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February 7, 1968

BY COURIER SERVICE


Honorable Richard Helms
Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Helms:

For your information, I am enclosing
a communication which may be of interest to you.

Upon removal of the enclosure, if
classified, this transmittal form becomes
unclassified.

Sincerely yours,


J. Edgar Hoover
Director

Enc.

REVIEWED BY FBI/JFK TASK FORCE

ON 5/8/94

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20900

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20535

February 7, 1968

In Reply, Please Refer to
File No.

DEMONSTRATION, WASHINGTON, D. C.

FEBRUARY 5-6, 1968

On February 5-6, 1968, a demonstration was held in Washington, D. C., sponsored by the Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam, an organization in opposition to United States policy in Vietnam.

Approximately 1,350 persons attended the opening session of the demonstration held at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, 1313 New York Avenue, Northwest, Washington, D. C., on February 5, 1968.

Reverend William Slegno Coffin, Jr., Chaplain, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, one of the five persons recently indicted by a Federal Grand Jury for counseling draft evasion, was moderator of this session. Coffin, in his opening remarks, stated that it was possible that the administration is losing some of its leaders such as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Gardner, Secretary of Defense Holtzman and Ambassador Goldberg because they do not agree with the moral position of the administration in the war in Vietnam. He stated that if this was their reason for leaving, they should speak out. Coffin stated that if the President really wants to end the war he has only to declare a cease-fire to be effective in 24 hours and then hope that the other side will follow suit.

Reverend John C. Bennett, President, Union Theological Seminary, New York, New York, and a Co-chairman of the Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam, spoke concerning a new book published by the Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam in January, 1968, entitled "The King of America." Bennett remarked that it was difficult for a nation to admit that it was wrong, but that confession and repentance are a fruit of certain faith and both churches and synagogues should cry out against the war.

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Father Robert Drinan, Dean, Boston College Law School, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, stated that the violence of the war has silenced the conscience of those who engage in it and those who are witnesses. He said that if the war could not be won without violating the rules of warfare, the American people have the right to know this and to repudiate the pattern of lawlessness in the Vietnam struggle.

Dr. Seymour Melman, Professor of Industrial Engineering, Columbia University, New York, New York, and the Director of Research for the book "In The Name of America," stated that the root principle at stake is whether American officials must obey the law or whether they are above the law. He said that in a free society some may be guilty, but all are responsible. Melman claimed that the recent Viet Cong infiltration into Saigon proved that the people of South Vietnam do not support their Government.

The opening session ended at approximately 12:30 p.m. and participants were urged to attend "state-by-state" strategy sessions at various local churches from 1 p.m. until 2:15 p.m. During the afternoon of February 5, 1968, participants were encouraged to visit their Congressmen for the purpose of presenting their views on Vietnam.

During the opening session, a group of approximately 100 counterdemonstrators representing the American Council of Christian Churches, a conservative fundamentalist organization, conducted a picket line in front of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. These individuals carried placards reading, "No Substitute for Victory," "Let's Have Victory in Vietnam," "Clergymen, Stop Helping the Reds," "God and the Devil Do Not Coexist," "Will the Sacrifice of Our Boys Be in Vain," and "We Detest War Too, But Tyranny More."

Reverend Donald A. Waite, who acted as a spokesman for the American Council of Christian Churches, stated that his group was in Washington, D. C., to demonstrate in favor of United States policy in Vietnam and in opposition to the activities of the Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam. He said his group would peacefully picket all the activity of this latter group.

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At 7 p.m. on February 5, 1968, an "Ecumenical Worship" was held at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. The program included a "Report from Vietnam" and the showing of a film entitled "Inside North Vietnam."

Speakers included Rabbi Jalfour Brichner, Director, Commission on Interfaith Activities, Union of American-Hebrew Congregations; Dr. Harvey Cox, Professor, Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts; The Reverend George H. Docherty, Minister, New York Avenue Presbyterian Church; Rabbi Abraham J. Koschel, Professor of Jewish Ethics and Mysticism, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, New York; and the Reverend Andrew J. Young, Executive Vice President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Following these speeches, a film entitled "Inside North Vietnam" by Felix Greene, an English journalist, was shown. The program ended at 11 p.m.

On the morning of February 6, 1968, the demonstrators reconvened at two locations. One group of approximately 350 to 400 people attended a plenary session on "the religious community and politics, 1968" at the Lincoln Memorial Congregational Temple, 1701 11th Street, Northwest, Washington, D. C. The second group of approximately 1,200 individuals met at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church for a plenary session on "the religious community and the draft."

At the Lincoln Memorial Congregational Temple, Sanford Gottlieb, Executive Director of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, a group which opposes United States policy in Vietnam, urged support for the candidacy of Senator Eugene McCarthy.

Buff Reid, Assistant Director Thurston Morton, said the war in Vietnam is related because the United States cannot determine the course of events in Vietnam. He called for the election of a Negro African president.

At the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, one of the speakers was the Reverend William Sloane Coffin, Jr., who spoke on the draft. He stated "legality is not

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morality." He said a minister can counsel individuals to obey their conscience, but cannot counsel them to disobey the laws.

The Reverend Dr. Coffin was interrupted by the Reverend Carl McIntyre, an official of the International Council of Christian Churches, who asked to speak. He stated he had been defrocked as a Presbyterian minister because he wanted to be ruled by God and not by human beings. He told those present they must follow their conscience and follow the word of God.

Following the meetings at the two churches, the demonstrators participated in a silent prayer service at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Following this service, a closing assembly was held at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church where the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke regarding the administration's policy concerning the war in Vietnam and the war on poverty. King said that those working in the civil rights movement should also be working for peace and justice. King stated, "I will give you my commitment, I intend to keep on marching." Speakers at this assembly also included Ossie Davis, who has been identified as a member of the Communist Party during the latter part of 1963, and Coffin.

Following this closing exercise, Reverend Thomas Hayes and four other individuals proceeded to the Department of Justice Building, Washington, D. C., where they presented representatives of the Department of Justice with a large scroll signed by members of the Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam in support of antidraft and antiwar activity.