geneva Accords specified the 1956 elections be held under international supervision. This became the usual impossibility in any case, just as in Germany and Korea. North Vietnam left Vietminh behind, though they were pledged to withdrawal, to form resistance pockets and infiltrated others back later. All Laos lay open as a path to their forces. The U.S. had pledged not "to use force to disturb the settlement" but also said "any renewal of Communist aggression would be viewed by us as a matter of grave concern."

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Those, including Novak, who keep saying that the U.S. would not allow free elections in Vietnam generally quote President Eisenhower. Eisenhower wrote in his memoirs that "it was generally conceded that had an election been held, Ho Chi Minh would have been elected Premier." This was in 1952 or early 1953 when the war was still going strong and Bao Dai was the only alternative to Ho. He also wrote: "I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indochinese affairs who did not agree that had elections been held as of the time of the fighting, possibly eighty per cent of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader rather than Chief of State Bao Dai." Novak writes: "Eleven years ago, in 1956, the U.S. supported Diem in canceling the election called for

under the Geneva Accords when, according to President Eisenhower, Ho Chi Minh would have won eighty per cent of the votes." Pacifist literature is especially fond of this historical distortion, though it is but one example. It bolsters their argument that the country really belongs to Ho Chi Minh, the people wanted and still want him, and why don't we just let him prevail. But what the South Vietnamese might have wanted in 1953 or 1954 is quite different from what they might have wanted in 1956 under very different circumstances. Novak's version of subsequent Vietnam developments is also full of errors and remains otherwise a matter of opinion, not, as solemnly represented, a strictly factual presentation.

Says Novak further, we are in Vietnam for possibly three reasons: to help the Vietnamese, to contain China and stop "wars of liberation," to give South Vietnam a separate political identity and choose their form of government. The last two reasons he believes are "mistaken," "irresponsible," and "immoral." Let's leave them alone, he says; let the "resisters" fight their own battles. "The U.S. cannot play God." He considers "unification" of North and South Vietnam some kind of a moral imperative, though it is only a return to French colonial geography.

When South Vietnam became an independent entity in 1954 it had a population of ten million. Today after every kind of carnage it has a population of 16 or 17 million, nearly five million of whom defied more death and terror from lovable Ho and the Viet Cong to vote in their own election. I don't think the U.S. can just walk off and leave them to subversion. I find it very curious that Novak never once uses the word "subversion"—at least I watched very carefully for it and don't think I missed it. Subversion is at the heart of the Vietnam situation as well as many other unstable nations. Subversion and revolution are not synonymous. Subversion is the internal destruction of nations sponsored by other nations. It is difficult to declare war on subversion, or negotiate it away, and few study its ethics, but it is just as insidious and immoral as any great war of aggression. There must be a deterrent to subversion and the Vietnam war is a very bad substitute. We should learn from it how to find a better deterrent.

Rabbi Heschel says "the decision to use military force was a failure of statesmanship, a failure of nerve, a moral retreat." What do you do when "statesmanship" fails? Not to use force can be a moral retreat, too. When Heschel speaks of the "whoredom of militarism" and hurls the ancient prophets of Israel at us. I could not help thinking of the Arab-Israeli war which seems to have presented the liberals who oppose the Vietnam war with an interesting dilemma.

Dr. Brown ranks American participation in the Vietnam war as one of the three great moral outrages of our era, along with the rise of Nazism in Germany in the 1930's and the struggle against civil rights in the 50's and 60's. And where are the churches and synagogues? They should be speaking up, he says. They failed on Nazism, the race struggle, and now, he maintains, they are failing on Vietnam. This is true about the separation of the religious establishment from the issues of history, but how can I "discuss" an issue with someone who accuses me (because I cannot so rank Vietnam) of condoning Nazism and Negro-hating. Yet Dr. Brown makes a great plea for the right of dissent. I am not worried about *these* dissenters. The U.S. public in time of war has never displayed greater toleration of dissent, surrounded as they are by sour guilt complexes. These dissenters control most of the journals of opinion, except perhaps *The National Review*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *Playboy*. Their one-sided arguments and carefully selected facts, sources and reading lists receive plenty of attention.

• Official Protestant, Catholic and Jewish declarations on Vietnam, present in the appendix, are much more carefully reasoned. Positions offered bear little resemblance to the inadequate unilateralism and dogmatic condemnations of the three authors.

What alarms me about these authors is that they not only condemn war, they condemn U.S. foreign aid as dollar imperialism when they ought to be out picketing for more of it. Dr. Brown even frowns on economic and social reconstruction in Vietnam before peace negotiations have begun because they "can only be interpreted as condoning our massive acts of on-going destruction." *What kind of morality is this?* Does this therefore make it a good thing that the Viet Cong kill 15 pacification workers every week? Or that they murdered or kidnapped 5,000 elected village chiefs, teachers, health workers and agricultural aides last year?

I am afraid that the coming U.S. elections will cause us to pull out or go all out when we should be pulling in, cutting the bombing, consolidating gains, and settling in with *more* forces to protect and nourish reconstruction over the long period of time it is bound to take. If public opinion polarizes one way or the other, and Novak's eighty per cent disappears, then we will be in danger of throwing away all that many have suffered and sacrificed for. Meanwhile, protect me from those who want to protect us from the risk of becoming prisoners of force by making us prisoners of non-force.