

# Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam

by Martin Luther King



*The following is the exclusive and authorized publication of the address given by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., at the Riverside Church, New York City, April 4, 1967, sponsored by Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam. It has been slightly condensed.*

OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart, as I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam, many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path. At the heart of their concerns this query has often loomed large and loud: Why are *you* speaking about the war, Dr. King? Why are *you* joining the voices of dissent? Peace and civil rights don't mix, they say. Aren't you hurting the cause of your people, they ask. And when I hear them, though I often understand the source of their concern, I am nevertheless greatly saddened, for such questions mean that the inquirers have not really known me, my commitment or my calling. Indeed, their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live.

In the light of such tragic misunderstanding, I deem it of signal importance to try to state clearly why I believe that the path from Dexter Avenue Baptist Church—the church in Montgomery, Alabama, where I began my pastorage—leads clearly to this sanctuary tonight.

I come to this platform to make a passionate plea to my beloved nation. This speech is not addressed to Hanoi or to the National Liberation Front. It is not addressed to China or to Russia.

Nor is it an attempt to overlook the ambiguity of the total situation and the need for a collective solution to the tragedy of Vietnam. Neither is it an attempt to make North Vietnam or the National Liberation Front paragons of virtue, nor to overlook the role they can play in a successful resolution of the problem. While they both may have justifiable reasons to be suspicious of the good faith of the United States, life and history give eloquent testimony to the fact that conflicts are never resolved without trustful give and take on both sides.

Tonight, however, I wish not to speak with Hanoi and the NLF, but rather to my fellow Americans who, with me, bear the greatest responsibility in ending a conflict that has exacted a heavy price on both continents.

Since I am a preacher by trade, I suppose it is not surprising that I have seven major reasons for bringing Vietnam into the field of my moral vision. There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I, and others,

have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor—both black and white—through the Poverty Program. Then came the build-up in Vietnam, and I watched the program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic, destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.

Perhaps the more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the young black men who had been crippled by our society and sending them 8000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would never live on the same block in Detroit. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.

My third reason grows out of my experience in the ghettos of the North over the last three years—especially the last three summers. As I have walked among the desperate, rejected and angry young men, I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through non-violent action. But, they asked, what about Vietnam? They asked if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government.

For those who ask the question, "Aren't you a Civil Rights leader?" and thereby mean to exclude me from the movement for peace, I have this further answer. In 1957 when a group of us formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, we chose as our motto: "To save

the soul of America.” We were convinced that we could not limit our vision to certain rights for black people, but instead affirmed the conviction that America would never be free or saved from itself unless the descendants of its slaves were loosed from the shackles they still wear.

Now, it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war. If America’s soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read “Vietnam.” It can never be saved so long as it destroys the deepest hopes of men the world over.

As if the weight of such a commitment to the life and health of America were not enough, another burden of responsibility was placed upon me in 1964; and I cannot forget that the Nobel Prize for Peace was also a commission—a commission to work harder than I had ever worked before for the “brotherhood of man.” This is a calling that takes me beyond national allegiances, but even if it were not present I would yet have to live with the meaning of my commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ. To me the relationship of this ministry to the making of peace is so obvious that I sometimes marvel at those who ask me why I am speaking against the war. Could it be that they do not know that the good news was meant for all men—for communist and capitalist, for their children and ours, for black and white, for revolutionary and conservative? Have they forgotten that my ministry is in obedience to the One who loved His enemies so fully that He died for them? What then can I say to the Viet Cong or to Castro or to Mao as a faithful minister of this One? Can I threaten them with death, or must I not share with them my life?

**A**ND AS I PONDER the madness of Vietnam, my mind goes constantly to the people of that peninsula. I speak now not of the soldiers of each side, not of the junta in Saigon, but simply of the people who have been living under the curse of war for almost three continuous decades. I think of them, too, because it is clear to me that there will be no meaningful solution there until some attempt is made to know them and their broken cries.

They must see Americans as strange liberators. The Vietnamese proclaimed their own independence in 1945 after a combined French and Japanese occupation and before the communist revolution in China. Even though they quoted the American Declaration of Independence in their own document of freedom, we refused to recognize them. Instead, we decided to support France in its re-conquest of her former colony.

Our government felt then that the Vietnamese people were not “ready” for independence, and we again fell

victim to the deadly Western arrogance that has poisoned the international atmosphere for so long. With that tragic decision, we rejected a revolutionary government seeking self-determination, and a government that had been established not by China (for whom the Vietnamese have no great love) but by clearly indigenous forces that included some communists. For the peasants, this new government meant real land reform, one of the most important needs in their lives.

For nine years following 1945 we denied the people of Vietnam the right of independence. For nine years we vigorously supported the French in their abortive effort to re-colonize Vietnam.

Before the end of the war we were meeting 80 per cent of the French war costs. Even before the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu, they began to despair of their reckless action, but we did not. We encouraged them with our huge financial and military supplies to continue the war even after they had lost the will to do so.

After the French were defeated it looked as if independence and land reform would come again through the Geneva agreements. But instead there came the United States, determined that Ho should not unify the temporarily divided nation, and the peasants watched again as we supported one of the most vicious modern dictators—our chosen man, Premier Diem. The peasants watched and cringed as Diem ruthlessly routed out all opposition, supported their extortionist landlords and refused even to discuss reunification with the North. The peasants watched as all this was presided over by U.S. influence and then by increasing numbers of U.S. troops who came to help quell the insurgency that Diem’s methods had aroused. When Diem was overthrown they may have been happy, but the long line of military dictatorships seemed to offer no real change—especially in terms of their need for land and peace.

The only change came from America as we increased our troop commitments in support of governments which were singularly corrupt, inept and without popular support. All the while, the people read our leaflets and received regular promises of peace and democracy—and land reform. Now they languish under our bombs and consider us—not their fellow Vietnamese—the real enemy. They move sadly and apathetically as we herd them off the land of their fathers into concentration camps where minimal social needs are rarely met. They know they must move or be destroyed by our bombs. So they go.

They watch as we poison their water, as we kill a million acres of their crops. They must weep as the bulldozers destroy their precious trees. They wander into the hospitals, with at least 20 casualties from American firepower for each Viet Cong-inflicted injury. So far we may have

killed a million of them—mostly children.

What do the peasants think as we ally ourselves with the landlords and as we refuse to put any action into our many words concerning land reform? What do they think as we test out our latest weapons on them, just as the Germans tested out new medicine and new tortures in the concentration camps of Europe? \* Where are the roots of the independent Vietnam we claim to be building?

Now there is little left to build on—save bitterness. Soon the only solid physical foundations remaining will be found at our military bases and in the concrete of the concentration camps we call “fortified hamlets.” The peasants may well wonder if we plan to build our new Vietnam on such grounds as these. Could we blame them for such thoughts? We must speak for them and raise the questions they cannot raise. These too are our brothers.

Perhaps the more difficult but no less necessary task is to speak for those who have been designated as our enemies. What of the NLF—that strangely anonymous group we call VC or communists? What must they think of us in America when they realize that we permitted the repression and cruelty of Diem which helped to bring them into being as a resistance group in the South? How can they believe in our integrity when now we speak of “aggression from the North” as if there were nothing more essential to the war? How can they trust us when now we charge *them* with violence after the murderous reign of Diem, and charge *them* with violence while we pour new weapons of death into their land?

How do they judge us when our officials know that their membership is less than 25 per cent communist and yet insist on giving them the blanket name? What must they be thinking when they know that we are aware of their control of major sections of Vietnam and yet we appear ready to allow national elections in which this highly organized political parallel government will have no part? They ask how we can speak of free elections when the Saigon press is censored and controlled by the military junta. And they are surely right to wonder what kind of new government we plan to help form without them—the only party in real touch with the peasants. They question our political goals and they deny the reality of a peace settlement from which they will be excluded. Their questions are frighteningly relevant.

Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and non-violence—when it helps us to see the enemy’s point

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\*The press and some critics have quoted this sentence out of context. I had no intention of equating the U.S. and Nazi Germany. Indeed, recognition of American democratic traditions and the absence of them in Nazi Germany, makes it all the more disturbing if even some elements of similarity of conduct appear.

of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.

**S**O, TOO, WITH HANOI. In the North, where our bombs now pummel the land, and our mines endanger the waterways, we are met by a deep but understandable mistrust. In Hanoi are the men who led the nation to independence against the Japanese and the French, the men who sought membership in the French commonwealth and were betrayed by the weakness of Paris and the willfulness of the colonial armies. It was they who led a second struggle against French domination at tremendous costs, and then were persuaded at Geneva to give up, as a temporary measure, the land they controlled between the 13th and 17th parallels. After 1954 they watched us conspire with Diem to prevent elections which would have surely brought Ho Chi Minh to power over a united Vietnam, and they realized they had been betrayed again.

When we ask why they do not leap to negotiate, these things must be remembered. Also, it must be clear that the leaders of Hanoi considered the presence of American troops in support of the Diem regime to have been the initial military breach of the Geneva Agreements concerning foreign troops, and they remind us that they did not begin to send in any large number of supplies or men until American forces had moved into the tens of thousands.

Hanoi remembers how our leaders refused to tell us the truth about the earlier North Vietnamese overtures for peace, how the President claimed that none existed when they had clearly been made. Ho Chi Minh has watched as America has spoken of peace and built up its forces, and now he has surely heard the increasing international rumors of American plans for an invasion of the North. Perhaps only his sense of humor and irony can save him when he hears the most powerful nation of the world speaking of aggression as it drops thousands of bombs on a poor, weak nation more than 8000 miles from its shores.

At this point, I should make it clear that while I have tried here to give a voice to the voiceless of Vietnam and to understand the arguments of those who are called enemy, I am as deeply concerned about our own troops there as anything else. For it occurs to me that what we are submitting them to in Vietnam is not simply the brutalizing process that goes on in any war where armies face each other and seek to destroy. We are adding cynicism to the process of death, for our troops must know after a short period there that none of the things we claim to be fighting for are really involved. Before long they must



know that their government has sent them into a struggle among Vietnamese, and the more sophisticated surely realize that we are on the side of the wealthy and the secure while we create a hell for the poor.

Somehow this madness must cease. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam and the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as an American to the leaders of my own nation. The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop must be ours.

This is the message of the great Buddhist leaders of Vietnam. Recently, one of them wrote these words: "Each day the war goes on the hatred increases in the hearts of the Vietnamese and in the hearts of those of humanitarian instinct. The Americans are forcing even their friends into becoming their enemies. It is curious that the Americans, who calculate so carefully on the possibilities of military victory, do not realize that in the process they are incurring deep psychological and political defeat. The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism."

If we continue, there will be no doubt in my mind and in the mind of the world that we have no honorable intentions in Vietnam. It will become clear that our minimal expectation is to occupy it as an American colony, and men will not refrain from thinking that our maximum hope is to goad China into a war so that we may bomb her nuclear installations.

The world now demands a maturity of America that we may not be able to achieve. It demands that we admit that we have been wrong from the beginning of our adventure in Vietnam, that we have been detrimental to the life of her people.

In order to atone for our sins and errors in Vietnam, we should take the initiative in bringing the war to a halt. I would like to suggest five concrete things that our government should do immediately to begin the long and difficult process of extricating ourselves from this nightmare:

1. End all bombing in North and South Vietnam.
2. Declare a unilateral cease-fire in the hope that such action will create the atmosphere for negotiation.
3. Take immediate steps to prevent other battlegrounds in Southeast Asia by curtailing our military buildup in Thailand and our interference in Laos.
4. Realistically accept the fact that the National Liberation Front has substantial support in South Vietnam and must thereby play a role in any meaningful negotiations and in any future Vietnam government.
5. Set a date on which we will remove all foreign troops

from Vietnam in accordance with the 1954 Geneva Agreement.

Part of our ongoing commitment might well express itself in an offer to grant asylum to any Vietnamese who fears for his life under a new regime which included the NLF. Then we must make what reparations we can for the damage we have done. We must provide the medical aid that is badly needed, in this country if necessary.

Meanwhile, we in the churches and synagogues have a continuing task while we urge our government to disengage itself from a disgraceful commitment. We must be prepared to match actions with words by seeking out every creative means of protest possible.

As we counsel young men concerning military service we must clarify for them our nation's role in Vietnam and challenge them with the alternative of conscientious objection. I am pleased to say that this is the path now being chosen by more than 70 students at my own Alma Mater, Morehouse College, and I recommend it to all who find the American course in Vietnam a dishonorable and unjust one. Moreover, I would encourage all ministers of draft age to give up their ministerial exemptions and seek status as conscientious objectors. Every man of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits his convictions, but we must *all* protest.

**T**HERE IS SOMETHING seductively tempting about stopping there and sending us all off on what in some circles has become a popular crusade against the war in Vietnam. I say we must enter that struggle, but I wish to go on now to say something even more disturbing. The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality we will find ourselves organizing clergy- and laymen-concerned committees for the next generation. We will be marching and attending rallies without end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy.

In 1957 a sensitive American official overseas said that it seemed to him that our nation was on the wrong side of a world revolution. During the past ten years we have seen emerge a pattern of suppression which now has justified the presence of U.S. military "advisors" in Venezuela. The need to maintain social stability for our investments accounts for the counterrevolutionary action of American forces in Guatemala. It tells why American helicopters are being used against guerrillas in Colombia and why American napalm and green beret forces have already been active against rebels in Peru. With such activity in mind, the words of John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Five years ago he said, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable."

Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken—by refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investment.

I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. When machines and computers, profit and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs re-structuring. A true revolution of values will soon look easily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say: "This is not just." It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of Latin America and say: "This is not just." The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just. A true revolution of values will lay hands on the world order and say of war: "This way of settling differences is not just." This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into the veins of peoples normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice, and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values. There is nothing, except a tragic death wish, to prevent us from re-ordering our priorities, so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. There is nothing to keep us from molding a recalcitrant status quo until we have fashioned it into a brotherhood.

This kind of positive revolution of values is our best defense against communism. War is not the answer. Communism will never be defeated by the use of atomic bombs or nuclear weapons. Let us not join those who shout war and through their misguided passions urge the United States to relinquish its participation in the United Nations. These are days which demand wise restraint and calm reasonableness. We must not call everyone a com-

munist or an appeaser who advocates the seating of Red China in the United Nations and who recognizes that hate and hysteria are not the final answers to the problem of these turbulent days. We must not engage in a negative anti-communism, but rather in a positive thrust for democracy, realizing that our greatest defense against communism is to take offensive action in behalf of justice. We must with positive action seek to remove those conditions of poverty, insecurity and injustice which are the fertile soil in which the seed of communism grows and develops.

**T**HESE ARE REVOLUTIONARY times. All over the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression, and out of the wombs of a frail world, new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as never before. "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light." We in the West must support these revolutions. It is a sad fact that, because of comfort, complacency, a morbid fear of communism, and our proneness to adjust to injustice, the Western nations that initiated so much of the revolutionary spirit of the modern world have now become the arch anti-revolutionaries. This has driven many to feel that only Marxism has the revolutionary spirit. Therefore, communism is a judgment against our failure to make democracy real and follow through on the revolutions that we initiated. Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism.

We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world—a world that borders on our doors. If we do not act we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.

Now let us begin. Now let us re-dedicate ourselves to the long and bitter—but beautiful—struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the sons of God, and our brothers wait eagerly for our response. Shall we say the odds are too great? Shall we tell them the struggle is too hard? Will our message be that the forces of American life militate against their arrival as full men, and we send our deepest regrets? Or will there be another message, of longing, of hope, of solidarity with their yearnings, of commitment to their cause, whatever the cost? The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise we *must* choose in this crucial moment of human history.

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Midnight Moscow Airport  
 sucks me in from Siberia  
 And blows me out alone  
     in a black bus  
     down dark straight night roads  
     stark snow plains  
     eternal taiga  
     into monster Moscow  
 stands of white birches  
     ghosted in the gloaming  
 Where of a sudden  
     Segovia bursts thru  
     over the airwaves  
 They've let him in  
     to drive the dark bus  
 Segovia's hands  
     grasp the steering wheel  
 Yokels in housing projects  
     drop their balalaikas & birch banjos  
 Segovia comes on  
     like the pulse of life itself  
 Segovia comes on thru the snowdrifts  
     and plains of La Mancha  
 fields & fields & fields  
     of frozen music  
 melted on bus radios

Segovia at the instrument  
     driving thru the night land  
 of Antiquera  
     Granada  
     Seville  
     Tracery of the Alhambra  
     in a billion white birches  
     born in the snow  
     trills of blackbirds in them  
 Segovia warms his hands  
     and melts Moscow  
     moves his hand  
     with a circular motion  
     over an ivory bridge  
     to gutted Stalingrads  
 Segovia knows no answer  
 He's no Goya & he's no Picasso  
 but also  
     he's no Sleeping Gypsy With Guitar  
     Guarded by a Lion

and who knows if he slept  
     with Franco  
 He knows black condors fly  
 He knows a free world when he hears one  
 His strums are runs upon it  
 He does not fret  
 He plucks his guts  
 He fucks hate & makes love  
 and listens to himself as he plays  
 and speaks to himself  
 and echoes himself  
 And he keeps driving & driving  
     his instrument  
     down the wide dark ways  
     into great Moscow  
     down the black boulevards  
     past Kremlin lit & locked  
     in its hard dream  
     in the great Russian night  
     past Bolshoi Ballet & Gorky Institute  
     John Reed at the Drama Theatre  
     Stalyagi & heroin at Taganka  
 Stone Mayakovsky stares  
     thru a blizzard of white notes  
     in Russian winter light



# MOSCOW IN THE WILDERNES

by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Segovia hears his stoned cry  
 and he hears the pulse in the blood  
 as he listens to life as he plays  
 and he keeps coming & coming  
 thru the Russian winter night  
 He's in Moscow but doesn't know it  
 He played somewhere else  
 and it comes out here  
 in a thaw on an airwave  
 over Gogol's Dark People  
 stark figures  
 in the white night streets  
 clotted in the snow  
 He listens to them as he goes along  
 He listens for a free song  
 such as he hardly hears  
 back home  
 Is Lenin listening  
 after fifty Octobers  
 Segovia walks thru the snow  
 listening as he goes  
 down Vorovsky Street  
 to the Writers Union  
 He meets the old hairs that run it  
 They dig him  
 & they know what it means to dig  
 in mahogany cities  
 Segovia teaches them open-tuning  
 with which they can play anything  
 freely & simply  
 This is not his Master Class  
 He leaves them humming & goes on  
 Segovia plays in the loose snow  
 and digs a bit alone  
 under the free surface  
 with his pick

He strikes softly as he listens  
 He hears a dull thud  
 where something is buried  
 a familiar thud  
 such as he sometimes hears  
 back home  
 He drops his pick & goes on  
 down Vorovsky Street  
 His music has a longing sound  
 He yearns & yet does not yearn  
 He exists & is tranquil  
 in spite of all  
 He has no message  
 He is his own message  
 his own ideal sound  
 And he sounds so lonely to himself  
 as he goes on playing  
 in the iron-white streets  
 And he is saying: I say all I know  
 & I know no meaning  
 He is saying  
 This is the song of evening  
 when the sphinx lies down  
 This is the song of the day  
 that begins & begins  
 The night lifts  
 its white night-stick  
 The ash of life  
 dries my song  
 If you only knew  
 He is saying  
 My love my love  
 where are you  
 Under the pomegranate tree  
 He is saying  
 Where is joy where is ecstasy  
 Stretched out in the snow  
 where only the birds are at home  
 He is saying  
 There's a huge emptiness here  
 that stares from all the faces  
 All that is lost must be  
 looked for once more  
 He is saying  
 Far from me far from me

You are the hour & the generation  
 they marked for result  
 He is saying  
 I am your ruin  
 unique & immortal  
 I am your happiness unknown  
 I am light  
 where you are dark  
 where you are heavy  
 He is saying  
 I am an old man  
 and life flowers  
 in the windows of the sun  
 But where is the sun the sun  
 Soleares . . .  
 On the steps of a jail  
 that looks like a church  
 he finds a white bird  
 What is important in life? says the bird  
 Segovia says Nada but keeps on playing  
 Soleares  
 Soleares  
 Soleares  
 And he cries out now  
 when he sees a strange woman  
 or sees a strange thing  
 And he hears many strange women  
 & many strange things  
 after fifty Octobers  
 & fifty strange springs  
 And Segovia follows them  
 down their streets  
 and into their houses  
 and into their rooms  
 and into the night of their beds  
 And waits for them to make love  
 And waits for them to speak  
 And waits & waits for them to speak  
 And he cries out now  
 when he hears them speak  
 at last in their last retreat  
 No he doesn't cry out  
 He never cries out  
 He is taciturn & never sings  
 Only his instrument speaks & sings  
 But when it does sing  
 when it does cry out  
 at what it hears  
 an ancient armadillo  
 asleep for centuries  
 in the cellar of the Kremlin  
 raises its horny head  
 opens its square third eye  
 and looks around blinking  
 and then at last  
 opens its great gut mouth  
 and utters  
 ecstatic static



# EGOVIA IN THE SNOW

Moscow-San Francisco  
 March 1967



## [Part II]

# America The Raped

*AUTHOR'S NOTE: For those of you who weren't around last month, the thesis of this essay is that America is being subjected to an irreversible rapine by the Engineers—the people whose only approach to any question is to build something, manage something, change something. The principal failure of the kind of mentality represented by the Engineers, it was suggested in Part I, is that they don't understand the*

*concept of ecology; and our principal failure in dealing with them is that we don't understand very much ecology either. We took several thousand words to explain that ecology is about how things fit together, and we toured the Everglades, the Great Cascades and a few other places to make clear what we meant and to describe various horrors perpetrated or planned by the rapacious Engineers. Pick it up from there.*

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### [VII: THE MASSIVE FUND-RAISERS]

IF THERE IS A GOD of the Engineers, then his idea of Chartres is probably a dam in the Grand Canyon.

The whole idea of damming this world-famous gorge, and drowning beneath a needless reservoir 600 feet of the earth's history, dating back to before the beginning of even the simplest forms of life, so boggles the mind of anyone who is not an Engineer that it is impossible to write about it with even a momentary pretense of dispassion. To read the debates in newspapers and magazines, in pamphlets and in the Congressional Record, and to find grown and otherwise responsible men discussing such a project as though they were talking about a footbridge across the upper reaches of Wildcat Creek, is to realize the cosmic reach of Herbert Muller's remark that no animal is so stupid as a human fool.

When, after only a few minutes' concentrated study, a reporter realizes that the Engineers want to build these hydroelectric dams not because anybody needs the water nor because anybody needs the power, the idea of writing about it seems as impossible as satirizing the war in Vietnam.

Most Americans believe that the Grand Canyon is a national park, and is somehow "protected." Except for a short stretch, it is not. There is a small Grand Canyon National Park, and below it a somewhat larger Grand Canyon National Monument (a designation that doesn't

carry the protections that national park status carries), and the rest is just river. By any reasonable definition, however, the Grand Canyon stretches from Glen Canyon Dam, on the Arizona-Utah border, to the top of Lake Mead, which is the body of water backed up behind Hoover Dam on the Arizona-Nevada border.

The Engineers want to put one of their absolutely unnecessary dams in Marble Gorge, and back water up 55 miles to the foot of Glen Canyon Dam. The reservoir in the gorge would be more than 300 feet deep. The other dam would be at Bridge Canyon, near the Hualapai Indian Reservation, and would back its reservoir entirely through the Grand Canyon National Monument and 13 miles into the Grand Canyon National Park. The water would be over 600 feet deep in spots. The Engineers don't like to talk about it, but that reservoir would also affect the level of the channel upstream, causing immediate silt deposits for another 15 miles or so above the head of the reservoir; so they'd be messing up the Grand Canyon through the entire monument and for 30 miles into the park.

The dams are intended to generate "peaking" power, which is to say that the water will be released as the demand for power dictates. This means, of course, that the river level behind the dams will rise and fall every day—probably as much as 15 feet. You may still want to go boating on a river that may rise or fall 15 feet a day, but you may be certain that it isn't going to do much for the ecology of either the river or its banks.

by Gene Marine