



A. J. Muste Memorial Institute

339 Lafayette Street
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*God gave Noah the rainbow sign
No more water, the fire next time.*

A.J. Muste lived by the rainbow sign, sensing the splendor and harmony in what many saw only as conflict and diversity. Growing up as a young man during the cataclysm of the first World War, when all the assumptions of the age of reason were shattered, and barbarism seemed more likely a prospect than human perfection, he committed his life to the complex task of linking social justice with loving nonviolence. Where others saw "peace" as a noun, A.J. Muste saw it as a verb, a "way". His commitment to the powerless and dispossessed was total. His personal integrity won him a rare universal respect.

A.J. Muste Memorial Institute was organized to keep alive the spirit of the man whose name it bears, functioning in his area of primary concern—the exploration of the link between nonviolence and social change. A.J. Muste always met the challenge of the present in a direct way, and was exhilarated by the potential of the future. The Institute operates in that spirit: it applies its resources to current social, political, and economic problems, in the hope that the storm through which we are now passing will be lighted by the rainbow, not the fire.

PEACE "There is no way to peace—peace is the way" was A.J. Muste's simple statement of his conviction that the road to peace does not run through the territory of war. Today, the use of violence to achieve social change has laid claim on the consciences of many, in both the Church and the secular community. Violence has been sanctified not only by the American government, with its extraordinary collection of nuclear weapons, but by large sections of the radical population who feel there is no other way of dealing with rigid institutions. The Institute seeks nonviolent ways of achieving social justice and peace. Without passing judgement on those who feel driven to defend themselves through violence, the Institute will explore the causes of violence, initiating programs and investigations which hopefully will lead to the kind of creative actions which will make violence unnecessary.

POLITICAL DIALOGUE A.J. Muste's range of interests was broad, and because of his desire to understand his opponents, he easily engaged in friendly dialogue with those his associates branded "the enemy". He was equally at ease with theologians and Marxists, officials of the U.S. State Department or the Soviet Union, pacifists, anarchists, Communists, Trotskyists—while never compromising his own principles. Once, pressed by friends to explain why he "spoke with the unspeakable", he re-

sponded: "I've always tried to keep communications open between radicals and non-radicals . . . it goes back to something fundamental in the nonviolent approach to life . . . you always assume there is some element of truth in your opponent's position and you respect him for hanging onto an idea he believes to be true . . . on the other hand you must try very hard to see what truth actually exists in his idea and seize on it to make him realize what you consider to be the larger truth".

The Institute is resuming the lively dialogues which so captivated A.J. Muste, opening communications with those outside the mainstream of American political or religious belief, bringing together the theoreticians and theologians who may disagree sharply on the course humanity should take, but care very deeply about our common future. At a time when the survival of the human race is an open question, this effort to break down divisions from the past and establish networks of understanding and common search in the present is very much part of the Institute's work.

CIVIL LIBERTIES A.J. Muste's belief in the need for social revolution led him to believe that no State had the right to bind the conscience of its citizens. His voice was raised for civil liberties not as a mere tactic to be picked up and discarded as occasion demanded, but as a basic affirmation of the democratic principle, universal in its demands, applying to all points of view, not only in this country but throughout the world. The Institute is developing programs to isolate and expose institutionalized policies which deny us our basic freedoms and supports those projects which, by exercising the freedom of dissent, affirm its very existence.

RELIGION For A.J. Muste the roots of nonviolence and social justice were to be found in religion even if, as in his own case, the insights he gained from his religious beliefs led him to a deep respect for Marxism. As a secular organization, the Institute will explore the problem stated by Martin Buber, the problem that haunted A.J. Muste throughout his life, to "find a way to drive the principles of the normative into the hard soil of political reality". It is an exploration that crosses denominational lines, engaging the finest minds in both the Judaic and Christian communities, as well as in the East, where the greatest "religious-political" leader of this century was Mohandas Gandhi, a Hindu.

CIVIL RIGHTS A.J. Muste was an associate of A. Philip Randolph, one of the deans of the civil rights and trade union movements, and a mentor to the late Martin Luther King Jr. Few aspects of American life so deeply angered A.J. Muste as that of racism, a racism that was blatant in the now-dead Jim Crow laws of the South, a racism that was implicit in the social structure of the