



period of his life. He alone was trusted by all the radical groups, he alone was able to act as the center around which they could organize the vast coalition of energies which became the American movement to end that war. In 1966 he led a group of pacifists to Saigon, where after trying to demonstrate for peace, they were arrested and deported. Late that same year, he flew with a small team of religious leaders to Hanoi where they met with Ho Chi Minh. Old men meeting in the midst of war, one of them committed to the path of violent change, the other to nonviolence. Less than a month later, A.J. died suddenly in New York City. At his death messages of condolence came from sources as diverse as Ho Chi Minh and Robert Kennedy.

Memorial services brought speakers from the Church, the Trade Union movement, and from both the Communist and Socialist Workers Parties. To an outsider it must have seemed incomprehensible that a single man could have so broad a range of friends. To his associates he was a remarkably warm person, one who loved baseball and poetry. To audiences, however, he seemed more distant, and while his speaking style was direct and immediate, one listener said she knew, having heard him, what the prophets sounded like. His integrity was beyond question. He tolerated disagreement but achieved remarkable loyalty. He did not have disciples but co-

workers. A brilliant thinker, he left behind no single body of theoretical work — but a small army of women and men whose lives, hearts and thinking were forever radically changed by knowing him.

There are two themes that ran through A.J. Muste's life so clearly and marked his own actions so decisively, that the conflict between them became a dialectic, never resolved. One theme was peace, non-violence, profound reverence for life. The other theme was social justice. To respect life meant to struggle to achieve social justice, yet the struggle for social justice invariably disturbed the peace and risked the nonviolence so central to A.J. The life-destroying institutions of injustice which A.J. saw around him were intolerable — yet violent social change was also intolerable. It was this "dialectic" which led him into the Marxist-Leninist movement and then back into the religious pacifist movement. Those who worked most closely with him are convinced that he was never fully able to leave behind his Christian mysticism when he was a Marxist-Leninist, and that on his return to the Church he brought with him much of his Marxism.

No authentic honor can be done to the memory of the man and his life if we select one theme and ignore the other. Few people have been so deeply committed at the same time both to peace and to social justice, so fully aware of the difficulty of reconciling these two demands, and so intent on making that effort.

One of A.J. Muste's favorite selections from poetry is surely one which he earned as a final homage:

I think continually of those who were truly great —
The names of those who in their lives fought for life,
Who wore at their hearts the fire's center.
Born of the sun they traveled a short while towards the sun.
And left the vivid air signed with their honor.

— Stephen Spender

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