

# RADICAL AMERICA

vol. 8, no.3

\$1



ORGANIZING AGAINST THE WAR:  
G.I.'S AND CIVILIANS

# RADICAL AMERICA

May-June, 1974

Volume 8, Number 3

INTRODUCTION	1
THE OLIVE-DRAB REBELS: MILITARY ORGANIZING DURING THE VIETNAM ERA, Matthew Rinaldi	17
THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT AND THE WAR, James O'Brien	53
MYTHS AND TRUTHS: A Review of Frances Fitzgerald's <i>Fire in the Lake</i> , Nguyen Khac Vien	87
RADICAL AMERICA CATALOGUE	109

*Cover:* Members and supporters of Vietnam Veterans Against  
the War

*Back Cover:* Detroit, 1971. Photograph by Jerry Berndt

Editors: Frank Brodhead, Margery Davies, Linda Gordon, Jim  
Green, Michael Hirsch, Allen Hunter, Jim Kaplan, Donna  
Karl, Jim O'Brien, Wesley Profit, Paddy Quick, Becky  
Tippens

Associate Editors: Paul Buhle, Ellen DuBois, Martin Glaber-  
man, Ann Gordon, Dick Howard, Roger Keeran, Mark  
Levitan, Mario Montano, Mark Naison, Brian Peterson,  
Michael Schulman, Stan Weir

RADICAL AMERICA: Published bi-monthly at 5 Upland Road, Cam-  
bridge, Massachusetts 02140. Subscription rates: \$5 per year, \$9 for two  
years, \$12 for three years; with pamphlets \$10 per year. Free to prison-  
ers. Bulk rates: 40% reduction from cover price for 5 or more copies.  
Bookstores may order on a consignment basis.

Second Class Postage paid at Boston, Massachusetts and additional mailing offices.



# Introduction

This issue of Radical America and the previous one address themselves to major aspects of the Vietnam War. The articles are studies of the Vietnamese and domestic movements of opposition to American imperialism. In this introduction we will try to explain why those movements were and are of such tremendous importance, and at the same time we will suggest why American socialists and revolutionaries no longer give them such singular attention. We say this even though the war is not over and may well continue as sharply as ever. But the close of one phase of the war, marked by the peace agreement of 1973, allows us to look at one coherent part of it: the Second Indochina War. During the course of this war there were major changes in the political economy and world position of the United States; these changes have reopened the prospects for a

socialist movement in the US. Thus the first part of this introduction speaks about the changes in the political and economic situations generating a new socialist movement, and the second part addresses the question of what heritage the anti-war movement has left for today's socialists.

A year after the peace agreement, the situation in southern Vietnam resembles, in many respects, the situation of a decade ago. The war continues. The National Liberation Front (NLF) grows in strength primarily through its tenacity and ability to lead the Vietnamese peasants in their fight for self-determination. Though devastated by the war, the South Vietnamese countryside is again an arena in which the NLF leads a political struggle for national liberation and eventual reconciliation with the North. On the other side, the Saigon government maintains its position only through military force, repression, and terror. This corrupt police state continues to be supported and financed by the US. Yet, as the more astute US government studies pointed out a decade ago, the US and its client regime have no chance for a political victory, and it is now clear that military success can come only at too great a cost if at all. Nonetheless it seems that the US decision-makers are as confused about how to proceed today as the Pentagon papers reveal they were ten years ago. Strategically stymied, they do not intend to withdraw, but remain committed to preventing an NLF victory. As long as the US remains entrenched in Vietnam — in all of Indochina — there remains the possibility of another war with open US participation.

Even though there are several parallels with the situation of a decade ago, the opening of a Third Indochina War is being played out on a fundamentally altered world stage. One of the smaller changes is in the Left's own perspective. In the mid- and late sixties many radicals of the New Left accepted the analysis that the Vietnamese were the first of many Third World peoples who would be fighting peasant-based wars of national liberation. It is now clear that the New Left was overly optimistic about the possibilities of anti-imperialist struggles. It was insufficiently attentive to the regional differences in peasant societies and their

histories of struggle or relative quiescence. In part because of their long histories of opposing French and Japanese colonialism, the Vietnamese and all Indochinese resistance movements have proven to be more exceptional than the New Left had anticipated. In many areas of the world strong national-liberation struggles never developed. In some cases this is because the US, its allies, and puppets have successfully used political and military repression against those movements. With few exceptions struggles for self-determination outside of Indochina have not developed into full-scale wars, but have been defeated, checked, or forestalled. The last issue of Radical America was devoted to a major article by David Hunt which can help its readers to understand how the Vietnamese, led by the NLF, have been so exceptional, how they have been able to wage a successful war despite the murderous military attack by a vastly stronger power.

If wars of national liberation outside of Indochina have not had a great impact against American imperialism, it is true that US imperialist strategies have changed. These changes have occurred in the context of global capitalist industrialization. American imperialism and neo-colonial regimes have increasingly integrated the Third World into the world capitalist economy. Ever larger investments by American-based multinational corporations increase the exploitation of the Third World for cheap labor, new markets, and basic resources, i.e., for high rates of profit. In the context of world capitalism these Third World workers may be super-exploited; at the same time they often earn more than workers in locally-owned industry, rural proletarians, or peasants. In the short run this pattern of investment creates within Third World nations a working class separated from the peasantry. But in the long run this growth pattern creates conditions that increase the prospects for international working-class solidarity. With more capital directed toward manufacturing the urban industrial working class is further universalized. More workers with similar work experience will be directly subjected to the same international cycles of boom and recession that are

inherent in capitalism. Responding to the same crises or opportunities, workers in many different countries can be expected to respond simultaneously with class offensives and organizational forms similar to those in the more advanced economies. Thus these new patterns of investment are bringing into being the conditions for more intense cycles of international working-class struggle.

Another consequence of continued investment in less-developed economies is that a few of the larger nations are now emerging as powerful within their own regions. Thus while the United States is, in an absolute sense, an ever greater global power economically, politically and militarily its relative power has decreased. Some of these larger countries have risen to the status of junior partners because of their growing economic strength and because of their political and military utility to the US. In the Near East Iran is joining Israel in acting as a regional imperial power. In Latin America the rapid economic and military ascendancy of Brazil has been supported by the US. The need to work with regional military powers has led to greater American support for harsh dictatorial governments prone both to suppress internal anti-imperialist revolts and to oppose liberation struggles in neighboring states.

The unexpected setbacks in Vietnam forced the US capitalist class to recognize and make use of these new regional powers. The Nixon Doctrine said the nationality of the front-line troops of counter-revolution must change. As opponents of imperialism, we recognize not only the ugly racist qualities of this policy, but also understand its roots. Briefly put, this new military policy is an adaptation to two current realities brought on by the war in Vietnam. Politically, the American people are unwilling to commit many thousands of troops to the defense of the empire. Economically, the long-term balance-of-payments deficit means that the American government can no longer afford to keep a large army stationed abroad.

Responding to constraints such as these the US has also been forced to develop new military strategies. Large por-

tions of the military budget are now appropriated for developing rapid development systems to enable stationing combat-ready troops in the US or on board ship. There are also new strategic and tactical approaches to counter-revolution that the military has developed in Vietnam. These techniques and technologies of counter-insurgency were not successful in Vietnam; but in other situations these brutal instruments — at times subtle and at times open — have stopped the growth of revolutionary movements. Where guerrilla movements could be stopped while small, as in Bolivia, the limited application of sophisticated technology worked. Where movements had developed mass bases, US-trained soldiers and police surrendered “sophistication” and resorted to torture and mass murder to eliminate their opposition, as in Guatemala, Brazil, and Chile. Thus while modifying its military strategy toward the Third World, American policy is consistent. It is staunchly opposed to self-determination and social transformation, and outside of Indochina it has been quite successful.

If the Third World does not pose the fundamental threat to the American empire that many leftists thought in the late sixties, it does not follow that American control remains undisturbed. In fact it now seems obvious that the unchallenged global domination of the United States has been short-lived. The very successes of America’s post-World War II capitalist growth necessarily generated the forces that are now challenging American capitalism. Increasing evidence for this is to be found internationally in the increasing inter-capitalist rivalries, and with the resurgence of class conflict within the advanced capitalist nations including the United States. After World War II the United States was the strongest power on earth and had the healthiest capitalist economy; but in order to ensure its continued growth America’s corporate planners used the American taxpayers’ dollars to rebuild the war-torn economies of Japan and Europe. Domestically taxes went to support a profitable permanent arms economy that kept employed the tremendous productive capacity that American industry developed in the war years.

These successes did allow for the rapid growth of the American economy, and there was a rise in the general standard of living. With repression in the labor unions and the pervasive atmosphere of anti-communism — which both stifled domestic critics and justified the arms budget — the labor opposition that arose at the end of the war was quieted. Not only did the United States benefit from this growth, but it also contributed to the rapid reconstruction of the other major capitalist economies, particularly West Germany and Japan. With cheaper wages for their working classes and more efficient industry — more efficient because the older capital goods that had been destroyed by the war were replaced with newer ones — these countries are increasingly able to compete successfully with more and more sectors of American industry. They have not had the tremendous capital resources available to compete with the United States in the development and investment in the more advanced industries such as computers; but they are now competitive in an ever broader range of commodities both within the United States and in the Third World economies. Thus the international forces that most threaten the US today are to be found in its political and military allies. Japan is not only playing the role of regional power in a system designed by the US in Southeast Asia, but it is also increasingly a threat to American capital in Asia, Latin America, and the United States. In the European Common Market, West Germany is emerging as a threat to the expansion of the American economy. While rooted in the dynamic of capitalism itself, international economic conflicts have surfaced recently in part because of the heightened financial burden that hit the US because of the Vietnam war.

Increased competition between capitalist classes and the effects of the war have been most clearly revealed in the international financial crises. Throughout much of the 1950s and all of the 1960s the US had a balance-of-payments deficit even while it had a balance-of-trade surplus. (The balance of trade is the difference between the price of what a nation imports and what it exports. If the income from sales of exports is greater than the cost of imports, a country has



a balance-of-trade surplus because more money flows into the country than leaves it; if the balance is reversed, then the country runs a deficit. But beyond the balance of trade there is a balance of payments which accounts for all forms of cash flow in and out of the country.) Usually a country cannot continue too long with a balance-of-payments deficit because continued cash outflow indicates deeper and deeper economic problems and greater foreign indebtedness. In order to maintain its global empire the US had overseas military costs that led to capital outflow — for instance GI wages spent in foreign countries and military aid not spent in the US. Thus the expenses of empire that were necessary to create the context for capitalist expansion, including a favorable balance of trade for the US, led to a deficit in the balance of payments.

The US was able to maintain this balance-of-payments deficit for many years because the dollar had been established as convertible with gold — as the international standard of exchange — by the Bretton Woods agreement of 1944. In re-creating a universal medium of exchange — recognizing that there was not enough gold to handle the level of trade — this was a useful decision to all prospering economies. But it was especially advantageous to the US. As long as the dollar was trusted internationally the US could pay for imports and other external expenses by printing money not backed by gold. This situation could only be maintained as long as the dollar was stable and valuable to other nations. When the military costs of the Vietnam war and war-related inflation drastically increased the balance-of-payments deficit, and shook confidence in the dollar's stability, other countries began to redeem their dollars for gold, German marks, and Japanese yen. The US could get out of its deepening deficit and regain its dominant financial position only by creating a more favorable balance of trade. But American products were undersold by those of competitors both at home and abroad. The US tried to get Germany and Japan to revalue their currencies to boost the international value of the dollar. No longer beholden to the US and increasingly feeling as though they were capable of inde-

pendent action, these nations did not acquiesce to American demands. Nixon's August 1971 decision to abandon the convertibility of the dollar as part of the New Economic Policy (NEP) was an official recognition of the fact that the US no longer had the power of economic coercion in the capitalist world. Nixon hoped that other currencies would float in relation to the dollar and the dollar would thus be devalued. In fact this was not sufficient, and Nixon formally devalued the dollar — first in December 1971 and again in February 1973. These actions tried to improve the position of American capital in the world economy; but they have also affected the American working class. The past few years have brought noticeable increases in working-class militancy in all advanced capitalist countries. In order to compete in international trade, the capitalists in each nation try to increase domestic productivity and freeze wages; in recent years the working classes of the West have fought back.

This conflict has been most developed in France, Italy, and Great Britain; but more recently West Germany, Japan, and the United States have also been arenas of class conflict. The state is ever more clearly intervening in class relations to ensure to each nation's capitalist class the ability to compete in the world economy. A result is increased popular recognition of the state as the political arm of the capitalist class.

The wage and price freezes of the NEP forcibly announced to the American working class that Nixon was going to use the power of the state to ensure capitalist profits at the expense of workers. The 10% surcharge tax on all imports that Nixon levied as part of the NEP hits the consumer in addition to the explicit target: foreign capitalists exporting to the US. The devaluation of the dollar and the wheat deal have led to higher costs for food and have heightened the inflationary process. More recently the engineered "energy crisis" has been very costly for Americans. Thus it appears that open class struggle will again be part of American politics.

This sketch of recent changes in the capitalist world is

meant to show why we think that socialist politics — by which we mean a socialist movement necessarily rooted in and growing out of the working class — is the arena within which our socialist commitments must be made. We now want to focus on the living political heritage of the anti-war movement, a heritage very important for socialists. Historically the link between socialism and anti-imperialism has not been automatic. It must be fought for and insisted upon.

With this purpose, we want to focus on two legacies of the anti-war movement. First, while accepting the difficulty of separating the effects of the anti-war movement from those of the war itself, we think that the movement helped make changes in American society. Second, we will try to show how the movement left a crucial heritage for socialists.

The anti-war movement, particularly its younger and more radical wing, helped hundreds of thousands of college students and other young people come to understand America as an imperialist nation. The anti-war movement brought white children of prosperous families into the streets where blacks had been for some years. This had two connected effects: first, especially under Nixon, the government intensified its repressive and intelligence operations using methods more crude, direct, and illegal than previously, as in the Watergate plumbers' operations; second, this repression and the recent revelations of it brought home to many white Americans a deeper resentment of political corruption and police authority. The continual and collective direct action of anti-war activists did help some workers to regain a sense of the utility of direct action. The government's persistent but ineffectual lying about the war has quite properly led many people of all classes to question all official pronouncements. Deep skepticism about the truthfulness of government sources is not new in American history, and this distrust may only apply to particular administrations; but this skepticism is feeding a growing anti-authoritarianism in broad sectors of the population. The anti-war movement played an important role in creating

space for investigative reporting to accelerate this process of growing disbelief, and often egged reporters on to find the truth when editors would have scotched the story. More concretely, the movement curtailed recruitment for the officer corps through ROTC and helped end the draft, creating new problems for the military in the all-volunteer army.

Perhaps more important than any of these was the rise of the GI resistance movement. It was separate from the civilian anti-war movement, and did not share, by and large, the same class origins. Nonetheless the civilian movement did create some of the political and cultural space within which GIs could begin to question and resist military authority and order. As Matt Rinaldi makes clear in his article in this issue, GIs in motion cannot be understood apart from activity in civilian society. With the withdrawal of ground troops from Vietnam, and the decline of the anti-war movement, the movement in the military has receded. But it, too, has left an important heritage: it helped undercut militarism and patriotism in the working class. Institutionally this can be seen in the small number of Viet vets who have gone into the traditional veterans' organizations. Some white and many black GIs have become explicitly anti-imperialist, and this attitude among working-class people will help make resistance against future imperialist wars even stronger. More broadly, many veterans are attracted to the cultural posture of anti-authoritarianism. These working-class veterans will carry their revulsions against capitalist culture into their work situations and they will more likely resist wage-cuts, speed-ups, and other productivity drives by their bosses.

All of the above accomplishments, while not to be scoffed at, are dwarfed by the failure to end the war in Vietnam. That failure is put into perspective by Jim O'Brien's article. He offers a class analysis of the constituency of the movement which clarifies why the movement grew in the class it did, why it did not develop in other classes, and hence why it could not end the war. He traces the course of the movement, notes its partial successes, and suggests what general legacy it has left.

While O'Brien's article draws an objective over-view of the anti-war movement, we would now like to discuss the movement's political heritage for those people who were in it and are now socialists. In this group are at least two kinds of political histories: the stories of those who were "New Leftists", who often entered the anti-war movement as liberals; and the stories of those who were socialists before the anti-war movement. Some readers who were in neither of these groups may recognize themselves in these comments; and some who were in one of these groups may not recognize themselves at all. We do not claim to be talking about everyone. But we think there is a significant group of socialists, mostly over 25, who shared these experiences, and that it is worth trying to crystallize some of them.

Especially before the Tet Offensive, many radicals shared with liberals in the anti-war movement a tendency to view the Vietnamese as a long-suffering, gentle people being inexorably pounded into submission by the all-powerful US military. The Vietnamese were passive victims, and the anti-war movement took upon itself the responsibility for preventing their destruction. Later an equal and opposite error caught on in the form of Third Worldism, the view that the national-liberation movements would provide a sufficient force to destroy US imperialism. This tendency saw the NLF as invincible superhumans, all but impervious to technological warfare.

Not only were both of these views wrong, but they came from a similar mystification. The NLF, of course, are neither victims nor supermen. Their very humanly heroic achievements do not represent a superior culture or superior will power, but come from the experience of imperialism and anti-imperialist resistance, social and economic conditions, and effective political education and organization. Yet an aura of romanticism still surrounds much radical writing about the Vietnamese. In the last issue we published an article which we hope will dispel some of that aura and encourage a more materialist analysis of the NLF. David Hunt's work on the NLF in My Tho Province represents, we think, a big step toward this kind of analysis.

It is one of the first works in English on the NLF that helps explain the process of their political work. In this issue an article by the North Vietnamese scholar Nguyen Khac Vien, which we have reprinted from the Vietnam Courier of Hanoi, offers a criticism of Frances Fitzgerald's Fire in the Lake. We think it is important because it opposes a prevalent academic form of this romanticism.

Both the perception of the NLF as victim and the perception of the NLF as vanguard stemmed from a similar cultural bias and even arrogance. Both views tended to consider support for the Vietnamese a sufficient anti-imperialist strategy. Both tended to mask the necessity of combining support with an independent attack on American capitalism: the first because its adherents felt that all other tasks paled in the face of the need to halt the barbarous US attacks on Vietnam; the second because its adherents felt that active support of Third World revolution would be sufficient to bring about revolution in the US. Both views, also, tended to exacerbate feelings of powerlessness when the anti-war movement could not force the US to withdraw completely and permit self-determination for the Vietnamese.

In considering the political legacy of the anti-war movement, we must grant that this powerlessness, rubbed like salt into wounds as anti-war activists watched unprecedented brutality directed against the Vietnamese for a decade, helped create some of the despair about political activity that we see today. This despair, of course, was primarily created by the war and capitalist society itself. Where the movement itself created that fatalism it was most often among the professionals and professionals-in-training who, as Jim O'Brien's article shows, were the backbone of the anti-war movement. These people, especially those who were still students and had not yet established vested interests in their professions, often entered the movement in the first place with naive and inflated estimates of their potential power and influence in affecting US policy.

Some of these former anti-war activists have dropped out of political activity; some are even explicitly cynical about

"politics". Others, in another form of cynicism, enter reform activities even while their own analysis tells them that the entire system must be changed; they betray their own analysis because they can find no way of putting it into practice, and because they are not apathetic and want to be effective. These forms of individual expression come from despair, but they will also build more despair since they cannot produce substantial change in the society.

But there were other former anti-war activists who became socialists. Many of these came from the same professional class backgrounds and current situations as those who "dropped out" or became reformers: correlations between class and politics are not simple or direct, and often not easily explainable. There were others with non-professional and even working-class backgrounds who had joined the anti-war movement, mostly from public colleges, and some of these people also became socialists. There were, on the whole, few socialists who came out of the anti-war movement, and their experience may have been unique: we expect that in the near future people will come more directly to socialism through their own class experience. But the anti-war to socialist experience was nevertheless significant, especially for the ongoing task of maintaining anti-imperialist consciousness in the emerging socialist movement.

The process of transformation from opposition to the war to socialism was partly a process of learning from mistakes. One kind of error was the faith in protest and pressure politics that characterized the early civil-rights and anti-war movements. Another was the Third World tailism, adventurism, and rejection of domestic class conflict that was seen in its most exaggerated form in Weatherman. Those who were traditional Marxists in the mid-1960s also made errors. On the one hand the older and larger Marxist parties, correctly perceiving that the anti-war movement, in order to win, would have to gain support from the working class, erred by watering down the political content of their anti-war campaigns. On the other hand, the smaller and often younger Marxist parties erred by raising "correct

politics" in an abstract and divisive manner.

Of course all political activists make mistakes; and those who are Marxists should be able to learn from them by distinguishing human failing from historical limitation. What is unique about the errors of the anti-war movement, however, is that they occurred in a process of integrating anti-imperialism into socialism. This process had its dangers, as we have argued in our discussion of romanticizing the Vietnamese. But it also had its strengths. It was a transition in which the relationship with the Vietnamese revolutionary struggle was central — a relationship which existed, it seems to us, on three levels. First, many activists formed an intense emotional tie to the Vietnamese. It is important to distinguish here between emotion and romanticism. It is possible to feel a great love and respect for the tenacity and confidence of the Vietnamese resistance without distorting or mystifying Vietnamese politics or character. If many fell into mystification, that is no reason to conclude that the correct political relationship is one of emotional detachment. It is right for socialists to have strong feelings.

For some, this emotional response to the Vietnamese led, on a second level, to an identification with their politics. When some parts of the anti-war movement adopted NLF flags as their symbol this was an important reorientation, an identification with them as revolutionaries. The actual content of PRG and DRV politics may not be useful for Americans, since Vietnamese social and economic reality is so different. Nevertheless, some anti-war activists perceived that the strength of the NLF was not merely in its anti-imperialism, but also in its leadership of a social revolution in Vietnam. But even for those who remained fixed on the NLF as a military anti-imperialist revolutionary force, the revolutionary interpretation of Vietnamese resistance gave American revolutionaries greater confidence that US imperialism could be defeated. This identification with Vietnamese revolutionaries led in some cases, as we have said, to the error of Third Worldism. But however great the dangers of Third Worldism, the greater danger in the US, with its strong imperialist traditions, has been



and will continue to be that of national and racial chauvinism.

The third level of identification with the Vietnamese, the highest level, is an understanding of the structural connections between Vietnam and the US. These connections involve not just the slogan of a "common enemy" but a global system of economic, political, and military control by US capitalism. Understanding of these complex structural connections can help to create a socialist movement which supports Third World national-liberation struggles steadily and enthusiastically while simultaneously organizing to overthrow capitalism in the First World.

Linda Gordon and Allen Hunter  
for the RA Editors





# **The Olive-Drab Rebels:**

## **Military Organizing During**

### **The Vietnam Era**

**Matthew Rinaldi**

#### Introduction

“The morale, discipline, and battleworthiness of the U. S. Armed Forces are, with a few salient exceptions, lower and worse than at any time in this century and possibly in the history of the United States.

By every conceivable indicator, our army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and non-commissioned officers, drug-ridden, and dispirited where not near mutinous.

Elsewhere than Vietnam, the situation is nearly as serious.”

So wrote Col. Robert D. Heintz in June of 1971. In an article entitled "The Collapse of the Armed Forces", written for the eyes of the military leadership and published in the Armed Forces Journal, Heintz also stated, "Sedition, coupled with disaffection within the ranks, and externally fomented with an audacity and intensity previously inconceivable, infests the Armed Services." This frank statement accurately reflects the tremendous upheaval which occurred among rank and file GIs during the era of the Vietnam war. Covered up whenever possible and frequently denied by the military brass, this upheaval was nevertheless a significant factor in the termination of the ground war, and helped to imbue a generation of working class youth with a deep-rooted contempt for America's authority structure.

Military morale was considered high before the war began. In fact, the pre-Vietnam Army was considered the best the United States had ever put into the field. Consequently, the military high command was taken quite by surprise by the rapid disintegration of the very foundations of their power. But the brass were not alone in their surprise; the American left was equally unprepared for the sudden appearance of rebelliousness among GIs. The left had only recently emerged from the highly polarized years of the civil rights movement, and was still permeated with a consciousness that distrusted whites in general and working class whites in particular. As a consequence, in the early years of the war the general attitude of the left was that whites were rednecks and were somehow personally implicated in the continuation of the war.

The class composition of the American left, particularly of its ruling segments, played a significant role in separating it from the realities of the GI experience. When the war in Vietnam first became an issue, early in 1963, the primary base for organized anti-war sentiment was the intellectual community and the middle class. As American presence reached major proportions in 1964 and 1965, the anti-war movement solidified its strength in the middle class but had little impact on the blue-collar working class. As a consequence, the movement developed primarily middle

class forms of resistance, which meant that there was heavy emphasis on draft resistance and draft counseling. While actual resistance only reached minor proportions, draft counseling and effective methods of draft evasion saved the majority of white middle class youth from the U. S. military.

Simultaneously, there were economic factors molding the composition of the armed forces. Middle class youth could afford college and looked toward professional careers, while working class youth were systematically channeled into the military. Though the draft claimed a high number, a large percentage also enlisted, since job opportunities were limited and the military seemed to be inevitable after high school. In addition, the court system continued to offer "voluntary enlistment" as an alternative to a couple of years in jail, and many guys thought at the time that it was a good offer. As a result of these factors, the Armed Forces were quite efficiently filling their ranks with third world and white working class youth.

The image these youth had of life in the military was shattered quite rapidly by the harsh reality they faced. Those who had enlisted found that the promises made by recruiters vanished into thin air once they were in boot camp. Guarantees of special training and choice assignments were simply swept away. This is a fairly standard procedure used to snare enlistees. In fact, the military regulations state that only the enlistee, not the military, is bound by the specifics of the recruiting contract. In addition, both enlistees and draftees faced the daily harassment, the brutal de-personalization, and ultimately the dangers and meaninglessness of the endless ground war in Vietnam. These pressures were particularly intense for third world GIs, most of whom were affected by the rising black consciousness and a heightened awareness of their oppression.

These forces combined to produce the disintegration of the Vietnam era military. This disintegration developed slowly, but once it reached a general level it became epidemic in its proportions. In its midst developed a conscious

and organized resistance, which both furthered the disintegration and attempted to channel it in a political direction. The following will be an attempt to chronicle the growth of GI resistance and to study the attempts by the left to organize and intensify that resistance.

### Early Resistance

In understanding the development of resistance within the military it is important to focus on the organic connection between the civilian political situation and the level of struggle within the military. The fact that people pass through the military, that it is clearly defined as a transitory situation, and that there are extreme dangers involved in resisting leads to the fact that greater pressure is required to bring about an upsurge among soldiers than is required to bring about an upsurge among civilians. Consequently, if pressures are developing within the society as a whole, they will find expression first within the civilian world. New recruits will then bring this outlook of developing upsurge with them into the military.

This phenomenon developed during the Vietnam era. The early years of the Vietnam war, up until 1966, were fairly quiet. While there was protest against the war, this protest was still quite isolated, and to the majority of Americans the war could still be justified on the grounds of classical anti-communism. In addition, the black liberation struggle had not yet reached the point where it was affecting the consciousness of the mass of black youth, while similarly the anti-authoritarian dope culture had not yet reached widespread proportions among white youth. Consequently, soldiers entered the military in this period with a passive acceptance of the war and a predisposition to submit to military authority.

At the same time, the mechanisms of internal control were functioning at maximum efficiency within the armed forces. Military personnel are deprived of the rights and protections of the civilian constitutional legal system; instead they are subject to the feudalistic laws of the Uniform

Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). Under the UCMJ there is no trial by your peers. Rather, rank and file GIs are tried by boards composed largely of officers and NCOs. The attitude of these trial boards was accurately reflected by an Admiral serving on the Twelfth Naval District Court who commented, "Anyone sent up here for trial must be guilty of something." Under the circumstances it's hardly surprising that the military achieves convictions in 94% of its court martials.

The ever-present fear which is used to control GIs is quite consciously cultivated by the military. This is done partly by creating a state in which you never know what the reaction will be if you break a particular rule. Thus, at times minor infractions are treated with very harsh punishment, while at other times they are treated lightly. Major offenses are more likely to receive harsh punishment, yet they can also result in simple discharge. It's totally unpredictable. The result is to keep GIs constantly off balance, afraid to take the slightest move toward resistance because there is no accurate way to judge the response of the authorities. In a world where an authority has total control over your life and seems to exercise this control in a completely arbitrary manner, the safest course is to remain anonymous.



The years 1966 and 1967 saw the first acts of resistance among GIs. Given the general passivity within the ranks and the tight control exercised by the brass, these first acts required a clear willingness for self-sacrifice. For the most part they were initiated by men who had had some concrete link with the left prior to their entrance into the military.



500 GIs from Fort Hood march down the streets of Killeen, Texas—October 25, 1971.

The first major public act of resistance was the refusal, in June of 1966, of three privates from Fort Hood, Texas to ship out to Vietnam. The three men, David Samas, James Johnson, and Dennis Mora, had just completed training and were on leave before their scheduled departure for the war zone. Mora had been affiliated with the W. E. B. Du Bois Clubs in New York prior to being drafted, and is generally considered to have been the prime mover behind the refusal. The three announced a press conference, but federal agents arrested them before they could make their statement. Nevertheless, the fledgling New York peace movement succeeded in giving the case wide publicity. The men were each eventually sentenced to three years at hard labor.

There followed a series of individual acts of resistance. Ronald Lockman, a black GI who had also had previous connections with the Du Bois Clubs, refused orders to Vietnam with the slogan, "I follow the Fort Hood Three. Who will follow me?" Capt. Howard Levy, who had been around the



left in New York, refused to teach medicine to the Green Berets, and Capt. Dale Noyd refused to give flying instructions to prospective bombing pilots. These acts were consciously geared toward political resistance. Since the GI movement was a heterogeneous phenomenon reflecting many different trends in the civilian world, there was also in this period the beginning of a kind of moral witness resistance. The first clear incident occurred at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, where in April of 1967 five GIs staged a pray-in for peace on base. Two of these GIs refused a direct order to cease praying and were subsequently court-martialed. While this act was never duplicated pro-forma, it was the forerunner of numerous acts of resistance based on religious and moral grounds.

The majority of these early instances of resistance were actually simply acts of refusal; refusal to go to Vietnam, to carry out training, to obey orders. They were important in that they helped to directly confront the intense fear which all GIs feel; they helped to shake up the general milieu of passivity. But they still focused on individual responsibility. In a sense they were a continuation of civilian resistance politics transferred to the military setting, the notion that individual refusal would shake the system. But the military was quite willing to deal with the small number of GIs who might put their heads on the chopping block; to really affect the military machine would require a more general rebellion.

In 1967 the left was still suspicious of, and at times hostile to, GIs, but there was an increasing minority, particularly within the Marxist left, which was beginning to come to grips with the possibility and necessity of doing political work within the military. This growing awareness led to four different efforts to do such organizing.

The first attempt was the creation of a newspaper called VIETNAM GI. The paper was created by Jeff Sharlet, a vet who had served in Vietnam in the early years of the war. He came back to the States fairly disillusioned, returned to school and found himself alienated by the student movement, particularly by its hostility to GIs. In early 1967 he

set out to create some form of communication and agitation within the military. That vehicle was VIETNAM GI, which was very effective at this time. It carried a lot of very grisly news about the war, but it also carried lots of letters from GIs and consistently ran an interview with a GI either just back from Nam or recently involved in an act of resistance. The paper was widely circulated and well received.

Unfortunately, VIETNAM GI never advanced beyond the purely agitational stage. Vets on the staff occasionally visited bases around the country, but these visits were primarily to aid distribution of the paper. There was never an attempt to link various contacts together and create some form of organization. With Sharlet's early death from cancer, the paper never advanced beyond this point. The paper continued, but GI resistance advanced to the point where there was on-base organizing going on and local papers coming out, and those local papers were for the most part more interesting to GIs than a national paper put out by vets. So VIETNAM GI faded in importance. Nevertheless, it represented a significant breakthrough when it first appeared, and helped play a catalytic role throughout the service.

Another approach was an early attempt at colonization by the Socialist Workers Party. Pfc. Howard Petrick, a full member of the SWP, was stationed at Fort Hood and began to distribute literature within his barracks. The authorities reacted swiftly and Petrick found himself threatened with a court martial. The SWP focused on this as a violation of "GI rights", and decided on a campaign for GI rights as their strategic approach to military organizing. This had two flaws. First, while Petrick had in fact been attempting to organize his barracks, the effect of the SWP campaign was to focus on the case as another act of individual resistance. Secondly, while GIs certainly understood that they had no "rights", they also understood that this was not the basis of their oppression. The war, the class system in the military, the general oppression of their lives was far more potent to them. Consequently, when GIs did become polit-

ically involved, the issue of "GI rights" became quite minor. The Socialist Workers Party, however, never advanced beyond this conception, and while their early work helped to stimulate GI resistance, they became increasingly irrelevant when GI resistance became widespread.

The most dramatic of these early organizing efforts, and the first to really focus on the need for collective resistance, was the work done by Andy Stapp at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Stapp entered the Army independently, experienced with the civilian left but unconnected to any organization. He began rapping with the guys in his barracks, giving out literature, and gathering a small group around him. The brass soon moved against him, demanded that he surrender his literature, and busted him when he refused to hand it over. At this point his efforts at organizing could have ended. But he appealed to a variety of left groups for support, and the Workers World Party in New York came forward to help. Their influence transformed the nature and future of his work. Their immediate impact, the result of their determined presence at Fort Sill and the media coverage they were able to generate, was to save Stapp from heavy repression. He served 45 days at hard labor in 1967, was busted again and acquitted, and was finally discharged for "subversion and disloyalty" in April of 1968.

The political impact of the Workers World Party on Stapp was profound. His work had at first been courageous but unfocused. The party provided a focus. They emphasized the need for organization, and convinced Stapp of the viability of calling for a union within the military. Consequently, a few months before his discharge Stapp helped to found the American Servicemen's Union, and as a civilian he assumed its leadership. Through the ASU and its paper, THE BOND, GIs around the world were exposed to the concept of organization, and this influence helped to stimulate spontaneous organizing efforts at many bases.

Unfortunately, the long term effects of the intimate link between the ASU and the Workers World Party were largely detrimental. The WWP focused its attention largely on the media and on spectacular acts of confrontation, but rarely

undertook any consistent day-to-day organizing. Ironically, they contributed the concept of organization but were unable to implement it. As a result the ASU collected paper memberships, circulated THE BOND around the world, but was never able to sustain an organization. Its attempts in the next few years to connect with local organizing groups consistently led to sectarian battles, leaving the local efforts in a shambles.

The fourth attempt in this period was the creation, by leftwing civilians, of the off-base coffeehouses. The coffeehouses represented the first significant step by the civilian movement to reach GIs. The first coffeehouse was set up at Fort Jackson in 1967, and soon afterwards coffeehouses were established at Fort Leonard Wood and Fort Hood. These eventually developed into a network of coffeehouses, storefronts, and bookstores which covered most major bases in all four branches of the service.

The original conception behind the coffeehouses, while fundamentally valid, was faulty in two regards. First, the initial coffeehouses were located at major basic training bases, the idea being to struggle with the brass for the mind of the GI during his basic training. If the brass won, this thinking ran, they would have an effective killer in Vietnam; if the coffeehouse won, there would be refusals and disaffection. Basic trainees, however, are completely isolated. Not only are they restricted to base and supervised around the clock but their training areas are even off-limits to other GIs. Consequently, there was never a real opportunity for organizers to relate to basic trainees. In a sense, though, it didn't matter, for it wasn't the arguments of the brass versus the arguments of the coffeehouse which were going to alter the thinking of these GIs. It was their concrete experience in the military and in the war which was going to transform them into dissidents.

The second error concerned the nature and style of the coffeehouses. The original conception was that by creating a semi-bohemian counter-culture setting, it would be possible to reach the "most easily organized" GIs. This emphasis on culture did in fact attract in the early days those

GIs who were just getting into the dope scene, but it didn't necessarily lead them toward political action. Consequently, the political work often floundered. The advantage, though, of the coffeehouses and storefronts was that while their original strategic conceptions were faulty, the form in which they existed was quite malleable, and thus most of the projects were able to transform themselves to meet the developing needs of the GI resistance.

The reaction of the military brass to these first attempts at organizing were in keeping with traditional military practice. Individual GIs court martialed for political activities received stiff penalties, and any groupings which developed were broken and scattered. But the brass were still dealing with a situation in which their forces were still fairly intact. Though the early rumblings of discontent were spreading, the troops were still fighting in Vietnam, orders were still being obeyed, and the chain of command still functioned smoothly, so there was not yet an apparent need for the brass to develop an overall strategic approach to political activity in its ranks. The next few years would create such a need.

### The Ground War Expands, The Movement Grows

The period from 1968 to 1970 was a period of rapid disintegration of morale and widespread rebelliousness within the U.S. military. There were a variety of causes contributing to this development. By this time the war had become vastly unpopular in the general society, demonstrations were large and to some degree respectable, and prominent politicians were speaking out against the continuation of the war. For a youth entering the military in these years the war was already a questionable proposition, and with the ground war raging and coffins coming home every day very few new recruits were enthusiastic about their situation. In addition, the rising level of black consciousness and the rapidly spreading dope culture both served to alienate new recruits from military authority. Thus, GIs came into uniform in this period with a fairly negative predisposition.

Their experience in the military and in the war transformed this negative pre-disposition into outright hostility. The nature of the war certainly accelerated this disaffection; a seemingly endless ground war against an often invisible enemy, with the mass of people often openly hostile, in support of a government both unpopular and corrupt. The Vietnamese revolutionaries also made attempts to reach out to American GIs. A medic stationed at Chu Lai told how he made friends with a local Vietnamese boy who took him on walks around nearby villages and talked to him about the war. One day, after there was a trust developed between them, the boy pointed out a man casually walking from shop to shop and explained that he was the local NLF tax-collector. "It really blew my mind", the GI later said, "to realize that the people right around our base were willingly supporting the Viet Cong."

Many GIs also learned through bitter experience that the ARVN troops were not only unreliable allies, but that in a



"I'm over here fighting a war for a cause that means nothing to me. It means nothin' but my life, and life's a very dear thing to me . . . ." — GI in First Cavalry Division.

tight situation they could be as dangerous as the NLF. The ARVN troops would often fade away at the height of a battle, and it was not uncommon for them to turn their fire on the Americans if the NLF was making headway. The feeling spread among U.S. troops that they were fighting this war all alone. These experiences created a mood of despair, disgust, and anger, as GIs turned increasingly to dope and played out their time with the simple hope of survival. As one GI put it, "Our morale, man? Its so low you can't even see it."

This situation led to the rapid decay of the U.S. military's fighting ability in Vietnam. The catchword was CYA ("cover your ass"); as one GI expressed it, "You owe it to your body to get out of here alive." Low morale, hatred for the Army, and huge quantities of dope all contributed to the general desire to avoid combat. One platoon sergeant stated, "Almost to a man, the members of my platoon oppose the war... The result is a general malaise which pervades the entire company. There is a great deal of pressure on leaders at the small unit level, such as myself, to conduct what are popularly referred to as 'search and avoid' missions, and to do so as safely and cautiously as possible." The brass watched these developments with general helplessness. As a brigade commander in the 25th Division put it, "Back in 1967, officers gave orders and didn't have to worry about the sensitivities of the men. Today, we have to explain things to the men and find new ways of doing the job. Otherwise, you can send the men on a search mission, but they won't search."

While this malaise seriously affected the war effort, the spectre of open mutiny was even more startling. In 1968 there were 68 recorded incidents of combat refusal in Vietnam. By 1969 entire units were refusing orders. Company A of the 21st Infantry Division and units of the 1st Air Cavalry Division refused to move into battle. By 1970 there were 35 separate combat refusals in the Air Cavalry Division alone. At the same time, physical attacks on officers, known as "fraggings", became widespread, 126 incidents in 1969 and 271 in 1970. Clearly, this army did not want to fight.



"Capt., you'll never guess what  
I did wrong!"

from AFB, Dec.-Jan., 1971

The situation stateside was less intense but no less disturbing to the military brass. Desertion and AWOL became absolutely epidemic. In 1966 the desertion rate was 14.7 per thousand, in 1968 it was 26.2 per thousand, and by 1970 it had risen to 52.3 per thousand; AWOL was so common that by the height of the war one GI went AWOL every three minutes. From January of '67 to January of '72 a total of 354,112 GIs left their posts without permission, and at the time of the signing of the peace accords 98,324 were still missing. Yet these figures represent only the most disaffected; had the risks not been so great, the vast majority of Vietnam era GIs would have left their uniforms behind.

There is a common misconception that it was draftees who were the most disaffected elements in the military. In fact, it was often enlistees who were most likely to engage in open rebellion. Draftees were only in for two years, went in expecting the worst, and generally kept their heads down until they got out of uniform. While of course many draftees



went AWOL and engaged in group resistance when it developed, it was enlistees who were most angry and most likely to act on that anger. For one thing, enlistees were in for three or four years; even after a tour of duty in Nam they still had a long stretch left in the service. For another thing, they went in with some expectations, generally with a recruiter's promise of training and a good job classification, often with an assurance that they wouldn't be sent to Vietnam. When these promises weren't kept, enlistees were really pissed off. A study commissioned by the Pentagon found that 64% of chronic AWOLs during the war years were enlistees, and that a high percentage were Vietnam vets. The following incident at a GI movement organizing conference illustrates this point :

"A quick poll of the GIs and vets in the room showed that the vast majority of them had come from Regular Army, three or four year enlistments. Many of them expressed the notion that, in fact, it was the enlistees and not discontented draftees who had formed the core of the GI movement. A number of reasons were offered for this, including the fact many enlistees do enlist out of the hope of training, better job, or other material reasons. When the Army turns out to be a repressive and bankrupt institution, they are the most disillusioned and the most ready to fight back."

Resistance in this period took a variety of forms. Spontaneous and often creative individual acts were widespread, from subtle expressions of disrespect to sabotage on the job. More significantly, the general mood of anger and alienation led to a number of instances of spontaneous group acts of rebellion. These were likely to explode at any time. Often they occurred in the stockades, which were overcrowded with AWOLs and laced with political organizers. In July of 1968 prisoners seized control of the stockade at Fort Bragg and held it for three days, and in June of 1969 prisoners rebelled in the Fort Dix stockade and inflicted extensive damage before being brought under control. Probably the most famous incident of stockade resistance occurred at the Presidio, where 27 prisoners staged a sit-down during morning formation to protest the shot-gun

slaying of a fellow prisoner by a stockade guard. The men were charged with mutiny and initially received very heavy sentences, but their sacrifice had considerable impact around the country. After a year their sentences were reduced to time served.



The Presidio Mutiny, San Francisco, 1968.

A significant amount of resistance also occurred around riot control. While there were individual white GIs who refused riot control training, such as Pvt. Richard Chase at Fort Hood and Pvt. Leonard Watham at Fort Lewis, it was black GIs who spontaneously reacted in a mass way against being put in the position of being riot troops. During the summer of 1968 troops were put on alert for possible use at the Democratic convention in Chicago, and 43 Black GIs at Fort Hood held an all-night demonstration declaring their intention to refuse any such orders. This was a harbinger of continued discontent among black soldiers. During the summer of 1969 black GIs in the 3rd Cavalry Division at

Fort Lewis walked out of riot control classes en masse, and the brass were so anxious to avoid an incident that they let it pass.

In this milieu of widespread restlessness within the ranks, the left worked to generate conscious political action. The attempts made were varied. Groups like the Progressive Labor Party and the Spartacist League sent in individual members to organize, but they generally isolated themselves and were unsuccessful. The Socialist Workers Party continued to send in members, and at Fort Jackson in 1969 was able to create an organization called GIs United. This group contained a number of very capable organizers, and in March they succeeded in holding a large open meeting on base to rap about the war and racism. Over 100 GIs participated in this free-floating rap session, and the brass moved swiftly to bring the organizers up on charges. But media coverage and public support resulted in the Army taking a different tack; they simply discharged most of the men and scattered the others around the world. Once this incident was over the SWP continued to focus on GI rights, and was never again a significant force in the GI movement.

The ASU continued to be a highly visible force in this period, but it suffered from the limitations of Workers World politics and rarely advanced outside of its New York office. When it did, the results were often disastrous. A clear example of this occurred at Chanute Air Force Base. Here a number of airmen and radical civilians created a paper called A FOUR YEAR BUMMER (AFB) and began organizing on base. They recognized the need for national connections, and without an understanding of Workers World Party influence decided to affiliate with the ASU. National office people then came to Chanute, and within a short time created an intense split in the group over WWP politics, siphoned off a few members, and left the rest of the group in disarray. Most of the newly-active airmen were stunned by the political in-fighting, and several decided to think it over in Canada. As one AFB organizer wrote later, "In practice, the WWP, YAWF, and ASU put very little emphasis on ongoing, day-to-day organizing. Instead, they rush

in when things start happening, carrying lots of posters, banners, etc., and attempt to assume the leadership. Hopefully, a number of things will happen — the bourgeois media will give them credit for what happened, and the 'most advanced' of the participants will join the vanguard. This hope is based on a combination of an early Abbie Hoffman approach to the media and an extremely mechanistic concept of Leninist party building."

Thus the ASU, which was most promising in its conception, was unable to fulfill its potential. Yet because it had a clear political line and a national image, it was able to remain a consistent force. A large reason for this was the lack of cohesive politics on the part of many of the groups developing around the country. As the same AFB organizer wrote, "One of the reasons the ASU has been so frequently able to pose as something it is not is the failure of those of us engaged in military organizing, and of the movement in general, to come up with a consistent analysis of our own, rather than a patchwork creation which passes for an analysis. This shortcoming was specifically the reason AFB fell apart."

The most consistent, and certainly the most heterogeneous, of the attempts of the left to relate to GIs in this period centered around the coffeehouse projects. By the height of the war there were over twenty such projects, located at most major Army bases, the two key Marine Corps bases, and scattered Navy and Air Force installations. Staffed at first primarily by civilians, with vets soon joining the staffs in increasing numbers, the coffeehouses and storefronts reflected all the various forces which existed within the movement. There was never a cohesive, national ideology guiding this work; rather, different project staffs struggled out their orientation toward military organizing, some projects achieving a unified direction, some projects remaining scattered in their approach. As the war escalated, though, and as discontent and anger swept the ranks of GIs, the majority of coffeehouses abandoned the old orientation toward cultural alienation and consciously set out to do direct political organizing.

The primary function of these projects was to provide off-base meeting places for GIs. The majority of guys who came to these storefronts were attracted by their anti-brass atmosphere, stuck around to rap with some people and perhaps read an anti-war paper, and generally got exposed to left-wing politics. The service was permeated with an FTA ("Fuck The Army") consciousness, and many GIs felt so mind-blown by their recent experiences that they were actively seeking a new way to understand the world around them. Consequently, they were open to heavy raps about the war, imperialism, and the class nature of society. A certain number of GIs who came around reached a point where they wanted to participate in direct political work, and they plugged into various activities. The most common form was the creation of a GI newspaper. While some of these papers developed spontaneously at certain bases, the overwhelming majority were begun through joint work by GIs and civilians.

These papers were the most visible and consistent aspect of the GI movement. Starting with early papers like FTA at Fort Knox and FATIGUE PRESS at Fort Hood, local papers mushroomed around the country: SHAKEDOWN at Fort Dix, ATTITUDE CHECK at Camp Pendleton, FED-UP at Fort Lewis, ALL HANDS ABANDON SHIP at Newport Naval Station, THE LAST HARASS at Fort Gordon, LEFT FACE at Fort McClellan, RAGE at Camp Lejeune, THE STAR-SPAN- GLED BUMMER at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base... the list could stretch to over a hundred different papers. Their contents varied, from paper to paper and at times from issue to issue, from local gripes and a basic anti-brass, anti-war, anti-racist consciousness to an understanding of the nature of imperialism and attempts to move toward revolutionary socialism. Some lasted for only a few issues, folding when the guys putting it out were transferred or discharged. But most of those connected with organizing projects came out consistently, if sporadically, through the war years.

Generally, the papers were produced by small groups of GIs who then received help from other guys in circulating

them. It was illegal to distribute on base, but nonetheless countless copies were smuggled on and placed around the barracks, stuck in bathrooms, casually left in lounge areas. A few found their way into the stockades, often through sympathetic guards. A large number were simply distributed in off-base towns, and were well received. As one marine organizer put it, "Guys ask if the paper is underground. If we reply yes, they take it. Guys identify with a rebellion if not with the revolution." It was generally through these papers that the mass of discontented GIs were exposed to a sense of solidarity with other GIs and some level of political analysis of their situation. While the number of GIs who created these papers might total in the hundreds, the number who helped distribute them numbered in the thousands and the number who read them and related to them numbered in the tens of thousands.

Relations between GIs and civilians on the projects took many forms. On the one hand, civilians provided some essential functions, could keep the places running and do legal and organizational work while guys were on base, and generally provide contacts and resources from the world of the movement. These contributions were valued by GIs. But civilians clearly didn't share the same experiences or the same risks, and this at times led to conflict. Most projects experienced an ebb and flow of conflict and unity. A large degree of the conflict occurred because of civilian proficiency at certain tasks, which at times led to their domination. As one organizer expressed it, "People assume power depending on how priorities are defined and what skills are valued. If skills that only educated people have, such as speaking eloquently, laying out newspapers, gathering literature for a bookstore, legal assistance, etc. are rewarded, then people who don't have those skills become intimidated, feel useless, and do basically what they do in society at large — they withdraw and fuck up."

The problem was not simply a civilian-GI dichotomy. One organizer at Fort Lewis wrote, "Often, the problem was much more blatantly one of classism, that is that the middle-upper class people would dominate the meetings and

directions, with the lower class people doing most of the work. The way the problem looks is that the civilians dominated no more and no less, on the whole, than middle class educated GIs." But there were few middle class educated GIs in the movement; the general situation was that the bulk of the GI dissidents were blue collar working class youth, while most of the civilian organizers were middle class. A positive situation, in that it was a meeting between the middle class left and the working class, but it was a constant struggle to overcome the inherent roles established in relations between the classes. Similar dilemmas have confronted the left whenever it has attempted to change its class base.

Despite these internal struggles, the high degree of transience among GIs, and the pervasive power of the brass, the overriding intensity of the war ensured that the work continued. Since the high level of risk limited what actions could be undertaken, newspapers were the most realistic form of political expression. Attempts were made, however, to find forms for a higher level of struggle. At first this involved attempts to find a way to achieve base-wide actions. Sick call strikes were organized at Fort Knox early in the war and later at Fort Lewis. Soldiers cannot legally go on strike, but military regulations supposedly guarantee them the right to go on sick call, so if masses of GIs went on sick call on the same day it would in effect create a strike situation. But such efforts had to be publicized well in advance, and the brass resorted to intimidation, harassment, and outright refusal of the sick call privilege to crush these strikes. The attempt at Fort Knox resulted in failure, though at Fort Lewis it had a moderate impact, with up to 30% of the base trying to go on sick call.

Attempts were also made to hold meetings on base, partly due to the example of the GIs United meeting at Fort Jackson, but these meetings were extremely vulnerable. In October of 1969 an effort was made to hold a meeting at a service club at Fort Lewis, but an agent had infiltrated the group which called the meeting, and soon after it began it was raided by the MPs. Thirty-five GIs were picked up and

placed on restriction. Though formal charges were never brought against these men, in the following months almost all of them were either transferred, shipped to Vietnam, discharged, or simply busted on other charges.

Since it seemed that on-base activities were too risky, attempts were made to mobilize massive numbers of GIs for off-base actions. These were at times successful. Frequently, efforts were made to mobilize GI participation in civilian peace demonstrations. A series of marches outside Fort Hood and Fort Bragg and in cities like San Francisco were participated in by hundreds of GIs, and in December of 1969 almost 1,000 marines participated in an anti-war march in Oceanside, California. But the military was able to stifle this expression of resistance, largely by placing whole units or entire bases on restriction. Thus, when national demonstrations were called for Armed Forces Day, a radical GI at Fort Ord had to relate, "May 16, 1970 was a Saturday, and there was a huge gathering outside the gates of Ford Ord, but neither I nor any other GIs could participate, because the commanding general had ordered everyone to work all day Saturday, until the demonstration was over." While scattered GIs often went AWOL to participate, it was not possible to sustain mass GI participation in these marches. The power of the military authorities was simply too limitless.

This often led to a reconsideration of attempts to organize on base, and a new strategy was developed. Rather than concentrating on large base-wide actions, an effort was made to concentrate on localized, unit organizing. This meant that radical GIs, who were working on a base-wide paper and relating to an off-base storefront, would also attempt to create an organized group in their barracks. These groups would put out small, mimeographed unit newspapers, like SPD NEWS or FIRST OF THE WORST, struggle against immediate forms of harrassment, and occasionally submit group Article 138 complaints against a particularly oppressive officer. Because they dealt with immediate local issues, these unit organizations were frequently able to effect some genuine changes. In addition,



these unit groups could raise conceptually the issue of power in the military. For example, the FTA program written at Fort Knox, which first described the class nature of society and pointed toward the goal of socialism, went on to state, "We know that to achieve these goals will take a long fight. To begin to implement this program we intend to build our own democratic organizations within our units which serve our own interests, to protect us now from our present leaders, and later to replace the existing organization of the military." While this goal was far beyond what was realistic in this period, it was useful as a method of describing a possible transition to power.

Throughout this period, the GIs who related most directly to the organized forms of the GI movement tended to be white working class Vietnam vets. Racism clearly played a role in preventing solidarity between white and third world GIs. But the primary reason it tended to be overwhelmingly white had to do with the nature of the organizing. While black GIs were frequently in the forefront of spontaneous confrontations, such as combat refusals, stockade rebellions, and resistance to riot control, they did not relate in large numbers to putting out newspapers and doing agitational work. The consciousness of the mass of black GIs was generally higher than the consciousness of white GIs, which meant that the need for sustained agitational work was higher among whites. Consequently, black GIs participated heavily in group actions, while it was white GIs who developed agitational forms to reach their less politicized brothers.

The organized GI movement was primarily a stateside phenomenon, but there was also a strong pocket of resistance among U.S. troops stationed in Germany. Dope use was staggeringly high here, black consciousness was very developed, and spontaneous rebellions erupted periodically. Germany was often a transit point for GIs going to or coming back from Vietnam, and this added a direct consciousness of the war to the turmoil. Various papers were published in Germany, including a widely circulated GI paper with avowedly socialist politics, THE NEXT STEP. And at

times mass actions were organized, one of the strongest being an anti-racism rally in Heidelberg in 1970, which drew over 1,000 GIs.



Pointing to his wound, a veteran member of Alpha Company and his buddies celebrate his getting out of combat.

The military leadership was thus faced with the widespread breakdown of its authority, a deteriorating fighting force in Vietnam, and political dissidence throughout its ranks. Its response was twofold: more repression, and the development of a strategic approach to the problem. The repression was most intense on individual GIs. Pvt. Gypsey Peterson, who had helped create the FATIGUE PRESS at Fort Hood, was sentenced to eight years at hard labor for possession of an amount of grass so small it "disappeared" during analysis. Two black marines, William Harvey and George Daniels, were sentenced to six and ten years at hard labor for rapping against the war in their barracks. Privates Dam Amick and Ken Stolte were sentenced to four years for distributing a leaflet on Ford Ord. Pvt. Theoda Lester was sentenced to three years for refusing to cut his

Afro. And Pvt. Wade Carson was sentenced to six months for "intention" to distribute FED-UP on Fort Lewis. The pattern was widespread and the message was clear — the brass was not about to tolerate political dissent in its ranks. But a number of factors helped to weaken this repressive power. Media coverage, public protest, and the growth of GI resistance all played a part. The key factor was that political GIs continued to be dangerous in the stockades, and after numerous stockade rebellions the military often chose to discharge dissidents and get rid of them all together.

The repression on civilians was not as severe. One of the first moves against the coffeehouses was the effort to place the Shelter Half at Fort Lewis off-limits to GIs, but this required a legal hearing. When GI protest and media coverage were mobilized, the military backed down and simply canceled the hearing. The campaign against the coffeehouses then took a less direct form, usually carried out by local civilian authorities. The UFO at Fort Jackson was busted for being a "public nuisance", and the coffeehouse at Fort Knox was simply driven out of town. But though this harassment was costly, it never effectively disrupted the functioning of the organizing projects. What is significant is that the federal authorities never moved against the civilians involved. There is a federal statute, 18 USC 2387, which prohibits "all manner of activities (incitements, counseling, distribution or preparation of literature) intended to subvert the loyalty, morale, or discipline of the Armed Services", and carries a penalty of ten years in prison. But while hundreds of civilians openly violated this law, none were ever arrested. The unpopularity of the war, the spontaneous nature of GI resistance, and the general desire on the part of the Pentagon to avoid publicizing this resistance probably all contributed to the decision by federal authorities to withdraw from direct confrontation with the civilian organizers.

The new strategy developed by the Pentagon involved a strategic change in the nature of the war and a cosmetic change in the nature of the military. The ground war was

going badly, the American public was distressed over high casualties, and the Administration reasoned that it could fight just as effectively from the air. The ground troops would be replaced through the program of "Vietnamization". So, the central cause of the military's decay was to be gradually relieved as ground troops were withdrawn from the fighting and the new phase of air war was initiated. In addition, a new image was developed for the Army, de-emphasizing discipline and attempting to relate to black pride and the new youth consciousness. This was seen as the first step toward the development of a volunteer service. Through these transformations the military leadership hoped to back off from its disaster.

### A Changing War, A Changing Movement

The years from 1970 to 1972 marked the almost total collapse of the U.S. Army in Vietnam. Drug use became virtually epidemic, with an estimated 80% of the troops in Vietnam using some form of drug. Sometime in mid-1970 huge quantities of heroin were dumped on the black market, and GIs were receptive to its enveloping high. By the end of 1971 over 30% of the combat troops were on smack. Fraggings continued to rise, from 271 in 1970 to 425 in 1971; one division alone, the "elite" Americal Division, averaged one fragging a week. Search-and-evade and combat refusals were widespread. In a sense, the Army virtually ground to a halt. One newsman wrote in early '71, "Since the end of the Cambodian operation last June, the United States Army in Vietnam has fought no major actions, launched no significant operations, captured no territory and added no battle honors to its regimental flags. In this same period, the army has abandoned at least one base under enemy fire and suffered most of its losses from accidents and booby traps." One top ranking officer was moved to lament, "Vietnam has become a poison in the veins of the U.S. Army."

Troops sent to Vietnam in the early seventies had good reason to avoid combat. Not only were they in a war almost no one believed in any more, but they were shipped over

long after the Administration claimed to be withdrawing. There didn't seem to be any reason to risk being killed. At the same time, the States were being flooded with Nam vets back from the fiercest years of fighting, and their disillusionment was plainly evident at every stateside base. Dope and disrespect were everywhere, and the desertion rate was still climbing, reaching 62.6 per thousand in 1971. Many of these vets connected with the ongoing organizing projects; within a week after the 173rd Airborne was shipped back to Fort Campbell over 300 GIs from its ranks participated in a local anti-war march.

Though the ground troops were gradually coming home, for some elements of the U.S. military the war was escalating. The increased use of air power meant not only that more pilots were flying through anti-aircraft fire to bomb the Vietnamese, it also meant that tens of thousands of low ranking GIs were needed as back-up troops to service and maintain the squadrons of fighter-bombers. These men were predominantly third world and white working class youth who had enlisted in the Air Force or the Navy mostly because they wanted to escape being in the Army. There was widespread anti-war feeling among these crews, but their resistance differed from the resistance of Army GIs in some critical ways. First, they were not in the direct line of fire, they neither killed nor risked being killed, and consequently they had less motivation to rebel than did ground troops. The killing and the dying was done by the pilots, who were all officers and who tended to see themselves as "professionals". Second, because the support crews were not involved directly with combat, their resistance did not affect the war in an immediate way. But they were far from powerless.

The primary resistance which developed in this period was among crews on Navy attack carriers directly involved in the bombing. While there was dissidence and some political organizing among Air Force personnel and in other sections of the Navy, it was where the support crews most directly touched the war that resistance flared. Probably the most dramatic incident occurred aboard the Navy attack

carrier USS Coral Sea in the fall of 1971. The Coral Sea was docked in California while it prepared for a tour of bombing duty off the coast of Vietnam. On board was a crew of 4,500 men, a few hundred of whom were pilots, the rest being support crews. A handful of men on the ship began circulating a petition which read in part, "We the people must guide the government and not allow the government to guide us! The Coral Sea is scheduled for Vietnam in November. This does not have to be a fact. The ship can be prevented from taking an active part in the conflict if we the majority voice our opinion that we do not believe in the Vietnam war. If you feel that the Coral Sea should not go to Vietnam, voice your opinion by signing this petition."

Though the petition had to be circulated secretly, and though men took a calculated risk putting their name down on something which the brass might eventually see, within a few weeks over 1,000 men had signed it. Out of this grew an on-ship organization called "Stop Our Ship" (SOS). The men engaged in a series of demonstrations to halt their sailing date, and on November 6 over 300 men from the ship led the fall anti-war march in San Francisco. Their effort to stop the ship failed, and a number of men jumped ship as the Coral Sea left for Vietnam. But the SOS movement spread to other attack carriers, including the USS Constellation, the USS Hancock, and the USS Ranger.



San Diego: 132 sailors, mostly Black, refuse to reboard the USS Constellation because of racist practices on the ship — November 9, 1972.

The Navy continued to be racked by political organizing and severe racial unrest. In June of 1972 the USS Ranger was disabled by sabotage, and in October both the USS Kittyhawk and the USS Hassayampa were swept by fighting. In November of that same year the USS Constellation was damaged by sabotage, docked to repair the damage, and was confronted with 130 crewmen refusing direct orders to return aboard. Though the impact of these actions only slightly impeded the war effort, they helped to maintain a constant pressure on the Administration to withdraw the military from the disaster of the Indochina war.

The changing nature of the war forced the existing elements of the GI movement to re-evaluate their work. Most of the projects dealing with ground forces, the Army and Marine Corps, found that stateside bases were filled with disaffected, angry GIs. Yet the ground war was "officially" over, and the sense of urgency had left the movement. The result was contradictory impulses among rank and file soldiers; a feeling of anger tempered by the sense that it was no longer worth the risk to fight back, that the easiest road was waiting for discharge. The military authorities in their turn sped up discharges, offered a series of early outs, and moved to clear stateside bases of Vietnam vets. The anger continued to lead to sporadic acts of resistance, but it was rarely channelled into sustained organizing work.

Organizers at Fort Hood, attempting to analyze this situation, wrote, "The three main elements of the GI movement, as we see it, are 1) a high degree of militancy 2) a high degree of apathy and 3) almost a complete lack of organization. The first two may seem contradictory, but in reality they aren't. One can be ultra-militant in your hatred of the brass while being completely apathetic to the prospect of change." Dealing with the question of organization they wrote, "The transitory nature of the military and the deep fear of the UCMJ play a part in the lack of organization. On Fort Hood, which is mostly Vietnam returnees, the majority of GIs hate the Army with a passion, but won't move against it for those reasons. So, the GI movement today consists basically of fragging, shamming, individual

defiance, and sporadic mutinees and demonstrations. Anything and everything short of ongoing organization."

The Fort Hood account fairly accurately describes the situation at most Army and Marine Corps bases in this period. It was understood that the war was evaporating as an issue, and most organizers were shifting to issues that related directly to class oppression at home. A GI group at Fort Hood called the GI Summer Offensive Committee chose to concentrate on a boycott of Tyrell's Jewelers, a national chain of rip-off jewelry stores which specialized in selling cheap jewelry to GIs for the "wife, sweetheart, or mother" back home. The chain featured a "Vietnam Honor Role" listing all the GIs who had been killed while still owing Tyrell's money; the chain magnanimously absolved their debts. The boycott effort found a responsive note on Fort Hood and mobilized large picket lines and demonstrations. The boycott then spread to other bases and forced a number of local Tyrell's to alter their business practices. But while this action did succeed in helping to create an organization at Fort Hood, at the conclusion of the boycott the old contradictions re-surfaced and the organization slowly disappeared.

Some of the same problems faced organizers at Navy and Air Force bases. While those dealing with the attack carriers faced an explosive situation, the remainder of the Navy and Air Force exhibited only scattered resistance in this period. There was some positive work. Papers were begun and continued at many bases, and at Newport Naval Station on-board organizing occurred on a ship about to make a "goodwill" tour of Portuguese colonies in Africa. But this work rarely resulted in either mass actions or direct impact on the war. When a major offensive was launched by the North Vietnamese and the NLF in the spring of 1972 and the collapse of the Saigon forces seemed a realistic possibility, the U.S. was able to carry through a tremendous mobilization of air and sea power without any significant difficulties from the ranks, a task which would have been unthinkable in the Army.



In the early years of the seventies the organizing collectives at most bases also felt the dramatic impact of the women's movement. The most immediate effect was intense internal struggle over male domination on both the personal and organizational levels. The more long term effect was the re-evaluation by many women of the work they had been doing in previous years, and this frequently led to a decision to begin to orient toward organizing other women. In the military situation this meant organizing women in uniform and women who were dependents.

Most of the initial work focused on women in uniform. Women enlist for many of the same economic reasons which motivate men; the military seems to offer a secure job with "travel" opportunities and a certain level of respect. As well, many working class women find that upon leaving high school they have a choice of either remaining at home or getting married, and the military seems like a convenient escape from that trap. Consequently, enlistments are high. Organizing efforts by collectives of women occurred at both Fort McClellan and Fort Bragg, but in both situations it was found to be very difficult to organize WACs. The level of discontent was not high; in fact, 70% of first term recruits re-enlist. In addition, gay WACs were found to feel that the military offered them a fairly secure community of gay women, free from the general harassment in civilian society, and consequently they were reluctant to risk discharge for political activity. While individual WACs did relate strongly to developing women's consciousness, their acts of resistance remained individual and isolated. The women at Fort Bragg concluded, "It is our feeling that there will not be a mass movement among WACs."

There was more success in organizing women who were dependents of men in the military, particularly wives of GIs. They were in the position of following their husbands around from base to base, living in poor housing, and being forced to exist on meager military salaries. The lives of these families were often financially very tight; in fact, a study done by the government in 1970 found that the families of 50,000 servicemen were existing below the "poverty

line". These women were consequently often receptive to anti-military actions, were mobilized in a number of tenant's rights campaigns, and were frequently open to a developing women's consciousness. But there was also a high level of fear. Under Army regulations a GI is held to be responsible for the actions of his wife, and a number of GIs were punitively transferred when their wives became politically active. This and other factors, such as transience and the absence of stable GI organizations, tended to greatly hamper the development of a large movement of dependents.

For the military authorities, this period was one of cautious retreat. The services were in a state of disarray, many career officers were leaving in disgust, and the brass wanted to extricate themselves from the mess as easily as possible. The repressive apparatus was geared down, and the policy of early outs and discharges for Nam vets and political dissidents became widespread. Even in the Navy, which was experiencing heightened resistance, the brass chose moderation and conciliation.

The major response was a concentration on the development of an all-volunteer service. Though the war was still on and the draft was still functioning, the military experimented in this period with a number of programs which it hoped would cool out stateside bases and provide a model for the new volunteer army (VOLAR). These included race relations councils, some loosening of barracks regulations, and at some forts the development of ersatz coffeehouses on base, complete with black light posters and peace signs. (The one at Fort Carson was appropriately called The In-scape.) These early programs often led to disaster for the brass. Militant black GIs often disrupted the placid race relations councils, and an early VOLAR rock concert at Fort Ord turned into a battle between GIs and MPs. But these early programs were only the sketchy beginnings of the VOLAR effort. As the military gradually withdrew from the war in Indochina, the plans for a fundamental change in the services were put into full operation.

## The Modern Volunteer Army

The signing of the Vietnam Peace Accords in January of 1973 marked the formal end of over a decade of U.S. military involvement. While the war itself still lingered on, and renewed U.S. involvement remained a problematic possibility, the accords did signal the beginning of a new era. Ground troops were gone from Indochina, the bombing was ended, and GIs found themselves to be peacetime soldiers. Coupled with the end of the draft, these changes marked an opportunity for the armed services to rebuild themselves.

There are two primary elements to this current reconstruction. First, the Army and ground forces in general are being de-emphasized. Instead, there is an increased focus on mechanized warfare and the power of the Navy and Air Force. The advantage of these services is high mobility, tremendous striking power, and reliance on a smaller number of men. The second element is the transformation of the Army into a force composed of economically motivated volunteers. The belief is that military pay hikes, coming in a period of rising unemployment and general economic instability, will motivate working class youth to enlist in larger numbers.

To some degree this effort has succeeded. The military has spent millions of dollars on advertising, greatly enlarged its corps of recruiters, and managed to come close to meeting its recruitment quotas. The Air Force and Navy have had no problems, the number of women enlisting has increased by 50%, and a significant number of men have enlisted for the Army and the Marines. But there has been one glaring failure. They can't find enough men to enlist for Combat Arms, the very heart of the Army. In fiscal year 1973 only 34,000 men, 57% of their stated goal, enlisted for the infantry, despite a \$2,500 bonus for a four year Combat Arms enlistment. In order to increase these enlistments they lowered the educational requirements, but in the first months of fiscal year 1974 the percentage of black enlistees rose to 31%, and given the continuing spectre of black rebelliousness, that scares them. In a new effort

to deal with the shortage of combat troops the Army announced in February of 1974 that it was creating a new combat division by shifting men from headquarters and support jobs. So much for unit of choice enlistment!

It is important to stress that an economically motivated enlistee is not necessarily a gung-ho soldier. Recruiters still spin tales of an unreal world in order to meet their own enlistment quotas, and GIs are still finding that the military is not what they had been led to expect. The indicators for morale and discipline used by the Army are showing that discontent is high among new enlistees. At Fort Lewis, the model VOLAR unit on base is called the "New Reliables". A study done in the first five months of 1973 showed the New Reliables to have an AWOL rate averaging 47.2 per thousand, while the AWOL rate for other units on the based averaged 21.9 per thousand. At the same time, the Correctional Training Facility at Fort Riley, which was established during the war years to deal with chronic AWOLs, is continuing to process 150 GIs a week. Clearly, the new enlistee is often dissatisfied with his situation.

But this dissatisfaction is not sufficient to generate massive resistance. The end of the ground war removed the primary motivation for GIs to risk punishment; while there may be discontent now, it is generally overshadowed by fear of the UCMJ. As the organizers at Fort Bragg wrote in early 1973, "We began to grasp what we had been refusing to understand — the overwhelming majority of GIs at Fort Bragg had not been to Vietnam and probably would never be sent. The vets who swelled the ranks of the GI movement, as well as giving leadership, were all getting out, and guys just coming into the Army now were not facing a year of humping the boonies of Nam."

The organizational forms of the GI movement began to fade away. Storefronts and coffeehouses folded, newspapers became infrequent or ceased publication entirely, GI groups disappeared as their last members were discharged. While some scattered organizing continued, and some successful work was done at some forts around class based issues,

these efforts were unable to generate new growth. The era of massive GI resistance was over.

## Conclusion

Historically, the attempts of the left to do military organizing have taken only limited forms. In the Bolshevik revolution military organizing occurred in a period of intense revolutionary upsurge, and consequently had as its goals the neutralization of the armed power of the state and the winning of armed contingents to the revolution. In the peasant based revolutions in China, Cuba, and Vietnam, this organizing occurred during periods of direct military confrontation between state armies and the armies of the revolution, and the organizing was consequently a continuation of this war in a different form. While there was some agitation within European armies during the two world wars, the lefts in the respective European countries generally supported the war effort and consequently did not focus on military organizing, while the colonial wars of the European powers were fought without being impeded by left resistance. The role of the military in class society is of crucial importance to the revolutionary movement, as was tragically demonstrated by the Chilean coup, yet there has been precious little attention given to developing the theory and practice of military organizing.

Consequently, the experience of organizing in the U.S. armed forces during the Vietnam War was fairly unique. It represented an attempt to radicalize the working class in uniform while it was subjected to particular pressures, in a period when the working class in civilian life was relatively dormant. Given this situation, it was not realistic to conceive of this organizing as an attempt to win armed contingents for the left. Rather, the goals were two-fold: first, to incapacitate as much as possible the ability of the U.S. military to carry out its intervention in the Vietnamese revolution; and second, to stimulate struggle and militancy in a generation of working class youth.

Some success was achieved in both goals. The disintegration of the ground forces in Vietnam was a major factor in causing U. S. withdrawal. A complexity of factors caused this disintegration, ranging from the upsurges in civilian society to the impact of the Vietnamese revolution, and much of the breakdown in morale and fighting capacity developed spontaneously. Nevertheless, the conscious organizing of radicals both in service and out helped play a catalytic role in this disintegration.

The long term effects of this organizing are still to be determined. The veterans movement, and the political development of Vietnam Vets Against the War, certainly illustrate that a durable change of consciousness occurred among thousands of GIs. At the very least, the military tradition in the U. S. working class suffered a major setback. More significant, millions of working class youth who went through the war years have now returned to civilian jobs and life situations. To what degree the militancy and consciousness which was created during this period will be carried on to the civilian class struggle can only be determined in the years ahead.



# The Anti-War Movement And The War

James O'Brien

Among participants in the protest movement against the Indochina war, there has been a tendency to avoid some of the crucial questions about that movement: notably its social roots, its class composition, its impact on the outcome of the war, and its political legacy. This lack of self-conscious analysis was understandable when the movement was at its peak, since it made sense for the movement to exaggerate its breadth in order to exert the greatest amount of pressure on government policy. But the same near-blindness persists today. For example, Carl Davidson in The Guardian recently made the flattering but very misleading generalization that the anti-war opposition had "three main components: the U.S. working class, the Afro-American people and other oppressed nationalities, and the student youth." (1) At the other extreme in interpretation, but no

more helpful, is Thomas Powers's analysis in his new book The War at Home: Vietnam and the American People, 1964-1968 (New York: Grossman, 1973). This book, though useful in some respects, shuns any attempt at a class analysis of the anti-war movement, relying instead on such terms as "the people" and "ordinary citizens."

The editors, and we imagine virtually all the readers, of Radical America have taken part in the anti-war movement. This essay, although tentative in many of its answers, is an attempt to get at the most important questions raised by the movement's experience. I am not assuming that either the war or the anti-war movement is finished — it is very important that U.S. aid to the Saigon and Pnom Penh regime be stopped — but clearly the war does not now occupy the center stage in American political life. Thus the present time, when the war has lost much of its immediacy in the U.S. but is still fresh in mind, may be an ideal time for serious discussion of the lessons to be learned from the experience of trying to stop it.

The essay proceeds through a series of questions, seeking first to define the anti-war movement and analyze its class composition before dealing with the nature of its successes and failures.

## I. What Was the Anti-War Movement?

The simplest definition of the anti-war movement is that it was composed of those people who believed that the war was wrong and who participated in actions aimed at stopping the war. As a national phenomenon, the anti-war movement came into being in Washington on April 17, 1965, in the protest march sponsored by Students for a Democratic Society. The SDS demonstration drew upwards of 20,000 people, a startlingly large crowd for that time. More importantly in the long run, the march also set the pattern for future national demonstrations against the war. It was politically non-exclusive, encompassing pacifists who opposed all wars, revolutionaries who opposed all imperialist wars, and a majority who were solely concerned with the



war in Vietnam. SDS resisted the efforts of several "respectable" peace leaders to shape the march around a specific set of moderate proposals for de-escalating the war. Instead, the march was based on the lowest common denominator of opposition to U.S. intervention in Vietnam; within that broad consensus, participating groups could advocate "negotiations," "immediate withdrawal," or any other position they wanted.

Although SDS itself soon withdrew from its early leadership of the anti-war movement, the movement retained the essential character which the SDS march had given it. Mass demonstrations, notably those of April 1967 and October-November 1969, continued to be the movement's main public expressions. These demonstrations were typically called by coalitions of groups united around the single issue of opposing the war. While of course there was never an organization called the Anti-War Movement, the formal or tacit cooperation of diverse groups in the mass demonstrations enables us to say that there was a movement against the war. Different people within that movement worked in different ways between demonstrations — draft resistance, teach-ins, campus protests aimed at cutting off ROTC and other programs of university assistance to the military, work with the GI movement, petitions, referendum campaigns, newspaper advertisements, work for "peace candidates," for example — but there was still enough coherence for us to call the whole thing a movement.

One distinction that should be made here is that, for purposes of this essay, the anti-war movement will be considered separately from the GI rebellion of the late 1960s and early '70s. Partly because the two had different class bases, and partly because the military brass made every effort to screen out subversion, there was never an organic connection between them. They touched at a number of different points, and they influenced each other a great deal, but they were distinct social movements and need to be analyzed separately. This article is concerned with the anti-war movement among civilians.

## II. How Large Was It ?

The question of the movement's size is important because oppositional movements that hope to achieve their goals must mobilize people; they cannot depend on politicking at the top because they have little access to those circles. The size of a movement is hard to gauge and is not the only criterion by which it should be evaluated, but it is worthwhile to try to establish some rough estimates in regard to the anti-war movement. All kinds of guesses have been made — for example, I heard a prominent socialist intellectual say in the fall of 1969 that the anti-war movement then included a majority of the American people. To the extent that we can establish the movement's size with some rough accuracy, we are a step closer to being able to analyze the movement.

At the start, we should make clear what groups are excluded when we define the anti-war movement as comprising those people who believed the war was wrong and who took part in attempts to stop it. The first part of this definition excludes people, such as many officials of the Johnson administration after they left office, who had no quarrel with the war itself but came to feel it was unwinnable. It also excludes, for different reasons, people who made it harder for the government to carry on the war but who were not deliberately opposing the war by doing so. The airline machinists' strike of 1966, for example, as well as other strikes which broke through the Johnson wage-price guidelines, made the war harder to wage because they aggravated the wartime inflation and the balance-of-payments problem. It is tempting to label this normal strike activity as "objective" opposition to the war. But the same thing could be said with equal accuracy about the reluctance of taxpayers, of all classes, to pay for the war with increased taxes. (2) A definition of the anti-war movement that included nearly every American adult (including a great many who thought they supported the war) would be less than helpful.

The definition also excludes people who were opposed to the war but who took no part in efforts to stop it. In many cases these people had, not simply a passive aloofness from personal involvement in anti-war activity, but a strong desire to disassociate themselves from it. A poll taken in 1968, in fact, showed that among all those people who favored complete withdrawal from Vietnam a majority held a negative view of war protesters. (3) Understanding why this situation may have come about is one of our major tasks in analyzing the anti-war movement. In any case, it would be wrong to include these people in our estimate of the anti-war movement's size.

During the first stages of the Vietnam protest, the anti-war movement was fairly small. Perhaps a hundred thousand people took part in local demonstrations that were held in about sixty cities in the fall of 1965. (4) It would be fair to use that figure in describing the movement's approximate size at that time, since the demonstrations were virtually the only organized anti-war activity going on then. By the same token, by the spring of 1967 it was clear that the movement had grown dramatically. The April 15 marches in New York and San Francisco drew a combined turnout that approached a half-million. (5) Considering how hard it was for people in distant areas to travel to these demonstrations, we can say that the anti-war movement at that time numbered well over a million participants. Its size continued to grow, a fact that is made clear by the turnout for demonstrations in the fall of 1969. It is hard to estimate the number who took part in the Moratorium activities of mid-October 1969, since they were so numerous and scattered, but the November 15 marches in Washington and San Francisco may have drawn close to a million people altogether. (6) This would make a figure of two to three million appear to be a reasonable guess at the movement's size by this stage of the war. It is hard to say how much the movement grew during the next three years up to the signing of the Vietnam truce. By that time, mass demonstrations in and of themselves had become a relatively less important part of activity against the war. In addition, there

was a powerful lobby of liberal organizations working for an end to the war; it is hard to know whether to count all their members as participants in the anti-war movement. If we stick with our original definition, however, and define the movement as including those who took some part, directly, in efforts to stop the war, we might have a very rough figure of about four million people by the time America's direct military intervention in Vietnam ended.

What we have then, is a movement which, at its peak, comprised something like two per cent of the total population of the U.S. To say this is not to belittle the movement — four million persons is an impressively large number to be engaged in social protest — but to place it in perspective. As we will see later, the movement exerted an influence that went well beyond its size.

### III. What Was Its Class Composition?

This question can be separated into two questions: What elements of society were most inclined to oppose the war? and among those persons who opposed the war, which ones were most likely to oppose it actively, i.e. be part of the anti-war movement? These two questions have sharply distinct answers. According to the consistent findings of public opinion surveys, opposition to the war was highest among people with low incomes and low social status, i.e. for the most part, blue collar workers and their families. To give one example among many, a 1968 survey showed that 59 per cent of those of low "social position" favored a withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam compared with 40 per cent of those at an intermediate level and 31 per cent at high levels. Black people were more inclined to oppose the war than were whites, but even among whites the linkage between low income and opposition to the war was clear. The pattern shown by the surveys was reinforced by the voting in local Vietnam referendums such as those in Dearborn, Michigan, in San Francisco, and in Madison, Wisconsin. (7) The two exceptions to the generally high support given to the war by high-income people are that

Jews, of whatever income level, were inclined to oppose the war; and that people with two or more college degrees (usually professionals) were much more dovish than people with one college degree. (8)

When we come to the question of who took part in the anti-war movement, however, we get an entirely different picture. First, it can be verified by anyone who attended the large anti-war demonstrations that they were overwhelmingly white. The percentage of third world people who took part was almost certainly much less than their percentage in the population as a whole, not to speak of their percentage among the total number of persons who were opposed to the war. (9) This pattern only began to break down during the last few years of the war. Second, it is also a matter of empirical observation that the number of blue-collar working-class people who took part was relatively slight. This varied somewhat from one part of the country to another — it was markedly less true in the San Francisco Bay Area, with its tradition of working-class radicalism, than elsewhere (10) — but as a general description of the anti-war movement nationally it holds true.

Who did take part? The participation of high school and especially college students was most visible; clearly college students were the most numerous segment of the movement. Among adults, it is tempting to characterize the people involved in the movement as "middle class." This is a term that in its various usages has covered every stratum from low-level white-collar workers all the way up to the captains of industry (who are middle-class in the sense of not being a titled nobility). But to use this term would be to settle for less precision than is actually possible. For the most part there was little participation by either large or small businessmen in the anti-war movement. It is true that from 1968 on a growing segment of big business voiced strong reservations about the war, and that both Eugene McCarthy in 1968 and George McGovern in 1972 had wealthy backers. But business executives who took a direct role in the anti-war movement were few in number. As for small businessmen (the petit bourgeoisie), their political activism



The Pentagon, October 21, 1967.



...and a thousand or so as far as that part of the  
The only way to assess the achievement and failure of  
the anti-war movement is to look carefully at the movement  
in the explosion against the postponement of events in 1968

over the past several decades has been almost entirely of a right-wing variety; they were not a significant component of the anti-war movement.

The occupations that were over-represented in the anti-war movement, in relation to their size, were professional occupations. We can use the term "professionals" to describe such people as lawyers, doctors, teachers, writers, clergy, social workers, artists and musicians, librarians, and research scientists. They make up about one-eighth of the workforce. (11) The line between professionals and white-collar workers is not always clear (with regard to social workers, for example, or to teachers on the sub-college level) but it is at least possible to say that professionals, along with "borderline cases," were most involved in anti-war activity. For example, Richard Stout, who wrote a book depicting grass-roots involvement in the McCarthy campaign in 1968, took a survey of volunteer McCarthy leaders at the city, county, and state levels and found that about two-thirds were in professional occupations. While teachers accounted for nearly half the total, Stout added, "I believe that a broader sampling of volunteers below the nominal leaders would show higher percentages of physicians, lawyers, and clergymen than my figures." (12) The newspaper ads signed by teachers, writers, and others against the war, as well as the prominent participation in the anti-war movement by groups of teachers, clergy, lawyers, and medical workers, are further evidence of the role of professionals in the movement. Later in this essay we will have to confront the question of why professionals played the role that they did. For the present it is enough to keep in mind, while analyzing the impact which the anti-war movement was able to make, the fact that it had a distinctly limited class base.

#### IV. What Did the Anti-War Movement Accomplish?

The only way to assess the achievements and failures of the anti-war movement is to look carefully at the movement in its evolution, against the background of events in Indo-



china and in Washington. In analyzing what happened during the period between 1965 and 1973, it is useful to view the situation as a protracted contest between the anti-war movement and the leaders of the U.S. government, who throughout the period maintained an intention of forcibly imposing a pro-American regime on southern Vietnam. In seeing the situation in these terms, of course, we should keep in mind that not all the domestic constraints on Washington's ability to wage war can be credited to the anti-war movement. Strikes and resistance to tax increases have already been mentioned as examples of such constraints. In general, as the fighting in Indochina wore on, there was a growth of what we might call war-weariness, a reluctance to pay the costs associated with the war. In this light we have to note the example of the Korean war of 1950-53. Despite the lack of any organized anti-war movement to speak of (this was at the apex of McCarthyism), the burden of the Korean war was increasingly resented at home, and Eisenhower's election in 1952 was partly due to a belief that he could bring an end to the fighting. Still, it must be said that Washington emerged from Korea with a much more stable client regime than it appears to have now in Vietnam. In other words, direct American intervention in Vietnam was halted at a point short of anything that could plausibly be called "victory" for the U.S. (13) Moreover, even as we take the factor of war-weariness into account, we have to avoid considering it an entirely independent variable. Just as military authorities justify the suppression of dissent in the ranks by saying it hampers morale — and they are right — the same thing is true on the civilian front. The constant expression of opposition to the war cannot help but impair the willingness of people (even those who reject any identification with the war's opponents) to bear up under the burdens of war. Thus the anti-war movement had an indirect as well as a direct impact, and we have to keep that fact in mind as we go through a period-by-period analysis of the anti-war movement.

(1) When the Vietnam war formally began in 1960 with the founding of the National Liberation Front, the U. S. gov-

ernment was firmly committed to the maintenance of a "friendly" regime in Saigon. As the NLF expanded and strengthened itself during the first half of the 1960s, U.S. military aid grew steadily but very quietly. It did not involve American ground troops or heavy bombing. When Barry Goldwater suggested the use of tactical nuclear weapons in Vietnam in the 1964 elections, the Democrats used the issue against him quite effectively and portrayed President Johnson as something of a "peace candidate." During this period there was no appreciable protest movement against the war. The first Vietnam demonstration was apparently a small one called by the Youth Against War and Fascism in mid-1962. There were a few more in the fall of 1963, while the blatantly authoritarian Ngo Dinh Diem regime was still in power in Saigon, but hardly any other anti-war activity between that time and early 1965. Even when Johnson bombed North Vietnam in "response" to the manufactured incident in the Tonkin Gulf in August 1964, most people with reservations about the war were more concerned by the Goldwater candidacy than about what Johnson himself might do after being re-elected. Senators Wayne Morse and Ernest Gruening, who spoke out repeatedly against the war, did so in the absence of any real constituency in the public at large.

(2) The period between February and July of 1965 was a crucial period for American intervention. It was then that the Johnson administration, faced with the imminent collapse of the Saigon puppetry, began systematic bombing of both North and South Vietnam and committed American ground troops to battle. It was able to take these steps despite spirited opposition from an anti-war movement which came into being in the winter and spring. This initial protest was centered almost entirely on college campuses, especially among students and faculty in the liberal arts. It had two components. Faculty members' influence, felt especially through the teach-in movement, was vital in legitimizing student rejection of the war. But in itself the faculty protest tended to be channeled into polite debates in which scholars tried to persuade their colleagues in gov-

ernment that the war was mistaken. (14) In the student protest, which built on the participation of white students in the civil rights movement of the early 1960s, there was a sense of the need to build a mass movement which could force change from the outside, but the ability to create such a movement was lacking. Even on the campuses themselves, protesters were a very small minority.

Despite the prominence of the anti-war protest during this period, the administration was able to bring about a large-scale American intervention in the war without being seriously hampered by the anti-war movement. The main question we can ask about the anti-war movement's influence at this stage — and it is pure speculation — is whether the existence of a protest movement, no matter how small, helped force the administration to escalate its intervention by stages rather than by one potentially decisive blow. By the summer of 1965, according to the Pentagon Papers, the NLF had recovered from the initial impact of the American intervention and had resumed the military initiative. (15) Thus was set in motion the protracted spiral of gradual American escalation, with each step failing to bring the elusive victory sought by the American policy makers.

(3) From mid-1965 to the spring of 1967, as the U. S. intensified the bombing and increased its troop commitment to around 400,000 men, the anti-war movement established its staying power. The International Days of Protest in the fall of 1965, which drew a furious reaction from the government and the press, showed that the movement would persist even though the basic decision to enter the war had already been made. During the following year, even though the nationally-called demonstrations were sometimes disappointing in size, the movement grew. The most dramatic evidence of this growth was the many-fold expansion of SDS. Despite its leaders' confusion as to the exact role they should play in anti-war protest, SDS was very widely identified on campuses as the center of student opposition to the war — and on that basis it grew rapidly. The campuses were still the main focal point of the protest, but there were also organizations of non-university liberal profes-

sionals such as Clergy Concerned About Vietnam, Teachers for Peace, and the Lawyers Committee for Peace in Vietnam, all of which took part in the anti-war movement.

Especially among younger participants in the anti-war movement, prolongation of the war stimulated an ability to see the Vietnam conflict in a broad and radical perspective. In large part this stemmed from the influence of blacks. Although the anti-war movement was overwhelmingly white, it consisted in large measure of people who had gotten into activist politics initially through the civil rights movement. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee had been especially important in this respect. As SNCC moved toward adoption of its Black Power perspective in 1966, it also became more and more open in condemning the war and identifying the cause of the Vietnamese with the cause of American blacks. This in turn encouraged a tendency within the anti-war movement to oppose the war, not as friendly critics of the government, but from the point of view of "the enemy." In a sense, this was the basic springboard from which radicalization proceeded within the anti-war movement.

The effect of the anti-war opposition on government policy during this period is unclear. However, the continuing protest was almost certainly a factor in the government's cautious approach to mobilizing the nation's resources in support of the war effort. (16) Draft calls increased but there was not even a partial mobilization of the reserves or National Guard, and the day when taxes would have to be increased to pay for the war was postponed. The administration's attempt at informal wage controls fell before the airline machinists' strike of 1966 and was not resumed. Popular support for the war, no matter what the public-opinion surveys showed, was simply not strong enough for the administration to ask an all-out commitment from the American people.

(4) The period from the spring of 1967 to the aftermath of the Tet Offensive in early 1968 was the anti-war movement's first major offensive. The movement grew in two directions: by attracting a sizeable base among liberal

professionals for the first time (Martin Luther King's anti-war speeches in 1967 symbolized the emergence of a major anti-war base among liberals) and by attracting a rapidly growing number of culturally alienated young people. Both of these constituencies were evident in the astonishingly large demonstrations of April 15, 1967.

At the same time as the anti-war movement underwent this growth, however, it developed divergent political strains that were to mark its course over the following six years. By mid-1967, at both ends of the anti-war movement's political spectrum, there was a disillusionment with mass demonstrations as the primary vehicle for ending the war. While a few groups, notably the Socialist Workers Party, continued to see the mobilizations as the lynchpin of anti-war politics and continued to provide leadership for them, there were large-scale defections from this strategy. On one side there was a movement for a peace candidate (who turned out to be Sen. McCarthy) within the Democratic Party. This thrust was led by liberal professionals, who were in many cases pushed to the left by the war but who stopped short of a break with the normal channels of American politics.

On the other side, there was a growing search among campus anti-war protesters, spearheaded by SDS, to find more immediate and drastic ways of fighting against the war. These ways included both draft resistance and disruptive protests against "university complicity" with the war; blockades of placement interviews with Dow Chemical or military recruiters were a common form of this disruption. The slogans "Not With My Life You Don't," "Resist," and "From Protest to Resistance" summarized the new thrust of the campus anti-war movement. They reflected, not simply a new strategy for opposing the war, but a deepening radicalization of the protesters themselves. The students involved were largely from professional families, but either consciously or unconsciously were deeply dissatisfied with the quality of their lives. The turn to draft refusal or to protests against military targets that were close to home expressed an understanding that there was some kind

of tie-in between their own malaise and American imperialism. This tendency in the anti-war movement can be called the New Left tendency. In its choice of tactics it was influenced both by traditional pacifism and by a growing romantic identification with third world revolutionaries. This fragile amalgam was evident in the demonstrations marking "Stop the Draft Week" in Oakland, California in October 1967, in which normal civil disobedience alternated with attempts to "seize the streets" by blocking traffic. It was also evident at the Pentagon vigil of October 21, 1967, in which New Leftists took part both in civil disobedience and in attempts to get inside the Pentagon by rushing at lightly guarded doors. (17)

Throughout 1967 the thrust of the anti-war movement (all segments of it) was immensely sharpened by the continued success of the NLF in resisting American military might. The administration's claims of a certain victory began to seem more and more hollow as escalation continued to produce no tangible results other than the weekly "body counts" of "enemy dead" (which were counterbalanced by the growing list of American dead). However, it was the Tet Offensive of February 1968 which conclusively gave the lie to the official American claim that victory was near. The shock effects produced by Tet led to a major alteration of the administration's course in the war. Johnson turned down the military's request for 200,000 more troops for the war, cut off the bombing of part of North Vietnam, and entered into negotiations with North Vietnam and (more significantly, since the U.S. had never recognized it as a party to the war) the NLF. This response to Tet did not signify that American policy makers had abandoned the war, since they simultaneously stepped up the terror-bombing of most of Indochina, but it did represent a partial retreat on both the military and political fronts.

The natural question to ask here is: What role did the anti-war movement play in this retreat? Thomas Powers, whose book on the anti-war movement climaxes with the post-Tet decisions, claims that the movement was responsible for forcing the administration to change. "The oppo-

sition often seemed pitifully small compared to the power of the presidency," he summarizes, "but in the end it prevailed." (18) To credit the anti-war movement with that degree of power, however, seems too ambitious. It assumes that every domestic obstacle to further escalation of the war — including opposition to tax increases, mobilization of the reserves, and wage controls — was wholly the result of the anti-war movement. This assumption is flattering but not plausible.

A more likely assessment of the anti-war movement's contribution to the policy switch is that it played an indirect role which was felt in two main ways. The first is in the intangible contribution which the movement, in its three years of protests, had made to the growth of war-weariness and the undermining of civilian morale. More particularly, the street demonstrations, draft resistance, and disruptive protests of 1967 had contributed to a general social divisiveness that worried many decision makers. They were especially concerned because so many of those protesting and disrupting were (metaphorically and actually) their own sons and daughters, not the children of the poor and the black. These demonstrations exacerbated the social tensions caused by the war, by contributing to the widely held image of a nation in turmoil. (The summer of 1967 saw riots by blacks in several scores of American cities, in which more than eighty people died; this was also the time when "hippies" emerged as a visible and widely discussed phenomenon.) In internal memoranda written in early 1968 to discuss the government's options, civilian Pentagon officials used phrases like "provoking a domestic crisis of unprecedented proportions" (19) and "tearing apart the social and political fabric of our own country" (20) to discuss the effects of an all-out U. S. effort to win in Vietnam. The second main impact of the anti-war movement at this time was through the electoral process, and again the impact was indirect. The Tet Offensive came just before the start of the 1968 presidential primaries, and it gave a tremendous boost to the protest candidacy of Eugene McCarthy. When McCarthy came unexpectedly close to winning in New

Hampshire and was shown by polls to be a certain winner in Wisconsin, the Democratic administration's ability to hold onto its Vietnam policy was badly weakened; Johnson's response was to both alter the policy (keeping as much of it as he could) and renounce his candidacy. The interesting thing about the McCarthy campaign is that, while it got its grass-roots impetus from people who saw it as a vehicle for opposing the war, (21) it got its votes from all across the political spectrum. Among McCarthy voters in New Hampshire, for example, those who were dissatisfied with Johnson for not fighting harder in Vietnam actually outnumbered those who wanted a withdrawal from the war. (22) Because of the configuration of the Tet Offensive and the primaries, those anti-war activists who made the McCarthy crusade their own were able to exert a limited but very real leverage on the government's Vietnam policy.

(5) During the rest of the Johnson presidency, there was fragmentation and a partial lull in the anti-war movement. For the liberal Democratic wing, the important question was who would get the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. Even after McCarthy lost out to Vice-President Humphrey at the Chicago convention, it is probable that the bulk of McCarthy's supporters remained preoccupied with the election, whatever the results of their individual agonizings over whether to support Humphrey as the least of three evils. Within the New Left tendency there was even greater fragmentation. After Johnson's stepping down in March, a great many New Leftists came to believe that the U.S. had decided to leave the war, and that the war in itself was no longer a radical issue. This inclination coincided with the rise of black student protests over racial issues on integrated as well as all-black campuses, and from the spring of 1968 until its disintegration in mid-1969 the main thrust of SDS was to be support for black student demands. On the other hand, the planning of the demonstrations at the Chicago convention in August had a distinctly New Left cast. The purpose was to disrupt the convention and in the process to discredit the Democratic Party leadership, two objectives that were amply fulfilled even though the number



of demonstrators was probably no greater than 5,000. Despite the ripple effect of the Chicago street actions, and despite the fact that there had been large local anti-war protests in New York, Chicago, and other cities in the spring of 1968, there were no mass demonstrations against the war in the fall. Humphrey, Nixon, and Wallace were able to sidestep the war issue without being called on it. This was an example of the anti-war movement's chronic inability to maintain a strong independent force during election campaigns, true in 1966, 1970, and 1972 as well as in 1968. The one notable feature of the small local demonstrations held in the fall of '68 was the participation of a large number of active-duty servicemen, perhaps a thousand or more altogether. (23) Ironically, late 1968 was the time that protests against U.S. intervention in Vietnam reached perhaps their greatest heights in such other advanced capitalist countries as Britain and Japan. (24)

(6) In the early months of the Nixon presidency, the exact nature of his famous "secret plan" to end the war was not yet clear. That is, it was not yet made clear that his plan included a long-term stabilization of the Saigon regime — backed by as much American firepower, over as long a period, as domestic political pressure would allow him to provide. When this became evident during 1969, the anti-war movement swelled dramatically in size and activity. There was a marked influx of moderate-liberal Democrats (including some trade-union leaders) now that it was a Republican president's war, and an even greater influx of young people. It was a mass movement on the campuses, and it was starting to draw young people across class lines — in community colleges and working class high schools, for example, and more generally through the spread of youth culture well beyond the "middle class." The fall offensive of the anti-war movement was highlighted by the October 15 Moratorium (planned primarily by liberals) and by the November 15 Mobilizations in Washington and San Francisco (planned by a standard anti-war coalition including Left groups such as the Socialist Workers Party). Participants in local Moratorium activities undoubtedly num-

bered in the millions, while the Washington and San Francisco marches may have drawn a combined total approaching one million persons, an almost incredible number. (25)

The result of the pressure thus exerted on government policy was a limited advance for the anti-war movement. Nixon was not forced to order immediate withdrawal, nor even to adopt a precise timetable for withdrawal. But it seems as though the protest did limit the administration's options in the war, at least in regard to the use of American ground troops. Johnson had not actually reduced the U.S. troop level in Vietnam, while Nixon now started to. Nixon also took steps to try to dispose of the draft issue which further crimped his ability to use combat troops. (His tinkering with the draft climaxed in its total abolition in 1972; in the light of the fact that the draft had operated continuously since 1948, and that the present "volunteer army" has had severe problems in recruitment, the ending of the draft must be taken as a victory for the anti-war movement.) Resistance among GIs, which got much of its impetus from the anti-war ferment among civilians, also placed limits on the administration's ability to make effective use of its ground troops during this period.

Throughout the 1969-70 academic year the level of anti-war activity on campuses was greater than ever before. SDS was not a factor in the protest: after its split in the summer of 1969, the two SDS "national offices" were run by groups which, respectively, chose to shun the mass student movement in order to build a small revolutionary cadre (the Weathermen) or to build a program around student support for the demands of campus workers (Progressive Labor). Yet the New Left tendency in the anti-war movement was very much alive, as shown by the large number of protests against Reserve Officer Training Corps programs, military research, and military recruitment. (A number of the country's most prestigious universities dropped their ROTC programs, although new programs were instituted at a number of lesser-known schools and the net effect on the military's supply of junior officers is not clear.) The campus protests climaxed in the nationwide

student strike that took place in early May 1970 when Nixon sent U.S. troops into Cambodia. Literally hundreds of campuses were closed down, either by striking students or by worried administrators. It was by far the largest student protest in U.S. history.

The Cambodian invasion ended in a concrete victory for the anti-war movement, since Congress passed the Cooper-Church amendment forbidding the future use of American troops in Cambodia or Laos. The chain of cause-and-effect here is not clear, but the most plausible guess may be the following. At this stage of the war there were a number of mainstream liberal organizations (e.g. Americans for Democratic Action, the American Civil Liberties Union, and John Gardner's new Common Cause) which were strongly against the war. So were a number of media commentators, liberal trade-union leaders, and businessmen. This anti-war constituency had the political power, if galvanized into a strong enough action, to force at least a partial limitation of the war onto Congress. The magnitude of the student revolt in May 1970 created a large enough shock wave to bring all of this political pressure to bear, and Congress did pass the Cooper-Church amendment. This vote was not a complete repudiation of the war — the McGovern-Hatfield amendment for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam failed even to clear the Senate — but it represented a successful whittling-away of the administration's options in the war.

(7) In the wake of the unprecedented protests of late 1969 and early 1970, and in light of the continuing resistance among GIs, the administration moved fairly rapidly to reduce and then eliminate the direct role of American ground troops in Vietnam. By the time of the NLF and North Vietnamese spring offensive in 1972, there were not enough U.S. troops remaining in the country for use in combat. Starting in mid-1970, the administration placed primary reliance on the air war. The logic of American bombing in the South, which all along was to drive the peasantry out of its traditional homes and into Saigon-controlled cities, was carried to all but its furthest extreme. Gradually, however,

Nixon's ability to use American pilots was taken away. Anti-war measures in Congress came increasingly close to passage, with the traditionally pro-war House of Representatives voting in favor of a funding cut-off in 1972. It is likely that Congress would have overridden presidential vetoes and ended the war in 1973 if the administration had not signed a peace treaty in January of that year. As it was, the administration's attempt to prolong the bombing of Cambodia was foiled in mid-1973 by a Congressional threat to cut off all funding for the executive branch. Military aid to Saigon and Pnom Penh was continued, but at least the direct use of American forces was eliminated as a factor in the Indochina fighting.

In the background of the squeeze applied to Nixon's policy by Congress was the continuing pressure of the anti-war movement. The numbers of people involved in demonstrations were never as great as in the fall of 1969 or May 1970, but they were still large. National demonstrations in Washington and San Francisco on April 24, 1971, probably drew a half-million or more people. (26) They were immediately followed by an encampment of anti-war veterans, organized by the new Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW); and then by the May Day protests, an effort to tie up traffic and disrupt government business in Washington. May Day was the last nationally organized effort of what could be called the New Left tendency in the anti-war movement. Several tens of thousands took part, and over ten thousand people were arrested. A year later, when the U. S. mined Haiphong Harbor and resumed bombing of North Vietnam in response to the spring offensive, there were sustained local demonstrations all across the country. A massive protest was planned for the Republican national convention in San Diego in August 1972, and presumably it was a factor in the Republicans' last-minute decision to hold their convention in Miami Beach instead. Nixon's second inauguration in January 1973 was marked by a large number of demonstrators, perhaps 100,000 or more, demanding that he sign the peace treaty.

The demonstrations during this period were significant in that they showed a distinct broadening of the class base of the anti-war movement. This broadening was evidenced by a Chicano Moratorium against the war in Los Angeles in August 1970, which drew some 20,000 persons, and also by the fact that the April 24, 1971 demonstrations appeared to draw more Third World and white working-class participants than previous national protests had drawn. (27) The emergence of the VVAW, which included a great many working-class members, as an integral part of the anti-war movement was highly significant. There was also increasingly vocal opposition to the war from within the trade-union movement. It was a distinct minority within the AFL-CIO, but it still represented a large crack in the monolith of trade-union support for tough cold-war policies. (28) Anti-war statements by union leaders, even if they didn't lead directly to the participation of rank-and-file members in demonstrations, still helped to create an atmosphere where more working-class people would feel at ease in taking part.

The terms on which the U.S. ended its direct military role in Indochina were ambiguous. It was a tribute to the short-term success of the Nixon strategy that, five years after Lyndon Johnson's forced abdication, the Thieu regime in Saigon still stood. At the same time, the fact that all the bombing had not eliminated the NLF as a political and military force in the South showed that the administration's policy had fallen far short of anything that could be called a victory. Similarly, the fact that even as he protracted the Vietnam fighting the president moved to open up normal relations with China was highly significant. It represented a recognition on his part that the U.S. government had neither the military power nor the base of popular support at home that would be needed to maintain an energetic anti-Communist crusade. Where Johnson had tried to buy time for his Vietnam policy by evoking a crusader's zeal, and had failed, Nixon was forced to buy time by promising a "full generation of peace." Even as he spoke of the need to honor American commitments in Vietnam, he prepared

to abandon a set of older and firmer commitments in Taiwan. It was as an architect of permanent "peace," not as a fighter against Communism, that Nixon was able to win re-election in 1972. Not entirely, but in part, the political realities that forced him to take this course were the result of what the anti-war movement had done since 1965.

Summarizing this chronological account, we can find both limitations and accomplishments in the work of the anti-war movement. It is clear that, had American intervention in Vietnam been brief and relatively inexpensive (as was the Dominican Republic invasion of April 1965, for example), there would have been no anti-war movement capable of affecting the outcome. The movement built itself up over a period of years, and only the tenacious resistance of the Vietnamese created a situation in which the domestic anti-war movement was able to have an effect. Even as it was, the movement was never able to mobilize enough people behind its banner to force an end to the war. What it did accomplish was more modest, though nonetheless real. These achievements can be listed somewhat schematically, as follows :

First, both through its constantly reiterated arguments and through its very existence over a period of years, it weakened the government's ability to mobilize the American people behind the war. The movement affected not only those people who considered it part of the solution to the war, but also those people who saw the movement as part of the problem created by the war. In both instances, the movement helped to create a domestic political climate in which, from 1968 on, the government had to give at least the appearance of moving toward an end to American participation in the war.

Second, the anti-war movement helped to weaken the American military. It helped to foment dissension in the armed forces and thereby make the military a less reliable instrument in the hands of American policy makers. It provoked the elimination, at least temporarily, of the military draft for the first time in a quarter-century. It brought the

ROTC program under attack and thereby threatened the military's primary source of junior officers. In general, by being proved right about the prospects for an American triumph in Vietnam, while the military was proved wrong, the movement helped to bring the military into discredit — if not with Congress, which still rubber-stamps military appropriations, at least with a large portion of the public.

Third, the movement helped to weaken the pervasive ideology of anti-Communism as a justification for all sorts of interventions in the internal affairs of foreign countries. Large sectors of the anti-war movement, especially among the younger participants, openly identified with the Vietnamese who were fighting the American government. In doing so they helped to break down the stereotyped cold war image of "the Free World" versus "the Communists." The Nixon administration's partial rapprochement with China, whatever it may have shown about Chinese foreign policy, reflected a realization by the U.S. government that anti-Communism had lost much of its domestic appeal.

Fourth, in a number of intangible ways the anti-war movement, by maintaining its presence for so long, helped to radicalize a great many of the people who took part in it or were touched by it. An understanding that the war was part of a pattern of U.S. imperialism was widespread in the movement by the late 1960s. So was an understanding that the needs of a militarized corporate economy require the imposition of severe constraints on individual lives, as in the channeling built into the selective service system. And so was the broader understanding that there is no "national interest" of all Americans, but rather there are contending interests of different segments of the population. This radicalization may have been the main difference in the domestic aspects of the Korean and Indochina wars: there was much resentment at the Korean war, but with no self-conscious movement opposing it, the experience of the war moved few people to the left. Through its protracted confrontation with the makers of American foreign policy, the anti-war movement played a vital educational role, both for itself and for millions of people outside it.

## V. Could the Anti-War Movement Have Done More Than It Did?

This is a haunting question, especially when we consider the incredible amount of damage that Washington was able to create in Indochina in the years after the anti-war movement first started trying to end the war in 1965. In answering it, however, we should be aware of conjuring up mythical alternatives (e.g. mass sabotage or a general strike) that were not available to the anti-war movement because repressive mechanisms were too effective or because the basis of popular support did not exist. The real question we must answer here is not whether the anti-war movement chose "correct tactics," but why its class base was so narrow. It was the failure to draw more working-class people to its ranks that limited the political growth of the anti-war movement, even as it attained majority support on college campuses and involved a very respectable proportion of the professional class.

In turn, the lack of working-class participation in the anti-war movement has to be looked at from two angles. What were the barriers within the working class to involvement in the anti-war movement? And did the nature of the anti-war movement make it hard for working class people to join it? Taking the first question, we have to realize that the Vietnam war came at a time when the American working class was, for the most part, in a state of relative quiescence. In the late 1940s and early '50s the combined forces of "responsible" union leaders and federal and state agencies had all but eliminated a self-conscious Left as a factor in working-class activity for the first time since the start of industrialization in the nineteenth century. This repression and the consolidation of business-unionism had thereby helped to instill a mistrust of "subversive" ideas, backed by a healthy fear of the consequences of expressing such ideas. Even mass involvement in mainstream politics was not common. Union leaders had a powerful position within the Democratic Party, but theirs was an influence wielded from on high: there was no wide-scale participa-



tion by working-class people, except as a potential voting bloc which union leaders sought to direct.

In these circumstances, when the Vietnam war intensified in the mid-1960s there was no center of potential working-class opposition to the war. The official trade-union movement, as represented by the AFL-CIO leadership, was militantly pro-war, and even reformist unions like the United Automobile Workers supported the war at first. There were no other working-class institutions outside of the trade unions that were willing or able to serve as vehicles for protest against the war. In addition, it has to be remembered that professionals generally have far more autonomy in their jobs than do either blue-collar or white-collar workers, and therefore have much greater leeway for expressing "controversial" ideas. The whole socialization of working class people, in school and church as well as on the job, is geared toward keeping them in line and penalizing disrespect for authority, far more than is the socialization of professionals. As for college students, eccentric behavior from goldfish swallowing to phonebooth stuffing has long been accepted and tolerated from them, and they have more leeway than anyone else in society to become involved in social causes. This is not to play down the scale or significance of the role professionals and students played in the Vietnam protest, but only to say that they had to overcome fewer obstacles than did working-class people who might have taken part.

The question of whether the nature of the anti-war movement itself impeded the participation of working-class people, and therefore weakened the movement's potential impact, is more complicated. On the one hand we have to remember that some of the aspects of the anti-war movement that were most offensive, at least to older working-class people — its absolutist moral arguments, its cultural alienation from society, its readiness to identify with "the enemy" — were features that heightened the movement's appeal to a great many young people. On the other hand, there were aspects of class snobbery in the movement that

had no function whatever. These included a tendency among many within the movement toward moral condemnation of anyone (GIs and defense plant workers as well as decision-makers) who was "implicated" in the war. It was a safe condemnation to make, since students were at least temporarily sheltered from the draft and few students or professionals are directly dependent on military spending for their subsistence. There was also a tendency for people in the movement to write off blue-collar workers either as hopeless conservatives, patterned on Archie Bunker, or as well-meaning but ignorant people who had to be taught that the war was harmful. Finally, there was a tendency to oppose the war in a tone of moralistic outrage rather than in a tone of solidarity between exploited people in America and exploited people in other countries. (For a great many people in the anti-war movement, the only sense of solidarity was with glorified images of national leaders such as Mao Tse-Tung and Ho Chi Minh.) This was an accurate reflection of the anti-war movement's class base, but it was an obstacle to the movement's reaching out to the most oppressed parts of the American population.

Thus, there were tendencies within the anti-war movement that hindered its expansion. At the same time, as we have seen, even with the most impeccably "correct line" the movement would have encountered serious barriers within American working-class culture to the broadening of the movement's class composition. For the anti-war movement to have attracted a large number of working-class people would have required, not just education about the war itself — which a great many blue-collar workers already opposed — but a long process of political galvanization. And this process, by which working-class people might have come to take seriously their potential for acting directly on political questions, was not one that could have been brought about from outside the working class itself. Thus, given the fact that the anti-war movement's initial base was among students and professionals, the course it took over the years was broadly speaking the course best suited for exerting the greatest resistance to the Indochina

war. Under the circumstances, it is very hard to see how the anti-war movement could have been basically different from what it was. Rather than lamenting its failures, we should take pride in its limited but very real successes.

### Some Final Thoughts

It is hard to describe the political legacy of the anti-war movement. On the one side, it is clear that the legacy includes a greatly expanded political influence for liberal professionals. This fact was most evident in the 1972 Democratic convention, since George McGovern spoke for this constituency more than for any other. Even after McGovern's defeat in the 1972 election, the structural reforms that his forces had instituted in the Democratic Party have by no means been wholly reversed. These reforms took a sizeable degree of power away from traditional patronage-minded politicians and trade-union leaders and transferred it primarily to activist professionals. The political strength shown over the past few years by the ecology movement is another indication of the greater self-confidence and power enjoyed by liberal reform elements in society, based most widely among professionals. Similarly, the relative success of Congressional liberals in stalling the Nixon administration's attempted throttling of federal social-welfare programs is significant. Pressure for the retention of these programs has come, not just from the "clients" (who often are too weak politically to affect the outcome), but from the professionals who staff the programs and whose own livelihood depends on them. In all these ways professionals, as a social class with interests that are distinct from those of the capitalists, are making their weight felt politically. In large part, this thrust represents a carry-over from the role they played in the effort to end the Indochina war.

For those of us who consider ourselves socialists, and for whom the Vietnam war revealed problems that went to the very heart of the capitalist system, the liberal resurgence cannot be accepted as the most important long-term legacy of the anti-war movement. The question we are

faced with is whether, and in what ways, the anti-war movement helped to lay the groundwork for a viable socialist movement in the U. S. Clearly such a movement does not exist today — the organized Left has been almost totally irrelevant to the debates over Watergate, food prices, and the “energy crisis” over the past year — but the question has to do with long-term prospects rather than the immediate situation. In three main ways, we can say that the possibilities of a strong socialist movement were greatly enhanced by the struggle against the war.

First, growing largely out of the anti-war movement and the radicalization which it engendered in many of its participants, the word “socialism” is becoming a commonly used term in a way it was not in the 1950s and early '60s. Before Vietnam the two main Left groups, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, tended to mute their ultimate programs in favor of working for liberal reforms, often within the framework of supporting liberal Democratic candidates; other groups which did espouse socialism were too small to matter. The past few years have seen the proliferation and expansion of avowedly socialist groups, as well as the emergence of probably tens of thousands of independent socialists. At the very least there exists a loosely defined socialist intellectual community that is many times larger than before the Indochina war.

Second, in a number of ways the struggle over the war helped open up the possibility of independent working-class political activism. In this respect the partial broadening of the anti-war movement's class base toward the end of the war was a hopeful sign; even more important was the mass resistance among predominantly working-class GIs to military authority. Moreover, the anti-war movement was able to make significant splits over the war issue in both the trade-union leadership and the Catholic Church. These are two institutions that at times have each been able to act monolithically to smother political dissent among working-class people. In general the erosion of extreme anti-communism, in the working class as well as other sectors of

society, represents a weakening of one of the most important grounds on which the rulers of America have asked for unquestioning loyalty from the American people.

The third element to be considered here is that an increasing number of people, most of whom came out of the anti-war movement, have been doing left-wing political work in a working-class context. The concrete forms that this work has taken — community newspapers, workplace newsletters, rank-and-file caucuses in unions, health projects, tenant unions, food co-ops, and others — are small and often quite fragile. But the important thing is that, slowly, centers of independent political activism are being created in the working class.

Returning finally to the question of mass working-class participation in a movement such as the struggle against the Vietnam war, we have to say that it did not happen this time, but the conditions for its happening in the future may be in the process of being created. Around the time the anti-war movement first got started in 1965, a number of people in SDS were saying that the movement would be unable to stop the Vietnam war, but that with persistence and long-term work a much broader movement might grow up that would be capable of stopping "the seventh war from now." That remains to be seen.

#### Footnotes

(1) Carl Davidson, "A Decade of Antiwar Struggle," The Guardian, September 12, 1973.

(2) A Gallup poll in 1967 showed 70% opposed to the idea of raising taxes to help pay for the war. Milton J. Rosenberg, Sidney Verba, and Philip E. Converse, Vietnam and the Silent Majority (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 40-41.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 45.

(4) Based on estimates in The Militant, October 25 and November 29, 1965.

(5) The Militant, April 24, 1967, estimated between

400,000 and 500,000 in New York and close to 100,000 in San Francisco.

(6) The Militant, November 28, 1969, estimated 800,000 in Washington and 250,000 in San Francisco. The Washington police chief gave a figure of only 250,000 in that city, but admitted that his estimate was "modest." Washington Post, November 16, 1969.

(7) An excellent survey of this evidence is Harlan Hahn, "Dove Sentiment Among Blue-Collar Workers," in Dissent, XVII (May-June 1970), 202-205. Rosenberg et al., Vietnam and the Silent Majority is also helpful, as is an article by Richard F. Hamilton, "A Research Note on the Mass Support for 'Tough' Military Alternatives," American Sociological Review, XXXIII (June 1968), 439-45.

(8) Rosenberg et al., Vietnam and the Silent Majority.

(9) Even in the April 24, 1971 demonstration in Washington, which was considered to have drawn a higher proportion of third world people than previous marches, a survey by Washington Post reporters found that 95 per cent of the participants were white. Washington Post, April 25, 1971.

(10) For example, in the April 15, 1967 march in San Francisco, the trade-union contingent (mainly longshoremen) made up perhaps a tenth of the march. The Militant, April 24, 1967. This was a remarkably high proportion by the normal standards of the anti-war movement.

(11) "Professional and technical" occupations accounted for 10.8 million jobs in the first quarter of 1971, out of a total employment of 78.5 million. Martin Oppenheimer, "What Is the New Working Class?," New Politics, X (Fall 1972), p. 31.

(12) Richard T. Stout, People (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 127. His survey (with husband's occupation listed for women leaders who listed none of their own) showed: college professor or administrator, 30.7%; high school or elementary teacher or administrator, 13.7%; law, 11.4%; medicine and dentistry, 5.0%; clergy, 4.6%; business and banking, 8.8%; engineering and research (two categories that should have been separated since engineers and re-

search scientists behave differently politically), 7.2%; arts, communications, publishing, 1.3%; students, 9.2%; and miscellaneous, 8.1%.

(13) The Korean stalemate could be called a "victory," since the initial goal of resurrecting the Syngman Rhee government in Seoul was achieved, even though the U. S. did not succeed in conquering North Korea as it tried to do.

(14) For a critique of this thrust of the Vietnam dissent see William Appleman Williams, "Pseudo-Debate in the Teach-In: Criticism Contained," in Louis Menashe and Ronald Radosh, eds., Teach-ins: U. S. A. (New York: Praeger, 1967), pp. 187-89. See also parallel analyses by Anatol Rappaport, Joan Wallach Scott, and Stanley Diamond in *ibid.*, pp. 173-82, 190-93, and 207-9, and James Gilbert, "The Teach-in: Protest or Cooptation," in Studies on the Left, V (Summer 1965), 73-81.

(15) The Pentagon Papers (Senator Gravel edition, Boston: Beacon Press), Vol. IV, p. 21.

(16) Johnson is quoted as telling a group of Pentagon people in 1966, when they advocated the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong, "I have one more problem for your computer. Will you feed into it how long it will take 500,000 angry Americans to climb that White House wall and lynch their president if he does something like that?" Quoted in Focal Point (newsletter of the Indochina Peace Campaign), September 15/October 1, 1973.

(17) See The Movement, November 1967 (special issue on the Oakland protests); Connections (Madison, Wisconsin, November 1967, special issue on the Dow Chemical protests at the University of Wisconsin); and Mike Goldfield, "Power at the Pentagon," New Left Notes, October 30, 1967. This is not to say that the same people were necessarily involved in both types of protest. But both types were associated with the still somewhat undefined New Left, and both represented efforts to disrupt the normal functioning of the military, rather than simply register a protest.

(18) Thomas Powers, The War at Home: Vietnam and the American People, 1964-1968 (New York: Grossman, 1973), p. xix.

(19) Pentagon Papers (Gravel edition), Vol. IV, p. 564.

(20) Townsend Hoopes, The Limits of Intervention (New York: David McKay, 1969), p. 195, quoting a memorandum he wrote as Under Secretary of the Air Force in March 1968, addressed to Defense Secretary Clark Clifford.

(21) See Stout, People, on the grass-roots McCarthy workers.

(22) Rosenberg et al., Vietnam and the Silent Majority, p. 49.

(23) The Militant, November 8, 1968.

(24) The Militant, November 8, 1968, reported demonstrations of 100,000 in London and a total of 800,000 in different cities in Japan.

(25) There is no way to gauge accurately the number of people who took part in the Moratorium activities on November 15. A couple of rough indicators are that around 100,000 people took part in a rally in Boston and that in New York City around 90 per cent of the city's high school students and a solid majority of their teachers stayed away from school. New York Times, Nov. 16, 1969, pp. 19-20.

(26) The Militant, May 7, 1971, estimated over 500,000 in Washington and over 300,000 in San Francisco. Washington police estimated 175,000 in that city. Washington Post, April 25, 1971.

(27) The Militant, September 11, 1970, May 7, 1971; Washington Post, April 25, 1971.

(28) For a good account of the emergence of trade-union opposition to the war see Philip Foner, American Labor and the Indochina War, New York: International Publishers, 1971.



# Myths and Truths

Nguyen Khac Vien

A REVIEW OF FRANCES FITZGERALD'S FIRE IN THE LAKE: THE AMERICANS AND THE VIETNAMESE IN VIETNAM, Boston: Atlantic - Little Brown, 1972 (hardcover): New York: Vintage, 1973 (paper).

## I. WAR AND PEACE IN VIET NAM

Frances Fitzgerald has seen a lot and read a lot, and Fire in the Lake has the double merit of being at the same time a vivid report and a well-documented historical study. It is certainly one of the most interesting books ever written on Viet Nam.

The author is conversant with South Vietnamese realities, at least those of the Saigon regime and those of Washington's policy. In a lucid and crisp style, supported by solid documents, she destroys one by one all the myths of American official propaganda :

In trying to persuade the American public to support the war in Vietnam, they (American government officials) invested twenty-five years of political rhetoric in the establishment of certain propositions about the nature of the area (South-east Asia) . . . Vietnam was thought to be composed of two countries : a) North Vietnam, which was Communist and therefore intent upon invading the South; and b) South Vietnam which was "a member of the Free World family striving to preserve its independence from Communism." (p. 33)

A short recalling of history, covering past centuries as well as the evolution of the national struggle against the

---

\* Dr. Nguyen Khac Vien, scholar and physician, is responsible for North Vietnamese foreign language publications and editor of Vietnamese Studies. Born into a scholar-gentry family in 1913, Dr. Vien went to France in 1937 to study medicine. Remaining in France during World War II, he became active in the Vietnamese independence movement there. He also became a part of the Left and intellectual community there and wrote for many French journals on Indochina. Among his publications available in French are Kim Van Kieu, a translation into French of Vietnam's greatest traditional poetry; Experiences Vietnamiennes, a collection of articles (selections from which are being published in English by the Indochina Resource Center); and contributions to Le Tresor de l'Homme, a collection of children's stories. This article is reprinted from VIETNAM COURIER, #16, Sept. 1973, Hanoi, Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

French, easily demolishes the oft-repeated theme of the "two Vietnams" of American propaganda.

Concerning the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation, Frances Fitzgerald directly counters the lies of American officials and such "specialists" as Douglas Pike who "tend merely to support the claims of State Department propagandists that the NLF used foreign methods of organization in order to coerce a passive and generally apolitical peasantry." (p. 177) Her rejoinder :

In many regions, "the Viet Cong" were simply the villagers themselves; to "eliminate the Viet Cong" meant to eliminate the villages, if not the villagers themselves, an entire social structure and a way of life. (p. 374)

She also denounces the barbarity of the "pacification" strategy, already applied by Westmoreland but intensified to its last limits by Nixon, a strategy which simply consists in removing from the countryside all those people who could not be put under military occupation. (p. 376)

Frances Fitzgerald has seen through the nature of the Saigon regime, which is presented by official propagandists as the "legitimate, national government of South Viet Nam" facing the foreign-guided "Communists." The Nguyen Van Thieu regime is thus described :

Created, financed and defended by Americans, the Saigon regime was less a government than an act of the American will — an artificial military bureaucracy . . . American-supported governments corresponded to no internal political forces. (p. 317)

She devotes a whole chapter to ridiculing the Saigon-style elections, in fact mounted by the Americans to serve their own internal propaganda (p. 323), and describes corruption as the raison d'être of the Nguyen Van Thieu regime (p. 351). She has no illusions about those marionettes, those

"bad puppets," from Ngo Dinh Diem to Nguyen Van Thieu. She knows that Nguyen Van Thieu, like almost all the generals who now command the Saigon army, had served the French and has been engaged in illicit traffic through the agency of his wife. With those ignorant mercenaries at the head of the regime, there is first of all "a total divorce between knowledge and power," (p. 251) and especially a congenital inability to offer the country any sort of political solution.

All the Vietnamese generals had to do was to deliver a stable government and an effective pacification program — the United States would do the rest. (p. 275)

The author also knows the pro-American politicians, so-called opponents of the regime: Phan Quang Dan, Dang Van Sung, Tran Van Tuyen...

They have had no real influence and provide no political alternative. (p. 241)

The internal logic of American policy is depicted as necessarily leading to genocide, the total destruction of villages, and the "forced urbanization" of millions of peasants. A whole chapter is devoted to "Nixon's war" in which it is shown how the war, instead of abating, was considerably intensified: bombing raids and civilian terror (Operation Phoenix) alike were greatly stepped up.

With the Phoenix program the United States succeeded in fashioning much the same instrument of civilian terror that the Diemist laws for the suppression of Communism had created in 1957-1958. The only difference was that given the numbers of American and GVN troops and the participation of statistics-hungry U.S. intelligence services, the terror was a great deal more widespread than it had been before. The program in effect eliminated

the cumbersome category of 'civilian'; it gave the GVN, and initially the American troops as well, license and justification for the arrest, torture, or killing of anyone in the country, whether or not the person was carrying a gun. (p. 412)

Frances Fitzgerald is not content with mentioning the material destructions, massacres and tortures. She also stresses the liquidation of social structures, of the most fundamental social relationships, which leads to the moral and spiritual destruction of man himself.

Millions of people have been forced to leave their villages to go and live in refugee camps, in tar-paper villages, whose populations, uprooted and having no occupations to live on, entirely depend for their survival on what they can steal or beg from others. Hundreds of thousands of women have thus been forced to sell their bodies; hundreds of thousands of children, orphaned or abandoned by their parents, wander in the streets of the towns, having no longer any family life, no longer receiving any education, and left entirely to their instincts. The cities have become "the real strategic hamlets of the war." (p. 430)

This American policy, dictated by considerations of military strategy, takes on a marked racist character.

In Vietnam American officers liked to call the area outside GVN control "Indian country"... According to the official rhetoric, the Viet Cong did not live in places, they "infested areas"; to "clean them out" the American forces went on "sweep and clear" operations or moved all the villagers into refugee camps in order to "sanitize the area." Westmoreland spoke of the NLF as "termites." (p. 368)

Frances Fitzgerald has thus brought out the full scope of the material and moral destructions caused to Viet Nam by the Americans. She points out the immense difficulties that South Viet Nam will have to overcome, even after the withdrawal of the American troops.

Over the years of the war it (The United States) has not taken money out of Vietnam, but has put large amounts in. And yet it has produced much the same effects as the most exploitative of colonial regimes. (p. 434)

The reason, for her, is that American funds have gone not into agricultural or industrial development but simply into the creation of services for the Americans — the greatest service being the Saigon army. American wealth has gone into creating millions of people who do not engage in any form of production.

Looking into the future, after the withdrawal of the American troops, she clearly discerns the main obstacle for a political settlement.

... This reconciliation may be difficult to achieve. The Nixon administration is, after all, determined to prevent it. It is determined for the sake of what its officials imagine to be American prestige to force the Saigon government to go on fighting for as long as possible after an American troop withdrawal.... Nixon may well succeed in compelling Vietnamese to kill each other for some time to come. (p. 440)

How to resolve all those problems, which are so difficult and complex? Frances Fitzgerald scorns the plans for post-war economic development worked out by more or less qualified experts of the Lilienthal type, for, she says, "economic development does not exist in a void," "in a society that is politically organized in such a way as to make all economic progress impossible." (p. 435)

The reconstruction of South Viet Nam through the agency of the Saigon government, she says, is in itself an insoluble contradiction. American officials predict the worst catastrophes — massacres, economic collapse — in case American intervention and aid are withdrawn. Frances Fitzgerald, while recognizing the great difficulties that the Viet-

nameese people will have to face, feels great confidence in the latter.

The American war has created a social and economic chaos, but it has not stripped the Vietnamese of their vitality and powers of resistance. The Vietnamese survived the invasions of the Mongol hordes, and they may similarly survive the American war. (p. 437)

Frances Fitzgerald has faith, first and essentially, in the strength of the National Front for Liberation, which for many years has led the struggle against the United States, carrying on the tradition of an age-old national movement and relying on national resources.

Their (the NFL's) victory would not be the victory of one foreign power over another but the victory of the Vietnamese people — northerners and southerners alike. Far from being a civil war, the struggle of the NLF was an assertion of the principle of national unity that the Saigon government has endorsed and betrayed. (p. 438)

The author also knows that the NFL owes its strength to its revolutionary line and strategy and to the policy of coalition that it has constantly recommended. While men like Kissinger do not believe in the possibility of reconciliation between the Vietnamese groups and parties which American intervention and war have pitted against each other, Frances Fitzgerald, much better informed of Vietnamese realities, is of the opinion that the great majority of the people aspire not only to peace but also to the establishment of an organized society and the safeguarding of national identity. She believes not only in the possibility of national reconciliation, but also in the "conversion" of a large part of elements hitherto corrupted by the dollar. The "flame of revolution" will "cleanse the lake of Vietnamese society from the corruption and disorder of the American war,"

and the Vietnamese can "restore their country and their history to themselves." (p. 442)

## II. TRADITION AND REVOLUTION

Of the great problems of American intervention and war, of the nature and characteristics of the national character and the policy of the National Front for Liberation, Frances Fitzgerald has taken a clear and accurate view. We won't cavil at her about details, even when she repeats certain erroneous affirmations of American official propaganda, for instance when she writes that the North Vietnamese have created the FUNK (p. 415), or commits some error of documentation, ascribes a motto of Mao Tse-tung to General Giap (p. 382), gives a far too low figure for the number of French troops in Viet Nam (p. 140), etc. The real problem is not there.

The Vietnamese resistance has victoriously confronted the greatest imperialist power, which has vainly resorted to the most colossal and most inhuman means. How should this fact be explained?

First of all, how to explain the persistence in error and barbarity which has characterized American policy vis-a-vis Viet Nam over the last twenty years? Without going to the length of saying that Frances Fitzgerald has ascribed it solely to a total failure by the Americans to understand Vietnamese culture, we may none the less reproach her for having laid undue stress on this aspect, to the point of hiding Washington's true policy, namely neo-colonialism, the will to crush at all costs the Vietnamese revolution and make an example of it and dissuade the Third World from following the path of national and social liberation. In its global counter-revolutionary strategy, Washington has chosen to focus its effort on the national liberation movements of the colonial peoples and to strike especially at the Vietnamese movement, which is in the van.

Frances Fitzgerald makes the mistake of speaking of the Americans in general in face of Viet Nam and the Vietnamese. Doubtless there are Americans among those who exe-



cute official policy, for whom a daily problem is to grasp Vietnamese psychology and traditions. But for the promoters of American policy, Johnson-Nixon and Taylor-Kissinger, Vietnamese culture and psychology matter little. Their actions and decisions are prompted by the place of the Vietnamese national movement in the world context and by the policy they want to carry out in the present-day world. In our time, imperialism is confronted by a world revolutionary movement, of which a main component is the national liberation movement of the colonial peoples. Washington has understood this and for years has worked out a whole series of strategies, tactics and armaments and mobilized all the technological and scientific resources of the USA in an attempt to crush the movement. Frances Fitzgerald has brought out various aspects of the implementation of that policy — for instance, pacification and forced urbanization — but has failed to trace it back to its source, American neo-colonial policy. The Viet Nam problem is also a problem of our time. Fire in the Lake lacks this dimension which would have given it greater depth and the reader a better grasp of the problem.

One should not reproach the author for having analysed the cultural problem and depicted the disappointments and frustrations of the Americans in face of Vietnamese realities, but these psychological facts are not prime ones. Contacts between Americans and Vietnamese have not taken place in the abstract but within the framework of the implementation of a given policy. It is the political problem which makes it possible to put the psycho-cultural questions in their context, not the reverse. The confrontation between Americans and Vietnamese has been primarily and essentially one between neo-colonialist aggressors and a people engaged in a vigorous struggle for self-liberation, and this during a given period. It is not one between men formed by different cultural traditions. It is not cultural incomprehension that has led to genocide, but the policy of neo-colonialism and world hegemony practised by an imperialist power with a colossal technological potential and the determination to vanquish “people’s war” by “scooping

water away from the fish." The Washington strategists, indeed, take Vietnamese cultural characteristics into account only to lick into shape their strategies and tactics.

Even though the French act differently from the Americans, and the Vietnamese react in their own way, not like the Cubans or the Algerians, none the less it is the kinship between the French colonialists and the American colonialists, and between the Vietnamese and the Algerian, or Cuban patriots, which assumes primary importance. In spite of the differences that may exist between them, it is first of all the multiple aspects of a given national context that are decisive: the colonialist of 1970 cannot act in the same way as that of 1900, and the Vietnamese patriot who has fought the Americans under the leadership of the NFL can no longer be the same as one of 1945.

To leave concrete history for abstract psychological considerations, as Frances Fitzgerald has done in the wake of Otare Mannoni, means first of all to commit an error of method. That man keeps all his life complexes formed during his childhood is an undeniable truth. Freud has shown that an adult often reacts against people symbolizing social authority in a pattern of behaviour determined by his attitude toward his parents during his childhood, and we are the first to admit this.

However, to extrapolate, to extend this notion of individual psychology to social psychology, to the psychology of a people, is to forget that one has left one field of knowledge for another. Psycho-analysts have explained the French Revolution by the Oedipus complex: the French people killed Louis XVI simply to avenge themselves on the "father." Why, one may ask, did they not attack Francois I or Louis XIV? One can only smile before such assertions.

One can only regret that Frances Fitzgerald, so lucid and, besides, so conversant with history, has strayed into this "psychology of the depths" to the point of affirming that the French conquest of Viet Nam had met small resistance (p. 296). This is flying in the face of history, a history that French authors are the first to recognize. The French historian Pallu de la Barriere, who was with the French expeditionary force in the first years of conquest, wrote:

The fact was that the centre of resistance was everywhere, subdivided ad infinitum, almost as many times as there were Annamese. It would be more accurate to look upon each peasant who was tying a sheaf of rice as a centre of resistance. (Histoire de la Cochinchine, 1861.)



One sees where “pure” psychology divorced from concrete history can lead. There is no stereotyped Vietnamese; there do not exist a colonizer and one colonized who are shaped once and for all by the reviviscence of certain infantile complexes or by a dialectic of the slave and the master. In face of colonial conquest, the Vietnamese of various classes, religions, and ethnic groups have reacted differently. The king and high-ranking mandarins of the Court of Hue, caught between colonialist aggression and peasant revolts, chose to collaborate with the foreigners to fight the poor peasants, while the popular masses, the peasantry in particular, faithful to the national tradition, responded to the appeal of scholar patriots and conducted

against the occupiers a struggle which was to last from 1860 to 1900. After 1900, new social classes and strata were born, which resumed the national struggle on new bases.

Frances Fitzgerald is well acquainted with this history. She even uses it to demolish the main themes of American official propaganda; yet, curiously enough, she affirms in another chapter that all that history had brought no change to the psychology of the Vietnamese.

The resistance war was a political revolution and not a transformation of the Vietnamese personality. (p. 299)

Such a peremptory affirmation sounds odd to those who know the Vietnamese people closely, as well as from a purely theoretical point of view. How is a people's personality shaped? Is it determined once and for all by some genetic mystery, a whim of destiny, or is it formed in the course of concrete and well-defined history? When history stagnates for centuries, the psychology, the personality of a people seems to be frozen in a permanent pattern; but there are periods when history accelerates, revolutionary periods when real mutations happen in many fields. Men make their history, and history transforms men.

Let us take for instance the Vietnamese Confucian scholars of the 19th century. Since time immemorial, the idea had been impressed upon them that absolute fidelity to the king was the cardinal virtue of man; to disobey one's king was the most heinous of crimes, which no other virtue could redeem. Tragedy came when the king capitulated before the French conquerors and ordered an end to the struggle. Truong Dinh, who commanded royal troops in the South in 1862, was about to obey the order of the king when delegates of the population came and besought him to continue the fight. After long hours of reflection, his heart rent by a feeling which only those with a profound understanding of Confucianism could comprehend, Truong Dinh decided not to obey his king.

All the scholar patriots of the late 19th century — and they were many — knew that tragedy of conscience. Concrete history led them to oppose their king, and when the 20th century began, the monarchy had lost all prestige, not only because the kings had collaborated with the occupiers but also because all efforts by scholar patriots to put on the throne a patriotic and enlightened king had ultimately failed. By the early 20th century, Confucianism in Viet Nam, deprived of its leader, of its keystone, had become a mere survival. A persistent survival, present in many fields, but no longer playing the leading role that had been its own for centuries. The national idea became definitively detached from the monarchic idea, and the Vietnamese people was looking for a “way” other than Confucianism.

After 1900, many things in Viet Nam could still be explained by Confucianism, but they were only vestiges of the past. This doctrine no longer presided over the great events, the great trends that determined the course of the country's history. The sinologist Paul Mus, for whom Chinese texts assumed greater importance than Vietnamese historical reality, might find an explanation to those great events in the Confucian notion of “Heaven's mandate”; not the Vietnamese who had lived through and deeply felt all the attempts, insurrections, demonstrations, plots, which had marked national history since the beginning of colonial conquest.

The story told by Paul Mus is well known: he recounts how after the Japanese coup of March 9, 1945, which overthrew the French colonial administration, and then after the August Revolution, he was surprised to see that the entire Vietnamese people rejected French supremacy and accepted with disconcerting readiness the new power, the government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. Proceeding from this idea that the Vietnamese people had accepted colonial power, he ascribes this change in attitude to traditional behaviour: the Vietnamese people, in his view, had believed that the mandate of Heaven had passed from French to Viet Minh hands. Oblivious of that long history of national struggle waged by the Vietnamese people in

various forms from 1860 to 1945, Paul Mus is unable to perceive that historical maturation which had radically transformed Viet Nam; i. e. the psychology and personality of her people.

In particular, Paul Mus did not know, or took no account of, the history of the preparation of the August 1945 revolution, and the unfolding of that revolution in which millions of people joined in the conquest of power in each locality from North to South. In fact, after the failure of the various patriotic movements which succeeded each other from 1860 to 1930, the year of the Yen Bai insurrection, the Vietnamese patriots had realized the necessity for the national



In 1930 the peasants of Central Vietnam revolted against colonial-feudal tyranny and established local soviets.

movement to follow a new "way." This "way" was discovered by Nguyen Ai Quoc for the entire people. It continued the national tradition of undaunted struggle for the defence of independence while opening up entirely new prospects by integrating the Vietnamese national movement into a historical evolution and a revolutionary movement on a world scale.

The economic crisis of 1930, the coming to power of the Popular Front in France which made it possible for the Vietnamese people to engage in mass political activities on a large scale, the careful preparation of armed and political struggle in the years 1939-1945, the development of that struggle under the leadership of a Communist party which had both foreseen the events and known how to organize and mobilize the masses, the inter-imperialist contradictions, especially those between the Japanese fascists and the French colonialists — all that concrete history had led the Vietnamese people as a whole to accomplish — and not merely to accept — the August Revolution. Millions of Vietnamese, led by the Viet Minh, had participated in meetings and demonstrations, in national salvation associations of peasants, women, writers, and youth, in guerrilla actions, in attacks on Japanese-held stores of rice. When the opportune moment came they assaulted the organs of local and central power rigged up by the Japanese. The August Revolution and the establishment of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam were the outcome of that long and great march.

One understands more easily how, in the years that followed, the Vietnamese people found the strength to defeat the French expeditionary corps, then the American forces. To explain all those developments by a nebulous notion of "Heaven's mandate" and of purely psychological attitudes (some gestures and actions of President Ho Chi Minh are interpreted by Frances Fitzgerald in the sense of some stage-managing to corroborate that notion of mandate from Heaven) is to bypass true history and purely and simply create a myth.

The extent to which the revolution has changed the Vietnamese people's personality is shown in the following document, which is by no means from a revolutionary source. It is a report sent in 1958 by the governor of Dinh Tuong province to Ngo Dinh Diem, who wanted to assess the results of his campaign for the "denunciation of Communists":

Indeed the people are no longer what they were ten years ago. Some have been awakened by the revolutionary ferment. All have matured in blood and fire and become acutely conscious of their daily interests. The sight of women and children facing French tanks and machine-guns during the resistance, and the national (i. e. Saigon) troops recently, and demonstrating to demand general elections, proves that the people are no longer passive. The motivation which causes the people to scorn death and defy the authorities must be sought in the spirit of class struggle inculcated into them by the Communists and in their faith in certain victory. They have a strong belief in their historical mission, a salvation mission. How many intellectuals left Saigon for Hanoi at the time of the regrouping, or, having remained in Saigon, none the less look to Hanoi for their ideal? They are attracted by an extremely fascinating theory, Marxism, which is endowed with an immense power and is capable of turning the common people, hitherto naive and meek, into fighters ready for all sacrifices.

One clearly sees the failing of a certain orientalism, which when dealing with the peoples of Asia seeks only to learn about their past. Paul Mus, in spite of 40-odd years of contact with Viet Nam, had ignored all that contemporary history which has profoundly marked the Vietnamese people, to the point of explaining present-day history by an entirely out-of-date notion which had become almost alien to them. By treading in his steps, by taking what he says



for gospel, Frances Fitzgerald has simply let herself be led astray, going even to the length of affirming that Ho Chi Minh had "rejected" a "secular, industrial proletarian-based revolution" (p. 220) and explaining guerrilla warfare by Confucianism (p. 382).

In consequence of that, she not only loses the sense of present history, but also comes to acquire a false idea of Vietnamese past and traditions. The traditions of Viet Nam cannot be reduced to a few Confucian texts. Confucianism itself, in the old society, did not have that absolute supremacy attributed to it by Mus and Frances Fitzgerald. Running side by side with Confucian orthodoxy, the ideology of the ruling classes, mandarins and notables, there was a stream of deep-rooted popular culture, essentially peasant. While for the official historiographers, changes in the royal dynasties were the major events, for the present-day historian the many peasant insurrections which took place along the centuries assume even more importance. Like peasants anywhere else in the world, the Vietnamese peasant of former times was a stick-in-the-mud, often superstitious, and resigned to royal power, which he accepted as emanating from Heaven. But often he revolted, too, and, in the daily life in the village, he rebelled against orders and ideas from mandarins and notables.

While official texts taught about the mandate of Heaven held by kings, sayings and proverbs, which embodied popular wisdom, said on the contrary :

You win and you are king;  
You lose and you become a pirate.

and :

The king's son will surely be king,  
While the sexton's son will succeed him  
In sweeping the alleys of the pagoda.  
But let storms and tempests rise,  
And the king's son will sweep up  
Dead banyan leaves from the paths.

One should have seen the buffoon of popular opera pulling the legs of mandarins and notables to get an idea of that peasant rebellion, both social and ideological, which was a permanent feature of Vietnamese history and society of former times.

Traditional Viet Nam, contrary to what is imagined by Frances Fitzgerald, faithful disciple of Paul Mus, was a community that was neither homogeneous nor static. It was agitated by a vigorous class struggle between, on the one hand, the great dignitaries who were owners of vast estates, and on the other, the enslaved peasants of those domains, the free peasants, and the village communes; this, until the 15th century. From that date onward, as a result of the disappearance of the large estates and consequently of the aristocracy, the struggle was circumscribed to become one between the landowners and the peasants, who were also juridically free but were in practice deprived of all rights. Within the nation as well as the villages, a complex struggle — economical, social, ideological — opposed the poor peasants to the landowners and to the administrative machine of the regime : king, mandarins, notables. The scholar, the village intellectual, was in normal times the clerk of the regime, who maintained the people's ideological loyalty. But when the wind of revolt blew among the peasant masses, many of the scholars leaned towards the people, and this affected their ideology. Confucian orthodoxy no longer held supremacy. This class struggle, permanent and often exacerbated by bad harvests and natural calamities, did not, however, prevent the nation from coming closely together whenever the country was threatened by a foreign aggressor. Perhaps no nation was more divided than Viet-nam in the 13th century : the enslaved peasants of the large estates were astir, the free peasants and the communes vigorously opposed encroachments on their lands by great dignitaries, subordinate mandarins recruited through competitions contended with the aristocracy. Confucian scholars fiercely attacked Buddhism, the State religion of the time. Yet, when the Mongols, on three occasions, invaded Viet Nam, the people were one in defending the country.

The royal army, local troops commanded by high dignitaries, and village militia closely co-ordinated their actions to wear down and decimate the Mongol troops and finally drove them out of the country after winning resounding victories over them.

Traditions in Vietnam mean first of all the collective labour to build dikes and dig canals, in short to construct and maintain great water conservation works, and the constant struggle against natural calamities, which has formed a persevering and industrious people, strongly attached to the land which they had conquered inch by inch from a harsh nature; next, those traditions mean the long series of wars for independence which the people had to wage against a much more powerful feudal empire and which led them to work out appropriate tactics of people's war. Then, stress should be laid on the tradition of the poor peasant who day after day defended his rights in the village and stood ready, whenever the occasion arose, to revolt against the authorities; on the tradition of the intellectual, the scholar, who sided with the people in moments of crisis. It is this double tradition of struggle against nature and foreign aggression which characterizes Viet Nam, and not the notion of a heavenly mandate invented by defenders of the monarchy, a notion which did not always find large support among the people. Even such a stalwart supporter of the monarchy as Nguyen Trai (15th century) bluntly wrote to the heir to the throne, of whom he was the preceptor, that

The people support the throne in the same way as the water supports the boat; and just as the water can capsizе the boat, they can overturn the throne.

This double tradition of national and popular struggle has been raised by the Communist Party to a much higher level than in former times, so as to make it possible for the Vietnamese nation to mobilize all its energies in a gigantic combat waged for thirty years, successively against the Japanese occupiers, then the French colonialists and lastly

the Americans. By holding out prospects of total social renewal to Vietnamese patriots and a well-defined future to the peasant masses, by relying on appropriate revolutionary methods of political and military organization, by working out sound strategies and tactics for each moment, the Communist Party has helped the Vietnamese people to clear all obstacles victoriously. Anyone with even scanty knowledge of Vietnamese history over the past thirty years is struck by the gigantic effort needed to overcome the difficulties facing them. The NFL is not, as Frances Fitzgerald tries to suggest, something entirely new. It continues, in a new context, the struggle that the patriots had begun against colonialism as early as 1860; it continues the work of the Viet Minh, and its successes are due to the fact that at every turn it has found the correct line and tactics, in the light of revolutionary theory and practice. The mandate of Heaven has nothing to do with the history of its birth and development.

In all this there does not lie, as Frances Fitzgerald may imagine, something irreducibly Vietnamese. Revolutionary theory and experience, in spite of their complexity, can be communicated. We are living in a period when many peoples other than the Vietnamese may find themselves facing an American neo-colonialism that is as aggressive and barbarous as in Viet Nam. But Washington, which is pursuing its policy of conquest of the Third World, will see its attempts and maneuvers opposed by peoples who know how to defend themselves. This is borne out by the Cambodian people, whose tradition is Buddhist, not Confucian.

In the successes recorded by the Vietnamese resistance over the enormous American war machine, national traditions have come into play only to the extent that they have been fecundated by a new revolutionary doctrine. Frances Fitzgerald gives a hint of this revolutionary reality in many a page of her book, but one feels that a certain reserve, and — the word must be said — a certain “complex,” hold her back every time she is about to make the step which should have allowed her to grasp Vietnamese reality. By straying from what she had seen and felt concretely in Viet Nam and

treading in the steps of Paul Mus and Otare Mannoni, she has got lost in mirages that impart to her book a depth that is more apparent than real.

However, we think that in her quest for truth on Viet Nam Frances Fitzgerald is now only halfway through her journey.



Ho Chi Minh with Vietnamese children.

**FROM MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS**

**CAMBODIA IN THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN WAR**

by Malcolm Caldwell and Lek Tan

The full chronicle of Cambodia's recent history is assembled and analyzed in this valuable study, the work of a distinguished Western scholar and a Cambodian journalist.

\$4.95/£2.05 (paper)

**JAPANESE IMPERIALISM TODAY**

by Jon Halliday and Gavan McCormack

"Halliday and McCormack . . . have brought together an impressive body of material which even those who distrust their Marxist interpretation would be foolish to ignore. *Japanese Imperialism Today* is by far the most informative and in many ways penetrating analysis that has come my way so far."—Geoffrey Barraclough, *The New York Review of Books*. \$7.95 (cloth)

**Monthly Review Press**

62 West 14th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011 33/37 Moreland St., London, E.C. 1

# **The Review of Radical Political Economics**

Ackerman & MacEwan on the New Economic Policy  
Babson on the Multinationals and Labor  
Bowles on Education and Labor Supply  
Gintis on Alienation and Power  
Nell on Property and the Means of Production  
Quick on Women's Work  
Tabb on Capitalism, Colonialism, and Racism  
Webb on Taxes and the Vermont Worker  
Weisskopf on Imperialism in India

Send for Complete List

URPE

Office of Organizational Services

Michigan Union

Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

# RADICAL AMERICA

CATALOG

SPRING 1974



FIG. 80.—DEFERENCE.



FIG. 81.—DIGNITY.

Volume 2, Number 2 (March, April 1968): articles by Michael Munk on the Old Left newspaper Guardian and Richard Rothstein on successes and failures of ERAP, one of the early New Left organizing projects (60 pages, 50¢)

Working Class and Culture, Volume 3, Number 2 (March, April 1969): a review of "Literature on Working Class Culture", Paul Faler on "Working Class Historiography", George Rawick on "Working Class Self-Activity", Dick Howard on "French New Working Class Theories" (68 pages, 50¢ without cover)

Volume 3, Number 4 (July, August 1969): Marcuse's introduction to the new German edition of "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon" and articles by Staughton Lynd on Abolitionism and by Paul Mattick on Ernest Mandel (76 pages, 50¢)

CLR James: An Anthology, Volume 4, Number 4 (June 1970): essays and excerpts from writings by James, the author of The Black Jacobins and a leading anti-colonial figure during the 1930s, covering James's thoughts on Philosophy, American Society, the Caribbean, Literature and Sports, and the Third World today (120 pages, \$1, no bulk orders)

Society of the Spectacle, Volume 4, Number 5 (July 1970): translation and lavish illustration by the Black & Red Group (Detroit) of French Situationist work by Guy Debord, with text consisting of 221 epigrams on the "Spectacle" of life in modern society, the collapse of the Historic Left (Socialists, Communists, Anarchists, et cetera) and the necessity for revolutionaries to create non-alienated organizational forms for struggle (120 pages, \$1)

Volume 4, Number 6 (August 1970): an illustrated study by Franklin Rosemont of surrealist Benjamin Peret, with several Peret documents; articles by Mike Meeropol and James O'Brien on William A. Williams; and another exchange between Andrew Levine and Dale Tomich on Louis Althusser and Structuralism (80 pages, 75¢, no bulk orders)

Lenin-Hegel Philosophical Number, Volume 4, Number 7 (September, October 1970), edited by Paul Piccone, the editor of the philosophical journal TELOS: articles on the practice of Lenin and its influence on his philosophy; on the central political problems of Hegel's philosophy; and on Youth Culture (80 pages, 75¢, no bulk orders)

Radical History Number, Volume 4, Number 8-9 (November, December 1970), edited by the Madison History Group: essays on the legacy of W. E. B. Du Bois and Charles Beard, Marxist and radical historiography of the US since 1900, New Left historians, and radical teaching (120 pages, \$1)

Working Class and Radicalism, Volume 5, Number 1 (January, February 1971): including essays by Paul Booth ("Theses on Contemporary Labor Unionism"), Donald Clark Hodges ("Working Class, Old and New", on Marx's understanding of differentiation among categories of workers), and Brian Peterson ("Working Class Communism" in the United States and Europe, a historiographical essay) (96 pages, illustrated, \$1)

Black Labor, Volume 5, Number 2 (March, April 1971): Harold Baron on "Demand for Black Labor", Robert Starobin on "Racism and the American Experience", and documents on the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (120 pages, \$1, no bulk orders)

Volume 5, Number 3 (May, June 1971): including an essay by Mark Naison on blacks and American Communism; an interview with Aime Cesaire on Negritude; personal reminiscences from the strikes of the 1930s and the rise of the CIO, introduced by Staughton Lynd; and Bill Watson's article "Counter Planning on the Factory Floor" (96 pages, illustrated, \$1)



Women's History, Volume 5, Number 4 (July, August 1971): a historical survey of "Women in American Society" by MariJo Buhle, Ann Gordon, and Nancy Schrom; an article on office work by L. Valmeras; and a photo-essay "Remember the 'Fifties?" (120 pages, \$1, no bulk orders)

Volume 5, Number 5 (September, October 1971): featuring "Italy, 1969-70", documents and commentary on working-class struggles; Staughton Lynd on the steel contract; CLR James on Black Studies; and a work article by David Shanoes on the Chicago Post Office (96 pages, illustrated, \$1)

Marxism Today, Volume 5, Number 6 (November, December 1971): a major document by CLR James on the historical basis for present revolutionary potential, plus articles by James on George Jackson and by Paul Buhle on "Marxism in the US: 39 Propositions" (96 pages, \$1)

Volume 6, Number 1 (January, February 1972): "Women and Subversion of the Community", by Mariarossa Dalla Costa, with an introduction by Selma James; Nixon's NEP, essays by Paul Mattick and by Frank Ackermann and Arthur MacEwen; and a eulogy to E. L. T. Mesens by Franklin Rosemont (120 pages, \$1)

Volume 6, Number 2 (March, April 1972): "Southern Textile Workers", a major article by Harry Boyte; shop-agitation articles: "Reflections on Organizing", by the Sojourner Truth Organization, and "Work in a Rubber Factory"; the Radicalization of Quebec Trade Unions; and shop poems by Marty Glaberman (120 pages, \$1)

Changes in the Class Struggle, Volume 6, Number 3 (May, June 1972): "Theses on the Mass Worker and Social Capital", by Guido Baldi, with "The Struggle Against Labor", by Mario Tronti; "Class Forces in the 'Seventies", by Stan Weir, with a note on "Primary Work Groups"; poems by Steven Torgoff and Rikki (96 pages, \$1)

Retrospect on the New Left, Volume 6, Number 4 (July, August 1972): "The Eclipse of the New Left: An Overview", by Paul Buhle; "Beyond Reminiscence: An Evaluation", by Jim O'Brien; "Reading About the New Left", a major bibliographical essay by Jim O'Brien and Allen Hunter; "Sports and the American Empire", by Mark Naison; and a special 24-page section on colored paper, "Pictures From My Life", by Marcia Salo Rizzi (120 pages, \$1)

Quebec General Strike, Volume 6, Number 5 (September, October 1972): covering the historical roots and specific political background of the largest general strike in North America during this century, with analysis and documents showing the convergence of Quebec nationalism and socialism (120 pages, \$1)

Workers' Struggles in the 1930s, Volume 6, Number 6 (November, December 1972): including Staughton Lynd on rank-and-file steel workers' activities during the pre-CIO era, the narrative of a shoot-out in a Southern Tenant Farmers' Union - related action, a bibliographical essay on working-class militancy by James R. Green (120 pages, \$1)

Popular Culture, Volume 7, Number 1 (January, February 1973): an analysis of "Quilts: Women's Unrecognized Art" by Patricia Mainardi; an interview with "Donald Duck" on cartoons; and a review of "Dirty Harry" as archetypical action cinema by Tony Chase (96 pages, \$1)

Class Struggle in Italy, Volume 7, Number 2 (March, April 1973): an anthology of articles analyzing the weaknesses of Italian capitalism and the state, the political character of the left, and specific working-class struggles in industry and communities (120 pages, \$1)

An Underhanded History of the USA, Volume 7, Number 3 (May, June 1973): a cartoon history of the United States by Nick Thorkelson and Jim O'Brien, now reprinted in four colors (\$1)

Women's Labor, Volume 7, Number 4-5 (July-October 1973): an analysis of current problems of the American women's movement by Lise Vogel; a discussion of "wages for housework" with articles by Selma James, Sheila Rowbotham, Angela Weir and Elizabeth Wilson, and Ira Gerstein; and documents from women's struggles in Britain (192 pages, \$2)

Workers and the Control of Production, Volume 7, Number 6 (November, December 1973): "The Origins of Job Structures in the Steel Industry" by Katherine Stone, "The Lip Watch Strike" from Cahiers de Mai, and a symposium on Jeremy Brecher's Strike! with David Montgomery, Martin Glaberman, and the author (120 pages, \$1)

Organizing for Revolution in Vietnam, Volume 8, Number 1-2 (January-April 1974): a book-length study by David Hunt of the National Liberation Front in a Mekong Delta province in 1965-1967 (192 pages, \$2)

Organizing Against the War, Volume 8, Number 3 (May, June 1974): articles by Matthew Rinaldi on the growth of GI resistance in the Vietnam era and by James O'Brien on the civilian anti-war movement, with a critical review of Frances Fitzgerald's Fire in the Lake by Nguyen Khac Vien, and an introduction - overview by Linda Gordon and Allen Hunter (120 pages, \$1)

## PAMPHLETS

IN STOCK



**Modern Politics**, by CLR James: a masterful introduction to the economic, social-cultural, and political situation of humanity in the Twentieth Century, delivered initially as a series of lectures in Trinidad (Bewick Editions, 116 pages, \$1.50, bulk orders only from publisher)

**State Capitalism and World Revolution**, by CLR James: basic document of the "State-Capitalist Group" of CLR James, Raya Dunayevskaya, and others on the totality of world oppression and need of mass movement in world revolution (Bewick Editions, 107 pages, \$2.50, bulk orders only from publisher)

**The Invading Socialist Society**, by CLR James, F. Forest, and Ria Stone: reprint of 1947 document analyzing state-capitalist parties as an organic product of the mode of production of class society, drawing the conclusion that nationalization under bourgeois forms was not revolutionary. Supplements *State Capitalism and World Revolution*. (Bewick Editions, 48 pages, \$1, bulk orders only from publisher)

**Dialectic and History: An Introduction**, by CLR James: masterful exposition of the masses' striving for universality from ancient times to the present, showing the relationship of socialism and barbarism in modern politics, with an introduction and afterword by P. Buhle and D. Wagner (32 pages, 50¢)

**Introduction to Marxian Economics**, by Gayle Southworth: four lectures providing an elementary exposition of Marxian basics, delivered by an active member of the Union for Radical Political Economics to a student-run course in Marxian economics at the University of Wisconsin (44 pages, 50¢)

**Essays on Marx's Theory of Value**, by I. I. Rubin: brilliant treatment of the relation between Marx's philosophy and his economic critique, particularly in regard to value-theory, translated from the Russian by Milos Samardzija and Fredy Perlman, with an introduction by Perlman (Black & Red, 275 pages, \$2, bulk orders only from publisher)

**The Reproduction of Daily Life**, by Fredy Perlman: modern treatment of the subject matter of Marx's *Wage Labor and Capital* — alienation from production inside the factories (20 pages, color illustrated, 25¢, bulk orders only from publisher)

The Incoherence of the Intellectual, by Fredy Perlman: a study of C. Wright Mills by one of his students (Black & Red Press, 120 pages in nine colors, with many diagrams, photographs, and collages, \$1, bulk orders only from publisher)

Manual for Revolutionary Leaders, by M. Velli: elaborate critique of the estrangement and personification of power, and the function of the "revolutionary leader" in maintaining this division by stifling mass initiatives; compiled, edited, and illustrated by Lorraine and Fredy Perlman in an astounding array of colors and patterns (Black and Red, 261 pages, \$2.50, bulk orders only from publisher)

Working Class Historiography, by Paul Faler: a treatment of the contributions of E. P. Thompson, Herbert Gutman, David Montgomery, and Stephan Thernstrom to an understanding of working-class history, a newly expanded version of an article in the March-April 1969 issue of Radical America (24 pages, 15¢)

Women in the Working Class: Labor Studies Summaries: updating into a more popular format a major section of the Labor Studies Summaries composed by the American Labor History Group in Madison, including traditional works like The Golden Threads and The Long Day, along with recent commentaries like Elinor Langer's "Inside the New York Telephone Company" (co-published with New England Free Press, 48 pages, 50¢)

Race and Ethnicity: Labor Studies Summaries: also updated from Labor Studies Summaries, including such works as Race Riot in East St. Louis, The Black Worker, and The Polish Peasant in Europe and America (co-published with New England Free Press, 48 pages, 50¢)

Union Committeemen and Wildcat Strikes, by Martin Glaberman: study of workers' wildcats and attitudes in the 1955 auto strikes and analysis of the Left-wing committeeman, showing the need for "the creation of social and political organizations of a different type from those of the 1930s, originally published in Correspondence in 1955 (Bewick Editions, 23 pages, 50¢, bulk orders only from publisher)

What's Happening to the American Worker? by David Montgomery: a lucid introduction to the modern social history of labor in the United States, and current perspective, by the well-known author of Beyond Equality (24 pages, 20¢)

The New England Working Class: A Bibliographic History, by Paul Faler, Tom Dublin, and Jim O'Brien: a historical survey with bibliographic assessments, part of an ongoing effort by Left historians in New England to explore a region's labor history (Radical Historians Caucus, 24 pages, 25¢)

Women in American Society: An Historical Contribution, by Ann D. Gordon, Mari Jo Buhle, and Nancy Schrom: a major essay on the historical development of women's relations over two centuries of American society, reflecting changes in women's productive roles, with extensive bibliographical notes, and an Afterword updated to Spring 1972 (profusely illustrated, 72 pages, 50¢)

Pictures From My Life, by Marcia Salo Rizzi: striking graphics illustrate a personal record of the conflicts and struggles of a woman's life; printed as a special supplement to the July-August 1972 issue of Radical America (24 pages, 40¢)

The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control, by Maurice Brinton: extensive treatment of the step-by-step loss of workers' power to the bureaucracy in the Russian Revolution, 1917-1921, reprinted from Solitary edition (Black & Red, 89 pages, 80¢, bulk orders only from publisher)

Worker-Student Action Committees, by R. Gregoire and F. Perlman: recounting and analysis, by members of a Paris group, of spontaneous action during the May-June 1968 events in France (Black & Red Press, 96 pages, illustrated, \$1, bulk orders only from publisher)

New Majiks, by t. l. kryss: an anthology of poetry by a close associate of d. a. levy and one of the most sensitive of the Mimeo Poets including a selection from 1966-70 edited by Dave Wagner and Paul Buhle (48 pages, illustrated with kryss's rabbits, 50¢)

To Be a Discrepany in Cleveland, by d. a. levy: a broad selection from a range of levy's work, including several poems from his last period in Madison, Wisconsin, edited and introduced by Ann D. Gordon and Kate Gillensvaard (48 pages with kryss cover, 50¢)

Stone Sarcophagus, by d. a. levy: a politically-oriented selection from UKANHAVYRFUKINCITIBAK by Paul Buhle, with an introduction by Dave Wagner, (24 pages, illustrated with a collage by levy, 25¢)

Lies, by Dick Lourie: poetry by the editor of Hanging Loose, a frequent contributor to Movement magazines, including the poems "Gestapo" and "Altamont" (21 pages, 25¢)

-----  
Bulk orders for Black & Red pamphlets should be sent to Black & Red, Box 9546, Detroit, Michigan 48202.  
-----

Bulk orders for Bewick Editions pamphlets should be sent to Bewick Editions, 1443 Bewick, Detroit, Michigan 48214.

**RADICAL AMERICA REPRINTS  
FROM NEW ENGLAND FREE PRESS**

The New England Free Press is distributing the following reprints from Radical America. They should be ordered directly from the Free Press at 60 Union Square, Somerville, Massachusetts 02143.

Literature on the American Working Class, by John Evansohn and associates, March-April 1969 (15¢)

The Demand for Black Labor: Historical Notes on the Political Economy of Racism, by Harold Baron, March-April 1971 (50¢)

Working Class Communism: A Review of the Literature, by Brian Peterson, January-February 1971 (25¢)

Marxism and Black Radicalism in America, by Mark Naison, May-June 1971 (20¢)

The Southern Tenant Farmer's Union and the CIO, by Mark Naison, September-October 1968 (15¢)

Sports and the American Empire, by Mark Naison, July-August 1972 (20¢)

Personal Histories of the Early CIO, by Harvey O'Connor, George Patterson, John W. Anderson, Jessie Reese, and John Sargent, edited by Staughton Lynd, May-June 1971, (25¢)

Two Steel Contracts, by the Writers' Workshop in Gary and Staughton Lynd, September-October 1971 (20¢)

Counter Planning on the Shop Floor, by Bill Watson, May-June 1971 (10¢)

And Then . . . . .



The "Underhanded History of the USA," which appeared originally as Volume 7, Number 3 of Radical America, has now been reprinted in four colors and is distributed by the New England Free Press. Copies are \$1.00 (or 60¢ each for five or more) from the Free Press at 60 Union Square, Somerville, Mass. 02143.



FIG. 1.—"THE DOME OF THOUGHT."

NOTES ON  
OTHER  
PUBLICATIONS

The following items which we formerly carried in our catalog should be ordered directly from Black Swan Press, 3714 N. Racine Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60613.

The Apple of the Automatic Zebra's Eye by Franklin Rosemont and Schlechter Duvall (75¢)

The Poetical Alphabet by Benjamin Paul Blood (75¢)

Music Is Dangerous by Paul Nougé (\$1.75)

Down Below by Leonora Carrington (75¢)

Hidden Locks by Stephen Schwartz (75¢)

The Morning of a Machine Gun (\$1.75)

Rana Mozelle by Paul Garon (50¢)

---

From *Feminism to Liberation*, edited by Edith Hoshino Altbach, an expanded version of Volume 4, Number 1 of *Radical America*, can be ordered from the Schenkman Publishing Company, 3 Mt. Auburn Place, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138, for \$3.50.



## BECOME A PAMPHLET SUBSCRIBER

Radical America offers a pamphlet subscription designed to make available new pamphlets and magazines from the Left press in the US and abroad.

Over the past year we have sent out the following mailings to pamphlet subscribers :

I: General Strike, France 1968 by Andrew Hoyle from Sojourner Truth; Union Committeemen and Wildcat Strikes by Martin Glaberman from Bewick Editions; Two Steel Contracts by Staughton Lynd from NEFP; Traite de Savoir Vivre, Part II by Raoul Vaneigum, now no longer available; and Down Below by Leonora Carrington from Black Swan Press.

II: Dialectic and History by C.L.R. James from Radical America; Run-Away Shops by Mitch Zimmerman from the United Front Press; Hospital Workers by Elinor Langer from NEFP; Where's I.W. Abel by Workers for Democracy, now no longer available; The Fetish Speaks by Karl Marx from Black & Red; and Music Is Dangerous by Paul Nougé from Black Swan Press.

III: Race and Ethnicity in the American Working Class by Madison Labor History Group from Radical America and NEFP; Women in the Working Class by Madison Labor History Group from Radical America and NEFP; and Bolsheviki and Workers' Control by Maurice Brinton from Black & Red.

IV: A Revolutionary Socialist Manifesto by Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski from Pluto Press; and Productivity: The Employers' Attack and How to Fight It by Lori Larkin from the International Socialists.

The year's worth of pamphlet plus a regular subscription to Radical America is available for \$10. Help the Radical America pamphlet program develop with the magazine, and help yourself to a bargain.

# RADICAL AMERICA

An independent Marxist journal with in-depth analyses of the history and current condition of the working class in North America and Europe, shop-floor and community organizing, history and politics of women's liberation, contemporary socialist theory and practice, and popular culture.

## Subscription Type :

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 year \$ 5      \_\_\_\_\_ 1 year with pamphlets \$10  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2 years \$ 9      \_\_\_\_\_ 2 years with pamphlets \$18  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3 years \$12      \_\_\_\_\_ 3 years with pamphlets \$24

## Literature Orders :

(Item)	(Unit Cost)	
_____		\$ _____
_____		\$ _____
_____		\$ _____
_____		\$ _____
_____		\$ _____
_____		\$ _____
_____		\$ _____
_____		\$ _____

Note on bulk orders : Five or more copies of any one item, except as noted, may be purchased at a discount of 40%. Book stores and groups may order either issues or pamphlets on consignment basis.

Sub-Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Plus 10% Mailing \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
and Handling \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Total Bill \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Send To :

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City / State / Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Rip off this page and send to Radical America, 5 Upland Road, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140.

WORKERS AND THE CONTROL OF PRODUCTION  
A Special Issue of

# **RADICAL AMERICA**

featuring

- an updated report on the Lip watch workers' strike from **Cahiers du Mai**
- a Marxist analysis of scientific management's effect on steel workers in the U.S. by Kathy Stone
- a debate on mass strikes centering on Jeremy Brecher's book **Strike!** with essays by Dave Montgomery and Marty Glaberman and a response by Brecher

\$1.00 from RA, 5 Upland Rd., Cambridge, Mass. 02140.  
Bi-monthly subs \$5 a year.

