essary or equally justified, will be debated. But such debate does not, in my view, invalidate the conclusion stated above. I believe that, once the old "imperialist powers" were excluded—helped vigorously on their way by America, it's worth a note of ironic recall—America could only have refused such a role as it served in Vietnam by failing the rest of the "free" world. It is, I think, tremendously important that America should face this fact. For the United States continues to have a vital, continuing role to play in world security, stability, and development. It has for long been a potent worry that the scars left by this traumatic experience would be of such magnitude that the American people might leave the scene with their tails down, asking that the world be stopped while they get off. While we devoutly hope that everyone, not merely the West, has learned enough not to create the conditions for such a mess again, we have a long way to go to be sure of that.

Meanwhile, political and military alliances will continue to be required. External, economic, social, and regional development policies must be coordinated and made effective. Organizations with the required competence, authority, and power must somehow be brought into existence. The final lesson of the Vietnam tragedy is just how much more necessary and urgent such tasks are now than they were a decade ago. □

The Cost in Human Lives

WHO REALLY DIED IN VIETNAM?

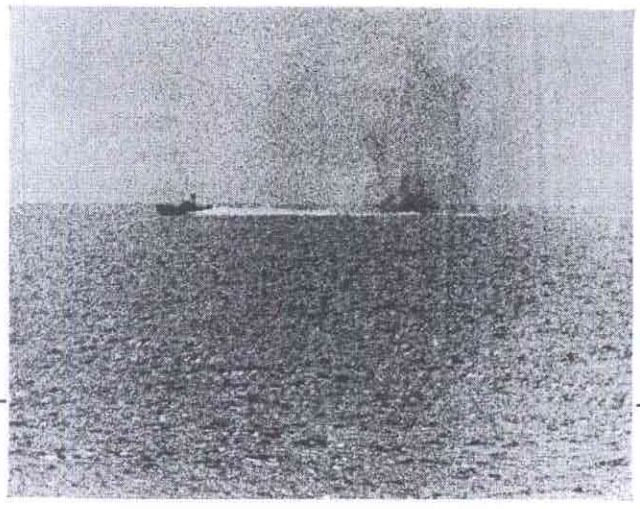
By Leslie Fiedler

"It dawned on me slowly," the author writes, "that I had never known a single family that had lost a son in Vietnam." And the reason, he concludes, is that this has been the first war that "has been fought for us by our servants."

It is often said that the war in Vietnam has divided our society, pitting generation against generation and class against class; like much that is "often said" about public issues, this is true—but not deeply revealing. It is more revealing, I think, to say that the war in Vietnam has mercilessly brought to light a profound division in our society by demonstrating that the actual fighting of war has become more and more exclusively an occupation of the exploited and dispossessed, while protest against war has been more and more preempted by the privileged and economically secure. As any newspaper reader with a feeling for statistics must have noticed, since about 1962 it has been by and large the obligation of the children of the poor to die in a war they do not understand, while the sons and daughters of the rich are demonstrating at home against that same conflict, which they have come to understand too well to endure.

The place in which the children of the rich have come to their understanding, and then mounted demonstrations, is the university, where their status as students has exempted them from combat. It has been, in fact, the prestige of higher education that has converted universal selective service from a democratic to a discriminatory institution, thus turning the Vietnam War into the first war of which it can be said unequivocally that it is being fought for us by our servants. Yet the university system in the United States is the least elitist of any in the world. Some 25 per cent of our young people between eighteen and twenty-four attend college, and we are presumably on the way to fulfilling the goal of universal higher education implicit in the constitutions of the Land-Grant colleges, which pledge that their doors will remain open to all and that "the tuition shall be forever free."

How did such anomalous inequities arise from the conjuction of two democratic dreams: the dream of sixteen years of schooling for all who desire it and the utopian vision of a citizens' army? From the first there were attempts to subvert the dreams by buying military substitutes, for instance, but not until Vietnam was the privileged evasion of service sanctioned by law. Of course, the exemption of college students would not have made so flagrant a difference had not the population of the universities already been so out of line with the ethnic and class balances of the larger community. Certain groups, such as the Jews, enroll more than 70 per cent of their children in universities, while the blacks have reached only half of the national average and the Indians half that of the blacks.



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The reasons for such imbalance are complex, but the facts are simple and clear. In our armed forces, drawn from the less favored segments of the community, barely 5 per cent of all enlisted men have made it through college—which is to say that those most likely to die in Vietnam are Americans who were first of all educationally deprived. It would surely be worse, as Sen. Edward Kennedy has argued on the floor of the Senate, if we were to substitute a volunteer army for our present mixture of conscripts and volunteers. But matters are bad enough as they stand—too bad, in fact, either to ignore or to seem to justify by a comparison with what would be even more monstrously unjust.

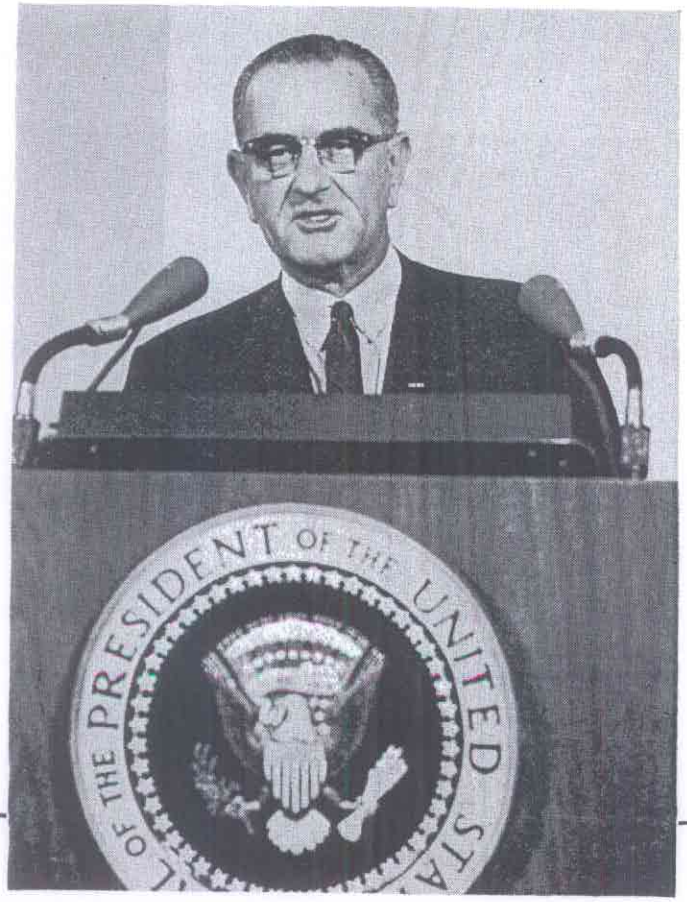
It was not the statistics, however, that first led me to reflect on the paradoxical relationship between participation and protest in the Vietnam War. Rather, it was the slow-dawning realization that I had never known a single family that had lost a son in Vietnam, or, indeed, one with a son wounded, missing in action, or held prisoner of war. And this despite the fact that American casualties in Vietnam are already almost equal to those of World War I. Nor am I alone in my strange plight; in talking to friends about a subject they seem eager *not* to discuss, I discover they can, they must, all say the same. As far as the university community in which I live and work is concerned, the war in Vietnam happens—on the level where blood is shed and lives are lost—primarily to others, though of course, in social, moral, and psychological terms, we are all touched, suffering along with other indignities the final one of being physically immune.

At this moment some Vietnam veterans are coming to the campuses, but I have still to meet one on my home grounds at the university in Buffalo. And I learn, consulting the statistics once more, that, though nearly half of those already released from service have taken advantage of their educational GI rights, more than half of that group have chosen vocational over university training.

No, the single person I have known well who went as a soldier to Vietnam (and returned) was black to begin with and had never been to college at all. On the other hand, I have been more or less familiar with hundreds, perhaps thousands, of young men—white and educated to the B.A. or beyond—who have protested the war they never saw. I do not mean to impugn the courage or sincerity of any of them, though they have ranged from conscientious objectors to back-row stowaways, from draft-card burners to connivers who have baffled their Selective Service boards by zonking themselves out on speed or reciting semifictional tales of their homosexuality, drug addiction, and psychosis. My own contemporaries present a mixed bag as well: organizers of teach-ins and raiders of draft boards, passers of petitions and visitors to the war zone who have gathered evidence of defoliation, terror bombings, and the burning of children. Nor have they all escaped unscathed, since even among the combatants in this less spectacular war against the war there have been casualties, too: busted heads, broken limbs, disrupted lives, expulsions, arrests, vindictive sentences, even some deaths.

No one has died on my own campus, to be sure, as at Kent State. But for a little while we, too, were occupied territory: 400 police marching smartly between the library and the parking lot, smacking their puttees with their night sticks—more, I would suppose, to reassure themselves than to terrify us. It was they who were on enemy ground, bugged by phone calls from their angry wives wanting to know when the hell they would stop playing soldier and come home. Before it was all over, there had been four nights of battle, tear gas against hurled rocks and Coke bottles, even a couple of students peppered with buckshot.

It was a battle between the students and their parents, really; between the elders who loved, if not the war in Vietnam, at least the society that supported it, and the youths who hated both that war and that society—and most of all, perhaps, those members of the society they



"...for peace is the only purpose of the course America pursues."

Lyndon B. Johnson, in a speech following his request for the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, August 5, 1964

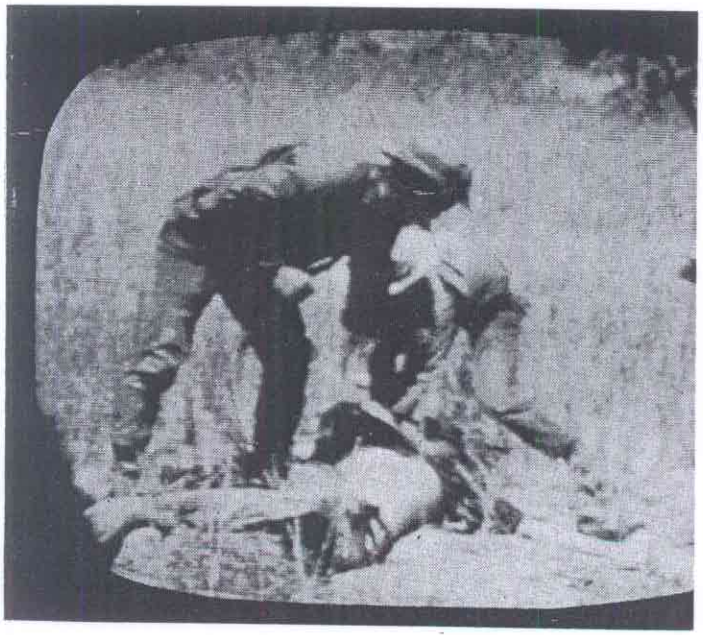
knew best. Of course, the parents were not there when the firing began, having called the cops in to do their dirty work; which is to say, having mustered a squad of uniformed men quite like, in class origin and degree of education, the forces in Vietnam. It was a second war being fought for them by their servants; but, since the enemy this time was their own children, it turned out to be a class war as well, with college kids confronting those who had not made it onto the campus until trouble began. On the campuses, however, those servants did better than in the rice paddies of Vietnam, for the victories of the students were small and transitory, consisting only of the political eclipse of Lyndon Johnson; a few antiwar bills introduced and defeated in Congress; the emergence of new strategies for losing a presidential election; and especially the momentary elation of the demonstrations, the mass ecstasy subsiding into frustration and baffled rage as the first war, the big war, the war elsewhere, continued.

If the students achieved relatively little, the risks they ran were relatively light. For in the cold war between the bourgeois generations there was less direct confrontation and less retrospective vindictiveness, as judges with LL.D.s mitigated what cops with high school diplomas had done earlier, dismissing cases, suspending sentences, in effect, abrogating martial law. This détente gives us the chance, perhaps, to see the struggle in a larger context, to understand that the students' war, quite like the colonial war against which it is directed, is part of a greater whole: in this case the total war against affluence and the university, waged as much on account of as in spite of the fact that together these enemies made possible that other war.

Having realized so much, we can begin to count all the casualties incurred in the war at home: not just those caught in the line of fire, but those who died of drug overdoses and in crumpled Volkswagens; those who were the victims of homemade bombs, whether their inept makers or some late-working researcher, as innocent (or guilty) as his assassins; those killed by Charles Manson and his girls, along with the less ideological patsys of big dope deals gone wrong. These are the "combat deaths," and there are the "wounded" as well: those stricken by hepatitis from improperly sterilized needles or by VD, which has grown virulent again among those at odds with "uptight" hygiene and AMA "professionalism." And finally there are the mad—a new category on official casualty lists, but surely not unknown in earlier wars. Now I recall that I have, after all, known one casualty in Vietnam: a "hippie" merchant seaman, carrying combat supplies into the war theater and dope out of it, who came unstuck in the middle of the Indian Ocean and sent me a telegram reading: "I am the Messiah. My father is dying."

But the greater number of casualties have occurred in Vietnam, of course, where not only God (Whom we have listed as dead for a century or two anyhow) but many men continue to die, though fewer and fewer of them have been Americans in recent years. "Vietnamization" has meant that our Oriental servants are doing more and more of the dying for us. From the start, however, this has been a conflict in which nonwhites have died at a disproportionate rate, and not merely because it happens to have occurred in a country inhabited by nonwhites. By the middle of October the total number of American dead was 56,164, whereas the "enemy" dead came to 900,909 and the South Vietnamese had lost 181,906 combat troops. If one adjusts these figures by subtracting the nearly 6,000 black dead from the U.S. total and adding them to the nonwhite total, the final result is approximately: U.S., 50,000; Them, 1,000,000 . . . . When the nearly 425,000 South Vietnamese civilians are taken into account, the disproportion becomes even more staggering.

Although perhaps not that surprising. The war in Vietnam seems about to turn into one in which no whites at all die. And yet it remains very much *our* war, the war we have dreamed ever since the first European set foot on American soil only to find the land he lusted for inhabited by a nonwhite people—in short, the undeclared, three-hundred-year-long war against the Indian, in the course of which we whites first became "Americans."



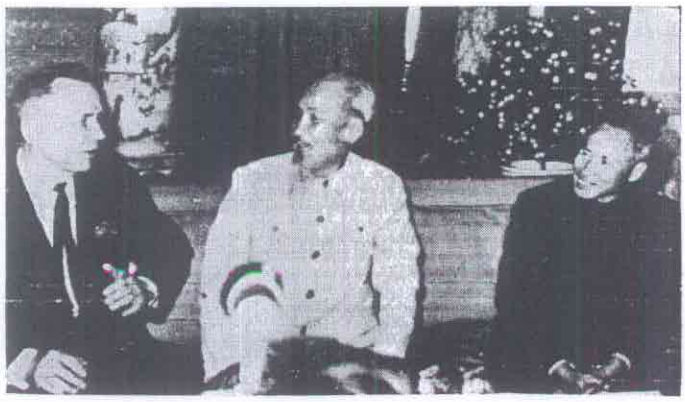
1964 | **1965**

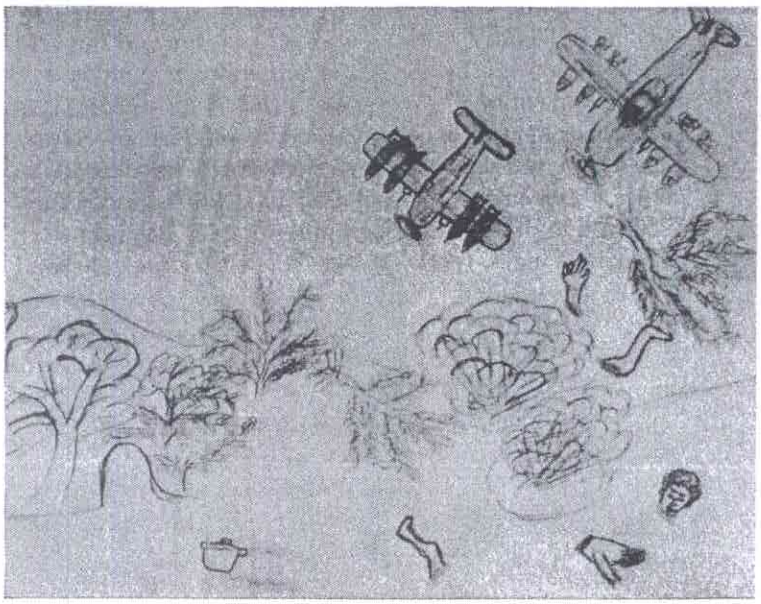
Into the image of our first alien enemy we have assimilated all the other nonwhites encountered in our imperialist adventures ever since: the long series of swarthy Others whose homelands we were sure destiny intended to be our own and whom we therefore battled, as the Marine Corp's hymn puts it, "From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli . . . ." Fixed in a hundred thousand works of art and sub-art, the image persists. "Remember the Alamo!" the embattled politician cries, or "Remember Custer's last stand," an apologetic journalist writes of this very war, and the proper responses arise. We are at home, back in the familiar nightmare once more.

But this time around we do not quite dare to say aloud, "The only good Injun is a dead Injun," for racism is no longer fashionable (at least among the polite), not dead, to be sure, but driven underground, into the undermind. And so we endure the pangs of a society that has outlived a value system whose mythological foundation remains firm. It has been a long time since we permitted ourselves officially to declare our hatred and fear of "gooks" and "wogs," which we still confess in our private abusive names for the Others. No official voice, for instance, cried "Yellow Peril" to justify the Second World War, which Vietnam in some sense continued, but private voices in the heat of combat cried worse. This deep-seated hatred for nonwhites may finally have been the reason why we were able to drop the atomic bomb on the Japanese though not on the Germans, on nonwhites but not whites, on Them but not Us. Certainly, the shameful war in Vietnam seems to confirm the suspicion that a lust for genocide rather than mere strategy cued the double bombing of Japan. For how can we read, without the aid of such mythology, this strange conflict in Southeast Asia that rejected even the traditional name of war while providing us with daily "body counts"? How unendurable they finally became, those totals reckoned in each morning's newspaper: for every enemy soldier killed, we soon learned, a three-day pass, quite like the seventeenth-century bounty of five pounds for every Indian scalp. It was as if we were moving grimly to the point where, checking the last figures, we would discover we had them all, *all*!

But even though the dream of total destruction is thus inadvertently confessed in the press, we have denied ourselves the instrument of total destruction this time around: no Big Bomb (though certain reactionary voices continued to call for it), only hand-to-hand combat, sniper answering sniper, the helicopters swooping low on missions of rescue and supply. To be sure, there are "little" bombs in great plenty, but somehow these do not register in our mythological imaginations, only in theirs. For us the prevailing image of the war is one of infiltration: the sneak attack from their side; from ours the war against the very trees, the burning out by jellied fire of the forest that conceals and the guerrillas that it conceals. And always no atomic bomb! It is not just a last delicate scruple of hypocrisy, the resolve to destroy utterly without quite seeming to do so—for what is the difference between a single payload of atomic magnitude and thousands of smaller raids adding up to the same total? It is also a deliberate decision—not less deliberate for being secret even from ourselves—to reinvent and reenact Indian warfare, in what must surely prove the last episode of our long combat with the nonwhite world.

Maybe, if we had been able to say aloud, "The only good Injun is a dead Injun," this war would have been over long ago and the next would have begun. But in the face of fact and probability we talked instead of national interest and containment and the threat of Communism (which somehow no hawk has ever been able to persuade us to fight in Europe, only in Asia). When will we realize that, in the bad dream our longest-lived myth has become, those "Reds" we fight turn out to be not Communists but *Peaux-Rouges*—Apaches, Mohicans, and Custer-killing Sioux? □





"One friend of mine went to the village to get rice for his mother and father. He crossed the field, and the airplanes saw him and shot and killed him so you couldn't even see his body. It was scattered all over the field."

—A twelve-year-old Vietnamese boy