

to Johnson, and yet when he does not even bother with the front of a "commission" but puts the study directly into the hands of the Pentagon, one does not hear a peep out of this Administration's Congressional henchmen. It did not puzzle them, apparently, that a study initiated by Kennedy had been going for seven months. What had happened to it? Why a new Presidential study on top of one that was already in progress?

All such quibbling was set aside when, with a great flourish and a \$1 million budget, the Department of Defense assigned thirty-five men full time to complete the new study, the deadline being *last* April. Although the report is now almost a year overdue, nothing has been heard from the study group, except for a few preparatory leaks to favorite newsmen that the draft will have to be continued as is, indefinitely.

John McClaughry, an aide to Prouty, nicely summarizes the strategy:

Johnson may not be the inventor of the phantom committee, but he is rapidly becoming a master of its use.

Several Congressmen or Senators—it doesn't matter of which party—get interested in what they believe to be a serious problem. They agitate for a serious study effort, by a select committee of Congress or by a special Presidential commission. Bills are introduced, speeches delivered, letters sent to the President stating the urgency of the matter and pleading for its support.

But for reasons of his own the President does not want the issue aired. The solution: with much fanfare the President establishes a phantom committee. On paper, the committee makes a frontal assault on the problem it faces. In practice, the committee does little or nothing. Its main purpose is to quiet the demands of Congress by assuring the public that something is being done.

Curtis and the others knew what Johnson was up to, but for a while they had to pretend that he was sincere. Now they have waited long enough to show that the President has no intention of attempting to cope with the draft problem, and they are ready once more to ask that the Congress take control. There must be quite a few young men who wish them luck.

FREEDOM'S CRISIS

THE LAST STEEP ASCENT

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

At the beginning of each year, Martin Luther King, Jr., presents in The Nation an annual report on the progress of civil rights. The essay here following is the sixth of these reviews, the

At the end of 1965 the civil rights movement was widely depicted as bewildered and uncertain, groping desperately for new directions. The substantial legislative accomplishments of the past several years, it was argued, dealt so extensively with civil rights problems that the movement had become stagnated in an embarrassment of riches. Negro leaders, we were told, did not know how to maintain their assembled armies nor what goals they should seek.

The dominant white leadership of the nation, in perceiving the civil rights movement as uncertain and confused, is engaged in political projection. The Negro freedom movement has a policy and a program; it is the white power structure that gropes in indecision. White America, caught between the Negro upsurge and its own conscience, evolved a limited policy toward Negro freedom. It could not live with the intolerable brutality and bruising humiliation imposed upon the Negro by the society it cherished as democratic. A wholesome national consensus developed against *extremist* conduct toward nonwhite Americans. That feeling found expression in laws, court decisions, and in the alteration of long-entrenched custom. But the prohibition of barbaric behavior, while beneficial to the victim, does not constitute the attainment of equality or freedom. A man may cease beating his wife without thereby creating a wholesome marital relationship.

The quality and quantity of discrimination and deprivation in our nation are so pervasive that all the changes of a decade have merely initiated preliminary alterations in an

earlier ones being: "Equality Now," February 4, 1961; "Fumbling on the New Frontier," March 3, 1962; "Bold Decision for a New South," March 30, 1963; "Hammer of Civil Rights," March 9, 1964, and "Let Justice Roll Down," March 15, 1965.

edifice of injustice and misery. But the evils in our society oppressing the Negro are not now so heavy a social and moral burden that white America cannot still live with them. That is the dilemma of 1966, for which the white leadership has no clear and effective policy. The logic of growth means that the civil rights odyssey must move to new levels in which the content of freedom is security, opportunity, culture and equal participation in the political process. Negro goals are clearly defined, their tactics are tested, suitable and viable. The lag is appearing in the white community which now inclines toward a *détente*, hoping to rest upon past laurels. The changes it must accept in the new circumstances, however logical, have not been faced nor accepted as compelling.

The period which has been completed, though attended by turmoil and spectacular events, was relatively easy to accomplish. Negroes not only furnished the drive but by disciplined adherence to nonviolence swiftly educated and won millions to the righteousness of their demands. For the white majority there were few hardships, and the lifting of some burden of guilt adequately compensated for any limited inconvenience.

The future is more complex. Slums with hundreds of thousands of living units are not eradicated as easily as lunch counters or buses are integrated. Jobs are harder to create than voting rolls. Harmonizing of peoples of vastly different cultural levels is complicated and frequently abrasive. It is easy to conceive of a plan to raise the minimum

wage and thus in a single stroke extract millions of people from poverty. But between the conception and the realization there lies a formidable wall. Someone has been profiting from the low wages of Negroes. Depressed living standards for Negroes are a structural part of the economy. Certain industries are based upon the supply of low-wage, unskilled and immobile nonwhite labor. Hand assembly factories, hospitals, service industries, housework, agriculture operations using itinerant labor, would all suffer shock, if not disaster, if the minimum wage were significantly raised. A hardening of opposition to the satisfaction of Negro needs must be anticipated as the movement presses against financial privilege.

Beyond this, long-established cultural privileges are threatened in the next phase. We have seen in the effort to integrate schools, even in the more tolerant Northern urban centers, that many reasonably unbigoted persons assume a new posture with the introduction of unfamiliar problems into school systems where they have a personal interest. In the quest for genuinely integrated housing, the intensity of opposition from many who considered themselves free of prejudice has made it clear that this struggle will be attended by tenacious difficulties.

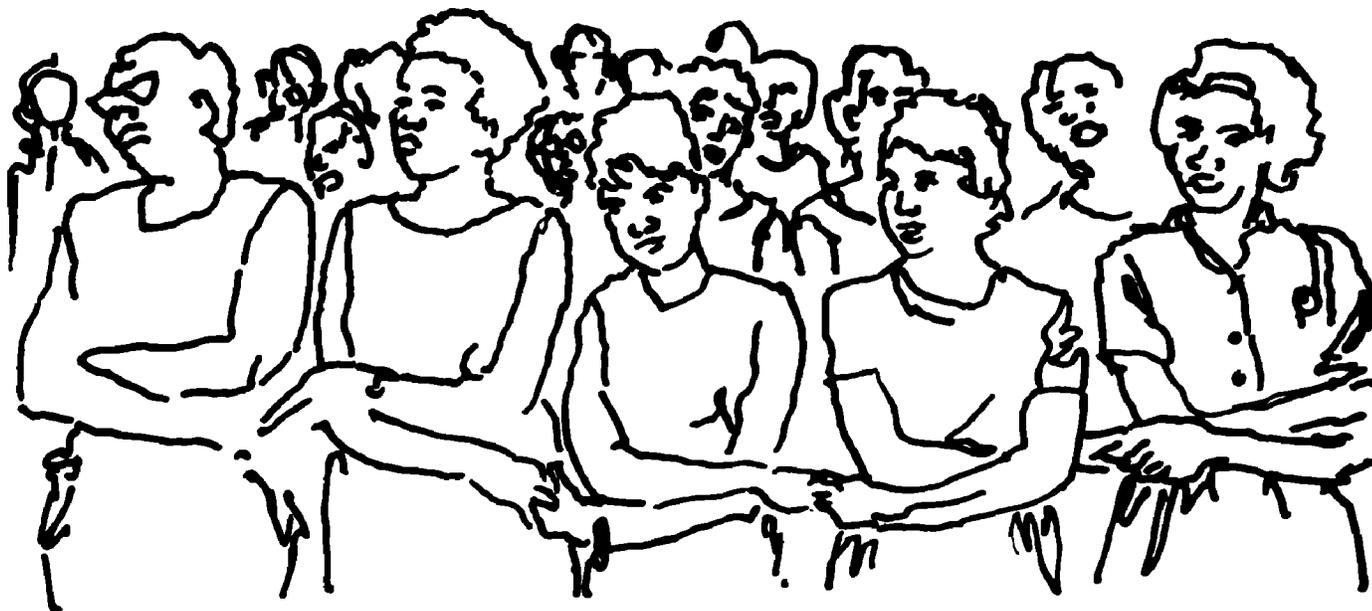
It is against this reality that the new period must be analyzed. Negroes have benefited from a limited change that was emotionally satisfying but materially deficient. As they move forward for fundamental alteration of their lives, a more bitter opposition grows even within groups that were hospitable to earlier superficial amelioration. Conflicts are unavoidable because a stage has been reached in which the reality of equality will require extensive adjustments in the way of life of some of the white majority.

There is no discernible will on the part of white leadership to prepare the people for changes on the new level. This is the program that is absent. No one has been told what slum elimination actually entails or what the transition from equality to opportunity really involves. One is forced to believe that the answers have not been forthcoming because there is no genuine conviction that such fundamental changes need be on any early agenda.

All profound social movements reach a plateau of this sort, short of the summit, and the presence of new opposition should not dismay us. Because we have accumulated substantial successes we have been able to reach the inner walls of resistance. That was our goal. The new obstacles should not be deplored but welcomed because their presence proves we are closer to the ultimate decision. These walls will yield to the same pressures that left the outer battlements in fragments behind us.

Government policy with respect to recent legislation reveals the contradictions that cloud the forward movement of civil rights. At the beginning of 1965, it was clear that the Administration was satisfied to rest on the legislation of the previous year. It felt the digestion of so heavy a feast of victories would occupy the civil rights movement for years. But our first step in February to employ these rights released the whirlwind. The attempt at Selma to brutalize Negroes once again stimulated decent Americans to a glorious moral moment of flaming indignation. President Johnson's passionate reaction made political history and his Administration moved with commendable dispatch to enact the Voting Rights Act of 1965. It was aided very significantly by the Goldwater debacle. The elections of 1964 broke the decades-old Congressional alliance of Dixiecrats and Northern conservatives, and sent to the Congress some fifty new Representatives who were receptive to fresh thinking.

With the passage of the memorable Voting Rights Act, the Administration once more proclaimed that the door to freedom had been flung open. Not since the promulgation of the Emancipation Proclamation had the hopes of Negroes been so high. But the year that came in like a lion went out like a lamb. There were increases in voting registration, there were some accretions to the list of token desegregated schools; but sweeping implementation nowhere appeared. Restraint and caution became public policy. The 1965 voting law applied to more than 500 Southern counties, but more than six months after its enactment only thirty-seven counties had received federal registrars. In the most important county of the South, where the city of Birmingham is located, every form of sophisticated evasion



was employed. We had to organize daily demonstrations, to face again police brutality, and to arrive almost at the brink of another holocaust, before the Department of Justice finally acceded and appointed federal registrars. The open door to freedom turned out in practice to be but slightly ajar, and even after mass action only a sliver of freedom was sliced off and served to a desperately hungry people.

Title Six of the same act had armed the government with substantial power finally to force school desegregation. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare wrote militant letters to school boards explicitly declaring that federal muscle would be used to break the resistance of a decade. Yet when the sound and fury abated, school desegregation continued merely to crawl forward.

The poverty program, which in concept elated the Negro poor, became so embroiled in political turmoil that its insufficiencies were magnified by paralyzing manipulations. Big-city machines felt threatened by it and small towns, particularly in the South, directed it away from Negroes. Its good intentions and limited objectives were frustrated by the skillful maneuvers of experienced politicians. The worst aspect of these negative experiences was the doubt cast upon the program as a whole and the discredit sustained by those Negroes involved directly in its administration. To launch a program with high-minded goals and to fail to safeguard it from opportunists and enemies amounted to sabotage, whether deliberate or undeliberate. It should have been obvious that Negroes, who alone were under pressure for results, would encounter difficulties in administration. They were ill prepared to handle the complexities that attended any novel and wide-ranging program. Yet they would have been successful even with their limitations if their efforts had not been impeded in so many instances by hostile municipal officials. At almost every turn malevolent press reports and irresponsible charges denigrated the projects that Negroes headed. Rumors and suspicions of corruption and waste proliferated until it became a hazard to assume responsibility.

Only a few weeks ago the President presented a plan to Congress for rebuilding entire slum neighborhoods. With other elements of the program it would, in his words, make the decaying cities of the present into "the masterpieces of our civilization." This plan is imaginative; it embodies social vision and properly defines racial discrimination as a central evil. However, the ordinary Negro, though no social or political analyst, will be skeptical. He knows how many laws exist in Northern states and cities that prohibit discrimination in housing, in education and in employment; he knows how many overlapping commissions exist to enforce the terms of these laws—and he knows how he lives. The ubiquitous discrimination in his daily life tells him that more laws on paper, no matter how breath-taking their terminology, will not guarantee that he will live in a "masterpiece of civilization." Laws affirming Negro rights have in every case been circumvented by ingenious evasions which render them void in practice. Laws that affect the whole population—draft laws, income-tax laws, traffic laws—do work, even though they are unpopular; but laws passed for the Negro's benefit are so widely unenforced

that it is a mockery to call them laws. The missing ingredient is no longer the will of governments to enact legislation; what is absent is the will to make it operative. There is a double standard in the enforcement of law, and a double standard in the respect for particular laws.

The Negro in 1966 now challenges society to make law real on the neighborhood level, down in the ghetto streets where he lives, works and seeks opportunity. Equal protection of the law is still substantially a national myth and a national disgrace in the reality of Negro life. In 1966, the Negro response is no longer a passive skepticism, nor is it expressed in the cynicism of inaction. A decade of sporadic and sometimes coordinated nonviolent action has educated him in the methodology of social change. He has learned how to compel the enactment of law, how to utilize to a degree some laws and how to expose spurious laws. He has learned that his adversaries are cunning, skillful and resourceful in obstruction and evasion. He has learned that governments do equivocate and retreat, no matter how exultant they are when they seek credit for legislation. Finally he has learned something about himself: *Negroes are not now merely a subject of change but an active organ of change.* This is the new political equation in contemporary society.

The regression of government after momentum has developed, the omission of the necessary planning and implementation to give reality to the law, are not accidental phenomena. The defaults merge into a pattern reminiscent of the period following the Civil War. Chattel slavery was abolished, but a program to transform slaves into citizens was omitted. Negroes left the plantations in hundreds of thousands expecting that the government that freed them would pursue the logic of its own act and create a structure into which they could fit. When this was not done, Negroes themselves improvised, sacrificed and struggled to gain a foothold on secure shores. However, the omissions inexorably caught up with them, and their enemies, only partially defeated, gained the breathing spell to reassemble and renew their power. The era of hope ended with the return of Negroes to a more sophisticated form of slavery that was to last nearly a century.

The danger of this period is not that Negroes will lose their gains. History will not repeat itself in a simple cycle. It can, however, fail to move forward and can become stalled on a higher plateau without prospect of reaching the summit.

The white power structure had to remake the South and Negroes seized the moment of change to fit the fabric to their needs. Evolving modern industrialism is being forced to reshape urban centers into which 70 per cent of the population is already absorbed. Once again Negroes will not allow change to flow around them, but will insistently demand to be elevated with the majority. The key question now confronting the nation is whether a swiftly transforming society is to be permitted to give tokens to the Negro, while the white population ascends to new levels of social development.

Historic decisions have yet to be made which will determine the context of the future. The dominant white majority appears to lack policy and sincere purpose, but the

Negroes, contrary to common belief, have a policy and a program. Having driven a sharp wedge into the once solid wall of resistance, they plan to hammer it in with increased force and vigor. Already they have shaken the political foundations of the South. Where once Atlanta was a singular example of Negro political emergence, today tremors are shaking state-wide areas of segregation. Utilizing the 1965 Voting Act where it was implemented, and acting without it where it was nullified by inaction, Negroes have patiently built significant voting power. They are a major factor in the forthcoming gubernatorial race in Alabama, that symbol of implacable resistance. In six counties of the state Negro registration exceeded white by the end of 1965. The hallowed state capitol, from which the Confederate flag still flies, will be host to black legislators, estimated at not less than eight members in the House and one member in the Senate.

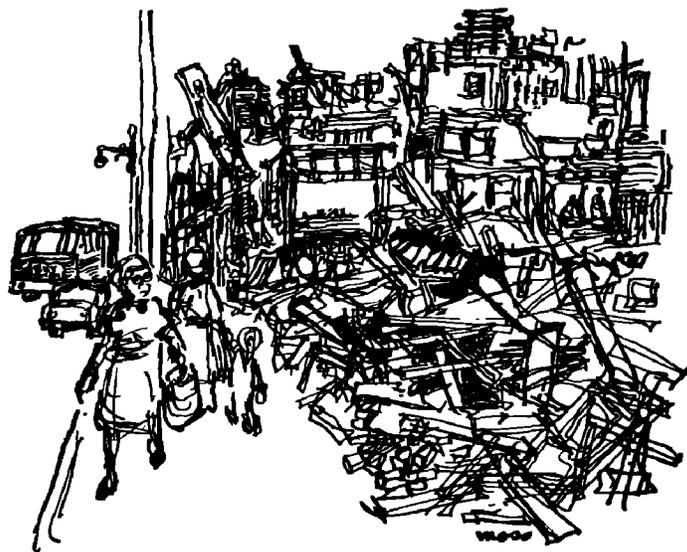
More important than this, however, is the transformation of the old segregationist official from a single-minded racist into something approximating a Northern style politician. In January, in Alabama, as the lines of black people stretched before registration offices day and night, the state Democratic Party removed the slogan of white supremacy from the party symbol. It may still live on in many hearts, but it is disappearing from tongues. Two years ago, I wrote in *The Nation* that the solid South was already fissuring along a seam that divided the industrializing regions from the old plantation South. Today the entire Old South is in dissolution. The momentum of change will not abate. Negroes are signing themselves into citizenship at the rate of thousands each day.

In the North, a new, more complex front is emerging. Neglected during the entire period of change, the slums are smoldering and seething. It would have been wiser for white America to have seen for itself that the slums were intolerable and dispersed them. But many white people of even reasonably good will simply know too little of the agony of ghetto existence to make slums as dispensable as segregated lunch counters. People of ill will still stubbornly cling to the determination to maintain a double standard of social and economic justice.

The experience of SCLC in Chicago already indicates that Negroes of the North are prepared to move and that token concessions will not blunt their drive. When 168 organizations representing all levels of the community are able to unite around a militant program to end slums, ghettos are on the way out even though for the moment they maintain their bleak existence.

When SCLC went into Birmingham in 1963, we said that if this capital of segregation suffered even a single defeat the effects would radiate across the South. Birmingham has met a succession of defeats and is influencing not only the South but the North as well. Chicago is the capital of segregation in the North; transformations of its slums will leave no Northern city secure with its own.

Mass nonviolent action continues to be *the* effective tactic of the movement. Many, especially in the North, argue that the maximum use of legislation, welfare and anti-poverty programs now replaces demonstrations, and



that overt and visible protest should now be abandoned. Nothing could prove more erroneous than to demobilize at this point. It was the mass-action movement that engendered the changes of the decade, but the needs which created it are not yet satisfied. Without the will to unity and struggle Negroes would have no strength, and reversal of their successes could be easily effected. The use of creative tensions that broke the barriers of the South will be as indispensable in the North to obtain and extend necessary objectives.

These are partial elements of the Negro's program for freedom. Beyond these is one of singular importance which will be featured in the North—economic security. This is usually referred to as the need for jobs. The distinction made here between economic security and jobs is not semantic. A job in our industrial society is not necessarily equivalent to security. It is too often undercut by layoffs. No element of the working people suffers so acutely from layoffs as Negroes, traditionally the first fired and the last hired. They lack the seniority other workers accumulate because discrimination thwarts long-term employment. Negroes need the kind of employment that lasts the year through. They need the opportunity to advance on the job; they need the type of employment that feeds, clothes, educates and stabilizes a family. Statistics that picture declining rates of unemployment veil the reality that Negro jobs are still substandard and evanescent. The instability of employment reflects itself in the fragile character of Negro ambitions and economic foundations.

Whether the solution be in a guaranteed annual wage, negative income tax or any other economic device, the direction of Negro demands has to be toward substantive security. This alone will revolutionize Negro life, including family relations and that part of the Negro psyche that has lately become conspicuous—the Negro male ego.

Our nation is now so rich, so productive, that the continuation of persistent poverty is incendiary because the poor cannot rationalize their deprivation. We have yet to confront and solve the international problems created by our wealth in a world still largely hungry and miserable. But more immediate and pressing is the domestic existence of poverty. It is an anachronism in the second half of the

20th century. Only the neglect to plan intelligently and adequately and the unwillingness genuinely to embrace economic justice enable it to persist.

Social conflict is not the product of skilled agitation. The apathy from which Negroes suffered for so long was derived from their powerlessness and their acceptance of the myth that abundance was not available. They are now accumulating power; they are taught by every media of communication that we are so opulent we can enjoy both butter and guns. That is why they confront the white power structure with their program and challenge it to produce one of its own. The creative combining of both programs would unite social and economic justice into a single package of freedom.

The Negro in 1966 does not issue his challenge in isola-

tion. Selma in 1965 made clear that there are white Americans who cherish decency and democracy; who will physically come to the scene of danger; who will fight for their nation not only on foreign battlefields but where its integrity is threatened within its borders. When 50,000 Americans, white and Negro, Protestant, Catholic, Jew and non-believer, assembled in haste from all corners of the land at Montgomery, there lived again in a luminous moment the spirit of the Minute Men who at Lexington and Concord electrified the world.

Negroes expect their freedom, not as subjects of benevolence but as Americans who were at Bunker Hill, who toiled to clear the forests, drain the swamps, build the roads—who fought the wars and dreamed the dreams the founders of the nation considered to be an American birthright.

CONGRESS & FOREIGN POLICY

THE TIMID POLITICAL WILL

EDWARD A. KOLODZIEJ

Assistant professor of government, University of Virginia, Mr. Kolodziej will publish this spring The Uncommon Defense and Congress, 1945-1963 (Ohio State University Press).

The most critical questions raised by last month's Fulbright hearings did not concern the present situation in South Vietnam. Why, one is compelled to ask, did the Congressional probe come so late, long after it might have had a salutary impact on United States policies in that area, and why has there not been a continuing Congressional debate, not only on Vietnam but on all aspects of American global strategy and foreign policy?

A study of these puzzling questions reveals fundamental weaknesses in popular and Congressional attitudes toward foreign policy and in the institutional response of Congress in defining that policy. Since its inception during the Eisenhower administration, the Vietnamese commitment has been shrouded in secrecy. The demand for secrecy and, concomitantly, for limiting public and Congressional debate, grew progressively as American involvement became deeper in the 1960s. The underlying justification for these constraints was, and still is, that the nation lives in a hostile world and domestic dissent must be suppressed lest the enemy gain from internal disagreement. The logical corollary is that only through such restraint can sufficient national will, including human and material resources, be harnessed to defeat the enemy on the battlefield or at the conference table.

It is in this frame of mind that the Congress has repeatedly been asked to make solemn pronouncements in support of contemplated Presidential actions abroad, whether in South Vietnam, the Middle East, the Formosa Straits or Greece. These resolutions, framed in the broadest possible language, inevitably give the President the broadest freedom of action and discretion. He is handed a blank check on which to write the amount of American commitment

to a variety of often dubious foreign projects, without continued and close Congressional review and consent. In effect, Congress mortgages its moral and political right to influence and criticize the application of Administration policy. It cannot very easily criticize the President's actions when it has so generously defined his mandate. The evolution of Vietnamese policy exemplifies the unhappy consequences of Congress' abdication of its governmental responsibilities, now only belatedly and imperfectly discharged by the Fulbright hearings.

The periodic and almost ritual affirmations of Congressional resolve to support the President have the added pernicious effect of creating the misleading impression that fundamental decisions on foreign policy have been taken after careful Congressional scrutiny. A considerable part of the ideal of democratic government—that government policies rest on a majority consensus forged in heated debate and discussion—is thus sacrificed to the claims of strategic necessity.

But need the sacrifice continue? While it is foolish, if not a little dangerous, to doubt that the nation lives in a turbulent and perilous world, it is equally simplistic to think that this condition of life is temporary or atypical. The mass of the American people and even the Congress may not realize it, but the United States has lived in precarious circumstances throughout most of this century. The traditional principle that the President and the government should be unreservedly and uncritically supported for the duration of a current crisis is therefore of doubtful applicability. The crises facing the nation have mounted, multiplied, and been almost continuous since World War II, and there is little likelihood that the future will bring relief.

In this context, urgent and sustained calls for unity in foreign affairs lose their force. However valid any particular appeal may be, there is now the serious danger that a consistent pattern of suppressing differences will become ha-

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