

MARTIN LUTHER KING, **EXTRACT** FROM NOBEL PRIZE LECTURE

The Nobel Peace Prize 1964

Dr. King delivered this lecture in the Auditorium of the University of Oslo

..... 5.10 '

This evening, I would like to use this lofty and historic platform to discuss what appears to me to be **the most pressing problem confronting mankind today**. Modern man has brought this whole world to an awe-inspiring threshold of the future. He has reached new and astonishing peaks of scientific success. He has produced machines that think and instruments that peer into the unfathomable ranges of interstellar space. He has built gigantic bridges to span the seas and gargantuan buildings to kiss the skies. His airplanes and spaceships have dwarfed distance, placed time in chains, and carved highways through the stratosphere. This is a dazzling picture of modern man's scientific and technological progress.

Yet, in spite of these spectacular strides in science and technology, and still unlimited ones to come, something basic is missing. There is a sort of poverty of the spirit which stands in glaring contrast to our scientific and technological abundance. The richer we have become materially, the poorer we have become morally and spiritually. We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish, but we have not learned the simple art of living together as brothers.

*Every man lives in two realms, the internal and the external. The internal is that realm of spiritual ends expressed in art, literature, morals, and religion. The external is that complex of devices, techniques, mechanisms, and instrumentalities by means of which we live. Our problem today is that we have allowed the internal to become lost in the external. We have allowed the means by which we live to outdistance the ends for which we live. So much of modern life can be summarized in that arresting (εντυπωσιακό, αξιοπρόσεκτο) dictum (ρητό) of the poet Thoreau¹: "Improved means to an unimproved end". This is the serious predicament (δύσκολη θέση, αδιέξοδο), the deep and haunting (που σε στοιχειώνει, που δεν ξεχνιέται) problem confronting modern man. If we are to survive today, **our moral and spiritual "lag" must be eliminated. Enlarged material powers spell enlarged peril if there is not proportionate growth of the soul.** When the "without" of man's nature subjugates (υποτάσσω) the "within", dark storm clouds begin to form in the world.*

This problem of spiritual and moral lag (υστέρηση, καθυστέρηση), which constitutes modern man's chief dilemma, expresses itself in **three larger problems** which grow out of man's ethical infantilism (παιδισμός, immature, stunted mental growth). Each of these problems, while appearing to be separate and isolated, is inextricably (αναπόσπαστα) bound (δεμένα) to the other. I refer to **racial injustice**, **poverty**, and **war**.

The first problem that I would like to mention is **racial injustice**. The struggle to eliminate the evil of racial injustice constitutes one of the major struggles of our time. **The present upsurge (έκρηξη, κύμα) of the Negro people of the United States grows out of a deep and passionate determination to make freedom and equality a reality "here" and "now"**. In one sense the civil rights movement in the United States is a special American phenomenon which must be understood in the light of American history and dealt with in terms of the American situation. But on another and more important level, what is happening in the United States today is a relatively small part of a world development.

(EXTRACT)

What the main sections of the civil rights movement in the United States are saying is that the demand for dignity, equality, jobs, and citizenship will not be abandoned or diluted (μετριάζω) or postponed. If that means resistance and conflict we shall not flinch (διστάζω, ζαρώνομαι). We shall not be cowed (εκφοβίζω). We are no longer afraid.

The word that symbolizes the spirit and the outward form of our encounter is **nonviolence**, and **it is doubtless that factor which made it seem appropriate to award a peace prize to one identified (ταυτίζομαι) with struggle (αγώνας, πάλη)**. Broadly speaking, nonviolence in the civil rights struggle has meant not relying on arms (όπλα) and weapons of struggle. It has meant noncooperation (μη συνεργασία) with customs and laws which are institutional (θεσμικός) aspects of a regime (καθεστώς) of discrimination (διακρίσεις) and enslavement (υποδούλωση). It has meant direct participation of masses (μάζες) in protest (διαδήλωση, διαμαρτυρία), rather than reliance on indirect methods which frequently do not involve masses in action at all.

Nonviolence has also meant that my people in the agonizing struggles of recent years have taken suffering upon themselves instead of inflicting (προκαλώ) it on others. It has meant, as I said, that we are no longer afraid and cowed. But in some substantial degree it has meant that we do not want to

instill (ενσταλάζω) fear in others or into the society of which we are a part. The movement does not seek to liberate (απελευθερώνω) Negroes at the expense (εις βάρος) of the humiliation (ταπείνωση) and enslavement (υποδούλωση) of whites. It seeks no victory (νίκη) over anyone. **It seeks to liberate American society and to share in the self-liberation of all the people.**

Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical (μη πρακτικός, μη εφαρμόσιμος) and immoral (ανήθικος). I am not unmindful of the fact that violence often brings about momentary results. (3) Nations have frequently won their independence in battle. But in spite of temporary victories, violence never brings permanent peace. It solves no social problem: it merely (6) creates new and more complicated ones. Violence is **impractical** because it is a descending (κατεβαίνω) spiral (5) ending in destruction for all. It is **immoral** because it seeks to humiliate the opponent (αντίπαλο) rather than win his understanding: it seeks to annihilate rather than convert (μεταπείθω). Violence is immoral because it thrives (ευδοκίμω) on hatred (μίσος) rather than love. (4) **It destroys community and makes brotherhood (αδελφικότητα, συντροφικότητα) impossible.** It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends up defeating itself. **It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality (κτηνωδία, βανασότητα) in the destroyers.**

In a real sense **nonviolence** seeks (1) to redeem (λυτρώνω, επαναφέρω στο σωστό δρόμο) the spiritual and moral lag that I spoke of earlier as the chief dilemma of modern man. It seeks to secure (εξασφαλίζω) moral ends (σκοποί) through moral means (μέσα). Nonviolence is a powerful and just (δίκαιο) weapon. Indeed, it is a weapon unique in history, which cuts without wounding and ennobles (εξευγενίζω) the man who wields (έχω, κρατώ στα χέρια) it.

I believe in this method because I think it is the only way to reestablish (αποκαθιστώ) a broken community. It is the method which seeks to (επιδιώκω) implement (εφαρμόζω) the just (δίκαιος) law by appealing (κάνω έκκληση) to the conscience (συνείδηση) of the great decent (τίμιος, αξιοπρεπής, σωστός) majority who through blindness, fear, pride, and irrationality (παραλογισμός) have allowed their consciences to sleep.

The nonviolent resisters can summarize their message in the following simple terms: we will take direct action against injustice despite the failure of governmental and other official agencies to act first. We will not obey unjust laws or submit (υποτάσσομαι) to unjust practices (άδικες πρακτικές). We will do this peacefully, openly, cheerfully because our aim is to persuade. We adopt (υιοθετώ) the means of nonviolence because our end (σκοπός) is a community at peace with itself. We will try to persuade with our words, but if our words fail, we will try to persuade with our acts. We will

always be willing to talk and seek fair compromise (συμβιβασμός), but we are ready to suffer when necessary and even risk our lives to become witnesses to truth as we see it.

This approach to the problem of racial injustice is not at all without successful precedent (προηγούμενο). It was used in a magnificent way by **Mohandas K. Gandhi** to challenge (προκαλώ) the might (ισχύς) of the British Empire and free his people from the political domination and economic exploitation inflicted upon them for centuries. He struggled only with the weapons of truth, soul force, non-injury, and courage.

In the past ten years unarmed gallant (ανδρείος, γενναίος) men and women of the United States have given living testimony (μαρτυρία) to the moral power and efficacy (αποτελεσματικότητα) of nonviolence. By the thousands, faceless, anonymous, relentless (αδιάκοπος, ασταμάτητος) young people, black and white, have temporarily left the ivory towers of learning to storm (επιτίθεμαι) the barricades (οδοφράγματα) of bias (προκατάληψη). Their courageous (θαρραλέος) and disciplined (πειθαρχημένος) activities have come as a refreshing oasis in a desert sweltering (καίγομαι) with the heat of injustice. (2) They have taken our whole nation back to those great wells (πηγάδια) of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers (ιδρυτές) in the formulation (διαμόρφωση) of the Constitution (σύνταγμα) and the Declaration of Independence (Διακήρυξη της Ανεξαρτησίας). One day all of America will be proud of their achievements.

I am only too well aware of the human weaknesses and failures which exist, the doubts about the efficacy of nonviolence, and the open advocacy (υποστήριξη) of violence by some. But I am still convinced that nonviolence is both the most practically sound (σωστός, λογικός) and morally excellent way to grapple (παλεύω) with the age-old problem of racial injustice.