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Was Martin Luther King a Marxist? *by Adam Fairclough*

Martin Luther King, Jr., has seldom figured in the Left's pantheon of Socialist heroes. To many of his contemporaries he seemed a typical product of the 'black bourgeoisie': a middle-class preacher from a middle-class family who pursued middle-class goals. Although an eloquent and courageous crusader for racial justice, his ultimate vision – as expressed for example in his famous 'I Have A Dream' oration – seemed to be the integration of the Negro into the existing structure of society; capitalism was not at issue. When he talked about the need for cleanliness, godliness and thrift, he sounded like Booker T. Washington, that epitome of bourgeois values who, at the turn of the century, had exhorted blacks to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. King's own admiration for Washington, whom many blacks viewed as an arch 'Uncle Tom', was widely-known and openly advertised. By the mid-1960s, at the height of his fame and success, King struck many of his contemporaries as an essentially conservative figure. He was always 'amenable to compromise', wrote one commentator, 'with the white bourgeois political and economic Establishment'. Lawrence Reddick, King's friend and biographer, had anticipated such verdicts years earlier. 'Neither by experience nor reading is King a political radical', he wrote in 1959. 'There is not a Marxist bone in his body.' True, King adopted a much more radical stance during the last two years of his life, but he never seemed to wander very far from the political mainstream. To the student radicals of the 'New Left', as well as to the angry advocates of 'Black Power', King remained a staid, unexciting figure, the ineffectual exponent of an outdated brand of liberalism.¹

It seems scarcely credible, then, that King was, as the Federal Bureau of Investigation maintained, a self-confessed Marxist. Did the FBI's ubiquitous wiretaps really record the civil rights leader saying, 'I am a Marxist', and that he

would profess this publicly but for the knowledge that it would destroy his position? In view of the notorious conservatism of the FBI, which branded the mildest of social critics 'subversive', this allegation might be dismissed as a paranoid fantasy, or perhaps a product of the racism that permeated the Bureau under its chief, J. Edgar Hoover. Hoover's own loathing for King, and his malevolent campaign to destroy him, have been thoroughly documented in Congressional investigations and a recent book by David J. Garrow.²

Yet the FBI's perception of King as a radical threat to American institutions was not as far-fetched as it may seem, for King did, in fact, express admiration for Marx and argue that the United States should move towards Socialism. King's placid exterior, his rotund manner, and his sober clerical mien tended to disguise his deep political radicalism. In addition, he expressed his political beliefs far more frankly and explicitly in private than he did in public. Only recently, when Mrs Corette King allowed researchers access to the records of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (the organization that her husband headed) has the real scope of King's radicalism become apparent. By 1966 he had become a passionate enemy of Western capitalism and an advocate, in his own words, of 'democratic socialism'.³

King's intellectual attraction to socialism pre-dated his career as a civil rights leader. In 1949, as a student at Crozer Theological Seminary, he read *Capital*, *The Communist Manifesto*, and some interpretive works on the thinking of Marx and Lenin. Although he rejected the materialist conception of reality, King was clearly enamoured by much of what he read. The *Communist Manifesto*, he later wrote, 'was written by men aflame with a passion for social justice.' Marx had raised 'basic questions', and 'in so far as he pointed to weaknesses of traditional capitalism, contributed to the growth of a definite self-consciousness in the masses, and challenged the social conscience of the Christian churches, I responded with a definite "yes".' Later, as a doctoral student at Boston University, King read and admired the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr, who combined Christian ethics with a Marxian analysis of history and society, and whose seminal work, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, had a profound and continuing impact on him. King's radical views while a student did not please his conservative father: as 'Daddy' King later wrote, 'Politically, he . . . seemed to be drifting away from the bases of capitalism and Western democracy that I felt very strongly about. There were some sharp exchanges; I may even have raised my voice a few times.'⁴

In December 1955 King was thrust into a position of leadership that he had neither sought nor wanted. Elected to serve as president of the Montgomery Improvement Association, a group formed to boycott the segregated buses in Montgomery, Alabama, King soon became the internationally-recognized symbol of the emerging civil rights movement. When black clergymen from across the South met to found a new civil rights organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), they automatically chose King to act as president. Interestingly, they decided to include the word 'Christian' in their name partly to avoid being labelled as a 'Red' organization.

Nevertheless, the three New Yorkers – two blacks and one white – who organized SCLC on King's behalf were all firmly on the Left. Bayard Rustin, Ella Baker and Stanley Levison were much older than King; their political involvement went back to the 1930s. Rustin had joined the Communist Youth League before the war but, like so many others, broke with the party over its subservience to

Moscow. He subsequently worked for various pacifist organizations, and helped set up the first London-to-Aldermaston march against nuclear weapons. He also tried, without much success, to popularize Gandhian civil disobedience as a means of fighting racial discrimination. He remained a Socialist, however, and had the long-term goal of moving blacks into a radicalized labour movement. Ella Baker lacked Rustin's interest in pacifism, but otherwise moved in the same political milieu. 'I had been friendly with people who were in the Communist Party and all the rest of the left forces', she would recall. Levison's political allegiance was more ambiguous. Ostensibly a liberal Democrat, he had been active in such groups as the businessman's committee for the re-election of Roosevelt (1944) and the American Jewish Congress. But he was also close to leading members of the beleaguered Communist Party and may have, in the early 1950s, offered them financial advice and assistance. Baker simply remembered that he, too, 'had come out of the New York left'. All three recognized that mass civil disobedience, especially in the context of the American South, was a tactic that had far-reaching potential. Excited by the Montgomery bus boycott – an entirely spontaneous protest – they offered the inexperienced King help and advice, and constructed SCLC as a vehicle for mass action throughout the South. Interestingly, Baker soon fell out with King because, in part, she deemed him insufficiently radical. Rustin and Levison, on the other hand, worked with him until his death in 1968, acting as unofficial advisers and behind-the-scenes organizers.⁵

Because of his association with these two, the FBI depicted King, from 1963 until his death, as either a conscious 'fellow traveller', or, at best, a naive dupe. Levison, the Bureau asserted, was a particularly subversive influence: a man who manipulated King in the interests of the Communist Party. Years after King's death, Levison, who was white, attributed this canard to the FBI's 'racist contempt for the intellect of the black man. No one with a modicum of sense . . . could have concluded that a man with the force of intellect and fierce independence that Martin King had could have been dominated by anybody. . . . And if there had been any domination in the relationship, the greater probability was that he would influence or perhaps dominate me.' Levison raised funds for SCLC, helped King with his speeches and writings, and proffered common-sense advice that remained, in David Garrow's words, 'wholly innocuous'. Rustin assisted King in similar ways and, far from being a dangerous radical, drifted steadily to the right, eventually attaching himself to the Johnson-Humphrey wing of the Democratic party.⁶

With his religious cast of mind, King tended to reject political ideology. Interested first and foremost in combating racism, he accepted assistance from whatever quarter it came. As for his staff, all he asked was that they accept nonviolence – as a tactic if not a philosophy – and be fully committed to the civil rights movement. On rare occasions, however, he succumbed to political pressure, and he distanced himself from both Rustin and Levison for a time because of their allegedly 'tainted' political pasts. In the case of Levison the pressure came from the White House itself. Later, King reproached himself for moral cowardice, and reestablished a close relationship with both of them. 'There's nothing to hide,' he told Levison. 'And if anybody wants to make anything of it, let them try.' By 1965, King had concluded that 'anti-communism' provided a handy cloak for opposition to social progress. By making continual allegations about 'communist infiltration' of the civil rights movement, he charged, J. Edgar Hoover aided and abetted the 'Southern racists and the extreme right-wing element.' Radicalism

among blacks grew out of 'impatience with the slow pace of establishing justice.' America's fear of communism, he concluded, was 'morbid', 'irrational' and 'obsessive'.⁷

Until 1965, King's radicalism was more intellectual than emotional. He had approached the struggle for racial justice in a non-ideological way, hoping to overcome bigotry and prejudice through an appeal to idealism and Christian principles. Perhaps because his parents had shielded him from the worst effects of racial oppression, he viewed racism as a Southern anachronism which would, in the course of a decade or two, wither away and die. After that, he believed, blacks would have to 'work desperately to improve their own conditions and their own standards. . . . The Negro will have to engage in a sort of Operation Boot-strap.' By 1966, however, he categorically rejected the idea of piecemeal reform within the existing socio-economic structure: a massive redistribution of wealth, not self-help, was the most urgent necessity.⁸

Two factors hastened this process of radicalization: King's belated realization that racism was endemic in American society; and his horror of America's military role in Vietnam. When he took SCLC North, to Chicago, he had to abandon his assumption that racism outside the South was a secondary, residual phenomenon. When blacks demanded an end to discrimination in housing, education and jobs, white support for the civil rights movement melted away. Routine police brutality pushed black frustration to the boiling-point, yet government, both federal and local, responded to the eruption of rioting with repression rather than root and branch reform. By the end of 1966 King's optimism had been shattered. Only 'a minority of whites,' he wrote, 'genuinely want authentic equality'. To black audiences, and to his staff, he put it more bluntly: 'the vast majority of white Americans are racists'.⁹

More and more, King saw racism as an instrument of class privilege, a means of dividing the working-class by giving whites marginal economic advantages and encouraging their psychological pretensions to superiority. Both black and white labour was thus more easily exploited and cheapened. With his top aide James Bevel, King viewed the black ghettos as 'internal colonies', a segregated market where goods and services were deliberately restricted in order to boost the profits of the capitalists who provided them. At an SCLC retreat in November 1966, he warned that demanding an end to the ghetto meant 'getting on dangerous ground because you are messing with folk then. You are messing with Wall Street. You are messing with the captains of industry'. He told his staff not to be afraid of the word 'socialism', for 'something is wrong with capitalism' and 'the Movement must address itself to the restructuring of the whole of American society'. Sweden, he pointed out, had 'grappled with the problem of more equitable distribution of wealth'; it had free health care, and no slums, poverty or unemployment. Institutional racism could only be eliminated through a radical redistribution of economic power; 'privileged groups will have to give up some of their billions'. America, too, he argued, 'must move toward a Democratic Socialism'.¹⁰

The war in Vietnam reinforced King's disenchantment with American capitalism. His opposition to the war has often been interpreted as a purely moral concern, an expression of his dogmatic commitment to non-violence. Not so: he did not take a politically agnostic position, but roundly condemned the United States as the aggressor. Time and again he insisted that Ho Chi Minh was leading a popular nationalist revolt against a corrupt dictatorship, and that the United

States had taken the wrong side. Again, King expressed his views more plainly and frankly when talking to black audiences, to friends, and to his own staff. During an SCLC retreat in May 1967, he left his staff in no doubt about his admiration for Ho Chi Minh – nor his utter contempt for the rulers of South Vietnam. He scornfully dismissed the notion that the South was being ‘invaded’ by the North: ‘the Vietcong came into being in the South as a movement to resist the oppression of Diem’. Besides, he argued, the division of Vietnam had been imposed from without: ‘how can somebody invade himself?’ When America supported the South, it was ‘as if the French and the British had come over here during the Civil War to fight with the Confederacy’. Speaking to an SCLC-sponsored conference of black ministers in early 1968, he cited the recent Tet offensive as conclusive proof that ‘the vast majority of the people in Vietnam are sympathetic with the Viet Cong. That is a fact’.¹¹

King did not see America’s involvement in Vietnam as an isolated aberration, but as part of a wider ‘pattern of suppression’ that embraced Africa and Latin America in addition to Southeast Asia. America bolstered the racist regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia; American arms and personnel helped to fight rebels and guerrillas in Venezuela, Guatemala, Columbia, and Peru. Why, he asked, had ‘the Western nations that initiated so much of the revolutionary spirit of the modern world’ become ‘the arch anti-revolutionaries’ of the twentieth century? Ultimately, he believed, the answer lay in the very nature of Western capitalism: ‘individual capitalists of the West’ invested ‘huge sums of money in Asia, Africa and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries’; multinational cartels stripped underdeveloped nations of their resources ‘while turning over a small rebate to a few members of a corrupt aristocracy’. The historic freedom accorded to capital in the United States had made government the servant of private profit:

A nation that will keep people in slavery for 244 years will ‘thingify’ them, make them things. Therefore they will exploit them, and poor people generally, economically. And a nation that will exploit economically will have to have foreign investments . . . and will have to use its military might to protect them.

This ‘need to maintain social stability for our investments’ explained the alliance with the landed gentry in Latin America; the support for colonial and white settler regimes in Africa; and the sponsorship of puppet dictators in Southeast Asia. The United States had become the world’s foremost neo-colonial power.¹²

During the last two years of his life, King became convinced that capitalism was the common denominator that linked racism, economic exploitation and militarism. These ‘triple evils’ of the modern era were ‘incapable of being conquered’ when ‘profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people’. If hostility to capitalism coloured his writings and speeches so strongly, could he, then, be described as a ‘Marxist’? In private, King readily acknowledged his intellectual debt to Marx and commended his critique of capitalism. Yet he always coupled such praise with qualifications. King, echoing the conventional definitions of the day, associated Marxism with the rejection of spiritual values, a shallow economic determinism, and the absolute supremacy of

the state. All this he emphatically rejected. He summed up his feelings about Marx, both positive and negative, in a talk to the SCLC staff in 1966:

I always look at Marx with a yes and a no. And there were some things that Karl Marx did that were very good. Some very good things. If you read him, you can see that this man had a great passion for social justice. . . . [But] Karl Marx got messed up, first because he didn't stick with that Jesus that he had read about; but secondly because he didn't even stick with Hegel.

As always, King then went on to talk about Jesus as his primary inspiration:

Now this is where I leave Brother Marx and move on toward the Kingdom [of Brotherhood]. . . . I am simply saying that God never intended for some of his children to live in inordinate superfluous wealth while others live in abject, deadening poverty.

That King should have stated 'I am a Marxist', without these qualifications and in such bald terms, is, in the opinion of this writer, unlikely in the extreme. His hostility to excessive materialism, and his concern for the poor and the oppressed, owed more to the Social Gospel than to Marxist ideology.¹³

Regardless of the influences that helped shape his political analysis, King made no bones about his radical opposition to American capitalism. 'For years,' he told one reporter, 'I labored with the idea of reforming the existing institutions of the society, a little change here, a little change there. Now I feel quite differently. I think you've got to have a reconstruction of the entire society.' He did not openly advocate 'socialism', but talked instead of a 'synthesis' between capitalism and communism; a 'socially conscious democracy which reconciles the truths of individualism and collectivism'. As he admitted in private, however, such definitions were really euphemisms for democratic socialism. In public, the best he could hope for was to encourage questioning and doubt. 'Why are there 40 million poor people in America?' he asked at the SCLC convention in August 1967:

When you begin to ask that question, you are raising questions about the economic system, about a broader distribution of wealth. When you ask that question, you begin to question the capitalistic economy. And I'm simply saying that more and more, we've got to begin to ask questions about the whole society. We are called upon to help the discouraged beggars in life's market place. But one day we must come to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. . . . You see, my friends, when you deal with this, you begin to ask the question, 'Who owns the oil?' You begin to ask the question, 'Who owns the iron ore?'¹⁴

King clearly found the gap between his own deepening radicalism and the political unsophistication of his followers frustrating. He hoped that black clergymen could, through education and training, be oriented toward his own radical values, enabling them to occupy the vanguard in a struggle for economic justice just as they had been in the forefront of the civil rights movement in the South. 'We must develop their psyche', he told a planning meeting of SCLC's Ministers Leadership Training Program. 'Something is wrong with capitalism as it now stands in the

United States. We are not interested in being integrated into *this* value structure . . . a radical redistribution of power must take place.' As Louis Lomax wrote, this vision of the clergy was, perhaps, 'the most ethereal dream he ever entertained'.¹⁵

By the end of 1967, King believed that he had found a more viable alternative: an interracial alliance of the poor. His last major project, the 'Poor People's Campaign', was an attempt to translate this concept into political reality. America, he argued, already had 'socialism for the rich'; if the government could hand out massive subsidies to affluent farmers, giant corporations and wealthy individuals, then it could guarantee jobs and a decent income for all. He did not define his goal as 'socialism'; instead, he called it 'poor people's power'. King proposed to lead thousands of the poor to Washington where, if necessary, they would engage in mass civil disobedience in order to stimulate government action. 'We will be confronting the very government, and the very federal machinery that has often come [to] our aid', he warned his staff. Many old allies and supporters were aghast at the plan. His old friend Bayard Rustin publicly opposed it. Even colleagues in SCLC had grave doubts. King nevertheless showed every intention of going ahead. In the midst of the preparations for the campaign he went to Memphis to support striking sanitation workers in their fight for union recognition. 'In a sense', he told a reporter shortly before his assassination there, 'you could say we are engaged in the class struggle, yes'.¹⁶

1 August Meier, 'On The Role of Martin Luther King', in Melvin Drimmer (ed.) *Black History: A Reappraisal*, Garden City, NY, 1968, p. 444; L. D. Reddick, *Crusader Without Violence*, NY 1959, p. 233. On King's admiration for Washington, and his praise of thrift and self-help, see Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom*, London, 1959, p. 213; Robert Penn Warren, *Who Speaks for the Negro?* NY, 1966, pp. 209–10; 'An Interview With Martin Luther King', *Playboy*, January 1965, p. 76. Reddick also wrote, however, that Marx did have an appeal for King – 'his dialectic, his critique of monopoly capitalism, and his regard for social and economic justice' (Reddick, p. 22).

2 'Testimony of Charles D. Brennan', in U.S. Congress, House, Select Commission on Assassinations, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Hearings*, 95th Cong., 2d sess., vol. VI, p. 346; David J. Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.*, New York, 1981. For briefer summaries of the FBI's anti-King campaign, see Mark Lane and Dick Gregory, *Code Name 'Zorro': The Murder of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1977, pp. 60–111; U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Final Report: Book III*, 94th Cong., 2d sess., 1976; *Report of the House Select Committee on Assassinations: Findings and Recommendations*, 95th Cong., 2d sess., March 29, 1979, pp. 432–39.

3 The SCLC records, which extend to more than 140 linear feet, were opened to researchers in the summer of 1981, in Atlanta, Georgia.

4 King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, pp. 86–93; 'How Should a Christian View Communism?' in King, *Strength To Love*, New York, 1963, pp. 114–23; Martin Luther King, Sr., with Clayton Riley, *Daddy King: An Autobiography*, New York, 1980, pp. 141–42; Garrow, p. 213. King's widow recalled Martin saying, when still a student, that while 'I could never be a Communist', he could not be a 'thoroughgoing capitalist' either; 'I think a society based on making all the money you can and ignoring other people's needs is wrong': see Coretta Scott King, *My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.*, New York 1969, p. 71. In a 1959 speech, King cited Marx (along with Jesus, Einstein and Freud) as outstanding examples of men who creatively used their intellectual and moral freedom; see 'Address at Meeting of Mississippi Christian Leadership Conference', 23 September 1959, hand-written manuscript, King Papers, Boston University, file drawer XI, folder-8 (collection hereafter cited as BU). In writing *Stride Toward Freedom*, King resisted suggestions from his editors at Harper and

Row that he tone down his criticisms of American capitalism; see Stephen B. Oates, *Let The Trumpet Sound: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, London, 1982, p. 131.

5 Ella J. Baker (John H. Britton interview, 19 June, 1968). Civil Rights Documentation Project, Moorland-Springarn Research Center, Howard University, pp. 10–23 (collection hereafter cited as HU); Stanley D. Levison (James Mosby interview, 14 February 1970), HU, pp. 16–17; Don Oberdorfer, 'King adviser says FBI "used" him', *Washington Post*, 15 December 1975; Milton Viorst, *Fire In The Streets: America in the 1960s*, New York, 1979, pp. 119–23, 200–11; Thomas R. Brooks 'A Strategist Without a Movement', in August Meier and Elliott Rudwick (eds.), *Black Protest In the Sixties*, Chicago 1970, pp. 339–41.

6 Victor Navasky, *Kennedy Justice*, New York, 1971, pp. 141–49; Garrow, pp. 44–77 and *passim*; Roger Wilkins, '“King” Disappoints NBC and Some Civil Rights Leaders'. *New York Times*, 19 February 1978, III, p. 19. FBI memos concerning Levison's alleged influence over King were legion; for a sample of the more important ones (although Levison's name is deleted), see House Select Committee on Assassinations, *King: Hearings*, vol. VI, pp. 131, 143–44, 187, 263–64. Only days before King's death, the FBI prepared a request to reinstall wiretaps in the SCLC offices, citing Levison as the reason. Levison had been the pretext for installing taps on King's own phone, as well as SCLC's offices in Atlanta and New York, in 1963. Unlike Rustin, Levison encouraged King to speak out against the Vietnam war; the evidence that he worked for the Communist Party, however, or succeeded in establishing an irresistible influence over King, is completely absent. Yet in 1978 one of Hoover's top assistants still insisted that King, by virtue of his friendship with Levison, was a Communist; see 'Testimony of Cartha D. De Loach', Assassinations Committee, *King Hearings*, VII, p. 49.

7 Navasky, pp. 141–46; M. S. Handler, 'Negro Rally Aide Rebuts Senator', *New York Times*, 16 August 1963, p. 10; 'Dr. King Hits Communist Charges in Stanford Speech', SCLC press release, 23 April 1964, SCLC collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Centre for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta (collection hereafter cited as SCLC); King, handwritten notes, n.d. [late March/early April 1965] King papers, King Center; 'Joint statement of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. . . . and John Lewis', 30 April 1965, SCLC, box 27, folder 55; James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, New York, 1972, pp. 367–69; King, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* New York, 1968, p. 211 (hereafter cited as *Where?*); 'Honoring Dr. Du Bois', *Freedomways*, second quarter 1968, p. 109.

8 King, 'No More Room in the Negro's Soul', *Honolulu Advertiser*, 20 February 1964; Warren, pp. 209–10. Stanley Levison, on the other hand, believed that King's affluent background accentuated his concern for the poor and underprivileged: 'Martin was always aware that he was privileged . . . and this troubled him. He felt that he didn't deserve this. One reason he was so determined to be of service was to justify the privileged position he'd been born into'; see Jean Stein and George Plimpton, *American Journey: The Times of Robert Kennedy*, New York, 1970, pp. 108–9.

9 King, *Where?*, p. 13; 'Dr. King's speech, Frogmore, November 14, 1966', SCLC, 28, 26, pp. 5–6; speech to voter registration rally, Louisville, Kentucky, 2 August 1967, pp. 1–3; 'America's Chief Moral Dilemma', speech to Hungry Club, Atlanta, 5 October 1967, pp. 4–5, King Papers.

10 'Dr. King's speech, Frogmore', pp. 14–20; King interview by John Herbers, *New York Times*, 2 April 1967, pp. 1, 76. King first referred to 'internal colonialism' in 'The Chicago Plan', 7 January 1966, SCLC press release. Earlier hints of a class analysis of racism could be seen in King, *Why We Can't Wait*, New York, 1964, p. 138; and in the famous speech King delivered after the Selma-to-Montgomery march in 1965; see 'Selma to Montgomery speech', 25 March 1965, TLS, SCLC, 27, 54.

11 King, 'Beyond Vietnam', speech to Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam, Riverside Church, New York City, 4 April 1967, SCLC recording, Atlanta (reprinted in *Freedomways*, Spring 1967); 'Conscience and the Vietnam War', *The Trumpet of Conscience*, New York, 1968, pp. 21–34; 'Speech at staff retreat, Frogmore, SC', May 1967, pp. 10–20; 'America's Chief Moral Dilemma', 5 October 1967, pp. 8–12, King Papers; 'Speech to Ministers Leadership Training Program', 18 February 1968, TLS, p. 17, SCLC, 28, 51. See also King's comments about the lack of popular support for the government of South Vietnam, and his scathing remarks about the performance of the South Vietnamese army, in 'The Domestic Impact of the War in Vietnam', speech to National Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace, Chicago, 11 November 1967, SCLC recording. Many of King's speeches on Vietnam were drafted by Stanley Levison.

12 King, *Where?*, pp. 202–19; ‘Beyond Vietnam’, *Current*, May 1967, p. 38; ‘President’s Address to the Tenth Anniversary Convention of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’, 16 August 1967, reprinted in Wayne L. Brockriede and Robert L. Scott (eds.), *The Rhetoric of Black Power*, New York, 1971, p. 163; ‘The Casualties of the War in Vietnam’, speech at the *Nation* Institute, Los Angeles, 25 February 1967, King Papers, pp. 5–7; ‘Dr. King Advocates Vietnam’, *New York Times*, 26 February 1967, pp. 1, 10. In ‘Honoring Dr. Du Bois’, delivered at Carnegie Hall, New York, on 23 February 1968, King spoke of ‘our brother of the Third World’ being ‘the victim of imperialist exploitation’; see *Freedomways*, second quarter, 1968, pp. 110–11.

13 King, *Where?*, p. 216; ‘Dr. King’s speech: Frogmore, November 14, 1966’, pp. 20–21, 29; ‘What Is Man?’ in *Strength To Love*, p. 109. The fullest discussion of King’s thought from a theological point of view is Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp, *Search for the Beloved Community: The Thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Valley Forge, Pa., 1974. David Garrow, on the other hand, believes that King, in certain narrow contexts, might have stated ‘I am a Marxist’ in private conversation (Garrow, p. 213; and correspondence with this writer, 2 February 1982).

14 David Halberstam, ‘The Second Coming of Martin Luther King’, *Harper’s*, August 1967, pp. 47–48; King, *Where?* p. 217; ‘President’s Address’, 16 August 1967, in Brockriede and Scott, pp. 161–62. The ‘synthesis’ idea appeared in his earliest published writings, but it was only in 1965 and after that he began equating this nebulous concept with democratic socialism of the Swedish model.

15 Minutes of national advisory committee, SCLC training program, 24 November 1967, p. 6, SCLC, 48, 11; Louis Lomax, ‘When “Nonviolence” Meets “Black Power”’, in C. Eric Lincoln (ed.), *Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Profile*, New York, 1970, p. 172; ‘King Aide Seeks to Organize Negro Ministers in 15 Cities’, *Atlanta Constitution*, 23 January 1968, p. 6. The programme was financed by the Ford Foundation. The FBI ‘briefed’ the Vice President of the Ford Motor Company ‘as to the subversive backgrounds of King’s principal advisers’ in an unsuccessful attempt to stop the grant; see G. C. Moore to W. C. Sullivan, 29 November 1967, in Assassinations Committee, *King Hearings*, VI, pp. 277–78.

16 King, ‘Speech to Mississippi Leaders on the Washington Campaign’, 15 February 1968, p. 6; King Papers; ‘A Proper Sense of Priorities’, speech to Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam, 6 February 1968, SCLC recording; ‘Nonviolence and Social Change’, *The Trumpet of Conscience*, pp. 53–64; ‘Showdown for Nonviolence’, *Look*, 16 April 1968, pp. 23–35; ‘Why We Must Go To Washington’, talk to SCLC staff meeting, Atlanta, 15 January 1968, pp. 11–17, King papers. For opposition to the Poor People’s Campaign from two of King’s close friends and advisers, see Marian Logan to King, 8 March 1968, TLS memo, SCLC, 40, 3; and Bayard Rustin, ‘Memo on the Spring Protest in Washington, D.C.’, January 1968, in Bayard Rustin, *Down The Line: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin*, (Chicago 1971), pp. 202–5. For opposition from some of King’s top aides, notably James Bevel and Jesse Jackson, see minutes of executive staff meeting, 27 December 1967, pp. 8–9, SCLC, 49, 13.