EL SALVADOR
THE NEXT “VIETNAM”

Even as THE VETERAN is being printed the situation in El Salvador looks increasingly serious. Before leaving office the Carter administration renewed aid to the military government in that country and the Reagan administration has continued the series of U.S. blunders by removing the U.S. Ambassador who had the courage to criticize U.S. policies there. Even more serious is the news that U.S. “advisors” have been tripled; while the number is still quite low, those of us who remember the early days of Vietnam are aware that it doesn’t take much to get involved, and Reagan’s avowed anti-communist crusade leaves no room for a liberation struggle.

VETS WIN ROUND IN AGENT ORANGE BATTLE

Vietnam veterans, their families and other victims of the defoliant Agent Orange have been on a legal roller coaster for the past seven years. Meanwhile, the fight to get the Veterans Administration to do its job and to test, treat and compensate veterans of Agent Orange poisoning has continued to grow. As vets realize more and more that no matter what happens in the courts, veterans must finally end up relying on their own efforts to get done what needs to be done.

The class action suit on behalf of Vietnam veterans and their families against the major chemical companies who manufactured Agent Orange began in 1979 under the direction of the New York law firm of Yannacoone & Yannacoone, and has since grown to be represented by 1250 lawyers representing 150 law firms spread across the country. The demands that the chemical companies contribute to a trust fund which would be used to compensate veterans and their families for injuries resulting from exposure to the deadly defoliant. The suit is based on the fact that the chemical companies were well aware of the possible effects of their products but, in the interests of making more bucks, didn’t bother to inform either the government or veterans of what could happen to them.

In late November, 1980, the class action suit suffered a severe reversal when a New York Appeals panel threw the case out saying that veterans could sue individually in their separate state courts, but that a federal class action suit was not legal. Had the decision stood up it would clearly have meant the end of the suit, since there are few—if any—veterans with the expertise or the resources to take on the giant chemical companies one by one in state courts.

 Barely a month later, however, in a kind of belated Christmas present to Vietnam vets, the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals overruled the initial ruling and while it excluded vets from having the right to sue the government (another part of the original lawsuit), it allowed the class action suit against the chemical companies and said that hearings on the case should begin as soon as possible. Prospects are good that cases may begin to be heard by the summer of 1981 (which is quick for the courts). Attorneys for the chemical companies have already filed an appeal and the courts have taken such different positions up to this point that no vet should start counting his money from the suit, but the situation looks promising and lawyers representing the veterans are optimistic.

Meanwhile, in early January, the consortium of lawyers representing the veterans filed another suit, this time naming the Veterans Administration as defendant for what amounts to maltreatment of Agent Orange victims. The most recent suit points out that the V.A. has systematically treated what in fact were symptoms of Agent Orange as instead various symptoms of psychosis, using the traditional V.A. procedure of drugging any vets whose problems might be mental. Since the cheapest solution to any problem is always the easiest, according to the V.A., they have normally stuffed with drugs any veteran whose symptoms are not immediately treatable with a pill.

Another field of battle—that of public opinion and through it, compelling the V.A. to do its job—has also had its ups and downs in the past several months. While Congress has quietly blithered about independent investigations of the effects of Agent Orange, results of these studies are still years away (during which time vets will continue to get sick and die as a result of their exposure, which was something more real than insulatd Congressmen can seem to realize). And as the lame duck Congress waddled into obscurity it is impossible to say what of their parting actions will ever go into effect.

By September, 1980, the V.A. said it had examined more than 30,000 veterans who believed their health had been affected by exposure to Agent Orange. Clearly the word is out. But, at the same time, the V.A. has yet to come up off one dime in compensation or treatment for these vets, apparently hoping that somehow the whole affair will just disappear. But even if affected vets wanted to let it all disappear, the effects of the toxic poison on their families will make that impossible.

Even the minimal steps taken by Congress and the V.A. are testament to the effect of vets in action demanding that there be testing, treatment and compensation for Agent Orange victims. When there’s enough noise and enough pressure, even the bureaucracy will grind slowly forward. The campaign platform in Reagan’s campaign is another testament since, though it does not admit the fact that Agent Orange causes health problems, at least admits enough to say that vets-converts should be treated by the V.A. until investigations of the problems are completed.

All this motion and counter-motions mean little to the Vietnam vet who watches his body wither away as a result of Agent Orange or sees his kids dying as a result of his exposure. For vets or their wives who call WAW because they are dying of cancer or are suffering from sudden fits of rage we have not...

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Discharges

Hundreds of thousands of vets came back from Vietnam not only with the many scars of the war but carrying the added problem of a less-than-honorable discharge. Not only did this bad paper prohibit many vets from making use of various vets' benefits, but in a job market which has never been worth a damn for Vietnam vets, jobs were even harder to come by.

VFW, since 1970 has pushed for a single-type of discharge, pointing out where the bad discharges came from--often an administrative way for a unit commander to get rid of a GI who refused to put up with all the military nonsense or who fought against the war--and how they were used--as a threat hanging over the head of GI's. Whenever the question of amnesty was raised we raised the additional question of bad discharges.

While we still have not won the unconditional amnesty or the single-type discharge that we fought for, the battle did result in a number of victories: a large amnesty program was put into effect (though still not the universal and unconditional amnesty we demanded), and the Department of Defense was forced to institute wholesale discharge reviews.

The latest such review, in which certain categories of bad discharges are automatically upgraded has had its deadline extended until the first of April, 1981. Discharges involved include certain kinds of administrative discharges and many bad discharges given for various drug offenses. For vets who fall into these categories it is well worth the effort since the complicated paperwork involved in individual upgrading through a series of discharge reviews is not required.

In an attempt to get the program as widely used as possible the Defense Department has set up an information packet which can be gotten merely by writing to: Department of Defense Discharge Review, P.O. Box 21, St. Louis, MO 63166.

G.I. Bill & Debt Collection

After the usual prolonged struggle by vets, Congress finally decided to raise the G.I. Bill payments by 10%. While no student-vet is going to refuse the increase, it comes in the face of two related developments: a yearly inflation rate of over 12% and an unemployment rate among Vietnam-era vets which is almost double that of a year ago. According to recent statistics, over 150,000 Vietnam-era vets are unemployed; of these, 422,000 vets are between the ages of 25 and 39 (the average Vietnam-vet at this time is 34 years old with two children, meaning that unemployment is likely to be a greater problem than when vets were just out of the service). For many vets in the past a period of unemployment was an incentive to use the GI Bill in order to survive while increasing their job potential, but the majority of vets now unemployed don't even have the means to return the G.I. Bill payments which have now reached a total of $570 million. While that is a large chunk of cash it's about half the cost of a B-1 bomber.

There are no statistics on the number of vets who started the semester in school but, because they found a job, because a VA check was late and they had to drop out, or just because the GI Bill payments weren't enough to pay the landlord and buy food, are now faced with having been "overpaid" by the VA. Given the closeness with which the VA monitored school records, requiring all kinds of paperwork for vets who missed classes, in many cases the overpayment was one month's check (and often this came even when the VA was informed that the vet had cut down his classes or dropped out of school).

For vets currently in school or for vets who are being chased by the VA for G.I. Bill overpayments, there are a number of circumstances in which the VA will allow classes to be dropped even after the final drop date without penalty:

- A serious illness either for the vet or his immediate family.
- Financial problems which required course changes or dropping a course.
- The school dropping a course.

For the majority of vets who are now under siege by the VA because of non-payment of whatever debt they owe, the reins are about to tighten as the VA pursues its money (it's unfortunate that they will not expend the same amount of energy to find a treatment for Agent Orange--we would now all be cured). For some years now vets applying for home loans have been denied these loans if they had an outstanding debt with the VA; for over a year debts of over $1200 have been turned over to the Justice Department for collection.

Many more plans are afoot to recover every dime owed to the VA--while wives of Congressional ABSCAM defendants find boxes of money under their beds. In September of 1980 the VA had passed

We know the problems Vietnam era veterans face, and we're here to help you get the help you need . . . without the hassles.

Stop by or call THE VETERAN, Feb.-March, Page 2
No Vote Beats Candidates
REAGAN WINS, PEOPLE LOSE

It took only a couple of years of
being bombarded by presiden-
tial commercials before the Amer-
ican people made a decision: in
overwhelming numbers they vo-
et either for a losing candidate
or didn't vote at all. Some 25%
registered voters were count-
ed for Reagan and if the number of
voting age people who didn't
even bother to register are added,
the majority not voting for
Reagan is even larger--some
85%.

Despite the general disgust
with the choice being offered,
the Reagan administration moved
into Washington. The White
House has undergone a trans-
formation into the corporate
headquarters of the USA Inc
with Reagan as Chairman of the
Board. Though angels may fear
to tread on the plush boardroom
carpet, a millionaire business-
ent men walk with the assurance
that in the background of the
desk with his fingers on the
trigger. And, then, that he has
surrounded himself with gold-
plated (and white-faced) male
advisors whose latest brush
with poverty was attending a
United Appeal cocktail party.

Certainly the flurry of ac-

tivities which went on in the days
immediately following the elec-
tion could only encourage every
right-wing nut rampaging the
streets and TV waves of the
country. An all-white jury in
Greensboro, North Carolina,
puts its stamp of approval on the
murder of people protesting
racism by Nazis and the KKK
when, despite TV films of the
actual murders, they found the
killers innocent. Congress de-
cided to forbid use of govern-
ment funds for integration
brought about by school bussing.
Jerry Falwell's "moral majority"
announced plans to clean-up
TV programs and, in anticipation
the Public Broadcasting System
began to censor potentially ob-
jectionable political comments
from its programs. And the KKK
proclaimed its camps (previously
disguised as "Ex-
plorer Posts") where white

youth are given weapons train-
ing for the coming " Peace war."
All these were little quips to
show us which way the wind is
blowing. In the background,
y to buy more wells to pump
more gas to charge us more for
and thus cut down our "depen-
dence" on foreign oil. The plan
will work, no doubt, for the 2%
of the population who will be
able to afford more than a thim-
bleful of gasoline. And it will
work wonders for the already in-
flated profits of the oil com-
panies.

The world right-wing
governments and forces were
dancing in the streets--and tak-
ing out their joy by mounting in-
creased attacks on any kind of
left-leaning group. As feeble as
was Carter's commitment to "hu-
man rights," his policy served
as a brake to some of the more
outrageous acts of right-wing
governments: Reagan's pronounce-
ment that "moderate repression"
was just fine with him took the
brakes off around the world.

Back at home there was the
Heritage Foundation, a right-
wing think tank (as they describe
themselves) dedicated to all
that's best of the 17th century.
They were right off the block in
offering their ideas on the do-
mestic scene to Reagan's transi-
tion teams (several of whom are
"fellows" in the Foundation al-
ready) and were, in response,
promised that their ideas would
receive careful consideration.
Their proposals on dealing with
domestic dissent make Nixon's
attempts at building an imperal
presidency look almost gentle:
they would have the government
drop all the safeguards that were
put in place after Watergate, al-
lowing illegal break-ins, phone
taps, mail investigations. While
they don't advocate concentration
camps for those who dare speak
against the regime, they're set-
ting the scene, and people who
look back on the days of Joe Mc-
Carthy and witch hunts with hor-
ror may end up seeing those as
the "good old days."

Reagan's cabinet appointments
do nothing to dispel the corpor-
ate image. From Secretary of
State Haig, a corporate general
whose career was made by being
buddy-buddy with Nixon to Sec-
Professor of the Interior Watts who
seems to want to cut down every
tree in every national park to
satisfy the lumber industry, ap-
pointees have cozy ties to al-
most every industry which wants

something from the government.
Only groups which represent
the people of the country have no
voice--the elderly while Rea-
gan's "team" is predominately
elderly itself they are hardly
people who must survive on so-
cial security), the poor, the
people on welfare, union mem-
bers, consumer groups.

One group is being taken
into consideration--veterans.
Reagan's advisors, long before
the election, saw the value of
meeting some of the demands of
vets. As an October, 79 posi-
tion paper on veterans said,
"With more than 30 million vet-

ers of voting age in the U.S.,
representing a significant inroad

turn to page 15

I'M WORKED
ABOUT THE
NEW WAVE
OF RACIAL
OPP

IT'S JUST

THE KLAN

EXTRANUS

THINGS

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BUT THEY'RE

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REPEATED ATTACKS

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WITHOUT ALL

THE ATTENTION,

THE KLAN

WORLD DISAPPEAR

THE KLAN?

I'M TALKING

ABOUT THE

SENATE

THE VETERAN, Feb. March, Page 3
Test & Treat Agent Orange! No Draft, No War!
VETERANS' DAY

On November 8th, a typically cold, crisp day in Chicago, VAW broke with tradition, of a sort, to commemorate Veterans Day, 1980. Chicago VAW members joined a contingent from Milwaukee and Madison VAW, Chicago Vets for Peace, representatives from the Veterans Leadership Conference, the Illinois Veterans Congress, the Illinois Vietnam Veterans Civic Council, and several chapters of the Midwest Coalition Against Registration and the Draft.

Bill Davis, Chairman-elect of the Illinois Vietnam Veterans Civic Council and a member of VAW, spoke briefly about the general conditions facing Vietnam veterans and how, over the last half decade there has been no significant progress on major issues like employment, health care, upgrading of benefits for Vietnam vets. He noted that in spite of promises and well intentioned "too little too late" programs, the Carter administration with its huge V.A. budget, continued the decline of veterans' services. Davis pointed out that, "In spite of the promises being made to vets by the incoming Reagan administration and assorted politicians, we've heard these songs before and the tunes have all been sour." Davis also noted that little has been done to defuse the growing anger and frustration on the part of vets. "When we came back from 'Nam we had to go to the V.A. for what we needed. We raised hell about the conditions. We picketed, seized and held V.A. offices, and were continually burned and co-opted by the system. The older vets organizations characterized us as malcontents and crybabies. Within the next 10 to 15 years more and more older vets will be turning to the V.A. for help. The services we fought for--and which were declining then--just won't be there. Perhaps this time they'll join us on the picket lines."

Joan Maimon, Chairperson of the Veterans Leadership Conference read a statement about what the Reagan administration was promising vets. Paul Galvan, of Chicago's Loop College, read a statement with detailed specifics about Reagan's plans about Agent Orange, in particular a promised independent study on the problem.

The final speaker was Barry Romo from the VAW National Office; he spoke with particular anger about Reagan's reference to Vietnam as a "noble experiment." Romo stated, "If Vietnam can be called a noble cause, which it wasn't, Vietnam vets certainly haven't been treated like nobility." He went on to say, "Here we are faced with the possibility of a new draft and another war, and the same people who profited from the last one are ignoring the problems facing the vets who fought it. The people in this country aren't stupid. They won't want another generation to go through what we have."

The program at Chicago's Daley Plaza was officially closed as the son of a Chicago VAW member and possible Agent Orange victim, placed a wreath at the Veterans Memorial, the Eternal Flame, not simply to commemorate the dead, but to point to the futility of man's death and the continuing struggle of living vets.

"Traditional Vets Day"
The "traditional" Veterans Day in Chicago was, in most respects, the normal, drab and forgettable ceremony it always has been. Held during the middle of the week, the ceremony was missed by most vets who, even had they been interested, could not have attended. Dominated by the Legion and VFW, the program consisted primarily of their patting each other on the back, congratulating each other on the magnificent job they've done for vets.

Jane Byrne, Chicago's mayor, passed by an invitation to attend, choosing instead to dedicate a new "El" train stop which had more media value than this annual sleigh. She sent George Dunne, Chairman of the Cook Country Democrats, who poked, blah, blah, and sat back down. Present on the stage was Roland Libonati, former Congressman and candidate of Al Capone. As the Legion's legal type he has built a new career over the last decade keeping Vietnam vets and their organizations out of the "official ceremonies." This year was probably his greatest moment; only days before the Vietnam-era veterans participate in the program but there were none in attendance! That's right: zero! With the exception of a couple of us to observe and report on the activities, no Vietnam era vets attended. Someone reported that a person who resembled a 'Nam vet was there earlier but left--probably out of disgust.

We congratulate the program committee, also. When the rolls were read and heretics mentioned, Vietnam wasn't. In fact one could believe it didn't exist or had never occurred unless we had lived it--and continue to live it. Aside from the idiot running around dressed like Uncle Sam and the morons selling Nazi and moral majority newspapers, the big thrill was watching the "pre drill" team from the Legion mill around trying to figure out which direction to face, fire their M-1's in a ragged semblance of a salute, and watching the crowd flinch as these bozos swung their weapons in all directions desperately trying to clear and chamber another round.

It's just as well we Vietnam vets aren't welcome. Who the hell wants to be part of that kind of travesty anyway? We don't have any drill team. The cops would freak out if one Vietnam vet showed up anywhere with a weapon, much less an organized group. We don't need drill teams, fancy parades or bullshit programs. We need decent benefits, testing and treatment and compensation for victims of Agent Orange; we want a future for our kids without a draft and without their wars for profit at our expense.

WE NEVER FORGET,
WE NEVER FORGIVE!

CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONDEMN U.S. AID TO EL SALVADOR

On November 8, 1980, the United States Catholic Conference, a group known for its conservative policies, denounced the right-wing supported violence against the Roman Catholic Church in El Salvador and urged the United States Government to withhold military aid and political support for El Salvador's military-backed Government.

In a statement issued in Washington, the Most Rev. Thomas C. Kelly, general secretary of the National Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops, said that the Church in El Salvador was being attacked because, "It has embraced the pastoral task of accompanying the people in their hope, in their struggle, and in their suffering." The Most Rev. Frank J. Harrison, Bishop of Syracuse, in a letter to then Secretary of State Edmund Muskie said that, "The military dominated Government enjoys the support of your Administration but not the support of the Salvadoran people. We, along with millions of Christians in Latin America, are not afraid of the wave of change sweeping Central America because that change is rooted in a desire to create more just societies."
El Salvador is a small country in Central America. Controlled by a military junta (more in the USA) it is the largest recipient of U.S. military officer training conducted in the Panama Canal Zone. It is also racked by a civil war that has claimed close to 10,000 lives, among them more than 100 priests and nuns from the Catholic Church. In order to find out more about the situation and to inform our readers, we interviewed Father Roy Bourgeois, a Maryknoll missionary who has spent more than 3 years in South America including an investigative trip to El Salvador.

Fr Bourgeois grew up and attended college in Louisiana. He joined the Navy in 1962: from 1966-1967 he was in Vietnam where he was wounded and received a Purple Heart. He decided on becoming a missionary after his experiences with a Catholic orphanage in Vietnam caring for 400 children. He said, "I went over thinking the Vietnamese communists were our enemy but found that it was the poor and struggling people of Vietnam whom we were fighting."

Upon returning to the U.S., Fr Bourgeois joined the Maryknoll, a Catholic missionary group centered mainly in South America. During seminary he became involved with WAW in the early 1970s in New York. "I was torn," he said, "about what to do (when he was supposed to leave for Bolivia) about belonging to the anti-war movement, but I left Bolivia was home for the next five years, where I worked in a community development program in the Barrio, a slum."

"My first three years were mainly social work, setting up medical clinics, day-care centers, teaching school. I was living in a small room for $8 a month, living with the people. I heard the cry of hungry children at night. I decided then to become a voice for and with the people."

Things became very oppressive and we formed a Human Rights Commission to speak out for the needs of the poor and against U.S. aid to the Bolivian dictatorship. Then, one day I was arrested by four plainclothes policemen with machine guns and taken to jail." Fr Bourgeois was working over, tortured by the secret police to find out the names of the Bolivians he was working with. They did not find out any names and luckily, the Bishop of La Paz found out about his abduction and put pressure on the ruling generals for his release. He was declared persona non grata and sent back to the U.S.

In 1978 Fr Bourgeois was sent to El Salvador as part of a Church Human Rights Commission and has continued to work on the situation there. He explained: "First, you have gotten a situation of exploitation, an oligarchy of the so-called 14 families who own 65% of the land, businesses and companies. The wealth and poverty are in the hands of a few. As for the rest of the country, 40% of the children die before they reach the age of six. Those who do work are paid on the average a dollar a day. Illiteracy stands at 65%. There is a limit to what the people can take--they are beginning to resist."

"The resistance is made up of different sectors. First, the peasants (mostly small farmers) who work the land for the 14 families. Second, the workers: in El Salvador labor unions are outlawed and it is the death penalty for organizing one. Third, students, university professors, high school teachers, even doctors. Many doctors have been killed. There are also small businessmen who feel they cannot make it under the ruling families."

All of these different sectors are resisting the 2% (who control the military, the police and the National Guard). Incidentally, many of the officers have been trained at West Point." The State Department likes to portray the struggle as one between the extreme left and the extreme right. The truth of the matter is that the struggle is a liberation struggle. The majority (90%) make up the people's forces; they are fighting to overthrow the small ruling class."

"The U.S. does not want to admit this. The struggle is basically one of the people to survive. Bishop Oscar Romero said this and was killed on March 24. Prior to this, on February 17th, he wrote a letter to Carter pleading with him not to send aid to the ruling junta. On April 1st, the U.S. approved $5.5 million in military aid and $30 million in "economic aid."

Fr Bourgeois closed by saying, "I talk to a lot of high school students, and tell them, if we (the U.S.) fights (in El Salvador) it will be against the people of El Salvador, the poor and the oppressed. They will be asked to come to the aid of the oligarchy and they have damned well better know who they are fighting for and who they are fighting against."

Fr Bourgeois expects to be reassigned to the Missions in 1981, either to Guatemala or El Salvador. Reagan and his transition team have already said they think too much has been made of "Human Rights" and that the U.S. should not be ashamed to support "moderately repressive" dictatorships. Two of Reagan's main foreign affairs advisers have served in the past as agents of Central American dictators. His main foreign affairs advisor, Allen, was a foreign lobbyist for the Portuguese government to gain support for their colonial wars in Africa. Reagan's team has announced that the U.S. must be prepared to send troops anywhere regardless of world opinion or support. And the recent events in El Salvador demonstrate that the rulers believe they can move against the people without incurring any disfavor in the U.S.

STOP INTERVENTION The government has an elaborate list of items it wants to send to El Salvador--helicopters, patrol boats, jeeps, riot control gear and training in "internal security." But before this wish list can be funded, Congress has to act. And that's where individuals can come in. A letter to your Congressman or Senator can't hurt and may help slow down the propel up of yet another military dictatorship.

For more information, write: El Salvador Solidarity Committee 3411 West Diversey Chicago, IL 60647 (312) 227-1632

THE VETERAN, Feb. - March, Page 5
Psychological Problems in Vietnam Vets

V.A. "DISCOVERS" DELAYED STRESS

Vietnam was a different kind of war. Instead of young French girls throwing roses, Vietnamese were throwing hand grenades. Instead of being received by the people as "liberators," we were met by peasants who treated us as invaders. Rather than fighting against a corrupt dictatorship, we were propping one up. The myth of Vietnam being an American fight for freedom and democracy exploded in the reality of My Lai-type massacres. Vietnam veterans faced the incredible contradiction of the government propaganda with the bloody reality.

Most vets were pretty quiet about their experiences in Vietnam. This wasn't wholly because the people back home were not supporting the war as some pundits are now saying, but because many people did not want to hear the reality of our experiences. How many of us wrote the letters home, while we were in Vietnam, even to our families which never talked about the reality of what we were doing. And more than a few of us were ashamed and embarrassed, about what America had done to the Vietnamese and tried to put it out of our minds, tried to shove it deep into our memories and leave it. But not talking about our experiences did not make them go away—in fact, more and more of those memories persist in coming back.

VVAW was one of the first groups to deal with what doctors and psychologists are now calling "delayed stress syndrome." As early as eleven years ago VVAW set up rap groups to deal with what we then called "Post-Vietnam Syndrome." At the time the V.A., older vets' groups and the government were denying its existence but VVAW knew it was real because we had to deal with it on a daily basis. Ten years later the reality of psychological problems has become so acute that even the V.A. is forced to deal with its existence.

As of October 1st, 1980, the V.A. has "discovered" the existence of what it calls "post-traumatic stress disorder"—which is the same thing as PVS used to be or delayed stress syndrome is today. The V.A.'s definition of what will permit the award of disability is as follows:

"Post-traumatic stress neurosis (disorder) is a psychiatric disorder having its onset as an incident of armed conflict or enemy action, or following bombing, shipwreck, or internment under inhumane or severely deprivation conditions or similar life-threatening episodes. . . . (There must be)

a. A recognizable stressor that would be expected to evoke significant symptoms in almost all individuals, that is, a life-threatening episode. . . .

b. Re-experiencing the traumatic event either by a recurrent and intrusive recollection of the event, dream of the event, or suddenly acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were occurring because of an association with an environmental or ideational stimulus.

c. Numbing of response to or involvement with the external world . . . feeling of detachment or estrangement from others, or marked constriction of affective responses.

d. At least two of the following symptoms that were not present prior to the traumatic event.

1. Hyperarousal or exaggerated startle responses.
2. Sleep disturbance.
3. Guilt about surviving while others have not.
4. Memory impairment or trouble concentrating.
5. Avoidance of activities that arouse recollection of the traumatic event.
6. Intensification of symptoms by exposure to events that symbolize or resemble the traumatic event.

The V.A. circular from which this information is taken goes on to discuss acute and chronic problems, says that if the disorder doesn't fit all these standards it is not worthy of compensation and warns against assuming that vets who are just alienated or have "dropped out" are suffering any compensable disorder.

However, once the criteria have been satisfied, according to the V.A., a vet may be awarded anywhere from 0% to 100% disability.

Cutting through the jargon, the V.A. directive seems to say that vets must prove, through their military records, that they were involved in a life-threatening event (and few of us who were in Vietnam didn't face at least a couple of them) and that their lives, since that time, have been affected by the event. Exactly how that will be proved remains to be seen.

Since the time the V.A. directive came out, there have been cases of veterans who have won disability payments as a result of post-traumatic stress. Craig Williams, a 9th Infantry vet in Minneapolis, won $133 a month and all the psychiatric care he needs after only a three-year battle with the V.A. After he had been out of "Nam for 8 years he began having flashbacks and nightmares. He spent three months with a V.A. psychiatrist who diagnosed him as having war neurosis, but then had to stop because the problems were "service connected"!!

Williams comments, "I wasn't interested in monetary compensation, my objective was to get a service-related disability for the trauma I received in Nam so I could continue with therapy. . . . The government was responsible for me, and I think that it should take care of a great number of guys who are out there with the same thing."

A few independent psychologists have taken a great interest in the problem. Psychologist John Wilson of Michigan State says it's possible by 1985 that 40-50 percent of the combat veterans could have problems serious enough to impair normal functioning if strategic intervention is not forthcoming soon. And Dr Charles Figley of Purdue estimates that as many as 68% of combat vets still have recurring dreams and nightmares, indicating latent anxiety. "The symptoms might be delayed," he says, "but the problems are always there."

It is a triumph, of sorts, that the V.A. was finally forced to recognize the existence of service-connected psychological disabilities resulting from service in Vietnam. The victory came because vets would not let the issue die—and could not let it die because it is something that thousands of us live with every day and every night. How much it is connected with exposure to Agent Orange is now under investigation, though for the veteran or his family living through the problems, their interest is less in the cause than in how to best deal with the situation.

When VVAW first tried to approach the problem of PVS back in the late 1960's, we built the "rap" groups knowing that vets would talk more easily with other vets. We did this without benefit of consultants or V.A. psychiatrists—but because we knew it needed to be done. The V.A. has yet to develop a better, more effective form of treatment, and $133 a month is not enough to pay for broken marriages, inability to hold a job, or any of the hundred and one other things that are the result of PVS. Vets finally made the V.A. do its job—or at least start to—on this issue; and we will do it again!

NEW ADDRESS
NEW PHONE

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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Used in War, then Thrown Away, But Not Again

NO DRAFT, NO WAY

Only one of Ronald Reagan’s campaign planks dealt with ending the peacetime draft, and no one knew how many votes that won for him. Most people realized that while he opposed the peacetime draft he was quite willing to start a war instead and institute the war-time draft in a moment. But with the election won and inauguration over, even the opposition to the peacetime draft disappeared under the crush of advice from military counsellors. Whether or not the anti-draft campaign promises won him any votes, Reagan and his political advisors did gauge correctly a real feeling among millions of Americans. When the Carter Administration pushed through the new registration plan and that plan went into effect, large demonstrations across the country took place at post offices where the official registration was taking place for 19 and 20 year olds.

Immediately, the media across the country began to report massive non-compliance: 31% in Baltimore, 32% in Chicago, 47% in Peoria, Illinois, and on and on. In an independent survey by the Boston Globe, 25% of eligible young men did not sign up. But within days the Selective Service System announced that 95% of all eligible registrants signed up—a remarkable statistical sleight-of-hand the government had announced earlier it would take up to four months to compile the figures, but when Carter’s saying political fortunes needed a boost, suddenly the figures were immediately available. What dark crevice these figures were pulled out of can only be guessed. Pro-draft forces did not rely on carrot of patriotism to persuade young men to sign up.

Carter’s Attorney General issued lethal threats to anyone who refused to register. Despite the threats nearly a thousand young men across the U.S. stood up before the media and public ly defied the government on the basis of their personal, moral or political opposition to registration. To date not one charge has been brought against these bold young men.

By even the most conservative estimate, one million men did not register. High numbers noted on their forms that they were registering under protest, others put in for conscientious objector status, an unknown number of bogus applications were made by men past draft age, women filled out forms using their first initials and last names. In all, register took place, but it was absurd to say it was “successful.”

Anti-draft forces and coalitions, organized nationwide, were a key factor in deflecting the registration drive. Represent a broad segment of society, the potential registrants, their families, students, young workers, women, trade unionists, political groups of many types, and veterans—particularly Vietnam vets—laid a solid foundation of organization and experience which made the anti-draft movement stronger from the start than its predecessor in the early 1960’s (which was successful in getting registration and the draft shelved).

The American public was not quite as gullible as the government seemed to hope. With increasing international tension between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, with the events in Iran, and the presence of military “advisors” in Central America (particularly in El Salvador) who would believe we needed a “peace-time” registration but there were no plans for a draft. Come on guys—you may try to keep us ignorant, but we’re not that stupid.

The anti-draft movement more than met its first test on the first round: anti-draft forces were out again during the early weeks of January when the law called for registration of the next crop of potential cannon fodder: no statistics are yet available on this last mass registration attempt (in the future registrants will be expected to register on their birthdays).

With the failure of registration and the draft uncertain under the Reagan regime, still the anti-draft forces have made some significant gains. After a period of low activity they have grown and, more important, have successfully branched out into community levels bringing in more people—people who have often not been involved in political issues in the past.

Legislative measures which still surround the draft are also important. Not one of the men who went public against registration has yet been prosecuted. Of the million (at least) non-registrants, there is no threat of federal prosecution that can only handle 40,000 cases a year (which includes every federal prosecution for anything) which can make a dent in charges brought against those who refused to register.

If federal courts dealt with nothing but anti-registration cases for the next twenty years they would still not finish—and that even assumes no one will refuse to register in the future.

And the government has other problems with the draft: federal ruling now prohibits the use of public social security numbers as a form of identification for registrants, something which will make finding non-registrants even more difficult. And an ACLU suit challenging the registration laws on the basis of sex discrimination is now before the Supreme Court, which, while it may try to dicker the issue, will still have to put forward some ruling which can well have widespread effects.

Much of the anti-draft activity nationwide has gone on in small local groups growing out of a couple of individuals whose opposition to registration was strong enough to get them out to organize others. In an attempt to coordinate this activity nationwide, the Coalition Against Registration and the Draft (CARD) is, with other groups putting together an anti-draft conference to be held at Wayne State University in Detroit in mid February to plan a national strategy for anti-draft work for the future. WWW will be there and everywhere else possible to use our experience to help build the anti-draft forces.

NO DRAFT, NO WAR!

THE VETERAN, Feb. - March, Page 7
Why Vietnam Veterans and Agent Orange Victims

It's a familiar story to Vietnam veterans everywhere. There's the initial knowledge about the use of defoliants in Southeast Asia. Then came the case histories of cancer deaths, physical and mental symptoms, stillborn and deformed children. Vietnam veterans, either in already existing organizations, new groups, and finally coalitions, began to do battle with the government, the veterans administration, chemical companies and even traditional veterans organizations.

The fight for testing, compensation and follow-up has been a twisted maze of half-stepping, double-dealing bureaucrats, vicious counter-attacks by the chemical companies and "next-to-nothing" support by the traditional veterans organizations which voice support for Agent Orange victims while sitting on their large asses and launching slanderous attacks on Vietnam veterans leading the fight.

So what's new, you say?? Well, the difference here is that it's not U.S. veterans we're talking about, but the mirror image of our battle in Australia. Like VVAW and other Vietnam veterans groups in the U.S., the nationwide Vietnam Veterans Association (Australia) is waging an uphill battle against the effects of Agent Orange.

In recent correspondence with VVAW, Graham Bell, President, Queensland branch of V.V.A.A., stated, "One of the main problems we have in Australia is that several decision makers and influential public figures, both inside and outside the federal parliament, have placed every possible obstacle in the way of the Vietnam veterans, possibly out of fear of what will happen to them once we get an independent judicial inquiry--there has been very little direct public opposition to us, but behind the scenes, it is a very dirty and vicious fight."

The Returned Service League of Australia, an organization built along the lines of our American Legion or VFW, has been one of the major stumbling blocks in the path of the V.V.A.A., Bell commented. "The RSL is the largest and wealthiest ex-service organization in Australia. Vietnam war veterans have been approaching the RSL for assistance for over ten years, yet it is only since August 1979 that the RSL has made any moves on the issue of chemical agents and health problems."

In a significant move, the RSL openly attacked the Vietnam Veterans Association as merely trying "to gain cheap publicity by repeated attacks on the RSL."

Cheap publicity indeed! It is outrageous even to insinuate that Vietnam veterans fighting for their lives and the well-being of their families would require such methods, though we know that we have to fight for every inch of print and second of air time to expose the horror of Agent Orange and other chemical defoliants.

The V.V.A.A. demands a certain morality be denounced as 'insulting.' They ask for an independent judicial inquiry into:

1. The misuse of certain inherently dangerous and certain chemicals against the Vietnam War.
2. The various attempts to cover up and to mislead on the risks, applications, effects and disposal of these chemicals.

VVAW welcomes our brothers in Vietnam who already being waged by U.S. and New Zealand Vietnam veterans to right the wrongs of the use of Agent Orange; all of us need all the help we can get.

—Bill Davis, VVAW National Office

VFW has now been around well over 13 years. We started as an organization of veterans protecting the war we fought in, and grew to become a Vietnam veterans' organization concerned with a decent life at home and fighting against intervention abroad. We have never based ourselves on backing political candidates, or finding jobs in the bureaucracy for ourselves but in organizing vets to have a voice of their own. But, given the general situation of vets today with all the problems vets face, the question has to be asked:

"Why VVAW?" "Why not an Agent Orange coalition, or an anti-drug coalition, or even the American Legion or VFW?"

The question around the more "traditional" vets groups such as the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars is fairly easy. Just on a personal level most Vietnam veterans know and remember our reception in these groups when we returned from Nam. They were most interested in our dyes, but not at all interested in our views. More than a few Vietnam vets got into bar fights with the cooks and bottle washers from the class of '42 who wanted to tell us that we didn't know what a "real war" was like, and how they "worn" their war! Beside that, for many of us, remembering about killing "gooks" or saluting a post commandant or parading the Paxtonian of Allegiance was not our idea of a fun weekend.

But with all of this the political problems lay at the base of Vietnam vets' problems with the traditional vets organizations. Most Vietnam vets could not take the racism, the reactionary attitudes and the willingness of 50 old farts to fight to the last drop of our friend's blood. Simply put, we wanted our friends home and the war over. We knew from our own experiences in the paddy fields and jungles that the war was wrong, a rich man's war and a poor man's fight! We found no glory in Mai Lai or justification in the Saigon government. Older vets groups might find lost youth and maco memories in Vietnam but we thought about the dead and dying.

This situation has not changed today. The American Legion or VFW platform is based on "political correctness" and they deal primarily with the war in Vietnam. They are not interested in the feelings of the Vietnam veteran. They are more interested in pleasing the people who shout in the gallery. They have the power of the government to back them up.

VIETNAM VETERANS

Vietnam Veterans Against the War began in 1967 to join the ranks of those who wanted an end to U.S. involvement in Indochina. Basic principles of the organization have continued ever since: we have fought against unjust wars, whether the U.S. invasion of Indochina or the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. We have supported, by whatever means were possible, those who are fighting for their own liberation.

From its early days VVAW has operated on the knowledge that the government will give vets what they need only when forced to do so; that vets get nothing for nothing. We've learned that when one vet fights alone, there is a limited amount he or she can do, but when veterans unite to fight together, there is no limit on what can be accomplished. VVAW has seen some real successes: helping to put an end to U.S. troops in Southeast Asia, helping to get Nixon tossed out of office on his ear, winning (to a great extent) amnesty for many who resisted the Vietnam War, getting the Veterans Administration to begin the process of looking for answers to Agent Orange poisoning and to recognize Post-Vietnam Syndrome (now called "delayed-stress syndrome") as a service-connected disability.

VVAW has consistently stood with the interests of vets of all eras, especially Vietnam veterans and Vietnam-era vets, and this has often brought us into conflict with more traditional veterans' organizations. While the Legion or VFW have hawked more wars, VVAW has fought against wars wherever we encounter them.
AGENT ORANGE & NEW ZEALAND VETERANS

New Zealand’s version of the American Legion has recently discovered a series of medical problems among their members who fought in Vietnam: skin rashes, increased incidence of cancer, and children born with deformities. Surprise! Now they are talking about the possibility of Agent Orange poisoning of New Zealand Vietnam vets.

While New Zealand troops were not in Vietnam in great numbers, it is good to hear that a “traditional” vets organization somewhere is taking up the cause of vets poisoned by Agent Orange. Victims of Agent Orange need all the help they can get from anywhere in the world!

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AGENT ORANGE

much more to offer at this point than sympathy, understanding, and some suggestions about how to get involved in the struggle. We hope that vets do get involved in the fight whether it is to ban the components of Agent Orange from use in local parks (a fight which has recently succeeded in Madison, Wisconsin) or to build the necessary opinion to get the testing, treatment, and compensation that vets need. We will win what we need, but it’s up to vets to make that victory as quick as possible.

(For more information about getting involved either in the struggle to win testing, treatment, and compensation for Agent Orange victims or to join the lawsuit, write or call VAW for a copy of our Self-Help Guide for Agent Orange victims— it doesn’t answer all the questions that vets have but it is a good start toward getting involved.)

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THE VETERAN, Feb.-March, Page 9
Poland recently went through a mammoth strike wave that has resulted in many changes in Polish life and government. But many people have been left in the dark by the U.S. media reporting of the events, causes and consequences of this unrest.

First, to understand what is happening, people should throw away all their preconceptions about Poland. While it is a member of the Soviet Block, it is dominated culturally and economically by the West. (For example, 15 of 20 films recently showing in Warsaw were Western films. The Poles have also accumulated a debt of $20 billion to the West, more than the entire third world indebtedness to the entire Soviet Block.) The Polish army is fiercely nationalistic and has won many restrictions on Soviet troops in Poland. The Polish government was very unenthusiastic about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Catholic Church is very strong. 90% of the population belongs to single peasant households rather than massive state farms. Finally, three times in the last 24 years a government has fallen in Poland as a result of worker unrest.

The cause of the current crisis in Poland was a severe economic crisis. Food shortages were so severe that workers bringing food for relatives would be hounded by a third party which would not be paid. Many people were using envelopes of letters to send food subscriptions for writing letters. The reason for the crisis is that Polish debts to the West were coming due with the enormous sum of $7.8 billion scheduled for repayment this year. And due to the world economic slowdown, the demand for Polish goods has dropped badly in world markets.

The spark for the strike wave was the government's attempt to end rationing of meat and the distribution of meat through work places. Instead, the government wanted to sell meat through the higher-priced commercial shops. Strikes in protest spread all over the country. Then, in August, a militant, 60-year-old woman worker was fired at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk. Thousands of workers struck and took over the shipyard, a center for Poland's large and internationally important ship-building industry. Just as they settled that strike, eight other workplaces informed them that they were on sympathy strike and the Gdansk workers declared their strike over and immediately began a second strike together with the other workers. Within 2 days there were 40 more factories and several days later, there were 200. Their demands (besides pay hikes, earlier retirement, etc.) now included demands for new independent trade unions, freedom for political prisoners, limitations on censorship, and an access to the media for the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church got its first chance to go on TV in post-war Polish history and repaid the Gdansk workers by urging them to be moderate and go back to work. Catholic spokesmen also demanded that the Church be given more representation in parliament and other Catholic Church leaders began pressing their right of moral censorship over the media.

In spite of this "help" from the Church, the government was forced to give in on nearly every issue, including releasing the country's three known political prisoners. Gierczek, head of the government, had a convenient heart attack and was replaced as Communist Party Chief by the former security chief. In reverse, for instance, in similar situations in South Korea.

The American government's response has been mostly hypocritical or ignorant. The Polish desk at the U.S. State Department even said that plans for economic aid to Poland from Polish-American organizations were "preposterous" and that "Poland is an enemy of the West." Then he went on vacation in the middle of the crisis. But since when do the bankers in New York and London give $20 billion to an enemy? The Carter administration later floated the idea of economic aid to Poland in order to try to keep the government in power.

Soviet troops in a tactical exercise: The Poles were likely to put up a fight

US/USSR Involved

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The U.S. Army found itself in bad shape following the Civil War. Authorized a strength of 54,164 officers and men, the actual strength was under 40,000 and most of them were in the defeated Confederacy as an Army of occupation. The barons of industry had another task for the Army to perform—the opening of the West. With the millions upon millions of dollars to be made from land and from the railroads which would connect eastern manufacturing with western resources.

But, there was a critical barrier to this westward push; not just the natural difficulties of mountains, weather and distance which could be overcome, but the inhabitants of the area—the Indians—who fiercely resisted the invasion from the East. By the mid 1860's, the Indians had succeeded in pushing many of the ranchers, settlers and even the military back toward where they came from. So the call went out to recruit troops to fight the Indians.

The response was slight; most able-bodied men who could not afford to buy their way out of the military during the Civil War had had enough of fighting, and particularly fighting Indians, a job which was not only exhausting but dangerous. So the military, as it has in many instances before and after, turned to American minorities to find its forces. General Order #6, signed by Lt Gen William Tecumseh Sherman went out on August 9th, 1866:

"Commanders of military departments within this division in which colored troops are serving will proceed at once to enlist men for two regiments of colored regulars... one of cavalry, to be entitled the Tenth Regiment, United States Cavalry..."

Such was the beginning of the "Buffalo Regiment" which would exist through the North African campaign of World War II. This was far from the first time the military had turned to Black soldiers; some 180,000 Blacks had been recruited into the Union Army during the Civil War and over 33,000 had died during that conflict, often fighting in the dirtiest and least-known battles of that war. The established policy of all-Black units with almost all-white officers lasted through World War II and into the early days of the Korean War. (The Plains Indians, and particularly the "Dog Soldiers" had more going for them.)

"Buffalo" soldiers, with the handprint on the flanks meant an enemy horse captured, a red handprint meant an enemy killed in hand-to-hand combat to find buffalo meat to feed the line gang working on the railroad, the chances are that he knew none of this history. He did know that the horse he rode and the weapons he carried were far inferior to those of the hunters he was supposed to be protecting. When the Cheyenne attacked, the hunters got the hell out of the area back to the military base with the railroad crew. But Randall, musket in hand and mounted on a U.S. military venture was the U.S. Army very effective against guerilla tactics such as those used by the Indians.

The 10th Cav certainly did not have an easy birth. It was hard to find officers who would command Black units; George Custer was one who turned down a commission to serve with a Black regiment and at least one General took a lower rank to be part of a white regiment. Finally, Colonel Benjamin Grierson, as a teacher from a small town in Illinois who disliked horses, took the job of commanding the 10th Cav with the provision that he reserved the right to accept only "superior" men.

It wasn't a problem to find volunteers: given the situation that ex-slaves faced in the South, the offer of $13 a month (considerably less than white soldiers were offered) as well as room, board, clothing and a horse was relatively attractive (the economic draft where minorities and other poor "volunteer" because there isn't much else to do is not something new). Finally, there was the problem of equipment. Horses, saddles and other trappings, weapons, and even food were things which had been refused by other frontiers. Many horses died on their way to the 10th; saddles and bridles fell apart, and food was full of maggots. Finally, in August of 1867 the 10th Cav hobbled into Western Kansas to meet the Cheyenne Indians.
WHAT WENT WRONG IN VIETNAM

From the beginnings of VNAW in 1967 straight through the final victory of the people of Vietnam in 1975, VNAW stood firmly with the goals of the National Liberation Front (NLF) in South Vietnam and the government of North Vietnam. We not only believed the statement by Ho Chi Minh that, "Nothing is more precious than freedom and independence," but fully supported the efforts of the Vietnamese people to turn the state-ment into reality. Like millions of other people around the world, we rejoiced with the final victory of the Vietnamese people when the U.S. was finally tossed out and the corrupt and dictatorial government of South Vietnam was forced to flee the country.

In part because we so firmly supported the cause of liberation in Vietnam we hesitated to comment on Vietnam's increasing dependence on the Soviet Union, though we viewed this development with increasing alarm. We could not see how a government and a people which had fought so well against U.S. imperialism could fall into the arms of the other great imperialist power and exchange the bold struggle against U.S. aggression against the people of Vietnam for a love-in with the Russians whose purposes were much the same. With Vietnam's invasion of neighboring Cambodia and with the border war with China, the designs of the Vietnamese government became clearer—-they wished to dominate all of Southeast Asia and turn it into a greater Indochina over which the Vietnamese would have control.

Some of the problems facing the people of Vietnam today were made clear in an interview with Truong Nhu Tang, a founding member of the NLF in 1960 and Minister of Justice in the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) from 1969 to 1976. Under the Russian dominated version of Vietnam which sprang up after the success of the liberation struggle, Truong Nhu Tang escaped Vietnam to France where he now works in a tire factory.

"As one who has given my entire adult life to the cause of the Vietnamese nation," he said, "I must tell you that the liberation of Vietnam has been betrayed..." The present government of Vietnam, he said, is carrying out a repression more severe than that of the old Thieu regime in South Vietnam. The government, he said, "has sold out Vietnamese national interests to the Soviet Union and is continuing to make war in Kampuchea (Cambodia) and Laos in order to create a Soviet-Vietnamese sphere of influence where once there was an American one."

Under the Soviet puppet regime, Truong states, there are severe food shortages, political repression, persecution of the ethnic Chinese and heavy battlefield casualties among the Vietnamese troops inside Kampuchea. In addition to these substantial problems, there is the failure of the Soviet Union to live up to the promises it has made concerning economic aid. One result of this, according to Truong, is the beginning of a resistance movement inside Vietnam, based on overthrowing the present power structure controlled by Le Duan, secretary general of the Vietnamese Communist Party, and the most powerful figure in present-day Vietnam.

As in the past, the key posts in the government are held by relatives of the rulers; Le Duan has sons in key military positions of power, a brother-in-law as chief of the propaganda commission's secret service and other in-laws and nephews scattered throughout the government and the military. Le Duc Tho (chief of the organizational department of the Vietnamese Communist Party) has brothers in key party positions—all of this being reminiscent of the days when South Vietnamese President Diem ran his country like it was a family-owned business. It is a long way from the freedom and independence for which the people of Vietnam sacrificed so much for so many years.

For hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese for whom the victory in the liberation struggle might have meant an era of peace and rebuilding it has instead meant more fighting—invading Kampuchea and involved in a border war with China. Meanwhile they have seen their country fall more and more under the wing of the Soviet Union whose policies in other areas of the world and with other satellites (as in the case of Cuba) has meant economic disaster.

Truong now speaks of "liberation betrayed." For the people of South Vietnam who bore the brunt of the years of war, and for members of what was the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) which gave political leadership to the fight against the American invasion of the country, the loss has been extreme. Although Ho Chi Minh had talked of gradual reunification of Vietnam the Hanoi government didn't wait. Few members of the PRG ended up with any position in the "unified" government, and even those seem to have little real power. And always in the background lurked the Soviet Union ready to gobble up whatever it could and use Vietnam to its own ends.

There is little doubt that the war of liberation in Vietnam went sour. For those of us who supported the struggle in Vietnam in every way we could, we can only look with regret at what has happened, but that in no way changes the fact that our support was right. We stood shoulder to shoulder with the Vietnamese people in their struggle for liberation—a struggle which was not only right but victorious—and celebrated with them. That the fruits of their struggle have turned sour only means that we will stand again with the people of that country when their struggle begins anew.

continued Buffalo Soldiers

comment, "I wish no better men besides me in battle than these colored troops showed themselves to be."

The buffalo was eventually adopted as part of the insignia of the 10th Cav which spent World War I along the Mexican border and World War II in North Africa. Of course Black history has never been, until recently, anything more than a very poor relative of "American" history, but next time you're watching a grade "B" movie, as the cavalry comes charging to the rescue, consider that the cavalry that's charging might well have been the "Buffalo Soldiers" of the 10th Cav.
The early days of 1981 pro-
vided VAW with a time to look
back—it was ten years ago that
two of the major events in the
history of the organization took
place. The Winter Soldier In-
vestigation where Vietnam vets
talked about their participa-
tion in the atrocities of Vietnam
was held in Detroit at the end of
January and beginning of February
of 1971, and growing out of the
sparks of this event came the
demonstration which we called
Dewey Canyon III where Vietnam
vets threw their medals on the
steps of the U.S. Capitol,
straight into the teeth of the
ranks of the government
which had sent us off to
to fight their war.
Both events had an impact
way beyond the limited number
of vets who took part. Never
before in U.S. history had a
group of veterans of a war taken
a stand against the military
while it was still going on, and as
some of us were testifying or
flinging away the government’s
rewards for being “good little
soldiers,” other of our brothers
were struggling through the rice
paddies in Southeast Asia. Even
though the government attempted
to portray us as non-vet hippies
(until we waved discharge forms
at them), or dope-crazed psy-
chics, or pinko freaks, it was
clear to the millions who saw
us on TV or who talked to us on
the streets of every major city
in the country that we were the
children of the silent majority
which was already, in 1971, be-
ginning to turn staunchly against
the Vietnam War.
The Winter Soldier Investiga-
tions also saw us as we described
his own, personal participation
in war crimes—atrocities which
became normal in Vietnam where
government policy demanded a
body count but didn’t care whose
bodies were counted—and made
it clear that massacres such as
My Lai were not just the iso-
lated instances of men gone mad
that the government tried to por-
tray them as.

Dewey Canyon III, named af-
after operations in Vietnam which
secretly moved into Cambodia
(invasions that were adamantly
denied by the U.S. government)
saw a week’s worth of actions
around Washington including a
fruitless attempt to explain to
members of Congress what was
happening in Vietnam. But the
impact of the final day’s throw-
ing away of medals seared its
way into the consciousness of
the American public.
Whether or not people agreed
with what we were saying, VAW
had the advantage that no one
could challenge either our right
to speak or the credibility of
our statements: we had been
there, we had fought the war
while the rich who profitted
from it sat comfortably at home,
and we knew what we were talk-
ing about.
As the Vietnam War recedes
into history VAW still has the
experience from which to speak
out. And we will—against the
draft which sent many of us to
fight, and for vets. VAW’s
history is part of us, and we
can plan to live up to it.

Many of those who were part
of VAW during 1971 have drop-
ped away though they are invol-
ved in other fights. Ten years
after, we look forward to some of
them rejoining and getting invol-
ved in the struggle to win testing,
treatment and compensation
for victims of Agent Orange, and
no draft. It won’t be easy, but
we will win.

Organize, Unite
JOIN V VAW!

SPECIAL!
WHAT IS AGENT ORANGE
VETS SAY “TREAT AGENT
ORANGE”, TARGET VA

16 pages of testimony by
victims of Agent Orange
and experts on the ef-
fects of the chemical on
Vietnam Vets and thier
families. 50¢ post paid.
VAW
P.O. Box 25592
Chicago, IL 60625

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Letter to VVAW on Vietnam from
Vietnamese Revolutionary
Hoang Van Hoan, comrade in arms
of Ho Chi Minh and founding mem-
er of the Vietnamese Communist
Party has been sentenced to death
by the Vietnamese government.

Vietnam Veterans Against
the War:

I am indeed very glad to
know that your organization,
Vietnam Veterans Against the
War, has consistently been
concerned with the situation
in Vietnam. In their struggle for
national liberation, the Viet-
namese people enjoyed the sym-
pathy and support shown by
many soldiers in the U.S., armed
forces, and, in particular, by the
members of VVAW. Your
just and courageous actions
made an invaluable contribution
to Vietnam’s brilliant victory
in 1975. The Vietnamese people
very much appreciated and were
grateful to your deeds.

With the withdrawal of U.S.
troops from South Vietnam and
the total collapse of the Nguyen
Van Thieu regime, the Vietnam-
ese people did have a fine
opportunity to follow the wise
advice of our great leader Chair-
mansot Ho Chi Minh to build Viet-
nam into a peaceful, unified,
independent, democratic and
prosperous country. But this
wise advice has been flagrant-
betrayed by Le Duan and com-
pany as they attempted to push
an expansionist drive in
Southeast Asia. Facing angry
eyes of the progressive and
righteous-minded people of the
world, they defiantly sent
troops to dominate Laos, to in-
vasive and occupy Kampuchea,
and to provoke border conflicts
in the north so as to carry out
a policy of hostility against
China, which is the close con-
rade-in-arms of the Vietnamese
people. Therefore, the Viet-
namese people once again cannot
but lead a life of utter poverty
and misery under war conditions
with all their democratic rights
and freedom deprived, while
Vietnam as a nation has become
economically, politically, mili-
tarily and in foreign affairs a
vassal state of a foreign power
and lost all its international
status. All this is brought
about by the crimes committed
by Le Duan and company and
not the result of the withdrawal
of U.S. troops, as a few Amer-
icans tended to believe.

If to say that in the past, the
Vietnamese people had to sacri-
fice all that they had to fight
against U.S. imperialism and its
lackeys, today they are compel-
lled to rise up again to fight the
dictatorial and corrupted rule of
Le Duan and company.

I am confident that the Viet-
namese people will receive sym-
pathy and support from you and
other progressive people of the
U.S. in their struggle to make
their motherland a peaceful, un-
it, independent, democratic and
prosperous country.

With friendly greet-
ings,

Hoang Van Hoan
DEATH BY THE GREAT SALT LAKE

Civilians maintenance workers are dying off at Hill Air Force Base in Utah. Using various solvents and cleaners, exposed workers have been getting sick and dying off before their time.

The workers and their union leaders are trying to get the situation corrected and obtain worker's compensation for those already affected. However, in dealing with the USAF they've run up against a stone wall.

According to local union leaders, the best witnesses to the chemical hazards are dying off. Neil Breeden, President of Local 1192 of the American Federation of Government Employees, estimates that 150 people have died from exposure to dangerous substances.

Breeden is now collecting notarized statements from current and former employees working at the base. Three years ago he had 20 witnesses lined up to testify. Now, 14 of them are dead.

Liver trouble, heart trouble, diabetes, eye problems, addiction to some of the chemicals and disorientation, nausea, respiratory problems, diziness and change in personality are some of the problems. Death has come as a result of some of these problems or from cancer.

It is estimated that these exposure problems date back 25 years. Records show that officials at the base knew there were problems back in 1968. Records show that employees were being treated for physical symptoms that were not normal.

The Air Force has yet to admit to their role in the chemical exposure. As a result, those affected have to pay for their own medical treatment and others face all the same dangers in the future.

Remember the old days—and maybe even today? In your wilder-est dreams did you ever think about sneaking into the motor pool? You climb into a SPV (self-propelled vehicle) with a big 155 mm barrel. You crank up the engine and start it rolling across the base.

Maybe by this time, some- one discovers what you're doing and the whole base gets excited. You roll on. You see your CO, flip him the bird and maybe swing the turret in his direction to see what kind of look he gets in his eyes.

You approach the perimeter and knock over a fence. There's a security post over to the right. Some MP's are standing there with rifles at the ready. You swing over in that direction and aim the big howitzer at the MP's. They scatter and you knock over their little security post, and you're out on the homestead.

Next thing you know, there's an Oklahoma Smokey circling around you. The guy tries to be John Wayne and put his car in front of you. You keep rolling and when you get about a foot away, he speeds off like a scared rabbit.

Then you get into town and every squad car they have is after you. They're moving in and out, screeching their tires and chasing you around like a Blues Brothers movie. You see a cop that looks like the one that hassled you for being drunk, and you aim the 26 tons of weapon at him—out.

This goes on for two hours before they stop you. Tear gas is what gets you. You have to give up.

This wasn't a dream. This was not a dream! A Vietnam vet did it at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. The FBI won't give us his name but let's hope the brother gets off easy—after all, he didn't hurt anyone. He was only living a dream.

GRENade of the MONTH

This month's grenade goes to General Volsey Warner of the U.S. Readiness Command and Overseer of the Rapid Deployment Force. Gen Warner says that we'll have to throw away the 82nd Airborne Division and a Marine Brigade to defend oil in the Persian Gulf.

Warner said that even though it may be in vain, it would not be "too big a force to lose" to make a stand. What the hell? It's only 35,000 men. To defend OIL! The General doesn't even cover it over to say it's for "freedom" and "democracy."

NEW PHONE

VVAW

P.O. Box 25592
Chicago, IL 60625
or call
(312)
989-4684 or 463-2127

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Dear VVAV,

Would appreciate a copy of the four page form concerning Agent Orange (the Agent Orange Self-Help Guide).

The herbicide 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D is being used here in Manitoba. In 1974 Irene Stein began the search for a cure of malathion being used for foggin mosquitos and spraying forest tent caterpillars. Phenoxy herbicides were used by Mani- toba Hydro and the Department of Highways on the perimeter highway which circles outside of Winnipeg city. 2,4-D is used extensively on golf courses, city boulevards, agriculture, rail right-of-ways and pasture land. 2,4,5-T mixed with 2,4-D is used on crown lands to defoliate brush and aspen. This procedure is then followed by cattle grazing to finish trampling the brush. Hopefully, Manitoba beef has not been sold in the U.S.

N. Z.
Canada

I found 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T mix containers in the garbage dump within the Whiteshell Provincial Park. My daughter in 75 was at our cottage while spraying with Agent Orange was going 3 miles north of our cabin. We were totally unaware. She became ill, vomited blood and was in bed, all alone for three days. She was so weak. Our well water is contaminated but our provincial lab refuses to test for 2,4,5-T or dioxin.

We had sent our daughter away to the cabin to escape the city’s massive spray program, but enroute, the highways had also been done.

Today Manitoba has the 2nd highest cancer rate and highest infant mortality rate. There is data showing Manitoba’s environment is contaminated with Phenols...

Dear VVAV,

Enclosed is a small contribution to help your work. I wish it could be larger but I am 82 and money doesn’t stretch far anymore. I remember greeting you when you marched near here (Operation RAW--rapid American withdrawal—in 1970) and am so pleased to hear you’re keeping up the work.

L. M.
Philadelphia

Vietnam Sin
Far away, last civilization
I was a kid, I did not know
Nobody had the realization
What a sad blow
We had committed a sin
All they said was win
I lost my soul, I cried my tears
Now I’m not the same
The scars in my face show
The years
I’m half insane and in shame
America she says was right
Go there and fight.
What do I do now?
Ory, I don’t know how
I lost that those years
I have no more tears
Now they say: “Stay away”
You remind me, they say
Of Vietnam our sin.

Letman
Chicago

continued from page 3

REAGAN

into most voting blocks, obviously there is a definite need to place strong campaign emphasis on the needs and desires of all veterans, and to develop and aggressively promote a reasonable, well-balanced and forward-moving veterans policy which will be attractive to all veterans. The American Legion, the VFW and similar groups were, of course, overjoyed by Reagan’s win, as much over his plans to make anything that moves as by his lucrative campaign promises to veterans.

Veterans for Republicans, a group directed by Bill Ayres, worked as Reagan’s advisors on vets’ issues during the campaign. Among the vital issues they pushed on Reagan’s campaign were:

1. Maintenance of the V.A. as a distinct, independent agency.
2. Re-establish veterans as the first priority of the V.A. hospital system.
3. Vets pensions, disability benefits, vocational rehabilitation and educational assistance are indexed to the actual rise in inflation.
4. “Although the effects of Agent Orange on Vietnam veterans have yet to be scientifically proven, efforts should be made to determine the possibility of side effects on veterans; pending final determination, it would be appropriate and responsible to grant temporary V.A. medical care to vets suspected of suffering from Orange toxicity. This is the least we owe to vets who may be suffering irreparable damage due to a government-sponsored program.”
5. There should be active support for updating Vietnam-era vets’ benefits. “Any media attempts to play on the Vietnam veteran issue as a Vietnam war issue will not carry with the voters, and a strong, compassionate statement by Governor Reagan in the fight of Vietnam-era veterans, issued just before election day, will have a favorable effect on millions of Americans, especially in ethnic and minority groups.”
6. Maintain support for vets’ preference in all federal hiring.

There is also a more deep-seated suspicion about this particular campaign promise. Reagan already has the traditional veterans groups in his pocket since they love his plans increase military spending and stamp out the communist menace around the world. Vietnam vets are less susceptible to this kind of thing— we were already sent off to defeat communism in what Reagan has called the “noble cause” in Vietnam—but we found we were only purging an unpopular and corrupt dictatorship. So Reagan can win over Vietnam vets with campaign promises—and even by fulfilling some of them—perhaps he will have less opposition for the next military venture that he and his advisors are already plotting out.

And for Vietnam vets, all the benefits in the world are not worth sucking our children into another Vietnam. Campaign promises we will believe when we see them in action—and not before. And even then we will look closely! Pete Zastrow

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RECOLLECTIONS

The episode is one of a series of recollections from Vietnam and the military. VVAVW hopes to print a book of such recollections—the "war stories" which often go a long way toward showing what rich an a war was all about. We invite veterans to contribute their recollections.

"He Was Dead and I Was Going Home"

I had spent approximately ten months in the field, first in the Northern section of I Corps in Vietnam with the 196th Infantry Brigade. Now that Brigade was incorporated into the American Division with the 11th Infantry Brigade newly arrived from Hawaii. Things were very different in this unit: casualties were extremely heavy, not from shooting combat but from mines. In the almost two months I spent with them, we had suffered almost 40% casualties with only one man shot—the rest were bouncing betties, foot poppers and a few anti-tank mines. It produced a strange psychology where shooting combat was almost a relief. Firing your weapon and being shot at seemed more personal and safer, somehow, than mines. The constant pressure of the mines combined with the push for a body count produced things like the My Lai massacre—the pressure created a kind of psychosis I had not seen in much more difficult combat situations.

On this morning I was coming down the hill toward our company position after an all-night ambush. Across a ridge line I could see another squad of my platoon weaving its way back also. Suddenly there was smoke combined with an explosion. My platoon Sgt was hit, blown off the ground by a bouncing Betty. There was plenty of screaming as a medic tried to patch him up. "My balls—do I have my balls?" In a short time the Sgt was on a Medevac chopper; we continued toward the perimeter. Casualties never gave speeches or were hit clean like in the movies; it was always noise and real blood—red, followed by silence.

Once we'd got inside the perimeter the Company Commander told me the Battalion chopper was coming in and to gather my things and report to it. I was beside myself with joy—only 45 days left and now I was being taken out of the field. I grabbed bed my stuff and headed for the smoke that signalled the incoming chopper. When I got to it, the Battalion Commander held up a paper for me to read: "YOUR NEPHEW ROBERT WAS KILLED ALONG THE DMZ. YOU HAVE BEEN REQUESTED TO BE BODY ESCORT; WILL YOU GO?"

Nothing was said as I coffin. The Sgt said I was getting one too for a previous action while I was with the unit. So my nephew and I would be going home together both with medals on our uniforms. Only no one could see Bob's—he had spent too much time in the jungle and his askeet would not be opened.

Barry Rono
VVAV National Office

THE VETERAN'S BACK PAGE

Bob really didn't have much luck. While others were getting deferments, he was drafted. While Congressmen's sons were getting 4-F's for braces on their teeth, Bob was drafted as part of "Project 100,000." He didn't want to go but Secretary of Defense McNamara had come up with a plan to draft 100,000 men a year physically or mentally unable to pass the tests—and that left the sons of the rich free to take over daddy's business.

It took me only 24 hours to get back to the USA—the world.

Everything happened so quickly that I had not even been able to wash. The only clothes I had were some rumpled khakis I had worn on R&R six months before. Bob was left on base and I took a taxi to find a hotel, only there were no vacancies: sign after sign said "Welcome," but when I asked at the hotel the clerk always said, "No Vacancy."

I spent more time in the taxi than I had spent clearing Vietnam. Finally I found a place with color TV, double bed, bath with shower. I had gone from an ambush patrol to a color TV in less than 24 hours, arriving with Vietnamese mud and my nephew's body. I made it out alive but the "world" had somehow changed and now Vietnam seemed much more real.

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We would also like poetry and photos.