

# Vietnam and the Burden of Mennonite History

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On the level of public perceptions at least, this is a good time to be a Mennonite. We have come to hold a public image today that is quite flattering: we are known as a people devoted to service and peace. These characteristics go well together; they complement each other; they garner Mennonites a level of quiet public acceptance and even affection.

Yet at times in our common history in North America these characteristics have not always gone together so neatly. Sometimes, both in the public mind and in Mennonite practice, the twin callings to engage in peace and in service have clashed. One of the most agonizing recent arenas where this occurred was the Mennonite experience in Vietnam. In the dilemma we faced there lies a fundamental dilemma for those of us committed to both peace and service today.

Because these images have carried so much weight in modern Mennonite history, it is worth reviewing them briefly. When our armies rest quietly in their camps, as they do at present, the public tends to forget about Mennonite peace commitments. But when our nations go to war, as they have done repeatedly in this century, those commitments have unleashed upon us a stream of public scorn. The epithets still echo: “slacker,” “yellow,” “coward.” To US army officers in World War I, Mennonites were a “bovine” people, “intellectually inferior” and unworthy of assuming the responsibilities of full citizenship. “They remain a curious and alien survival of an old-world people, an anachronism,” wrote one army colonel.<sup>1</sup> Later, theologian Reinhold Niebuhr was more sophisticated but more condescending in his put-downs. Mennonites had a real service to perform, he declared, in preserving an ethic of absolute love at times when nobody else did. Yet in doing so, he warned, Mennonites were socially irresponsible and irrelevant to the struggle for justice. Worse, in their willingness to accept the benefits of society but to do nothing to “maintain

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government and . . . relative social justice,” Mennonites were parasites on the social order.<sup>2</sup> On the mass level, such scorn has been physically translated into embarrassing acts of public rejection: Mennonite homes and businesses have been daubed with yellow paint, Mennonite churches burned, individual Mennonites publicly taunted and ridiculed. For an acculturating people who have yearned for full acceptance into Canadian and American societies, this public rejection has hurt.

On the other hand, in times when Mennonites weren’t aggravating the public with stiff-necked fidelity to their peace position, the public could look upon us with some favor, even admiration. By and large, we have been very good citizens: we go to church faithfully; we keep our houses trim and our lawns mowed; we raise good crops of corn and children; we live simple, productive lives. When disaster strikes, Mennonites appear shortly afterwards to help clean up the physical and human wreckage. It would be erroneous to suggest that the Mennonite compulsion to engage in human service stemmed only from this desire for public acceptance. I will readily admit, even celebrate, the fact that for many Mennonites the overarching push towards service has come from their desire to be faithful to the commands of the Gospel. But the other compulsion has been operative as well. Partly to overcome the scorn we receive in wartime, we have created a host of service ventures—Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Disaster Service, Mennonite Voluntary Service, Mennonite Mental Health Services—and we support them faithfully with our money and our time.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, emanating out of this desire to create a “moral equivalent of war,” Mennonites have so intertwined service commitments into their church life and theology that these commitments have joined peacemaking as the twin pillars of modern Mennonite identity.<sup>4</sup>

And the public has noticed. For example: In 1989, *Harper’s Magazine* enlisted writers to describe the scenario that might ensue if Jesus came back and appeared on the popular TV comedy show “Saturday Night Live.” In his monologue, comedy writer Al Franken has Jesus express his personal preference for a chosen religious group. This Christ tells the audience that while he doesn’t want to offend anyone, “I don’t really care that much for the fundamentalists. If anyone’s interested, I think the folks that come closest to getting the whole thing right are the Mennonites. And they’re not even watching.”<sup>5</sup> Repeatedly, the movers and shakers of popular culture have noticed

faithful Mennonite service and have commented favorably.<sup>6</sup> The Mennonites who materialize in the wake of tornadoes to clean up the mess do not appear as “yellow” or “bovine” at all. For an acculturating people who have yearned for full acceptance into their societies, this public approval has been more than welcome.

Nonetheless, the contrasting images have led to a fundamental problem in modern Mennonite life. Mennonites like receiving the good images, but the burden of their history requires them to periodically engage in behavior that invites the bad ones. In the days of their Anabaptist ancestors, this meant a refusal to swear oaths or baptize babies. In more recent times, the salient issue courting public distaste has been the prophetic Mennonite articulation of the peace position. When Mennonites have expressed their dissent from the warmaking of the state, it has increased their marginalization in a way that not even all their good service work could erase. In 1971, a Mennonite pastor told a young member of a Mennonite “peace team” that “these people have worked hard to be accepted as good community citizens. They don’t want to hear about the peace issues you are raising, even if it is part of the faith they claim. It makes them different . . .”<sup>7</sup> More to the point, consider the objections that one Mennonite raised in 1969 to the decision of his church body to affirm draft noncooperation as a legitimate Christian witness. Such a resolution, he cried, “may be harmful to our public image.”<sup>8</sup>

There has been no era in recent Mennonite history in which these conflicting images were more potent, and in which Mennonites felt the burden of their history greater, than during the American war in Vietnam. Mennonite service workers in Vietnam confronted the dilemma head-on: How could they engage in sacrificial service to the suffering people all around them while somehow remaining faithful to the prophetic Mennonite calling to speak to issues of peace? Conditions in Vietnam accentuated this dilemma. There, Mennonites discovered that engaging in service to the victims of war contributed in an unintended but tangible way to the war aims of the forces producing these victims. The call to service and the imperatives of peacemaking clashed unmistakably, and a brief history of this conflict sheds light on the relative Mennonite commitments to peace and service today.

In Vietnam, as in so many other areas, Mennonite service work would proceed under the direction of the Mennonite Central Committee, which had begun at the end of World War I to direct efforts by North American Mennonites to help with famines in Mennonite areas of the Ukraine. By the end of World War II, MCC had developed into the church's major relief and service agency.<sup>9</sup> The leadership began exploring the possibility of service work in Indochina as early as 1950, but not until the termination of the French war in Vietnam in 1954 did the effort begin in earnest.<sup>10</sup> Accords reached in Geneva which ended that war set up two ostensibly temporary governments in Vietnam: a communist power in the north, headed by Ho Chi Minh, and a separate state in the south which would shortly hold a plebiscite to decide whether it would join with the northern state. Because the communist government of the north was perceived as anti-Catholic, within weeks after the Geneva agreement was signed in July 1954, peasant refugees from the north, mostly Catholic, began streaming into South Vietnam. Ultimately, they would number nearly a million.<sup>11</sup> That summer, MCC executive secretary Orie Miller was visiting MCC projects in Asia and stopped in Saigon. He sat at the airport and watched a torrent of refugees from the north arrive, at the rate of one plane every six minutes.<sup>12</sup> Their needs, Miller cabled MCC headquarters, were "desperate and accumulating."<sup>13</sup>

Having already received encouragement from US officials that voluntary agencies would be needed in Vietnam, MCC suddenly found the door flung wide open.<sup>14</sup> Vietnamese embassy officials quickly produced a visa for a 23-year-old MCC worker from California named Delbert Wiens; three other MCC workers were shifted over from Korea.<sup>15</sup> The team was charged to "develop a consistently MCC pattern of service."<sup>16</sup> They initially threw themselves into distributing food staple items furnished by the US government in an effort that officials, with an eye to the Christmas season, grandly named "Operation Reindeer."<sup>17</sup> As the initial crisis ebbed, MCC workers shifted their attention to the central highlands, in a location called Banmethuot; by November 1957, seven workers were assigned to a leprosarium there, including an MCC doctor, Willard Krabill.<sup>18</sup> The focus for their longer term work would soon build from these initial commitments and would be set at least through 1965. Throughout their first decade in Vietnam, MCC workers labored at: (1) distributing food and clothing to orphanages, and schools, and victims of

natural disasters; and (2) working in medical programs in the central highlands and later at Nha Trang on the coast.<sup>19</sup> By the early to mid-1960s the reasons propelling Mennonite relief in Vietnam closely resembled causes driving MCC efforts elsewhere. As a logical outgrowth of their growing identity as a people of Christian service, Mennonites moved to fill a huge human need. Jesus had called his disciples to provide a “cup of cold water” to the needy (Matt 10:42), a metaphor that became foundational in Mennonite service efforts. In Vietnam as elsewhere, Mennonites would provide that “cup of cold water” in the name of Christ. Admittedly, the president of South Vietnam, Ngo Diem, was initially suspicious of Mennonite pacifism. According to his secretary, Diem said, “I don’t know whether we should approve this project or not. They are in some kind of trouble with the army at home. They refuse to join their army.” In spite of this attitude, the mission workers generally received welcome and cooperation from Vietnamese government officials, who were eager to facilitate western aid to their country.<sup>20</sup>

From the very beginning of their work in Vietnam, however, Mennonites began to discover efforts being made to put a political spin on their simple acts of Christian service. Wiens pointed out to MCC administrators that refugees were helped very little by the caloric value of the “Operation Reindeer” packages, which consisted mostly of dairy items which the Vietnamese didn’t eat (they tried to use the cheese as laundry soap).<sup>21</sup> Instead, the point of these packages seemed to be for propaganda.<sup>22</sup> Should MCC help with that task? Ori Miller replied that the agency faced this problem in nearly every country where it worked and had always come to the “right conclusions” about how to proceed.<sup>23</sup> Yet MCC would find it harder to arrive at these “right conclusions” in Vietnam. For, as MCC worker Eve Harshbarger wrote home in 1954, “this country is on the thin edge of war.”<sup>24</sup>

The war, of course, came. With the blessing of US officials, President Diem never held the plebiscite stipulated in the Geneva Accords because if he had, the CIA reported, Ho Chi Minh probably would have won the election and South Vietnam would have joined the north as one united, communist country.<sup>25</sup> Neither did Diem allow free elections in his own country; in 1960, eighteen national Vietnamese officials called for such elections and Diem threw them all into jail. As a result, a full scale revolt began in South Vietnam, as armed guerrillas began organizing in the countryside to overthrow Diem’s

government. Eager to obtain further US aid, Diem responded by labeling all his opponents communists or “Viet Cong” regardless of their political orientation. The strategy worked: US military aid, along with advisors, poured into Vietnam; by November 1963, 15,000 US military advisors were working with the South Vietnamese army.<sup>26</sup> The guerrillas sometimes began to identify all Americans working in Vietnam as their enemies.

MCC painfully learned this reality in 1962. MCC worker Daniel Gerber had been assigned to maintenance tasks at the Banmethuot leprosarium. On May 30, as he and other staff prepared for their weekly prayer meeting, a group of about twelve armed guerrillas suddenly appeared at the hospital. They ransacked the offices for medicinal supplies, seized Gerber and two other missionaries, bound them up tightly, and led them away.<sup>27</sup> In spite of a half-dozen unconfirmed reports of their sighting, none of the three were ever returned.<sup>28</sup> In the same year, MCC lost ten tons of goods when guerrillas sabotaged a train.<sup>29</sup>

Episodes such as these pushed voluntary agencies, MCC included, into an ever-closer relationship with US military forces. MCC workers arranged to have the forces deliver supplies to isolated areas and sometimes even caught rides themselves. Doug Hostetter discovered the risks of this in 1965. Waiting at the airport in Khe Sanh for a flight to the coast, he accepted a lift from a friendly US military helicopter crew, who casually mentioned they had to run a short “cover mission” on the way. Hostetter had no idea what a “cover mission” entailed until he climbed aboard, seated himself on boxes of .30-caliber machine gun ammunition, and took off. The Huey helicopter was guarding another larger craft assigned to deliver military supplies to a jungle outpost. Quickly it came under fire, and door gunners on either side of Hostetter, in a deafening staccato of fire, poured bullets down at enemy soldiers below. Though hit, the helicopter arrived at the coast with no injuries, and the shaken young pacifist mission worker disembarked, unhurt but with plenty of food for thought about what it meant to do relief work in the midst of a war zone.<sup>30</sup> Because of the further breakdown of the Vietnamese transportation and communication infrastructure in the face of guerilla attacks, MCC began using the US army postal service, and staffers purchased food and supplies at the US military commissary.<sup>31</sup> When the war drew close, at times MCC staff bunked down overnight at US military bases.<sup>32</sup> For their part, army doctors

began volunteering their off hours at the MCC medical clinic in Nha Trang.<sup>33</sup>

Even the ability to conduct relief efforts simply in the name of Christ met unprecedented challenges. When severe floods hit Vietnam in November 1964, MCC plunged into the effort to help distribute emergency supplies to isolated villagers. They were forced to rely on US military helicopters—and learned that the pilots were forbidden to deliver supplies to areas under Viet Cong control. In those localities, people simply starved. Worse, the South Vietnam government would drop bags of sand labelled as relief supplies into these areas. When guerrillas appeared in the open to get the bags, they were shelled.<sup>34</sup>

By the mid-1960s, it was becoming increasingly difficult for Mennonites in Vietnam to hold to their largely apolitical stance and simply assist the suffering in the name of Christ.<sup>35</sup> For the “cup of cold water” was increasingly imprinted with military symbols and fit neatly into military purposes that, in Mennonite minds, ran counter to the essence of the Gospel.

“Simply being an American and present in this war makes maintaining our integrity very difficult,” MCC recognized in 1965,<sup>36</sup> and events of the coming years would intensify this problem. For, beginning about then, the war itself was Americanized. Realizing that the South Vietnamese could not stave off the communist insurgency by themselves, in 1964-5 Lyndon Johnson decided that Americans would have to win their independence for them. Within three years he had sent half-a-million US combat troops into a confused and brutal jungle warfare in which the enemy rarely appeared in the open and was often, tragically, confused with the peasant population. As a result, victory would be measured not by land taken but by body counts, a number that would escalate dramatically along with the war. Johnson also proceeded to launch the most devastating bombing campaign in human history. American bombers dropped horrible new anti-personnel weapons such as napalm that incinerated entire villages; they let loose massive pounds of chemical defoliants that rendered the lush countryside of Vietnam as lifeless and barren as a lunar landscape.<sup>37</sup>

Along with the escalation of the war came a matching one in non-military aid, and in 1965 the planners of war assiduously courted the assistance of US voluntary agencies.<sup>38</sup> In October, Willard Krabill represented MCC as part of delegation of voluntary agency and government representatives on a

tour of Vietnam. The purpose of the tour, funded by US officials, was clearly to demonstrate the human need and to solicit the help of the voluntary agencies.<sup>39</sup> The help soon arrived. By 1969 fifty foreign relief agencies were working there, maintaining over 700 expatriate and 1,200 paid Vietnamese staff, and with total operating budgets of about \$43 million.<sup>40</sup> MCC joined with Lutheran World Relief and Church World Service in a coalition called “Vietnam Christian Service” (VNCS); MCC administered this joint program until it left in 1972. The program launched initiatives in various areas: efforts to expand refugee relief were intensified greatly; medical services were made available at a half-dozen new sites; new ventures were set up to provide social services and community development. By October 1967, VNCS had seventy overseas personnel at work and was planning to send more. Ultimately, they would total over a hundred.<sup>41</sup>

Even in the beginning of the escalation, these workers realized it was not simple altruism that led government officials to so eagerly solicit their help. As he toured Vietnam at the behest of the government, Willard Krabill repeatedly heard from US officials that “You Voluntary Agency people can do a lot to help us show the refugees that the US wants to help them . . . and that they should be on our side.”<sup>42</sup> MCC administrator Paul Longacre recognized the fundamental issue at the same time. “Since the US is fighting a guerilla war,” he wrote home in 1965, “the strategy is quite a bit more involved than simply the positioning and the firing of bullets. The US knows that the war, if it is to be won, must be won primarily on the psychological level. The minds of the people must be won over to the non-communist side. To do this a massive program of aid and assistance has been undertaken.”<sup>43</sup> Newly arrived MCC worker Earl Martin heard the same point more bluntly from an army colonel, after he described the humanitarian mission of MCC’s work and explained workers would be serving out of a sense of Christian love. The colonel replied, “You’ve told me what you do. Now let me tell you what I do. My job, to put it starkly, is to kill the enemy. The more Viet Cong we kill, the better. We are also here to win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people. And that is where you come in, with your work in the camps. We are glad you are part of the team.”<sup>44</sup>

As MCC intensified its efforts in Vietnam in the later 1960s, the tensions and moral struggle that many workers felt would only intensify. The



fundamental question was inescapable: How, with a war raging all around them, would they express the twin Mennonite compulsions to offer Christian service and speak to the issues of peace? Let's now examine Mennonite service and peacemaking in the heart of the war in Vietnam.

On the one hand, the call to Christian service grew ever louder and more compelling. Workers labored to serve the needy in the very midst of a terribly cruel war, and the pall of suffering seemed omnipresent at times. Scenes they witnessed still cry out from the pages of thirty-year-old documents: the faces of refugees who had just lost everything when their village was destroyed; the mother whose children had just perished when errant bombs hit a refugee camp; the peasants who lost limbs to mines in rice paddies; the seemingly endless funeral processions.<sup>45</sup> One example might suffice. In 1973 VNCS worker Maynard Shirk described conditions at a huge refugee camp near Kontum, in the region of Plieku. To prevent the Viet Cong from gaining recruits and assistance from the peasants, the South Vietnamese army was in the process of forcibly relocating them, most of them Montagnard tribes people, to this barren camp. By April, 17,000 people had been sent there without adequate tents or sanitation, and with nothing to do. Babies had begun to die of malnutrition. Worse, Viet Cong guerrillas had recently appeared at the site, ordering the peasants to return to their village or be killed. The villagers made preparations to do so but then were forbidden by the South Vietnamese government, which warned them they would be punished if they left. Meanwhile, reported Shirk, "the morgue at the military hosp(ital) appears quite a busy place. They have now set up a tent beside the main building to help handle the heavy traffic in coffins."<sup>46</sup>

On the other hand, while MCC ably ministered to the immediate crises of the war's victims, as long as the war raged it was difficult to try to solve their longer term needs. The war produced plenty of such victims; the nation was awash with refugees. But MCC workers repeatedly noticed that, through the efforts of outsiders—those of the many voluntary agencies were considerably overshadowed by the larger energies of the US Agency for International Development (AID) and military "civic action" teams—the short term necessities of food, clothing, and shelter were readily supplied to most people who needed them.<sup>47</sup> While in some places people starved, in other locales so

much material aid was available that it seemed to foster dependency among the Vietnamese. A chieftain of a newly relocated village openly admitted that “I can get as much as I ask for.” To the shocked MCC workers, such people were “professional refugees.”<sup>48</sup> MCC’s goods were of such high quality that, in at least one instance, staffers discovered US officials were distributing them as rewards for hamlet chiefs who obeyed political/military directives.<sup>49</sup>

As the war intensified, MCC’s efforts to dispense these goods increasingly relied on military transport. Such efforts facilitated the tendency by many Vietnamese to identify VNCS personnel with the US military effort. With so many Americans, military and civilian, working at relief, many Vietnamese simply disbelieved the explanations by VNCS workers that their service arose only out of a sense of obedience to religious principles. After six years of working and living in Quang Ngai, for instance, Earl Martin was stunned to learn from his Vietnamese friends that only after he elected to stay with them after the US withdrawal did they finally believe he was not a CIA agent.<sup>50</sup> Other VNCS workers began to suspect that the very presence of North Americans in their midst endangered the lives of their Vietnamese friends and co-workers.<sup>51</sup>

Admittedly, MCC’s work in Vietnam ranged far beyond material aid and refugee relief. By 1970 the annual report on the projects pointed to strong efforts in medical services at three different sites, five community social service centers in Saigon, initiatives in home reconstruction, literacy classes, agricultural extension, handicraft production, and school lunch programs.<sup>52</sup> Dozens of Vietnam Christian Service workers provided a remarkable, admirable record of costly and sacrificial service, rendered at some risk of their lives. Nevertheless, by the late 1960s even as sensitive and astute an administrator as Paul Longacre, who had headed MCC’s efforts in Vietnam for three years in the early 1960s and then did the same from Akron, Pennsylvania through the rest of the decade, recognized the limitations facing the agency’s service. “Every worker who has worked in Vietnam and who has exercised some sensitivity to the Vietnamese people and problems there has come home frustrated,” Longacre conceded in 1972. “Most have said they would not be willing to go back unless the situation saw some changes. Because of the war, the Vietnamese people are not willing to become deeply involved in community development projects,” he explained. “They can only give

marginal commitment to any project.”<sup>53</sup> If sincere outsiders really wanted to help the Vietnamese and to minister to them in any but the most immediate way, perhaps they would need to stop the war.

MCC certainly included speaking to the ways of peace as an integral part of its purpose in Vietnam. The statement of the objectives and philosophy of VNCS included a call “to witness to the cross of Christ and to the reconciling power of love in the midst of violence, fear, hate and despair.” Periodically, as in 1966, MCC chiefs expressed their “concern for the peace witness of the relief program,” and noted the MCC mandate to unequivocally express “a moral witness regarding the wrongness of this war.”<sup>54</sup> Throughout their service, MCC workers moved numerous times to separate themselves from military identification and agendas, and to express their peace concerns. In 1967, for example, MCC turned down an offer from US AID for a large-scale refugee feeding program (the government would furnish the goods for MCC distribution). This program would, MCC felt, overly compromise the integrity and identity of its witness.<sup>55</sup> For a similar reason, though the decision displeased US officials, in the early 1960s MCC refused to display the handclasp symbol of US AID on goods it distributed.<sup>56</sup>

On several crucial occasions, MCC’s leadership in Vietnam likewise stood up to US military and diplomatic officials who had begun in 1967 to pressure voluntary agencies into a role more supportive of US policy.<sup>57</sup> For MCC, the pressure was most noticeably directed against the activities of VNCS worker Doug Hostetter, who had been assigned to community development and education in the up-country town of Tam Ky. Hostetter had arrived in 1966, fresh from completing his bachelor’s degree at Eastern Mennonite College and determined to express a Mennonite peace concern. He threw himself into language study and soon became fluent in Vietnamese. He befriended a number of Vietnamese, associated almost exclusively with them rather than with US AID or military officials, and refused to rely on US authorities for security. When Viet Cong bombs hit Tam Ky, he did not take refuge in the US military compound.<sup>58</sup> That is, in line with VNCS objectives, he tried to remain politically neutral in regards to the war and to avoid too close identification with US officials. Quietly he aided four US army deserters trying to leave the war;<sup>59</sup> publicly he assumed a vocal antiwar posture to his Vietnamese friends, to US military officials, and ultimately to the US press.<sup>60</sup>

When a new colonel named Bryerton assumed command of US military forces in the area in the spring of 1967, trouble quickly ensued. Hostetter introduced himself to the colonel upon his arrival to explain VNCS's work. When Bryerton demanded whether he supported US military policies and Hostetter replied he did not, Bryerton declared that no Americans should be working in Vietnam unless they did; within the next several months, he and Hostetter had several public, angry confrontations. In August 1967, the colonel asked VNCS to transfer Hostetter out of Tam Ky, and the US ambassador in Danang declared Hostetter "persona non grata" in the area.<sup>61</sup>

MCC's in-country leadership in Saigon was forced to act. They temporarily removed Hostetter from Tam Ky but reassigned him there several months later, where he served out the remainder of his service term. They also informed US officials that VNCS officials, not the government, would determine where they would place their personnel. In September 1967, along with representatives of four other voluntary agencies, MCC leader Paul Leatherman met with Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker to protest the increasing pressure all the agencies were feeling to get on the American "team." Leatherman admitted to Bunker that, in line with MCC's desire to offer impartial service to the needy, workers did not always know the political positions of those they helped. Bunker informed him that "if you're helping VC, that is treason. You know the penalty for treason." Leatherman replied that "there is no treason in the church."<sup>62</sup>

On many occasions in the late 1960s and early '70s, MCC engaged in activities that were what people like Bunker would label treason: they attempted to reach both the Viet Cong and the government of North Vietnam with a message of peace and reconciliation, and also with monies for medical relief. At four separate times MCC representatives Atlee Beechy and Doug Hostetter contacted officials from these governments; Beechy and Hostetter both visited North Vietnam, bringing over a hundred thousand dollars for the medical relief of people that their own government branded as "enemies."<sup>63</sup>

Meanwhile, MCC's desire to more freely engage in reconciling peace work was one of the rationales compelling its withdrawal from the cooperative arrangement of Vietnam Christian Service in 1972.<sup>64</sup> Once this change was effected and as the war slowly drew to its painful and bloody conclusion, MCC could take up more of this kind of explicit reconciling work: intervention

on behalf of political prisoners, demolitions removal, and the like.<sup>65</sup> By the late 1960s, many VNCS workers were sending antiwar protest letters and petitions home for publication in church and national newspapers.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the Mennonite presence in Vietnam became crucially important in the antiwar movement beginning to take on form and power in Mennonite churches back home. Partly due to reports received from workers, MCC's Peace Section began in 1965 to articulate a public dissent against the war.<sup>67</sup> MCC workers sent a flood of firsthand reporting about the evils of the war back to the denominational press,<sup>68</sup> while returning VNCS veterans such as Doug Hostetter, Earl and Pat Hostetter-Martin, and Jonathan Lind assumed important roles in the burgeoning peace movement on Mennonite college campuses.<sup>69</sup> Within a year after returning from Vietnam in 1967, Atlee Beechy estimated that he had spoken against the war to 150 churches, clubs, and other groups.<sup>70</sup>

Yet in the face of the terrible carnage of the war, and in light of the contributions by the voluntary agencies to the forces bringing that destruction, these voices on behalf of peace appear as somewhat muted, inadequate. MCC's ready and continued use of US military facilities, transportation, commissary privileges, and post office until late in its period in Vietnam certainly contributed to the peasants' inability to distinguish between Mennonites and the US military; so did the distribution of governmental surplus goods which carried political restrictions banning their allocation in communist nations. Not until 1970 did MCC decide to discontinue passing out such goods.<sup>71</sup> Volunteers were free to express their opposition to the war—but only as long as they directed their dissent back home and not to South Vietnamese government officials with whom MCC had to contract its work.<sup>72</sup> While this might have demonstrated a prophetic willingness to minister impartially to both sides in the conflict, not until late in the war did MCC explicitly move to extend aid to those the US government defined as the “enemy.” MCC moved on the diplomatic level to contact the Viet Cong but prohibited its volunteers in the field from doing so.<sup>73</sup> As he surveyed refugee needs with US officials in 1965, Willard Krabill saw that sending relief into Viet Cong areas “would not be tolerated.”<sup>74</sup> More surprisingly, MCC neglected to support the few Vietnamese Christians it encountered who faced prison terms for their conscientious objection.<sup>75</sup>

To be sure, MCC faced a number of constraints on its ability to offer a prophetic witness against the war as part of its activity. In 1967, William Keeney toured VNCS work at the behest of MCC's Peace Section, and his report encapsulated these constraints perfectly. First, a prophetic witness against the war would cause great tensions in relationships MCC valued with the evangelical, pro-war Tin Lanh church, the indigenous protestant church founded by the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Second, such a witness would also undermine the VNCS coalition's cooperative efforts. Many VNCS workers were not Mennonites and not pacifists, and would be uncomfortable with more explicit Mennonite peacemaking efforts. But perhaps most telling of all, Keeney noted that "too direct an attack on American policy would jeopardize the program of service."<sup>76</sup> More than anything else, the compulsion to keep serving the suffering was what kept Mennonites from going further with their peace witness.<sup>77</sup>

As an example of the road MCC chose not to take, consider two different approaches to ministering to South Vietnamese political prisoners. In 1966, MCC sent a Swiss doctor, Alfred Stoffel, to work at Con Son Island, one of South Vietnam's major facilities for holding those judged guilty of political offenses. The Island held an inmate population of 3,600 yet had not a single doctor. Here was a great chance, MCC administrators urged, to minister to those in need without reference to their political orientation.<sup>78</sup> Stoffel had worked in Africa and had aided the sick under tough conditions, and he tore into the work with great enthusiasm. Yet within six months, he was reporting back furtive and guarded references to "many things I see and hear which are extremely grim" which "I am not free to talk about," but which made him "often depressed when I leave these places of concentrated suffering." Patients lay on the floor and he had to crawl around to examine them; "work is difficult there because of lack of drugs, equipment, facilities, nursing and also because sometimes the prison wardens are reluctant to let me do my duty. It is inevitable of course that I see things which would better be hidden." He knew he fought "a rather helpless war against negligence and corruption . . ."<sup>79</sup> In November 1967, fearing for his personal safety, Stoffel abruptly fled the prison and left Vietnam.<sup>80</sup>

In accordance with his wishes, MCC said nothing about Stoffel or the conditions at Con Son Island. It remained for longtime Vietnam voluntary

agency leader Don Luce to accomplish what MCC pointedly refused to do. In 1970, Luce led two US congressmen and an aide to the island, where he showed them the horrific conditions in which the prisoners were kept; the aide snapped some photographs. The result? Any immediate aid to inmates by outsiders ceased, and the South Vietnamese government expelled Luce from the country.<sup>81</sup> But at about the same time as exposing Vietnam's infamous "tiger cages," Luce aroused the indignation and horror of the world. The issue became a cause célèbre in the peace movement, which not long afterwards succeeded in ending US involvement in the war.

In fairness, the muting of MCC's prophetic voice against the war occurred for pragmatic reasons: as frustrating and limited as their service was, MCC administrators would not engage in political dissent that would endanger its continuance. Luce's old agency, International Voluntary Services (IVS), provided a compelling example of what could happen to an outfit which spoke out too strongly. Throughout the later 1960s, IVS had been assuming an increasingly radical antiwar stance, which it did not hide from South Vietnamese officials. In 1971 they refused to renew its contract and expelled it from the country. Whatever assistance that agency could offer to the Vietnamese came to an abrupt end.<sup>82</sup> Even so, in retrospect, there might have been more room for MCC to raise its prophetic voice against the war than it realized or acted upon. Other groups managed to speak out more directly, but unlike IVS were not ultimately expelled from the country. Upon the close of her service assignment in 1970, Grace Kleinbach complained of "an *oversensitivity* (almost phobia)" [emphasis hers] "of VNCS regarding words or actions by members which might result in a reprimand by the [government of Vietnam] or the US Military." While the official excuse of VNCS leaders was "fear of extradition," she noted that other organizations such as the Quakers had been "far more outspoken" and had not "forfeited privileges for their stands of courage."<sup>83</sup>

MCC administrators instead insisted it was important to continue to offer a cup of cold water to those who suffered even when the cup itself contributed, indirectly, to the continuation of their suffering. The decision came accompanied by a sense of moral anguish that haunted scores of mission workers in Vietnam. As he decided to leave his work, VNCS staffer Tom Spicher voiced it well. He asked simply, "Can one both be opposed to the

bombing and help to feed the refugees it creates?”<sup>84</sup> MCC made its choice. Even while stressing the need for a prophetic voice against the war, Atlee Beechy argued that “Christians have been commissioned, commanded to be the compassionate community . . . to stand beside the dislocated, the disinherited, disrupted and despairing . . . we must be in Vietnam even if no one responds to the message in any formal or direct way, even if we are not gratefully received, or even if we are misunderstood and hated!” To leave Vietnam in the face of this massive human suffering, he said, would invite “spiritual death.”<sup>85</sup>

Given the contours of Mennonite history and theology, MCC’s decision to prefer service work to peacemaking in Vietnam was perfectly understandable. After decades of rapid acculturation, by the 1960s Mennonites were just beginning to articulate political concerns on behalf of other people who no longer lived beyond the boundaries of isolated Mennonite communities. Moreover, the Mennonites’ ability to articulate much of a prophetic voice was substantially hampered by profound conservatism in their ranks, which saw such political advocacy as violating a traditional two-kingdom theology that stressed church-state separation.<sup>86</sup>

Thirty years later, we do not face the same constraints on our activism. One of the major reasons is, of course, *because of* the Mennonite witness in Vietnam that for a decade or more pushed the cutting edge of the Mennonite witness to the state.<sup>87</sup> In conclusion, however, it may be enough to suggest that the agony of Mennonites to express a message of peace in the midst of war offers a pointed lesson for a later generation. Mennonites have fashioned a new identity as a people of service and of peace. In Vietnam, though, those two characterizations diverged, even ran counter to each other. This struggle is not so far removed from us today. We appreciate the legitimation and public status that our service activities provide for us. Yet peace issues still cut against that appreciation; the prophetic calling still detracts from it; the call for peace and justice coming down to us from our history still promises to remove this basis for acceptance. To some extent, Mennonite history is a burden, one we are still reluctant to fully take up.

For example, we are quite happy to designate the Washington Office or the Peace Section to articulate our dissent against genocide in the Balkans



or Iraq. Those agencies even receive a small chunk of our church budgets to witness on our behalf. We rejoice in the work of Christian Peacemaker Teams. Yet is that enough? Over the past five years, half a million children have died in Iraq as a direct result of the policies of the governments of the US and Canada. There has been some proper Christian protest against this killing expressed recently in Mennonite college towns, but very little of it has risen up from the churches.<sup>88</sup>

In the very least, reviewing the Mennonite experience in Vietnam ought to spark some newer reflections about the kind of burdens that a prophetic Mennonite past might ask us to carry today. Maybe this burden means not always being nice. Maybe it means getting in the way. Maybe remaining faithful to the burden of Mennonite history means leaving our paralysis induced by our recognition of the ambiguities of power, and confronting those who make war or perpetuate injustice.

Many years ago as their respective nations entered World War II, North American Mennonites worried about what this turn would mean for them. To avoid any kind of conflict between their peace commitments and their nations' efforts at total war, they worked hard to make an arrangement with the state. As it turned out, the deal worked out nicely for both sides. Mennonites entered isolated camps to dig fire trails and fight fires, and did admirable service with the mentally ill. They even paid for the privilege. For their part, the respective governments of Canada and the US did not draft young Mennonite men into the army or whip up mob action against Mennonite communities. The state was happy to have this body of potential dissenters safely tucked away and quiet. Indeed, Reinhold Niebuhr even celebrated Mennonites as a gentle people who would preserve an ethic of absolute love at a time when everyone else cast it aside. They did not need to worry about their safety or survival. All a people of peace had to do was stay in their place.

But would they? Will they? More than half a century later, these questions still linger.

## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> These quotes are taken from Gerlof Homan, *American Mennonites in the Great War, 1914-1918* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994), 136, 101; and James Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War: Mennonite Identity and Organization in America, 1890-1930* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1989), 238.

<sup>2</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, "Japan and the Christian Conscience," *Christian Century* LIV (November 10, 1937): 1391.

<sup>3</sup> On the construction of such service ventures as an expression of Mennonite aspirations to full citizenship, see James Juhnke, "Mennonite Benevolence and Revitalization in the Wake of World War I," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* LX (January 1986): 15-30; Juhnke, "Mennonite Benevolence and Civic Identity: the Post-War Compromise," *Mennonite Life* 25 (January 1970): 34-7. On this arrangement in the mid-century decades and later, see chapter six of Perry Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Beulah Stauffer Hostetler has noted that as Mennonites dropped forms of cultural separation, they came up with new forms of commonality which expressed key values. "Separation from the world," she declared, "was being expressed through peace and service programs rather than in prescribed nonconformity . . ." See Beulah Stauffer Hostetler, *American Mennonites and Protestant Movements: A Community Paradigm* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987), 293.

<sup>5</sup> Al Franken, "'Saturday Night Live' Monologue," *Harper's Magazine* 278 (April 1989): 50.

<sup>6</sup> For other examples, see the laudatory comments of Dorothy Thompson, "Queer People," in the *Ladies Home Journal* in 1952, reprinted in the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* L (July 1989): 4-5; and Martin Marty, "On 'Being Prophetic'," *Christian Century* 97 (May 14, 1980): 559.

<sup>7</sup> "Peace Section-1971," Report of the Peace Section in the *1971 MCC Workbook*, p. B-4, IX-5-2, Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen College, Goshen, IN (hereafter abbreviated as AMC).

<sup>8</sup> Ralph Kauffman, Letter to the Editor, *The Mennonite* 84 (November 18, 1969): 699.

<sup>9</sup> For histories of MCC, see John Unruh, *In the Name of Christ: A History of Mennonite Central Committee and its Service, 1920-1951* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1952); Robert Kreider and Rachel Waltner Goossen, *Hungry, Thirsty, A Stranger: The MCC Experience* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988).

<sup>10</sup> On early efforts, see MCC Executive Committee Minutes, October 6, 1950, p. 3 and December 2, 1950, p. 8, both in MCC Executive Committee Minutes and Reports, IX-5-1, Box 2, AMC.

<sup>11</sup> George Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 46; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, (NY: Viking Press, 1983), 222.

<sup>12</sup> Orie O. Miller trip diary, June 2 - September 10, 1954, p. 14, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Miller, Orie O., Commissioner trip, 1954," AMC.

<sup>13</sup> Miller to Akron, August 17, 1954, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Miller, Orie O., Commissioner trip, 1954," AMC.

<sup>14</sup> William T. Snyder to Orie O. Miller, June 23, 1954 and July 21, 1954, both in MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Miller, Orie O., Commissioner Trip, 1954," AMC. See Luke S. Martin, "An Evaluation of a Generation of Mennonite Mission, Service and Peacemaking in Vietnam, 1954-1976," n.p., MCC/EMBMC, July 1977, 6-7.

<sup>15</sup> Wiens to Byler, November 11, 1954, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Wiens, Delbert,"

AMC; MCC Executive Meeting Minutes, "The 1955 Assignment and Planning," December 29-30, 1954, MCC Executive Meeting Minutes, IX-5-1, Box 3, AMC.

<sup>16</sup> MCC Executive Meeting Minutes, "Memo of Understanding: Vietnam Unit," August 16, 1954, with Executive Committee minutes of September 23, 1954, MCC Executive Meeting Minutes, IX-5-1, Box 3, AMC.

<sup>17</sup> J.N. Byler to Delbert Wiens, September 24, 1954; Wiens to Byler, October 7, 1954; both in MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Wiens, Delbert," AMC.

<sup>18</sup> L. Martin, 8. MCC Executive Meeting Minutes, August 29, 1956, p. 5, MCC Executive Meeting Minutes, IX-5-1, Box 3, AMC.

<sup>19</sup> "Analysis and Proposals for Expanded Program in Vietnam," Exhibit 7 to MCC Executive Meeting Minutes, May 22, 1965, MCC Executive Meeting Minutes, IX-5-1, Box 3, AMC; Martin, 17.

<sup>20</sup> William T. Snyder to Orie O. Miller, August 6, 1954, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, Miller, Orie O., Commissioner Trip, 1954," AMC. Despite personal assurances about Mennonite good will he received from Wiens, Diem was suspicious of Mennonite pacifism and for a while held up official approval for the first MCC medical project in 1956. See Wiens to Miller, August 25, 1956, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Indochina Office, Dec-Aug, 1956," AMC. Diem's wariness was exacerbated by the growing opposition from pacifist Buddhist sects at home.

<sup>21</sup> Wiens to Byler, October 13, 1954, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Wiens, Delbert,"; Wiens to Byler, November 25 and December 28, 1954, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Indo-China Office, 1955," AMC.

<sup>22</sup> Wiens to Byler, February 5, 1955, and Wiens to Miller, Snyder and Byler, March 30, 1955, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Indo-China Office, 1955," AMC.

<sup>23</sup> Miller to Wiens, April 11, 1955, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Indo-China Office, 1955," AMC.

<sup>24</sup> Eve Harshbarger, "November, 1954 Activity Report," MCC Correspondence, IX 6-3, "Wiens, Delbert," AMC.

<sup>25</sup> Herring, *America's Longest War*, 55.

<sup>26</sup> Stephen Ambrose, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy since 1938*, 4th ed. (New York: Penguin, 1985), 147, 203-204, 208.

<sup>27</sup> T. G. Mangham to R.M. Chrisman, June 2, 1962, MCC Correspondence, "Vietnam Office, 1962," AMC.

<sup>28</sup> For a summary of these reports, see Jack Foley, "A Family's Tortuous Search to Find Father," *San Jose Mercury News*, August 17, 1985.

<sup>29</sup> L. Martin, 19.

<sup>30</sup> "Portrait: Doug Hostetter," *MCC Peace Office Newsletter* (September/October, 1992): 2; Doug Hostetter diary entry September 27, 1966, Hist. Mss I-719, Douglas Hostetter papers, Box 1, File 7, AMC.

<sup>31</sup> On use of the APO, see Martin, 25. On the use of—and strong MCC efforts to retain—commissary privileges, see Paul Longacre to Robert Miller, December 29, 1965, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Vietnam Office, 1966," AMC; and Peace Section report to MCC Executive Committee meeting, December 16-17, 1966, MCC Executive Committee Meeting

Minutes, IX-5-1, Box 5, AMC. Miller pointed out that in most cases, the closest association that MCC workers had was with US AID officials more than military forces. Certainly on some levels MCC objected to these close ties. Even if we just told our workers not to use the commissary, Paul Longacre realized, it would be “difficult to keep our people from using it anyway without approval.” See Longacre to Robert Miller, December 29, 1965, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, “Vietnam Office, 1966,” AMC. Nonetheless, MCC tried to curtail commissary use. In “Vietnam Christian Service Guidelines” issued in 1968, administrators in Akron tried to prohibit over-dependence by the workers on the US military commissary, transportation and the like; guidelines discouraged fraternization with US military forces and urged workers to live and associate with the Vietnamese. See Longacre, “Vietnam Christian Service Guidelines,” Exhibit 5 to MCC Executive Committee meeting, May 23, 1968, MCC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, IX-5-1, Box 5, AMC. These guidelines were prescriptive rather than descriptive. They were hotly rejected, as meddling by distant administrators, by VNCS workers in country. See: “Unit Meeting, Pleiku, VNCS,” July 30, 1968; “Minutes of the Meeting to Discuss VNCS Guidelines,” August 4, 1968; Bill Rose to Paul Leatherman, June 30, 1968; Doug Hostetter to Paul (Leatherman), August 6, 1968; Jeanne Armstrong, “Response to VNCS Guidelines,” August 6, 1968; all in MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, “Vietnam Office, April, 1968,” AMC.

<sup>32</sup> L. Martin, 20.

<sup>33</sup> Rudolph Lichti, “Report from Vietnam on MCC and US military Cooperation in Nha Trang Hospital Program,” September 19, 1962, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, “Vietnam Office, 1962,” AMC.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Longacre to Wilbert Shenk, November 23 and December 1, 1964, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, “Vietnam Office, 1964” and “Vietnam Office, 1965,” AMC.

<sup>35</sup> See L. Martin, 91.

<sup>36</sup> “Analysis and Proposals for Expanded Program in Vietnam,” Exhibit 7 to MCC Executive Committee meeting, May 22, 1965, MCC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, IX-5-1, Box 5, AMC.

<sup>37</sup> On the Americanization of the war and the increased bombing, see Herring, *The Longest War*, 108-139, 150-52; Karnow, *Vietnam*, 395-426.

<sup>38</sup> For examples of this solicitation, see Paul Longacre to Robert Miller and John Hostetler, August 9, 1965, and Miller to Longacre, August 19, 1965, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, “Vietnam Office, 1965,” AMC. Also David Leaman, “Politicized Service and Teamwork Tensions: Mennonite Central Committee in Vietnam, 1966-1969,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* LXXI (October 1997): 548.

<sup>39</sup> “Report on Vietnamese Refugees and Displaced Persons by a Delegation From The American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service,” included with MCC Executive Meeting minutes of December 10-11, 1965, with MCC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, IX-5-1, Box 5, AMC.

<sup>40</sup> Robert W. Miller, “The Role and Contribution of Foreign Voluntary Agencies in South Vietnam, 1966-1971,” M.A. Thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1972, 6.

<sup>41</sup> On the birth of VNCS, see Midge Austin Meinertz, ed., *Vietnam Christian Service: Witness in Anguish* (New York: Church World Service, 1976), 17-28. On the program expansion, see

MCC Executive Committee Minutes, December 10-11, 1965, pp.8-10, MCC Executive Committee Minutes, IX-5-1, Box 5, AMC; and Douglas R. Beane, "Vietnam Christian Service: a Partial Historical Survey," in Meinertz, ed., *Witness in Anguish*, 31. For totals, see Leo Driedger and Donald B. Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1994), 127.

<sup>42</sup> Willard Krabill, "Report of MCC Representative on the Vietnam Voluntary Agency Relief Team, October 16-28, 1965: Summary Observations," p. 2, included with MCC Executive Meeting minutes of December 10-11, 1965, with MCC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, IX-5-1, Box 5, AMC.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Longacre, "Occasional Bulletin, No. 3, Clarification of Issue: US Government–MCC Relationships," March, 1965, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Vietnam Office, 1965," AMC. Longacre understood how the work of voluntary agencies contributed to this objective. Johnson realized it was important to "rally the people at home, the rear guard . . . . So by MCC-CWS rallying the Protestant ranks for the welfare needs in Vietnam they will be rallying supporters to the government's cause here." See Longacre to Robert Miller, October 6, 1965, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Vietnam Office, 1965," AMC.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Leaman, "Politicized Service . . . .", 544.

<sup>45</sup> Instances of this are legion in MCC's Vietnam documents. For some specific examples from either end of MCC's service in Vietnam, see Delbert Wiens, "Monthly Report, September 3, 1954," MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Wiens, Delbert," AMC; Kevin Byrne to Mother and Father, July 27, 1970, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Vietnam Office, 1970" AMC; and Kurt Sawatsky, "Monthly Unit Report, Ban-Me-Thuot," May, 1972, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Vietnam Activity Reports, 1972."

<sup>46</sup> Maynard Shirk, "Occasional Report," April 4, 1973, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, Vietnam Activity Reports, 1973," AMC.

<sup>47</sup> For examples see: Wiens to Byler and Snyder, December 28, 1954 and Wiens to Miller, Snyder and Byler, March 30, 1955, Willard Krabill to Byler, November 12, 1955; all three in MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Indochina Office, 1955," AMC; "Overseas Services Report to MCC Executive Committee," September 18, 1985, MCC Executive Committee Minutes, IX-5-1, Box 5, AMC; Gayle Preheim, "PAX Service Report: The Refugee of the Vietnam War," May 14, 1967, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Vietnam Activity Reports, May, 1967," AMC.

<sup>48</sup> Preheim, "PAX Service Report: The Refugee of the Vietnam War," 2.

<sup>49</sup> Longacre, "Clarification of Issues, US Government–MCC Relationships," 2.

<sup>50</sup> Earl Martin, *Reaching the Other Side* (NY: Crown Publishers, 1978), 13.

<sup>51</sup> Gayle Preheim, "VNCS Withdrawal from Quang Tri Province," February 25, 1968, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Vietnam Office, 1968," AMC.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Miller, "Vietnam," 1970 MCC Workbook, pp.A-13–A-17, "MCC Annual Reports, 1968-74," IX-5-2, Box 2, AMC.

<sup>53</sup> Longacre to Snyder, "Vietnam Planning," August 11, 1972, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Vietnam Office, 1972," AMC.

<sup>54</sup> "Vietnam Christian Service Objectives and Philosophy," and Action VIII in minutes of Peace Section Executive Committee, both in MCC Executive Committee Minutes April 12-

13, 1966, IX-5-1, Box 5, AMC.

<sup>55</sup> L. Martin, 26, 101.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>57</sup> For evidence of this pressure, see Paul Leatherman to Paul Longacre, October 18, 1967, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Leatherman, Paul, August, 1967," AMC.

<sup>58</sup> Douglas Hostetter, "Confidential Report," August 14, 1967, Hist. Mss. I-719, Douglas Hostetter Papers, Box 1, File 31, AMC; Hostetter Journal, entries January 17, February 17, 1967, Hostetter Papers, Box 1, File 7; Gerald Aakers, "Field Trip to Quang Ngai and Tam Ky," August 2-4, 1967, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Vietnam Office June, 1968," AMC.

<sup>59</sup> Doug Hostetter to "Folks," September 9, 1968, Hist Mss I-719, Hostetter Papers, Box 1, File 32, AMC.

<sup>60</sup> On Hostetter's adept usage of press contacts, see Paul Longacre to Doug Hostetter, September 12, 1967, and Hostetter to "Dear Folks," September 3, 1967, both in Hist Mss I-719, Hostetter Papers, Box 1, File 31, AMC.

<sup>61</sup> Hostetter, "Confidential report"; Aaker, "Field trip to Quang Ngai and Tam Ky,;" L. Martin, 102. Also, see Leaman, "Politicized Service . . . ," 555-57.

<sup>62</sup> L. Martin, 102. Leaman reads this confrontation quite differently; see "Politicized Service . . . ," 558.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-111.

<sup>64</sup> William T. Snyder to Boyd Lowry, April 29, 1971, Exhibit 6 to MCC Executive Committee Meeting May 18-19, 1971, IX-5-1, Box 6, AMC.

<sup>65</sup> L. Martin, 91-3.

<sup>66</sup> For examples, see "Letter from Vietnam to American Christians," *Gospel Herald* 61 (January 16, 1968): 65-6; John Howard et al. to Richard Nixon, with Robert Miller to Boyd Lowry, May 18, 1970, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Miller, Robert W,;" AMC; Wilf Allen et al. to "Dear Friends," September, 1969, Ronald Partridge et al. to "Mr. President," October 15, 1969, both in MCC Correspondence, "Vietnam Office, 1969," AMC.

<sup>67</sup> Minutes of the Peace Section Executive Committee meeting, May 8, 1964, Peace Section Minutes and Reports, IX-7-8, Box 3, AMC. In July 1966, MCC sent a delegation to the White House to protest the war. Their letter described the nature and extent of Mennonite relief efforts in Vietnam and then outlined the contradictions that MCC had come to realize enveloped its work in Vietnam. "The time has come," the letter read, "when we can no longer maintain faith with the homeless, the hungry, the orphaned and the wounded to whom we minister unless we speak out as clearly as we can against this savage war in which our country is engaged"; see C.N. Hostetter and William T. Snyder to The President, July 11, 1966, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Hostetter, C.N.," AMC.

<sup>68</sup> For examples, see: Sam Hope, "Personal Reflections on our Presence in Vietnam," *Gospel Herald* 62 (April 8, 1969): 320-22; Kevin Byrne, "Significantly Involved," *Gospel Herald* 64 (January 12, 1971): 32; Earl and Pat Martin, "Who are You Kidding, Brother?" *Gospel Herald* 62 (October 28, 1969): 938; Max Ediger, "Handles for Lending a Hand," *The Mennonite* 88 (July 10, 1973): 440; Earl Martin, "Bombs Wait for Viet Farmers," *Gospel Herald* 66 (July 31, 1973): 589; Margaret Fast, "A Doctor in Vietnam," *Mennonite Mirror* 3 (November 1973): 9-10.

<sup>69</sup> On this Mennonite movement against the war, see Perry Bush, "Drawing the Line: Mennonites, the State and Social Change, 1935-1973," Ph.D. Diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 1990, 243-54, 262-71.

<sup>70</sup> L. Martin, 90.

<sup>71</sup> "Report on VNCS Material Aid," March 27, 1970, MCC Data Files, IX-12, #5, "Vietnam Christian Service, 1970," AMC; Martin, 101.

<sup>72</sup> Leaman, "Politicized Service . . .," 566.

<sup>73</sup> For example, see Paul Leatherman to Doug Hostetter, January 12, 1968, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Leatherman, Paul, 1968," AMC.

<sup>74</sup> Krabill, "Report on Vietnamese Refugees and Displaced Persons . . . Summary Observations," 2.

<sup>75</sup> L. Martin, 97.

<sup>76</sup> William Keeney, "Report to the Mennonite Central Committee Peace Section: Trip to Vietnam, May 1-16, 1967," Exhibit 6 with MCC Executive Committee Minutes, May 26, 1967, IX-5-1, Box 5, AMC. Likewise, Atlee Beechy signaled his own enthusiasm for more aggressive Mennonite peacemaking, but doubted whether the present environment would permit it. See Atlee Beechy to Edgar Metzler, May 10, 1966, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Beechy, Atlee, 1966," AMC.

<sup>77</sup> See Leaman, "Politicized Service . . .," 566-67.

<sup>78</sup> Luke Martin, "Con Son Island Trip Report," October 8-11, 1966; Leatherman to Miller, January 4, 1967; both in MCC Correspondence, "Leatherman, Paul, 1967," AMC.

<sup>79</sup> Alfred Stoffel to "Director Vietnam Christian Service," Monthly Reports, April, May, and October 1967, all in MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Vietnam Activity Reports, 1967," AMC.

<sup>80</sup> Leatherman to Longacre, November 9, 1967, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Leatherman, Paul, August, 1967," AMC.

<sup>81</sup> Gloria Emerson, "U.S. Writer Told to Leave Vietnam," *New York Times*, April 28, 1971; "Don Luce's Last Letter from Vietnam," April 27, 1971, Hostetter papers, I-719, Box 5, File 33, AMC. The aide was future US Senator Tom Harkin.

<sup>82</sup> On the expulsion of IVS from Vietnam see Miller, "The Role and Contribution . . ." 48-54; Jim Linn, "An Analysis of the Termination of IVS in Viet Nam," *IVS Reporter*, December 1971, 2-4.

<sup>83</sup> Grace Kleinbach, termination report, July 20, 1970, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Vietnam Office, 1970," AMC.

<sup>84</sup> Tom Spicher to Bob Miller, May 1, 1972, MCC Correspondence, IX-6-3, "Vietnam Office, 1972," AMC.

<sup>85</sup> Atlee Beechy, "Our Vietnam Witness," *Gospel Herald* 60 (February 21, 1967): 145; "spiritual death" in Leaman, "Politicized Service . . .," 567.

<sup>86</sup> See chapters 6-8 of my book *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in Modern America* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

<sup>87</sup> I am indebted to Earl Martin for this point.

<sup>88</sup> Rich Preheim, "Mobilization against Iraqi war slow in coming," *The Mennonite* 1 (February 24, 1998): 4.