

THE PENTAGON PAPERS AND THE INDOCHINA WAR

A Resolution adopted by the Eighth General Synod

June 28, 1971

The delegates to the Eighth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, acknowledging our gratitude to all the faithful witnesses for peace who have consistently raised up by word and deed the ways that make for peace, acknowledge also our own guilt by electoral consent and inattentiveness to legislative process for the involvement of the United States in what has been widely judged to be an immoral war in Indochina; prayerfully call upon our fellow Christians to join us in earnest petition of our governmental leaders to bring an end to this conflict in keeping with the provisions of this resolution; and make the following recommendations out of a love for our country, an appreciation of its worth, and a desire that no such criticism should deteriorate into a destructive hatred of the United States.

The Eighth General Synod of the United Church of Christ:

1. Calls upon the membership, congregations, Conferences, and Instrumentalities of the United Church of Christ to weigh the increasing evidence disclosed in the Pentagon papers and similar studies that the war aims and strategies of the United States government in Indochina—having been conceived out of a mistaken notion of United States interest and capacity, developed with cruel disregard for Indochinese lives and social patterns, implemented with persistent deception of the American public—are unjust and must, even as battlefield atrocities, be condemned by the Christian conscience;

2. Asks President Nixon to stop efforts to impose prior restraint on the publication of political information and opinions, including documents that have been classified as secret, but that do not bear directly on current military operation;

3. Asks the Congress in the hearings announced by Senator Mansfield and Congressman Morehead on the issues of Indochina policy raised by the Pentagon papers and similar studies:

a. To consider the problems of deception in government, and to develop procedures for classifying government reports and communications so as to insure the public's access to essential information;

b. To determine whether there be cause to censure high government officials found guilty of deception of the nation in the conduct of this war;

c. To use the disclosures as a basis for a new definition of national interest and commitment and as the basis for a clear shift in U.S. policy in Indochina to one of diplomatic initiatives to end the killing and promote a political settlement;

4. Calls upon the President and the Congress jointly to acknowledge the great responsibility of the United States government for enlarging the Indochinese conflict in the past with consequent massive destruction of human life and humane values, and to make a unilateral announcement that the United States is now ceasing all bombing missions, aggressive ground combat operations, and support for military operations by South Vietnam on the territories of its neighbors;

5. Calls upon the President and the Congress jointly to renounce the strategy of partial United States disengagement from a war that is being immorally protracted under the mask of a racist "Vietnamization" supported by residual United States forces, war materials, and funds;

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6. Urges the President, in consultation with Congress, immediately to submit fresh proposals for the negotiation in Paris of a compromise end to the war within the next six to nine months:

a. *based* on a United States pledge of total withdrawal of all troops, and military assistance, according to an agreed timetable;

b. *aimed* at synchronizing the end of United States participation in the war with

1) the establishment of a general cease-fire;

2) the release of all war and political prisoners;

3) the organization of open and free elections in South Vietnam under such international supervision as the government of Vietnam (Saigon) and the Provisional Revolutionary Government in South Vietnam (Front) concur to invite, and international acceptance of whatever government is so elected;

7. Urges U.S. officials to be ready to commit substantial funds for the rebuilding of war-torn countries if requested by the governments of Indochina.

(71-GS-48)