

## *April Fool Week*

**T**he fantastic, incredible, shattering events of April Fool Week came with such bewildering speed that it's almost impossible to sort them out and analyze them at this early date. We pundits and columnists were taken by surprise almost every day, and many of us formed brilliant theories one day, only to see them shattered by the onrushing and changing facts of the day following. The three mighty events that week were, of course, the unbelievable withdrawal of President Johnson on April Fool Eve, the agreement of Hanoi to begin preliminary peace talks, and the assassination of Martin Luther King. Let us set aside the King murder and its implications for later analysis, and concentrate now on Johnson and Vietnam.

The first point we must make is to protest vigorously at the mighty wave of adulation that swept over the man who, up to the end of March, was the most universally hated president in many generations. Let us hear no more of the sickening claptrap about Johnson's noble and Christ-like act of self-sacrifice, his self-immolation for the unity of the nation, and all the rest of the hogwash. I half-expected some of the Democratic Party hacks who led in the hosannahs to proclaim that LBJ had "died for our sins." Lyndon Johnson withdrew because, indeed, he had gravely "divided" the nation, but the division was all his doing, the doing of a man who had led this nation into an ever-escalating senseless and infamous war in Vietnam. He found himself, after three years of large-scale war, losing that

war, amid a rising tide of dissent, opposition, and even hatred at home. Beset at every hand, losing at home and abroad, Johnson decided to get out while he had some shred of reputation left. It must be recognized that the main lesson of the Johnson withdrawal is *not* his unexpected nobility; and saintliness, but the fact that the rising and swelling tide of the anti-war movement, the growing mass sentiment of determined opposition to the war and the draft, has won a tremendous victory: the anti-war movement — along with the remarkable fighting spirit of the Vietnamese people — was able to bring down the mightiest and most powerful man in the world: the President of the United States. It was a fantastic victory for mass public pressure from below — a pressure both at home and in Vietnam — that unexpectedly bubbled through the hard crust of Establishment rule and orthodox political party structures, to make itself heard and felt on the American political scene.

It was a victory of concerned private persons against the most powerful ruling machine in the world today. It was a demonstration that individual persons who believe and feel deeply enough about the sins of the government, and act upon that belief, *can* have an impact, even unto the toppling of the mighty head of that governmental Leviathan. This great victory can never be taken away from the people of this country.

Even recognizing this victory, however, it behooves us to remain on our guard. We cannot trust Mr. Johnson, as has been shown an almost infinite number of times in the past, and we cannot believe that he was not trying, in his desperation, to “pull a Nasser”: to resign dramatically and then have the mass of the people, in a wave of frenzied sentimentality, bear him aloft and “force” him to continue in office. We cannot be sure that Johnson was not, and to this day is still not, hankering after a “draft.” Fortunately, the massive sympathy vote that many pundits expected in the Wisconsin primary did not materialize; and who knows what “draft” sentiment might have been whipped up if Johnson had won in Wisconsin? But Johnson lost handily, and that menace is over; but we must still be on our guard for another opportunity to whip up a sentimental massive turn to renominate President Johnson.

Liberty depends upon eternal vigilance.