

ASPECTS OF COMPLICITY OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY IN THE WAR

Recognition of the fact that the warfare in Southeast Asia violates our laws and traditions, and has implicated this nation in crimes against humanity, is forcing a re-evaluation of the role of American universities in our society. We have held that scholars should be devoted to the pursuit and transmission of valid human knowledge, and that whatever our individual commitments, our academic institutions must not support more limited goals. Yet careful examination reveals that universities now often further narrow military and industrial policies and provide substantial aid to organizations whose goals are at variance with these traditional academic objectives.

Our entanglement in these questionable activities is the result of long-term trends. For most of our older members, the fascist threat to much that we held dear was so clear that we made our intellectual and institutional resources available to national governments fighting in the common cause. After World War II, scientists and engineers who had made that choice began to look to the federal government for research support on a scale to which academic institutions could not aspire. Under the pressures of the cold war this support took on a military aspect, leading in many institutions, and particularly at Stanford, to direct university commitment to classified military research. Fields of research which strengthened the evolving military technology, and which fed trained personnel into the expanding war industries and government bureaus, burgeoned here and elsewhere. The hypertrophy of such fields was guided primarily by the availability of funds, not by university policy. This pattern expanded into non-technological fields deemed useful to the government: the start of full-scale warfare in Vietnam found even traditional humanistic disciplines such as history drawing support for their graduate students from sources justified by military need (National Defense Education Act).

The gradual development of the military agencies of the federal government as a primary source of university funding rarely was opposed. The military tended to be not only more liberal with funds but also less concerned with picayune administrative detail than civilian agencies; overt political interference rarely surfaced as an issue. Consequently, when the government started a full-scale war without even asking Congress for the constitutionally required declaration, it was doubly difficult to recognize that the universities would not have to pay the price for the easy money they had been uncritically accepting for many years. Many professors still sincerely believed that the universities were neutral territories for literary and humanistic studies, pure research, and professional training, free to follow the truth wherever it might lead, and uninvolved in the partisan conflicts of the day.

The process of uncovering and accepting the fact of university complicity in the war was a painful one. Both the administration and established faculty were reluctant to face the situation. The burden of forcing recognition of complicity into the consciousness of the community therefore fell on the shoulders of activist students and junior faculty. The methods employed were untraditional, but we should ask whether any other approach available at that moment would have shaken us from our lethargy. By now we have heard from counsel who participated in the trials at Nuremberg and Tokyo that our own leaders, past and present, could be convicted and executed if brought to trial on the basis of extant law and precedent. Even with this fact staring us in the face, some of our community are reluctant to press for disengagement of this university from the war.

The steps the university has taken to date toward disengagement have hardly been spontaneous. A small sit-in and the revelation that the university was harboring (in fact concealing) a Central Intelligence Agency project started the