

APR 26 1972

NYTimes

METHODISTS SCORE U.S. VIETNAM ROLE

Conference Resolution Says
Americans 'Have Sinned'

By ELEANOR BLAU

Special to The New York Times

ATLANTA, April 25 — The general conference of the United Methodist Church approved today a strongly worded resolution charging Americans with guilt in the Southeast Asian war and calling on the President to cease all bombing immediately.

Approved by a majority of the 1,000 delegates after prolonged and sometimes emotional debate, the statement also asked the President to provide for the withdrawal of all United States military forces no later than next Dec. 31.

It called on Congress to stop providing funds for the support of military forces in Southeast Asia no later than the same date.

Recalling a much milder statement adopted by the church's highest lawmaking body at its previous quadrennial session, the conference said, "What was then an urgent priority concern has become an intolerable monstrosity. We have since then invaded Cambodia, widened the war into Laos, unleashed millions of tons of bombs over the entire area."

"We are therefore moved to confess our own continuing complicity in this violence and death," the statement continued. "We have sinned against our brothers and sisters, against the earth and our Creator. We have paid our taxes without protest; we have closed our eyes to the horror of our deeds."

The conference called on the "leadership of the United States to confess what we have done in Indo-China has been a crime against humanity."

In addition the conference did the following:

¶Pleaded with government leaders in Hanoi and the United States to agree immediately to the release of all prisoners of war at the earliest date, but no later than the end of the year.

¶Called for a halt to all United States efforts to control the results of any political settlement.

¶Urged a declaration of national intention to pay reparations to victims of the war under United Nations auspices.

The conference decided to send a delegation of bishops to Washington to try to present the resolution personally to President Nixon.

Before adopting the resolution, the conference defeated, by a vote of 534 to 405, a minority resolution that would have praised United States efforts to end the war.

"All the efforts exerted by our nation and its leaders has only fed the appetite of North Vietnam to wage cruel and inhuman war," it stated in part.

The minority resolution said it did not attempt to fix blame on either side, but called on "all parties to cease military operations now." But it hailed the withdrawal of American forces and what it termed the United States' willingness to engage in meaningful peace talks. And it called on Hanoi to "cease its aggressiveness upon its neighbors to the south."

In a voice that occasionally broke with emotion, Kenneth Cooper of Minette, Ala., who helped draft the minority report, said he did not want "to indict United States Presidents as war criminals." He said the United States was "not the sole party to be blamed."