November 20, 1998

Dear Friends,

I always look forward to the opportunity to bring you up to date on the A.J. Muste Memorial Institute's activities. As usual, this issue of Muste Notes *is accompanied by a letter giving you a more complete picture of our work in 1998 and our hopes for the coming year. I hope you will continue your support for our efforts.*

We're pleased to feature an article here by Professor Ann Douglas of Columbia University. In January, the New York Times *published a short essay by Professor Douglas which commented on pacifism as one of the "most underrated ideas" of recent history and described A.J. Muste's contributions as both an activist and thinker [see* Muste Notes *Winter 1998 issue]. We took the opportunity to ask Professor Douglas to write a bit more about A.J.'s role as an intellectual, albeit one who was uniquely aware of the hard realities of political and social action. She has issued us a challenge in calling for the Institute to consider reprinting* The Essays of A.J. Muste, *just as years ago we reprinted his biography,* Peace Agitator. *It will require some hard work and, of course, money, but we are seriously exploring the possibility of reissuing this book.*

As we enter 1999, we'll be facing a rising furor over the approaching millennium. For all of us committed to the cause of peace, it is an opportunity to gear up our actions toward a "new age" without war and injustice. As this milestone approaches, consider increasing your support for the Institute so we can enter the 2000s better prepared as we carry out A.J. Muste's legacy of action.

Yours for peace,

Murray Rosenblith

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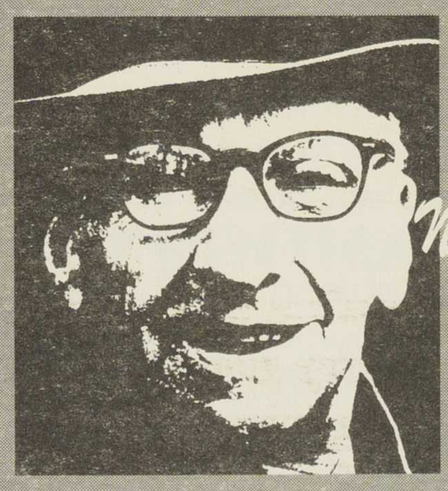
Executive Director



MUSTE NOTES

News from the A.J. Muste Memorial Institute

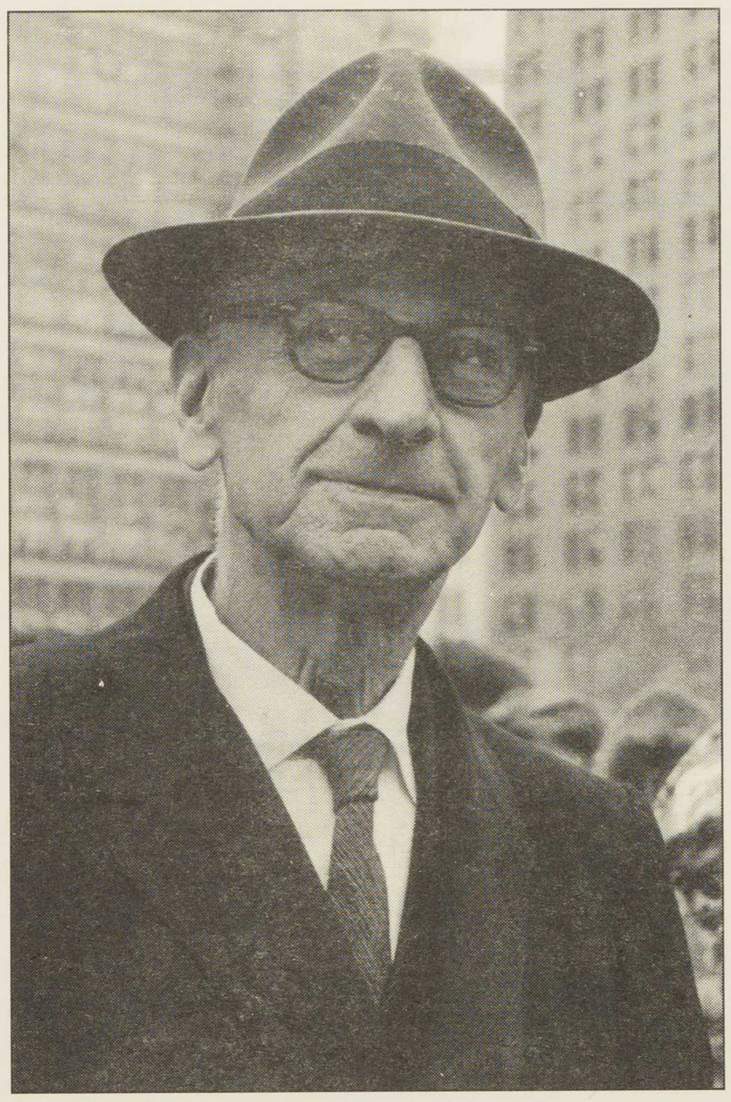
VOLUME 6, NUMBER 1 FALL 1998

A.J. Muste: The Activist Intellectual in the Cold War and Today

BY ANN DOUGLAS

By my bedside, I have a photo of A.J. Muste in his seventies, looking wise, sane, and touchingly eager. His books and pamphlets, largely gleaned from secondhand bookstalls, have a special place of honor on my shelf. He is, in a word, my inspiration, a kind of pledge that the individual conscience is not powerless in this age of ever larger transnational corporations, shrinking labor unions, and a burgeoning right which has hijacked and perverted the left's traditional ethical issues. After all, that is exactly the situation that Muste faced in the post-WWII years of the Cold War.

When Muste is remembered today, it is usually as the activist pacifist of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the War Resisters League, and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Muste's ability to carry on with the practice of a life on the left, his tireless application to the day-to-day tasks of organizing, fundraising, and public demonstration, is integral to the force of his example, but we shouldn't forget that he was also a writer, an intellectual, a brilliant theorist and theologian of the left--the *other* theologian of the Cold War, the determined, patient adversary of its chosen representative, Reinhold Niebuhr. Then at Union Theological Seminary and a consultant to the State Department, Niebuhr was an ingenious, influential apologist for the U.S. crusade against world communism. Since "power cannot be wielded without guilt, since it is never transcendent over interest," in Niebuhr's words, America "must cover itself with guilt in order to ward off the perils of Communism." Comforting words, Muste noted, to the administrations that dropped the atom bomb, tested the hydrogen bomb, instituted loyalty oaths and blacklists, founded and lavishly funded the C.I.A., and backed a host of corrupt dictators in the Third World. Only God can change human nature, by Niebuhr's logic, and since he hasn't done so, he must forgive its transgressions; but Muste argued that God's grace meant less divine forgiveness for inevitable human sinfulness than the *empowerment* of people in their struggle against it. His lifelong task on all fronts was to keep alive the will to change that the Cold War establishment branded heresy, even treason.



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