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Re: Notes w/ King and Transformation of the Civil Rights Movement

Source: Garrow, Cross

Vietnam:

First public speech against the war came in February 1967 in Los Angeles.

The speech received broad coverage in the national press.

King worried about the repercussions of this stand on the SCLC. Loss of funds for the organization. Blacks were the first to warn him that he was going too far. That the civil rights movement needed Johnson's support and Congress and that he was interfering in Big Daddy's war.

Levinson/ Wachtel/Andy Young wanted him to continue w/ his opposition to the war but not to get involved w/ the Mobe Movement people for fear of being isolated from his main constituency and lose sight of the civil rights struggle.

They arranged for his NY Riverside Church address. This was seen as a more politically respectable setting to air his views.

Reaction to the April 4th(1967)speech was immediate and negative.

> Willkins(NAACP) and Whitney Young(National Urban League) refused to associate w/ the speech. There was a barrage of negative newspaper editorials.

> Washington Post declared that King "has done grave injury to those who are his natural allies. . . and even graver injury to himself. Many who have listened to him with respect will never accord him the same confidence. He has diminished his usefulness to his cause, to his country, and to his people. And that is a great tragedy."

> April 10th the NAACP Board of Directors adopted a resolution labeling any attempt to merge the civil rights movement and the peace movement "a serious tactical mistake."

Ralph Bunch, the black American U.N. Undersecretary-General opined that King should either be a civil rights leader or an antiwar spokesman and "should give up one role or the other."

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Re: Notes w/ King & Transformation

Vietnam:

The war was a drain on him.

When I took up the cross, I recognized its meaning.
. . . The cross is something that you bear and ultimately that you die on. The cross may mean the death of your popularity. It may mean the death of a foundation grant. It may cut down your budget a little, but take up your cross and just bear it. And that's the way I have decided to go.

Carl Rowan trashes King in a Reader's Digest in which he blamed King's stand on VN as a result of King's inflated sense of self-importance and Communist influence. Rowan's stooping to McCathyism)