

Movie Review



THE BOYS IN COMPANY C

A DIFFERENT LOOK AT
THE VIETNAM COMBAT
EXPERIENCE - FROM
THE GRUNTS WHO LIVED
AND DIED IT

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Vietnam Recollections



"It Means Something, Doesn't It?"

A WEST VIRGINIA
VET'S MEMORIES
OF THE WAR

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THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

25¢

Vol.8 No.1

VETS OF ALL ERAS, CLOSE RANKS!

SPRING 1978

Vietnam War "Refought" System Rewrites History

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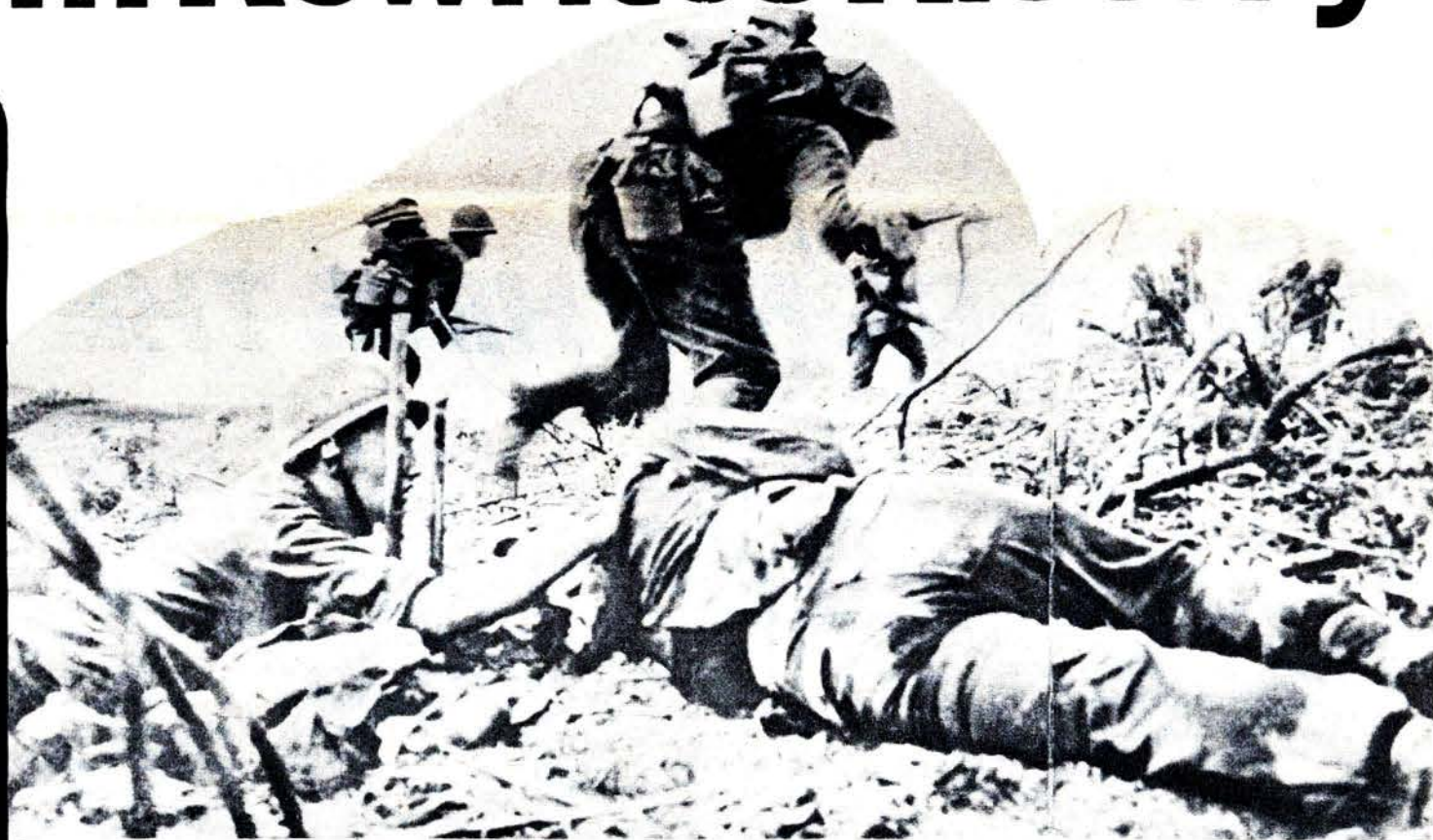
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FOR US VIETNAM WAS MORE THAN A MOVIE, A BOOK, OR THE PROFITS OF THE RICH

It's been three years since the liberation of Indochina. But 1978 has been decreed the "Year of Vietnam." After three years of hoping that the memories of the Vietnam War would fade away, the people who run this country have decided to take aim on the war and blast away.

*Ten movies, good and not so good, are due out in 1978 describing the experience of Vietnam - and sometimes the experience of Vietnam vets.

*A series of books, out last year in hardcover, will hit the paperback stands in huge printings.

*A TV series is being projected for the fall season.

*Ex-General Westmoreland tours college campuses to "explain the Vietnam war to the new generation."

*Newspapers run large think pieces on the problems of Vietnam vets.

*History is rewritten - for instance, the Tet Offensive in 1968 now becomes an "American victory" which was turned into a loss by the media.

Why? The lessons of Vietnam are not just fading away. The rulers of this country look into their future, see that they want us to fight another of their rotten wars a couple of years down the road; but first they've got to clear up Vietnam. So it's time to, in President Car-

ter's words, "heal the wounds of Vietnam." Translated, that means trying to bandage over the scores of the system which were so nakedly exposed during that war.

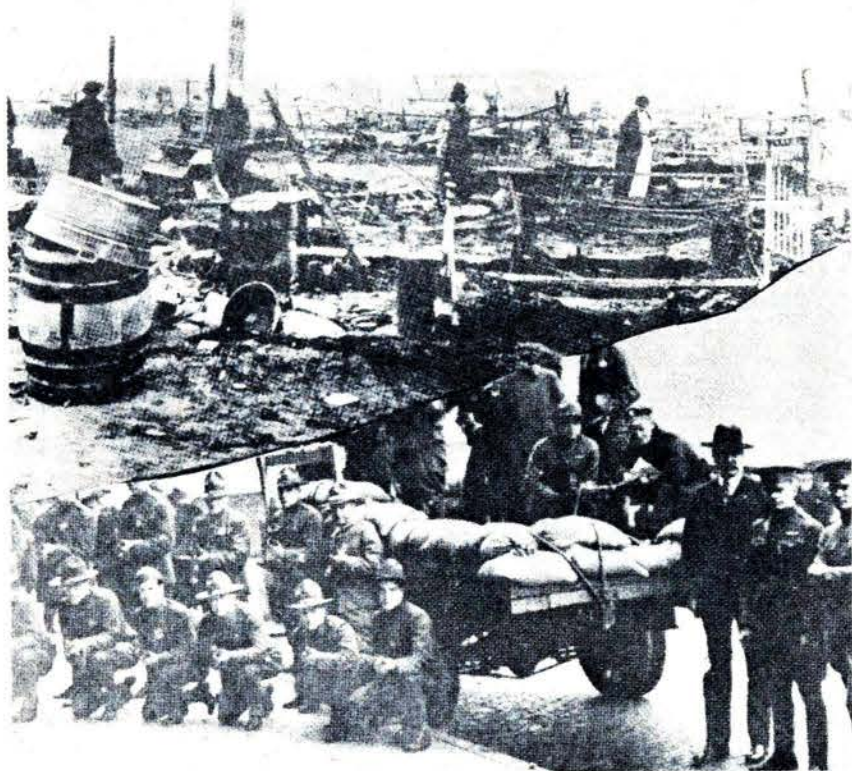
Their scheme won't work. Our memories are still vivid. We don't intend to forget our buddies who died for corporation profits, or forgive the rich who sent us there and now are trying to throw the survivors on the dung heap here. For veterans particularly, the experience and lessons from Vietnam have led us to say "Fight the Rich, Not Their Wars!"

**turn to centerfold
supplement**

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EDITORIAL GIs Are Not Strikebreakers VICTORY TO THE MINERS



THROUGH U.S. HISTORY, TROOPS HAVE BEEN CALLED OUT TO PUT DOWN WORKERS' STRUGGLES. (TOP) FEDERAL TROOPS WERE CALLED OUT TO THE MINERS STRIKE IN LUDLOW, COLORADO IN 1914. (BOTTOM) NATIONAL GUARD WAS CALLED OUT DURING THE SEATTLE GENERAL STRIKE OF 1919 TO PROTECT THE BOSSES' PROPERTY.

(As THE VETERAN is being printed, rank-and-file miners are voting on a new contract; threatened government takeover of the mines has been postponed for the moment. The UMW Arbitration Board has accepted the latest offer from the BCOA; initial reaction from the miners is clearly against the contract which is being called another sellout.)

President Carter is caught between a rock and a hard place. On one hand he has to go along with his powerful cronies in the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA) whose craving after profits has not lessened during the strike. But all the options that the BCOA wants Carter to use won't work since they come smack up against the determination of the miners to win their demands.

The Taft-Hartley Act would order the miners back to work; they won't go. Binding arbitration would impose a contract but still would not dig the coal out of the ground. More and more the government heads toward its last desperate option--bringing in the military. They did it during the Ludlow strike; they did it during the Veterans Bonus March; they did it during the Black uprisings in the cities around the country; they did it at the height of the anti-war

movement. After the bosses have bought off union leaders, have tried to sneak around and to threaten, finally troops are all they have left. In one state, Indiana, the National Guard has already been used to ride shotgun on convoys of scab coal.

We of VVAW have experience with the uses of the military whether it's to attempt to crush national liberation struggles as in Vietnam or to turn the guns against striking workers in the U.S. We had far more interests in common with the Vietnamese we were fighting than we did with the class that sent us to fight. Today's soldiers come, for the most part, from working families; they'll go back to work once out of the military. National Guardsmen when they are not mobilized are primarily workers. In either case their interests lie with other workers --with the coal miners who are fighting for a decent life--rather than with the bosses.

Members of the U.S. military have resisted before--Vietnam was a history of GI resistance. Many of the troops will see again how their government is using them--and see who is the real enemy. For the miners, VVAW pledges its support and its admiration for their righteous struggle. Fight on, Brothers.

VETS' "PREFERENCE" GOV'T: DON'T HIRE THE VET

Since the end of World War II, the U.S. government and most state and local governments have given veterans preference in hiring. Various civil service tests for jobs automatically award a certain number of extra points for military service, with additional bonus points for disabled vets and, in some cases, points for veterans who were awarded a Purple Heart as a result of being wounded in action.

However, if the U.S. government is faced with an economic squeeze (a situation where the large corporate powers want to free up money for their own uses, not to see it spent on government jobs or programs) and feels the need to pacify large groups of people while presenting the face of "equality" and "equal opportunity," then veterans' preference is expendable. Besides, most of these vets are Vietnam vets who, the government believes, can be stomped on once again without any particular public outcry. So, their solution is ready-made: talk about the need to hire women and, to a lesser degree, minorities, set up a couple of phoney vets jobs programs to demon-

"deep concern" with the plight of Vietnam vets, and get rid of veterans' preference.

That's exactly what Carter has proposed. To support his proposals, he primed the Government Accounting Office (GAO) to do one of their patented studies. "We are not suggesting," their report says, "that total elimination of veterans' preference is necessary or desirable; however, the conflict between veterans' preference and EEO (equal employment opportunity) could be minimized." And he has mustered the Chairman of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, Alan K. Campbell, to point out how veterans' preference "unintentionally works to the disadvantage of both women and minorities."

Briefly, their arguments say that the group of younger vets--20-24--where unemployment is sky-high are not helped by vets' preference (they don't explain why this is true, if it is). Already 50% of the federal workforce is made up of vets (the federal government is the leading employer of veterans). And this preference works against non-vets, especially wo-

men and minorities.

Of course they do not mention the real solution to the problem--jobs. Not just for vets but for all who want to work. Productive jobs which provide a decent wage so that veterans and non-veterans alike can support their families.

The government has demonstrated its great concern and compassion for the unemployed Vietnam vet. Along with cuts in jobless benefits which blasted out at all the unemployed, the government has aided vets with a \$140 million federal program which began last June. Designed to encourage private industry to hire vets, the program, called HIRE (Help through Industrial Retraining and Employment) guaranteed 50% of the training cost for employers who would guarantee to hire 100 workers; when employers complained about the number it was cut to 15 workers.

Carter presented this program in January 1977; Congress passed it and it went into law in June. It set up hiring priorities--first, disabled Vietnam vets; then other Vietnam vets, unemployed youth, and finally

the long-term unemployed. With the \$140,000,000 to work with, the program, in its first six months, had gotten jobs for 57 vets, 52 long-term jobless, and 27 young people, a grand total of 136. William Miller, recently appointed head of the Federal Reserve Board, was in charge of the program; if his performance there was any indication, we'd better start sticking what money we have under our mattresses. To get the 57 jobs for vets, the program only spent \$8.8 million; if they'd just given the money to the vets it would come to \$154,385.96 each. A Labor Department expert, admitting that the record of HIRE was "dismal," said: "It's not as dismal as it seems and we hope the record will get much better in 1978."

As usual, the "hopes" of the Labor Department won't put food into anyone's mouth, nor pay any landlords. Now will they provide any jobs, whether for the vets the program is aimed at or for women and minorities who they say are harmed by vets' preference.

In fact the whole idea of
Turn to page 14

Against Bosses and Sellout Miners' Fight Growing



ANGRY MINERS DEMONSTRATE IN WASHINGTON, DC; AFTER MILLER'S FIRST ATTEMPT TO SELL OUT, MINERS OCCUPIED THE UNION HEADQUARTERS.

The miners are in the midst of the longest coal strike in union history. They're taking on not only the coal operators, police, the national guard and the threat of federal troops, but also their own union officials. Despite all the tactics designed to crush or subvert their actions, and despite the real hardships involved in striking for three months, the miners grow stronger and support for their fight is growing among workers and others around the country.

The media, serving the interests of the bosses, have helped unleash a propaganda barrage attacking the miners and attempting to build popular support for any government or company actions which will stop their militant strike. We're told how the stubbornness, selfishness and greed of the miners is going to cause us all to freeze because they won't dig the coal. State governors have gone on TV to ask the miners to return to work and President Carter has fallen in line, appealing to the miners' "patriotism." Not one of these commentators, not one of these politicians has said that the BCOA (the Bituminous Coal Operators Association) should give the miners what they need to achieve their goal of a decent life--always it's the miners who should capitulate.

Not one of these commentators or politicians has yet said anything about all of us freezing because the mine owners won't offer up a decent contract. Why don't they talk about these sons of bitches who are living high off the profits they make from the miners who have to risk their lives, daily, in the mines?

Or take the media treatment of the contract offer agreed to by the United Mineworkers of America arbitration committee. Just based on TV and newspapers, people who have to believe that only fools would turn down such a lush contract. The facts are far different. The latest offer:

1. Takes away the right to strike. By allowing the company to fire "ringleaders, instigators, and pickets," the miners are being forced to depend on the grievance procedure for their very lives in unsafe mines. Without the right to walkout, miners will be forced to work for weeks and months waiting for action from the company.
2. Takes away full medical insurance. Every visit to the hospital by a miner or member of his family would require the miner to put up the first \$350 out of his pocket.
3. Does not equalize pensions. It continues to give miners who retired before 1974 a lousy \$275 a month and did not

improve the meager \$350 per month that goes to miners who retired after 1974.

These are three of the four main demands the miners began the strike with--yet the media would have us believe that a pay raise was all that counted and that the BCOA had already agreed to that demand.

In the face of all of this, the miners haven't even flinched. UMW President Arnold Miller's TV advertisements (paid for out of union funds from a union which has cut off the pensions to retired miners) are not only falling on deaf ears but are increasing the anger that many of the striking miners already feel toward their sellout top union leadership--in Illinois, 2000 miners marched demanding that Miller resign, and petitions demanding his resignation have been eagerly signed by miners across the country. Fights have broken out in union meetings between the union leaders who are supporting the contract and rank and file miners who believe that it stinks!

Over 160,000 miners are on strike. 1800 mines in 15 states are closed. In spite of statements about stockpiles, made at the beginning of the strike, the mammoth power companies are now playing a different tune and cutting back on power not only to schools and hospitals but even to industry. Layoffs have begun and will grow as the strike continues. So the attacks on the miners intensify.

In addition to the mine owners, the media barrage, and

sellout union leadership (Miller already accepted one rotten contract, only to have it unanimously voted down by the arbitration committee), the miners face the threat of federal intervention (which may be happening by the time THE VETERAN is out). In several areas the National Guard has already been called in. In the face of all this, the miners have continued to wage fierce and militant struggle. Non-union mines have been closed, scabs have been turned away, and scab trains and trucks have been stopped. This fight has by no means been easy. Pensions for retired miners have been cut off. One retired miner was gunned down by company thugs while delivering sandwiches to strikers on the picket line. However, the miners not only are fighting back now but have a long history of struggle. During the last hundred years, there have been 10 major mine wars and thousands of wildcat strikes. In 1968 the mines were shut for two months. Last year 85,000 miners went out on a wildcat strike because of cuts in medical benefits. And this year it is again toe to toe because the miners refuse to be crushed.

"We're going to stay out until hell freezes over if we have to," is what one miner said, and that is the spirit of the miners. With petitions and demonstrations they are fighting Miller and the other hyenas in the national union leadership. With their refusal to work and with the risk of their lives they are fighting the coal bosses. Fighting to keep the things they have won in the past and for the things they need in the future, the miners are an example for workers and oppressed people everywhere.

VICTORY TO THE MINERS



MINERS AND THEIR FAMILIES TAKE ON SCABS AT A PENNSYLVANIA COAL MINE DURING THE 1880'S.

Interview with the PAN AFRICANIST CONGRESS

"WE ARE GOING TO WIN"



(The following interview with PAC representative Mzonke Xuza was done in the office of the PAC permanent observer mission to the United Nations in New York in late January 1978.)

The VETERAN: Tell us about the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)?

PAC: The Pan Africanist Congress, since its inception on the 9th of April, 1959, has been in the forefront of the struggle in Azania.... In 1963 through its underground activities, the PAC caused the biggest disturbances in the country. Because the judge who was selected to investigate underground activities said that it was the biggest threat to the country in 1963, after that the movement was banned; most of its surviving members had to leave the country and the other were rounded up by the regime and they were executed. And ever since then we're still treading on the same road toward the same goals. I would say that more than ever before, at this moment, the movement has gained a lot of attention from people and from the regime, the latest being an investigation which took almost over a year when they investigated the activities of the PAC in the country--it was supposed to have stretched from 1963 when the movement was banned by the regime up to 1977. And police minister Jimmy Kruger has said that some of the activities during the national uprisings in the country were fomented by PAC through the Azania Peoples Liberation Army (APLA).

The VETERAN: Student rebellions in Soweto have gotten wide publicity here in the U.S. People have begun to recognize there is a liberation struggle going on in South Africa. Can you tell us a little about the Soweto rebellions?

PAC: For a long time after the uprising started people kept on with the idea that this was just against the Bantu education (which is the system of education for Black people in the country) but we have found out that the students who rose up, they have traced the whole chain of oppression. I remember well one member of our movement who was sent to join us here--he was once a leader of the Soweto uprising--he said that the whole thing was a chain because Bantu education came as a result of racism and racism

ism came as a result of apartheid and apartheid came as a result of capitalism and capitalism--well you know it's connected with imperialism--so it's a whole chain of oppression. So they were fighting against that; that's why it took so long and they are still continuing up to now.

The VETERAN: You mentioned the system of apartheid in South Africa; can you give us a little information about exactly what that is and how the PAC sees the struggle against it?

PAC: Apartheid, I would say, is the system of laws which were formulated a number of years ago to try and insure that a certain section of the population--the Black population--is under perpetual servitude. Cecil Rhodes, once governor of the country, said that the British realized the wealth of the country; the natives didn't know about it, they just ran on top and have to be treated like children. That's why in 1913 the Land Act came about where the surface of the country was divided: 13% for the African people (who comprise 80% of

the population) and the rest, 87%, was allocated to the white population since 1913. And the whole system of apartheid came about to try to insure that situation because out of that you'll find things like the "pass laws" which force people to stay in their reserves and starve there. These reserves are the 13%; people starve there until industry de-

mands their labor. And then they can get out of the reserves through a string of bureaucrats, magistrates, local chiefs and tribal authorities. Then they can go to industrial areas. As soon as they are out of work, they have to go back to the reserves.



VVAW CONTINGENT IN BAN THE KRUGERRAND MARCH IN CHICAGO

South Africa's Political Prisoners

REGIME HIDES TRIALS

Political trials of a number of PAC activists and supporters are now underway in South Africa. Despite the ferment and turmoil throughout the country, the government of South Africa continues to try to present the picture of a contented and quiet country with the government firmly in control. All in all, they're trying for an image of a good place for foreign capitalists to invest their money with a promise of a good and safe return.

As a result, the political trials are almost unheard of outside South Africa. To enforce the silence the trials are being held in small towns under specially created courts. The Pan Africanist Congress has begun a campaign to let the people of the world know what is going on and to build support for these freedom fighters on trial.

* In the largest of these trials, 18 men, including Zeph Mothupeng, Secretary for Judicial Affairs in the PAC Executive Committee, are charged

with "furthering the aims of a banned organization." Further, they allegedly engaged in acts of violence and destruction, and recruited people into the APLA (Azanian Peoples Liberation Army). In fact, many of the lectures and meetings they are charged with holding took place, according to the charges, inside prison.

* In Maritzburg, three men are on trial for allegedly going abroad to receive military training, charged under the "Terrorism Act." According to one witness, he "left because of intimidation by the Government and had wanted to learn to fight so he could free the people of South Africa."

* In Empangeni a Special Supreme Court was set up to try Bonginkosi Mngomezulu, a 35-year old peasant leader for supposedly killing six people (including one policeman) and attempting to kill 7 others. All this is being linked to PAC activities in the remote area where Mngomezulu was a pea-

sant leader.

* Two more men are on trial in Durban for recruiting members into PAC, a violation of the Internal Security Act.

* Four men died while detained in prison in circumstances much like the case of Steve Biko. The four were part of a list of 86 unindicted co-conspirators in the Mothupeng 18 trial. According to the government, they committed suicide.

The justice system of South Africa has already been exposed to the world during the "investigation of the murder of Steve Biko. There's no doubt that he was murdered by the police; the government only went through with the farce of an investigation because of massive international opinion and pressure.

These murders and trials are an attempt by the South African government to put a lid on the liberation struggle. And while the government is trying to keep the lid on, it's also trying to

Cont. on p.15



PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA DEMONSTRATE TO PROTEST ARRESTS FOLLOWING THE 1977 SOWETO REBELLION

The VETERAN: Removing the system of apartheid--is that the answer for the South African people? Or is the struggle against apartheid?

PAC: The struggle of the Azanian people is not only confined to remove apartheid because it's well known that, if for instance at this moment, some decree were to come out from the white pyramid that all schools are open, a lot of people still couldn't afford to go there--so why just remove apartheid?

What the people are fighting for is to remove such things as the 1913 Land Act so that the people of the country--the indigenous people--who comprise 80% of the population, who comprise the labor force of the country, they can repossess their land. They are the workers, the peasants of the country, and going along with the revolutionary ideology, the workers and peasants are the people who can lead in a revolution towards genuine freedom.

The VETERAN: President Carter and Andrew Young have come out against apartheid--Young especially is pushed as a champion of the people of South Africa and human rights; how do you feel about their role?

PAC: I think that people have to remember that Andrew Young is doing a job--there's nothing he can do or say that's against his superiors. Therefore, he cannot be regarded on his own--as an individual--as a champion for human rights, for freedom. He's doing a job for his superiors. Now as far as the Carter administration is concerned: you have to bear in mind that the real force in the administration and in Congress are the people who have the money, the multi-national corporations. To them what is important is to make money. If they can find a way

of maintaining stability in the country, then that will insure their investments. They're prepared to make such a puerile statement about removing apartheid as long as they see a way or possibility of stability in the country and are sure that their investments are safe.

The VETERAN: When we were in Vietnam we saw lots of evidence of U.S. corporations--how do U.S. and British investments play against the interests of the people of South Africa?

PAC: You must remember that at this moment there are 1634 multi-national corporations that are operating in South Africa. And of those companies, 400+ are U.S. companies. . . . You find it's much more profitable for them to go and expand the outlands in South Africa than to face labor problems and strikes in this country. It's much more costly here, because in South Africa the people who are laborers there are not allowed to strike, they are not allowed to form any unions. They are coming from the reserves, where they have been starved for so many years, where you'll find that because of these restrictions they'll be prepared to accept anything in order to support their families. That's how crude it is in that country.

The VETERAN: Last year at African Liberation Day, David Sibeko from PAC talked about the Peoples Liberation Army; what has happened since that time?

PAC: From a long time ago PAC realized that the only way to liberation was armed struggle. And there was a need for the formation of the Azanian Peoples Liberation Army (APLA) to be the military wing of the movement. One has to realize that the people have to be armed with the correct ideology so that together with the Azanian people they can

carry out revolution because the man without ideology, without realizing what he is fighting for, is nothing else but a terrorist as soon as you give him a gun. So in collaboration with the people--the Azanian people--the APLA has been formed to spearhead the physical side of the armed struggle.

The VETERAN: Blacks were recruited into the military in South Africa during World War II; how were they treated?

PAC: During WWII, Blacks were recruited. Especially at the beginning, they were only porters--offload things from ships and carry food around and cook and things like that. Some of them finally trickled into the fighting units. What is typical of the South Africa situation, it happened that somewhere in North Africa the casualties of a certain battle involved South Africans and they were buried together, whites and Blacks. When this reached home there was such an upheaval that instructions had to be issued that the whites had to be removed from that whole end of the cemetery and buried somewhere different,

not together with the Blacks. And at this moment the regime is training Black armies for the Bantustans. More especially I understand that the Transkei has its own army and these are the people who are used mostly against the armed struggle of the freedom fighters but who are unaware of this fact. We have to take cognizance that these people have to be treated with understanding--they don't know who they're fighting against.

The VETERAN: How does the future look?

PAC: I would say that the future has to look bright in terms of the liberation of my country because we're finding that more and more people are determined to join the armed struggle. The determination is not based on gambling--tactics--as you sometimes hear. People say, well, the regime they've got so many planes, are so well armed, etc, therefore they can withstand this and that much. It's not a game of cards, of looking how many aces you have in your hand. It's that the people are just determined and, with the will to be free, we are going to win!

Telegram of Condolences PanAfricanist Congress President Dies

(The following telegram was sent to the Permanent Observer Mission to the UN of the Pan Africanist Congress.)

OUR CONDOLENCES ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT SOBUKWE, FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF THE PAN AFRICANIST CONGRESS. HIS PASSING IS A LOSS TO ALL PEOPLES WHO ARE FIGHTING FOR THEIR FREEDOM. WE WILL REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS IN SUPPORT OF THE STRUGGLE WHICH WAS HIS AND WHOSE VICTORY WILL BE HIS MONUMENT.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO

OUR STRENGTH LIES IN OUR UNITY AND STRUGGLE

It's time for vets to get together to discuss our common problems and, more important, to begin to see some of the things we can do to solve these problems, to fight together against the way we were used once and then thrown away. To get this process going, VVAW is holding a veterans conference in Chicago on the 25th and 26th of March, Easter weekend, to bring together veterans from across the country. We need to work out a program to give us direction for the future.

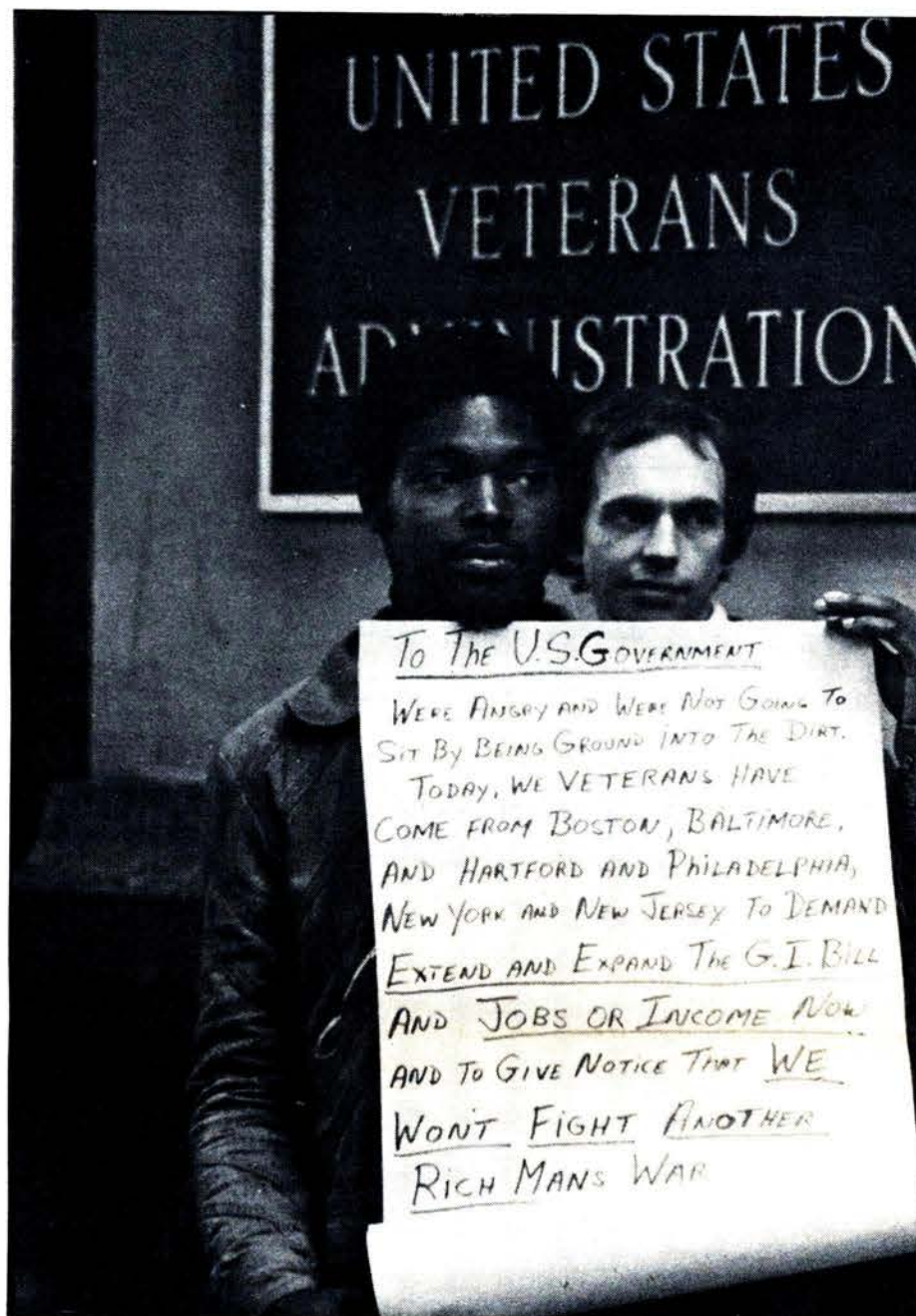
In addition to VVAW members VVAW has mailed out letters of invitation to vets clubs, veteran affairs directors, and individual vets at schools throughout the middle west. VVAW chapters, particularly in the mid-west, have begun to take out information about the conference to vets at unemployment offices, VA hospitals, and VA offices in order to bring together as many veterans with as many different ideas as possible.

Why use one of our valuable weekends sitting around and talking? What's the point?

This is the "Year of Vietnam" when the war gets discussed, the lies about the war get reviewed and expanded, the lessons of the war are more and more covered over. But what about the veterans of that war?

One thing is clear, not only from our own experience--that of Vietnam vets--but from the historical experience of the millions of veterans who have gone before us. We're not going to get any of the things we need--jobs, decent VA care, disability benefits that we can live on, or a GI Bill that will that will allow vets in school to survive--except through our own efforts. If we wait for the government to come up with these things on their own, we'll be waiting until Hell freezes over. If we wait until the "traditional" veterans organizations like the Legion or the VFW to come charging to the aid of the Vietnam vet, we'll all be dead and buried.

Huge numbers of Americans will agree with Vietnam vets when we say we're getting a raw deal. Even groups like the Legion (or at least many of its members) will agree with that. But when it comes to trying to change the way vets are treated, then it's a different tune they're singing. Our hope is



an organization which is prepared to do battle with the class that runs this country in order to get the things we need. The battles are necessary because, as we've seen time after time, crawling through the halls of Congress, hats in hand, to beg for a few more crumbs only leads to our getting stepped on by our self-proclaimed "friends" in government.

JOB--Vet's unemployment rates are high, partly because the overall economy is in sorry shape, but also because of the legends about Vietnam vets--we're all junkies, unreliable, troublemakers. This is one big topic for discussion at the conference. Government plans to eliminate vets preference is one part of this (see article on page 2).

DECENT BENEFITS--With a GI Bill about 300% below the version of the Bill at the end of World War II, we have to make plans about fighting to expand and extend the GI Bill. Soon,

the majority of Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans will no longer be eligible as a result of the restrictions on the Bill.

The Veterans Administration, despite the cover of a Vietnam veteran Max Cleland as director, has begun to talk a little more sweetly in response to the interest in how vets are treated. But there have been few changes. Vets are still getting disability payments sliced. Checks are still late. Red tape is, if anything, growing longer and harder to cut through. The VA hospital system is on the rocks, one reason why there is much talk in Congress about scrapping the whole system.

But vets don't need to make plans just around the issues that put bread and butter on the table (or in many cases, don't). The point behind the way the country's rulers are pushing the Year of Vietnam is not to give us a better break--it's to get people ready to go off again to fight their wars for them. As a

result, WAR, both in terms of what we learned from our own experience, and what we can do to make it more difficult for the government and its rich backers to drag our younger brothers or sons into their next war.

Specifically, Panama presents a situation where Carter has already threatened to "defend the Canal with 100,000 troops if necessary." South Africa, where the people are rising up and U.S. corporations are trying to help keep them in chains, is another volatile and explosive situation.

As veterans we have a particular perspective on war and on struggles for liberation. Based on our experience we have something to offer the American people so that others can learn from our experience. But we need common direction and common organization. And, while Vietnam vets have some particular problems, and this is the year when Vietnam gets reviewed, in fact veterans of all eras face many of the same problems and have a common interest in reaching solutions to them.

VVAW will be proposing the following agenda for the conference: on Saturday, March 25, from noon until early evening the discussion should center on the specific problems vets face--jobs, GI Bill, VA--some of the ways people have struggled against these problems, and how we can organize to deal with the problems in the future. Vietnam Veterans Day will be one proposal--see the article on the first page of the supplement/centerfold.

After some partying on Saturday night, Sunday should be spent working around some of the larger issues, including a speaker to talk about the Iranian Students Association's battle against the repression of the Shah, and a representative of the Pan Africanist Congress to talk about that country's turmoil and struggle. The campaign to provide "Fatigues for Freedom Fighters" and to build support for African Liberation Day will be one proposal.

The conference has to look forward. There's much to learn from the past, but the conference has to arrive at concrete plans for the future--we have to have these plans and a program in order to fight.

VETERANS: CLOSE RANKS!

SUPPLEMENT THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

SYSTEM REWRITES HISTORY, VETS CALL FOR VIETNAM VETERANS DAY



GIS ON PATROL IN I CORPS



THE BRASS WAS BIG ON BODY COUNTS



1971. DEWEY CANYON III. VETS CAME BACK TO PROTEST U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM'S CIVIL WAR



"Just slogging through jungle undergrowth was bad enough, but when we kept having to get around the small lakes, the craters made by our 500-pound bombs, the going got worse. Partly it was the extra 10 pounds of mud which caked our boots, partly it was the mosquitos who bred in the stagnant, water-filled craters. But also it was the sense of this once-beautiful country being ripped apart by our bombs, all being dropped to somehow "save" the country. And that, like all the rest of the things--the blowing away of villages, the free-fire zones, the mine that farmers kept setting off--made no sense at all for one who was 10,000 miles from home carrying out the tasks that were supposed to "defend democracy" and "preserve freedom." (From one of the personal recollections of Vietnam, a series being printed in THE VETERAN; the series is on page 16 in this issue.)

When we got back from the war we again had our eyes opened. We found that being a veteran was more of a handicap than it was the ticket to a better life that it was supposed to be. That same rich class that sent us off to fight their dirty war have got us again. They have a tight hold on the purse strings and, as a result, many of us have no jobs (or bad jobs) and lousy benefits.

There are a lot of us veterans --29 million--and we face particular problems. But we have no organization on a large scale that

deals with these problems. Groups like the Legion and VFW are dying. They have their halls for social gatherings, but in the political arena they are limited by the views of their leadership who have closed their ears to the needs of veterans and closed their eyes to U.S. involvement in wars and potential wars around the world.

It's time to organize to fight back. That's why VVAW is calling for demonstrations and programs on April 22nd in the mid-west, on a day we are calling Vietnam Veterans Day. (Five years ago then-President Nixon declared a Vietnam Vets Day but his ceremonies met with such widespread protest as he attempted to portray Vietnam vets as "patriotic" backers of his war that neither he nor his successors have tried to hold another one). The time is ripe. The American people are reviewing and revisiting Vietnam and its veterans. Books, movies, TV specials are all coming out now. People are saying "Why?" "What next?" "What about the vets?"

At the same time we don't want to limit this day to Vietnam vets--we're calling it Vietnam Veterans Day because the Vietnam experience is being aired now. Most vets have shared common experience, have common problems--and a common fight. We should all come out around these things we have in common.

We have to remember how history is made--how change comes about. It doesn't come by waiting for a great man to happen along who will lead us to the promised land. It doesn't come by petitions brought to a Congressman on bended knee. Instead, it comes by people getting out there, on the front lines, and demanding it. The rich bastards who run this country aren't pushing the "Year of Vietnam" because they

want us to remember all the lessons of that war. Or because they plan to do anything for Vietnam vets. In fact, they're planning to pimp off the experience of veterans, turn that experience on its head, and use it to help put across their ideas of what happened in Vietnam. They've got a purpose in all this too--to get us ready to go off to fight for them once again.

On Vietnam Veterans Day, the day we declare, not waiting for those turkeys to come up with some jive, we'll take them on. We need jobs or income now--for vets and for all the other unemployed troops in the unemployed army. We demand decent benefits for all vets--that's regardless of discharge, too; we've gone much too long trying to scrape by on their bad VA care, their inadequate GI Bill, their attempts to cut disability payments. We see their next war being pumped up, so we say U.S. Out of Panama Now--their "treaty debate" is another sham. We say Victory to the People of Southern Africa, people who, like the Indochinese are fighting for their freedom and independence.

Veterans, like millions of others, have made the gains we've made through fighting for them. Organizing is the key: one by one we get picked off, but united we have strength. We learned discipline and organization in the military--now we must put these lessons to use in our own interests, not in the interests of the rich who sent us off to fight and die for them.



JOBS or INCOME NOW
DECENT BENEFITS for ALL VETS
FIGHT the RICH, NOT THEIR WARS

Jobs or Income Now

From chow lines to unemployment lines--that's a big part of the history of the Vietnam vet. Years after the war and long after most vets were separated from the military, the enemy of unemployment still stalks the ranks of veterans.

In the most recent available statistics, Vietnam-era vets (those who spent at least some part of their military service between August 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975) between the ages of 20 and 24 have an unemployment rate of 16%; non-vets in the same age group have the criminal rate of "only" 9.4% unemployment. For the younger minority vets, the rate is well over 30%.

Of course the government has a solution--in fact, it has a number of solutions. A full unemployment bill, they say: we'll set our goals at only 4% unemployed, although experts say that figure isn't realistic. We'll set up programs to put everyone to work--at sweat-shop jobs at the minimum wage. Or if nothing else, we can always just drive people out of the employment market so they're no longer a bothersome statistic.

But look at the bright side, says one economist with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; "Today unemployment is far less a hardship because of a larger proportion of families

with two or more workers." Great--they most think that husband and wife both work simply for the joy of working, not in order to make enough to get by. Unemployment would mean just starving slowly instead of all at once.

Millions of Americans are without jobs; not even the government statisticians can say how many people have stopped looking so have been dropped from the figures. But for this large army of unemployed, men and women, veterans and non-veterans, the demand is the same. Resist all attacks coming down on unemployment insurance and demand: **JOBS OR INCOME FOR ALL--RIGHT NOW!**

Amnesty and Discharges

What happens to the vet with a bad discharge? The question is vital to over 600,000 Vietnam-era veterans.

Part of the answer is no jobs. For many vets when we can't find work, we can fall back on the GI Bill, pick up some job qualifications and subsist on the GI Bill while doing it. But even that option's not open to the vet with a bad discharge. VA care is also denied to those veterans.

Of all the leftovers from the Vietnam War, vets with bad discharges may well be the most pointed reminder of what happened during that war. Thousands of bad discharges were handed out through the military "justice" system for what were simply acts of resistance to that war.

As part of his program to

"heal the wounds of Vietnam," President Carter came up with an amnesty which, as he originally presented it, would solve the problems of vets with bad discharges by providing a simplified discharge upgrading procedure. The program was a fake which did little for the vets enrolled, and which had the guts cut out of it when veterans benefits were denied to the participating veterans. The results of the program were so bad, so few vets applied for the upgrading, that the government has never made the results public.

Discharges and the overall question of universal, unconditional amnesty get to the heart of the lessons of Vietnam--it is right to resist an unjust war, and amnesty recognizes this fact. It also gets at the military's Uniform Code of Military

Justice which has always been a tool for the brass to control the troops. There has never been much pretense that the UCMJ was "just." Bad discharges have been passed out for whatever the brass decided it didn't like. Black GIs got way more than their "share" of these discharges. Administrative discharges, usually "undesirable," were given out by the handful to GIs who took them rather than go through the hassle of a court martial and who just wanted out.

VVAW has fought around the question of bad discharges as a part of the overall amnesty issue for years. Only the strength of the amnesty movement has forced the government to provide some concessions, but the fight for universal, unconditional amnesty is far from over.

"YEAR OF VIETNAM" THE 'REFIGHT' OF THE



THE HISTORY OF VIETNAM WHICH THE U.S. WAS FILLED WITH THE KIND OF U.S. TROOPS OUT IN THE FIELD IN AN ATTEMPT TO BRING ABOUT THE END OF A VIETNAMESE VILLAGE AT THE HANDS OF GIANTS LIKE SHELL MAINTAINING SWEAT AND BLOOD. WE FOUGHT THE WAR FOR THE RICH RICHER!

Indochina was liberated almost three years ago. The war was over, won by the people who had been fighting for freedom and independence for over 20 years. The U.S. ruling class, decisively beaten in that war, spent the next three years doing everything it could to ignore the war in hopes that somehow it would fade from the memory of the American people. Veterans of the war, an embarrassing reminder of what had happened there, were equally ignored.

But 1978 is different. Suddenly, it is the "Year of Vietnam"--refought, revisited, and revised. At least 10 major movies, including "Boys of Company C" and the multi-million dollar epic "Apocalypse Now," a Francis Ford Coppola extravaganza due out in September, have been shown or will soon hit the screens. Books such as Philip Caputo's A Rumor of War, Gloria Emerson's Winners and Losers, and Ron Kovic's Born on the Fourth of July, all out last year in hardcover, are being reprinted in paperback making them accessible to many more people. TV columnists are talking about plans for a fall series which would deal with Vietnam (maybe "Light at the End of the Tunnel?")

Newspapers have caught the Vietnam fever. There have been series about Vietnam revisited. Even Vietnam vets and the problems they face have been the subject of a number of articles and columns. Papers blast away at the so-called "blood-bath" in Cambodia, the "Once Peaceful Land" (and it was peaceful for the handful of rich parasites who survived by pimp-

Extend & Expand the GI Bill



According to the Veterans Administration, the GI Bill enrollment will "continue its downward trend in fiscal year 1979." From the present total student population (both vets and active duty GIs) of 1.29 million it will drop to 1.1 million next year.

None of this comes as much of a surprise to today's vet/students. First, the GI Bill payments, even with the November

raise, isn't enough to get by on; unless the vet works a full time job and goes to school besides, the GI Bill barely allows him to squeeze by. In fact the government hopes to buy off the vet with the cost of living allowance which the recent raise represents but vets aren't about to take the bait. Despite their "kindness," today's GI Bill is still a shadow of the Bill at the end of World War II--in comparative buying power the WWII Bill beats this one by nearly 300%.

Then there's the ten year restriction. There's no reason why vets should have only ten years to use the Bill; the need to get an education or job training can come at any time.

Or there are the hundred and one other petty restrictions and harassments everything from

attendance checks in the schools (reminding vets of bed checks in the military) to late GI Bill checks and changes in the system of payment. And for the present enlistees, there's no Bill at all!

All of this leads to the decrease in enrollment. But there's a bigger reason behind it all. Paying vets to go to school doesn't make any money for the rich who run this country, any more than healthcare in VA hospitals or a large number of other programs. So the solution is to cutback in any way possible.

Vets fought to get as far as we have--and vets won't stop now. That's why we say **Extend and Expand the GI Bill!**

VIETNAM" FIGHTING THE WAR'



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IND OF COMPARISONS SEEN HERE:
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ing off the people). Articles have appeared to say how the Vietnamese offensive during Tet of 1968, when they seized city after city and were even inside the American Embassy in Saigon, was in fact a major victory for the U.S. military which was only turned into a loss by the way it was reported in the U.S. media. Marines who were in Hue, held by the Liberation Forces for 25 days, tell a different story--see the article on this page.

As part of this blitz, no less a personage than Ex-general William Westmoreland, a loser in Vietnam and a loser again in his attempt to begin a political career, is now appearing on college campuses to explain the Vietnam War to the new generation which, he says, "doesn't remember what the war was about." Wherever he goes the message is the same; the American military was tremendous and could overcome any obstacle, but in Vietnam they were handcuffed.

After trying to ignore the war and hoping it would just fade into the dusty hallways of history, the class that runs this country has decided that they have to get out a position on the war. It's more than just the money to be made off movies on the war, or even Westmoreland's ability to rip off \$1500 for each of his lectures. Ignoring the war--and ignoring the veterans of the war--didn't work; the lessons that people learned about resisting an unjust war, whether inside the military or in the streets, the lessons about what a small and underdeveloped country with a strong political leadership and direction

can defeat a large, powerful and technologically advanced country--these lessons aren't about to fade. Yet, as the rulers look into their future (and ours) and see that they are going to need us to fight another of their rotten, profit-making wars a couple of years down the road, they see they have to clear up the question of Vietnam first. Too many people, vets and non-vets alike, recall Vietnam and say they won't go off to fight another one like that.

What can this flock of bosses do? They've got to deal with millions of Americans who repudiated the war, and a mountain of evidence that points to U.S. designs in pushing the war. No longer can they get away with saying that we were really "defending democracy" in Indochina. Practically no one but the most hardened and blinded fool is likely to go along with that lie any longer. So they are forced to change their propaganda. "Well, maybe we made a little mistake," they say; "The war was an error and we really shouldn't have done it. But you can be sure we won't make that kind of mistake again. Now put on your flack jackets and get ready for Panama (or South Africa or the Middle East or wherever the next war might start)."

From their point of view, the Vietnam War was a mistake because they lost. But in fact it was much more than simply a "mistake." It was a necessity for a system whose economy is based on either expanding--finding markets, resources, and labor as cheap as possible--or collapsing. There were further political reasons, too. The U.S. had long been a power in Asia and could not afford to lose its foothold in Southeast Asia. Even more important, the U.S. ruling class looked around the world and saw struggles for national liberation on the upswing. With the need to exploit labor, resources and markets, they could see what an effect these struggles might have in the future--and determined that they must stop the trend by fighting in Vietnam.

They lost. But that same system, no matter what admissions the politicians might make, has the same needs today and will have them in the future. All of Carter's pious words don't change the fundamental need of the system to move toward another war, whether a war in Panama or South Africa, or finally a war with the USSR to see who grabs the rich spoils of industrial Europe. Exposing that system and its needs, and fighting against the next war is one of the primary aims of VVAW. Based on our experience of fighting for the rich, we now say FIGHT THE RICH, NOT THEIR WARS!

Tet-Hue Veteran: "I THINK THEY'RE TRYING TO REVERSE HISTORY"



LIBERATION FORCES ADVANCING IN I CORPS

(On the 10th anniversary of the National Liberation Front's Tet offensive in February, 1968, newspaper articles appeared saying that the U.S. military "won" during Tet, though the U.S. media turned it into a loss. General Westmoreland is touring the country saying much the same thing. So THE VETERAN went to a VVAW member who was in Hue during Tet; here is his recollection.)

"In February, 1968, I was a member of the 2nd Marine Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, H Company; we were the first group sent into Hue after the Vietnamese Liberation Forces seized the city plus all kinds of other cities throughout Vietnam. We were sent up there without even knowing what we were going there for. Nobody told us how big this offensive was--we just drove up to the city and as soon as we crossed the bridge into the city, we were taken under fire--ambushed.

We were under fire for 25 straight days until tremendous numbers of Marines were called up along with the whole 101st Airborne Division, to take up blocking positions around the city. The Marines were supposed to sweep through the city and push the Vietnamese into the blocking force. Eventually, the city was returned to control of the Thieu government but this went on for 25 days.

Now during the 10th anniversary of Tet I see on TV that people like General Westmoreland are saying that Tet was a defeat for the Vietnamese and a victory for the U.S., and that it would have been a total victory if the politicians had taken the handcuffs off. I don't see how he can say that. First, we were fighting about 2000 Vietnamese in Hue City; at least 1000 of them somehow got away. From what I understand this happened all over the country--they sure weren't "wiped out." When we left Hue and went out into the countryside, the resistance was just as strong--even stronger--than it had been before Tet. People know about Hamburger Hill; that was about 10-15 miles north of there; hundreds of GIs--Airborne--were wiped out there, and that went on after Tet.

Westmoreland is dreaming just like he was after Tet when he came to Marine Division Headquarters and spoke to some of the troops; he said that Marines should remember their amphibious war training because they were going to be landing in North Vietnam soon to end the war. Any landing in North Vietnam--we'd have been lucky to get back as much as one C-ration can. There was no way. All in all, I think they're trying to reverse history. They're going to say it was a just war we could have won. I think veterans know better than that...."



U.S. MARINES IN HASTY RETREAT FROM KHE SANH

The Boys in Company C is a very good movie about the Vietnam War. It's filled with scenes that most vets will recognize, remember and relate to. It's a kind of enlisted man's MASH (movie version), laced with humor and showing some of the episodes that raised questions about the nature of the war for those who fought it--the lust for body count, the senseless patrols, the incredible notion that wiping out the Vietnamese people was the best way to "save" them.

This is the first actual Vietnam War movie in over ten years. While there have been many TV shows depicting crazy vets (dopers, psychopaths, criminals) and the recent movie Heroes which dealt with a returned-home vet, the only other movie which focused on the war itself was John Wayne's Green Berets, a feeble failure in its attempt to whip up some kind of mass enthusiasm for the war. People should take the opportunity to see Boys in Company C because it presents a mainly accurate view of the war and captures some of the reality of Vietnam.

The film begins by introducing its five main characters just as they are entering Marine bootcamp. (It's worth noting that the film covers a lot and compresses a lot of experiences into only two hours so cannot develop many of its themes very fully.) There's Alvin Foster, the narrator from the Midwest; Washington, a ghetto Black; Billy Ray Pike, the "all-American" boy with a slight drug problem; Fazio, a latter-day Fonz from Brooklyn; and Bisbee the basic hippy drafted into the Marines.

The film follows them through basic in what has to be the most realistic account of that ordeal ever filmed, complete with accurate language. It's hilarious--and true. Often when vets reminisce about basic we recall the funny things about it, but with a grim undertone (how many people we went through basic with didn't come back from 'Nam?) Both the funniness and grimness are in the movie, including a good though simple approach to discrimination against Blacks in the military. While there are few Blacks and other minorities in Company C--hardly an accurate reflection of the high percentage of minorities in front-line companies--the movie gets at the important truth of how national differences tended to disappear in actual combat situations where it made little difference if the man covering your ass during a firefight was Black or white or Latin, or if the medic who patched you up was a different color.

Movies- "Boys in Company C"

RELIVING VIETNAM

But the crux of the film takes place in Vietnam. Many scenes hit home about the nature of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Particularly striking is a scene in which Company C led by a captain who you hope will soon be fragged goes on patrol.

The captain is looking to please his superiors with a high body count. In the process he kills off several soldiers. After taking fire and returning it, he orders several GIs to find the VC bodies. When they can't find any, he assumes they escaped to a nearby town via a tunnel. He calls in artillery to level the town (which always provided the opportunity to count every civilian body in the town and boost the body count). Sickened by this, the Black GI confronts the captain. The captain responds that "It's an enemy town." "They're not the enemy," the GI says; "You are."

This is the best single line in the film. Forcefully, it shows how many GIs, confronted with an actual situation, had the sudden shock of basic understanding about the nature of the war and who, on a perceptual level, was a friend and who was the enemy. It took a little longer and, in some cases, repeated experiences such as this, to begin to understand that the real enemy wasn't mainly the captains or even the colonels, but the corporate system and its bosses which sent us off to defend and expand their profits overseas.

The movie portrays many of the other situations we had to confront, situations which were at odds with our supposed reason for being in Vietnam and which, in the long run, helped us gain some kind of understanding of the war. The corrupt Vietnamese district chiefs; the misinformation from G-2 (Intelligence); the affection we had for the Vietnamese people we came in contact with off the battlefield; the hatred we had for some of the officers. Problems common to the American GI--the black market, drugs, even the clap--are dealt with in a simple but good way in the film. The preview audience where we viewed the movie cheered each time one such problem was resolved.

The film isn't perfect. As in MASH the filmmakers opt for symbolism that is too simple--contact sports. In MASH it was

the famous football game; in Company C it's soccer. Suddenly, the stark reality of the war turns into a soccer game where men fight men, one team wins and one loses. The audience turns into a cheering section for the Americans against their Vietnamese opponents and much of the complexity of the situation as many of us saw it in Vietnam is glossed over.

In fact, of course, war is not just a "game." It is an extension of politics. Early in the film one of the characters raises the point that there is a civil war going on in Vietnam--that's a little closer to the point but the political context is lost during the soccer game. The war was a war of liberation, a war to give the Vietnamese people the right to self-determination without outside--U.S.--interference. When we look

worth dying for if necessary. For many Americans, however, there was a conflict between the two.

Why? The burnings of villages, indiscriminate bombings, free fire zones where anything or anyone who moved was "enemy," and massacres such as My Lai were not just the results of mad company commanders but were part of the necessary overall strategy of the U.S. rulers. They had no other choice in their attempts to defeat a politically directed and motivated force. For the individual GI, however, confronting these incidents after having been trained about the "rightness" of the U.S. "cause," the result was questions about what he was doing there--and finally the sense that all he wanted to do was get out alive, that "winning" the war was not some-



THE FIVE LEADING CHARACTERS IN "THE BOYS OF COMPANY C" DRESSED FOR THEIR ROLES IN THE MOVIE. RELIVING THE VIETNAM EXPERIENCE UNDERLINES SOME OF THE LESSONS WE LEARNED FROM THAT WAR OF LIBERATION.

back on our Vietnam experience, whether liking the Vietnamese people or the death of close friends, we weren't always sure about what we were doing there. But confused or not, we did not see it as a game--and the movie doesn't need the soccer game since there is plenty of reality packed into its two hours.

The major point of the movie is summed up by the narrator Foster--it's better to be living than winning. This is the idea that the audience is left with at the end of the film. Hundreds of thousands of GIs in Vietnam felt the same way--that's what short-timers' calendars were all about. But this wasn't always the choice we faced: GIs who resisted in Vietnam often both lived--and won. And the Vietnamese, who were fighting a just war, winning and living were not in conflict: they had a cause it was

thing he was about to give up his life for.

Overall The Boys in Company C is a good movie. During its couple of hours, the vets become familiar buddies. It's easy to remember incidents in the field, in basic--and some of the questions that the war raised. Vets should see the film and bring their families and friends. And they should be prepared to relive some of those times which we can never erase from our memories, times which have become more and more important as we draw lessons from them which expose the nature of the system, see some of the ways to fight against it, and come to a better understanding of who in fact the real enemy is.

VVAW NATIONAL OFFICE
P.O. BOX 20184
CHICAGO, IL 60620
(312) 651-1583

From the 40s to the 70s GIs USED AS GUINEA PIGS



"GUINEA PIGS" DURING A-BOMB TEST



ONE OF THE TEST VICTIMS

When the U.S. began to develop nuclear weapons, only a few of the effects were known; Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the first two major tests of the bomb's destructive capabilities. To determine more precisely how nuclear weapons could be most effectively used, a series of tests were conducted during the period from the late 1940's to early 1960's in Nevada and in South Pacific islands.

In Nevada smaller bombs were tested to discover their destruc-

tive power and radiation effects. While Ban the Bomb protestors assembled at the gates of the Nevada test site, dozens of bombs were detonated inside. In some tests, small cities were built, complete with homes that we would be happy to be able to live in, and manikins equipped with measuring devices to record the effects of both the blast and the subsequent radiation.

But the government wasn't satisfied with dummies or measuring devices--they had to have

some live guinea pigs and GIs were the logical choice (just like GIs were the choice to test the experimental drug dapsone in Vietnam. (accompanying story)

Fifteen hundred feet from ground zero observers watched the shock waves roll toward them across the desert floor. Equipped with thick dark glasses as their primary means of protection, they were supposed to collect all kinds of data. In some tests, a company of soldiers were put in deep trenches 1000 feet from the point of detonation. They were plain and simple guinea pigs. If they survived the explosion, that meant nuclear devices had a tactical use and that troops could be sent in shortly after the blast from nearby. Long range effects didn't make much difference.

Although the GIs radiation badges registered below the danger level, it's now coming out that various things have happen-

ed to the men involved: hair falling out or turning gray, all the way to a high rate of leukemia. In typical government double-talk and double-act, it turns out the VA has awarded medical disability benefits to some of the men involved, but no one has admitted that soldiers were used as guinea pigs or that those involved should be given care or benefits.

With the recent publicity the government has been forced to acknowledge the situation. Anyone involved in the experiments is being urged to call the Defense Nuclear Agency at 800-638-8300 (toll free). It isn't clear yet whether they are trying to collect more data or will really do something for the vets who got screwed.

REMEMBER THAT LITTLE WHITE PILL?

Remember the line-ups in Vietnam when the 1st Sergeant would go around giving us our malaria pills? Or the Psy-war choppers flying over a firebase telling us all the terrible things that would happen to us if we didn't take those nasty-tasting things? Most Vietnam vets remembering resisting the pill, coming up with all kinds of reasons why we couldn't or wouldn't down the foul pills.

Once again the GI has been proved right. The National Cancer Institute, experimenting with dapsone (the little white pill, not to be confused with the large orange pill) has found that it produces cancer in rats. Troops in Vietnam, according to the Institute, were not told that the drug was being used experimentally.

Apparently the military, which makes such a big thing of taking care of its own, wasn't satisfied with just killing us off for the profits of those rich bastards who run this country--they had to use us for medical experiments at the same time. Of course now they state that they "haven't the foggiest idea" of how many troops actually took dapsone, but they think they should follow our shortened lives to find out about the incidence of spleen cancer.

Ain't it great to contribute to medical science? Or to be a guinea pig along with cannon fodder? Just one more item to add to the list of charges against those bastards and to underline who, in fact, was the enemy in Vietnam--not the Vietnamese but the scum who sent us there.

CONT. FROM PAGE 15

SHAH'S WIFE

chants and slogans were heard by thousands who either passed by or gathered near the demonstration.

While the demonstration

continued, Farah arrived by a secret entrance. Unknown to the gathering in the huge dining room was the fact that several Iranians and Americans (including members of NUWO) had obtained invitations. When Empress Farah got up to speak she was greeted by interruptions from around the room. As Nel-

son Rockefeller gave her pats of reassurance, people stood up and denounced the Shah and his fascist rule in Iran. All in all there were about a dozen people arrested inside and outside the building for "causing a disturbance."

The evening never turned into the melee that took place in Washington but nevertheless it was a victory for the ISA. The ruling class was scared--they had to be or why would they have called out an army of riot police.

Before she left for Iran, Farah gave several interviews. She denounced the demonstration and denied the "allegations" as she called them against the Shah. But this was feeble defense. The people of New York had joined with the ISA to give Farah Pahlevi and the rich who honored her, an evening they won't forget and a message that whenever they raise their ugly head and proclaim their bloody message of death, repression and exploitation for profits, we will confront them with our contempt and determination to fight back.



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Organized Enlisteds A Real Threat

GI Union Panics Brass

Not since the widespread rebellions of the Vietnam era has the Pentagon and ruling class felt this amount of pressure from rank and file military personnel. General Bernard Rogers, Army Chief of Staff, stated the military's opposition to unionization in a speech to the Association of the U.S. Army: "We don't need unions to represent our soldiers--that is the responsibility of the Army leadership."

GIs thought otherwise. Thousands of GIs and their families in the U.S. and Germany signed petitions to Congress for the right to unionize by the summer of 1977. Organizing Committees such as the one set up by the 10th Special Forces at Fort Devens, Mass., in December of 1976, became widespread. The pot was boiling and the brass and ruling class in this country didn't like the smell from the kitchen.

The drive for unionization of the military isn't a new idea. The day to day grind of the military, attacks by the brass, racial discrimination, and railroad courts are and have been a matter of policy in the military. During the Vietnam War, political questions around the war, racial discrimination and democratic rights took the lead over most economic questions. One organization of the period, the American Serviceman's Union, attempted to unite GIs into a union. It was met with ruthless attacks and repression which eventually wiped out all attempts to organize. GI organizations were generally established independently at various bases and aboard ships. During the high tide of anti-war activity, VVAW united many of these loose-knit groups as well as thousands of GIs abroad and in Vietnam into one organization.

Much of the unity of those groups was based on opposition to the war in Vietnam; when the war ended with the victory of the liberation forces, many of these groups withered away. Still, the many problems faced by GIs did not disappear. The most recent drive towards unionization was initiated, though never really launched, by the American Federation of Government Employees, a 300,000 member federal employees union, the largest of its type in the U.S.

The AFGE under the leadership of its President, Ken Blaylock, eyeballed the potential of 2.1 million GIs as members and licked its chops at the hard

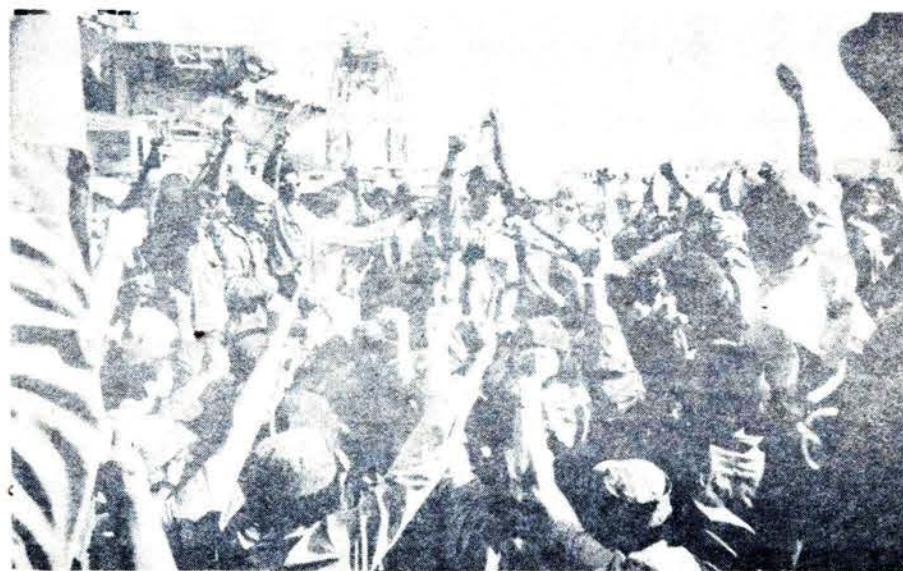
cash they would bring into the union in dues, not to mention the power base and influence that these members would represent. Deftly sidestepping the critical issues of racism in the military and democratic rights for GIs, the AFGE crowd pressed home pay raises, benefits, housing, medical services and other necessary economic issues with some talk of legal representation in specific cases under the UCMJ--not outside, but under one of the most oppressive and one-sided legal systems ever set up!

Added to this was the AFGE plan to focus on support units and not potential combat forces. Troops in combat units would receive no protection--in short, the people facing the most harassment and worst conditions were S.O.L. The AFGE further sweetened the pot for the ruling class by stating that "the military section would voluntarily agree not to strike and that representation would cease in time of war or "national emergency" such as Vietnam. This is a union?

If the AFGE would have had its way, GIs would have been in the same situation as most workers in this country--up against a two-headed monster of the union bureaucracy and the "company" management. Like the miners, fighting the union leadership for the right to strike and no fines for wildcats, and up against the coal operators for a decent life.

But even with this, there's much more positive than negative about military unions, whether the AFGE or other unions. The establishment of a union would provide GIs with "room to work" and the ability to struggle for meaningful change. Certainly workers would not throw out their union and cease to fight within it for the option of no protection at all.

GIs, however, are substantially different from workers. Regardless of the fact they are from the working class, carry out "jobs" in the military and, in most cases, rejoin the ranks of workers in society after discharge, nevertheless, while they are part of the military they are the last resort, the main line police force for the U.S. ruling class. Regardless of the individual sentiments of GIs, the military's history has been one of breaking strikes, scabbing on workers, and waging wars of exploitation around the



132 sailors, mostly Black, refused to reboard the USS Constellation unless racist practices were corrected on the ship -- San Diego, November 1972.

world. The rich realize the importance of a military strictly under their control and spent millions of bucks to stop the unionization drive. They'll employ every vicious tactic at their disposal to prevent it in the future. The worst fear is GI unity over a large area; while they can always pick off a few leaders here and there, a union would provide a basis for the GIs to unify to fight.

Now, GIs have a taste in their mouths of the type of organization or union that can be built. They also know that if anything gets built, it will be the rank and file GIs that build it.

In the wake of the unionization failure, rank and file GI groups have not stepped back from the struggle. One such group, the Alaskan Soldiers & Sailors Alliance, in proposing an enlisted people's association, calls for, among other

things, an end to bad discharges, elimination of non-judicial punishment, the right to resist illegal orders, and end to arbitrary searches, and trial by a jury of peers.

These are examples of the demands of the rank and file GIs. During the Vietnam War it was the rank and file who refused in the thousands to go into combat, who sabotaged the ships, who went AWOL, deserted, or organized among the troops to stop the war. And they got out, many took to the streets as veterans to stop the war.

If a GI union comes into being, in whatever form, it's the rank and file who will build it and make it the type of organization that meets their needs and carries forward the struggles of GIs.



IN THE 60s AND EARLY 70s GIs STOOD UP AGAINST DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM IN ACTIONS LIKE THOSE AT FT. HOOD (ABOVE), FT. JACKSON, PRESIDIO.

Lost Something in the Translation

ORIGINS OF "GUNG HO"

When this article appeared in VVAW's "GI NEWS" in October of 1974, U.S. military units were still using the phrase "gung ho" to describe units or GIs who were "model" troops in terms of their enthusiasm for whatever task they were doing. In Vietnam, among the GIs, the meaning began to change--someone who was "gung ho" was at least partly nuts; a gung ho officer was probably out to get himself a medal and kill off as many of his troops as necessary to get it. A gung ho GI wanted to walk point or would extend in country, and for most GIs--who most wanted to get home and get out--that was something only a nut would do, at least voluntarily. So a term which had originally been used by the brass as a kind of rallying call turned into an insult. But neither use of the

term "gung ho" had much to do with the origin of the term; in fact, the U.S. military could not afford to let the beginnings of the term get out to us.

The term "Gung Ho" comes from China; it was introduced to the Marine Corps by Colonel E.F. Carlson when he formed the 2nd Raider Battalion during the early days of World War II. The battalion grew famous enough so that there was a movie about the Battalion and their Makin raid called "Gung Ho." But the history of Carlson, the Raiders, and "gung ho" has been carefully hidden.

"Gung Ho" originated in the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) in China, led by Mao Tse-Tung, Chu Teh, and Chou En-Lai, all of whom were personal friends of Carlson. He had met them while he was a U.S. military observer in China in the late

1930's. Carlson spent months marching, studying and fighting with the Red Army. While doing so, he learned an entirely new way (for him) of running a military operation. When he returned to the U.S. he tried to tell the American people that it was the Communists, the Red Army, that was leading the struggle against Japanese imperialism (Japan invaded China in 1931) and that they had a new and better way of organizing their military. Carlson called this style of military work "gung ho" from the Chinese slogan "work together." So after he returned to the U.S. Carlson was ordered by the Navy Department to cease talking about China, the Red Army, and "gung ho." Carlson refused and resigned from the Marine Corps so that he could continue to speak out.

When it became obvious in early 1941 that war with Japan was inevitable, Carlson rejoined the Corps and fought for the chance to form a guerilla battalion, organized on the basis of the gung ho principles that he had learned from Mao, Chu Teh and Chou En-Lai. After Pearl Harbor and Wake, the defeats in the Philippines and Malaya, he was given permission to form a new type of unit, christened the 2nd Raider Battalion.

"Gung Ho" meant many things to the raiders, but two of them stand out. The first was the absolute equality between officers and enlisted men. Raider officers ate the same food, slept in the same bunks, wore the same uniform as the enlisted men. They dug their own latrines and carried their own packs. Officers did not order their men to do anything that they--the officers--were not willing and able to do first. There were regular weekly meetings between all the officers and men where the men were encouraged to speak their minds freely, to criticize the non-coms and officers if they deserved it. Officers and non-commissioned officers had to earn the respect of the men who they led. If they failed to do so, if they felt they were "better" than the men they were to lead, they were kicked out of the Raiders. The enlisted men were treated with respect. Their ideas were both solicited and respected. And as a result the men trusted their officers.

The second major element of "Gung Ho" was knowledge and political understanding about why and how they were fighting. Like the principles

of military organization, this was taken from the PLA where political education and discussion was seen as a vital part of military operations. Carlson believed that the war was against fascism and that defeating the Japanese would be a positive step for everyone. Carlson had nothing to fear from free and open discussion with the troops because he practiced what he preached. Democracy, respect and human dignity were all part of the 2nd Battalion.

The "Gung Ho" meetings covered much more than criticism of officers and what the war was about. Before each mission and whenever possible in the field, there was a full discussion with the men to explain the necessity of the mission, what the aims were, the tactics being planned, and how this mission fit into the overall picture.

The Raiders were involved in heavy fighting throughout the war during which their 1000-man battalion suffered a remarkably low 17 casualties. Other units began to write and ask about "Gung Ho." Newspaper articles were written. Enlisted people in other units began to talk about "Gung Ho."

Suddenly, the brass promoted Carlson to the job of plans officer for the 4th Marine Division. He was never again allowed to command troops. A new C.O. was appointed for the Raiders and his first orders were to eliminate Gung Ho meetings and re-institute saluting. All Gung Ho changes were quickly ended.

The brass destroyed the true "Gung Ho" (and in the process co-opted the term for their own uses) for two reasons. Most U.S. officers knew they could not lead their men based on the men's acceptance of their leadership; and not many officers were ready to give up the privileges of their rank.

More important, however, was the principle of winning over the troops to a political understanding of why a war is being fought. When, as was the case in World War II, winning that war was in the interests of the vast majority of the American--and world--people, it's possible to carry on the kind of discussion that was part of "Gung Ho." But the U.S. government had other plans for the U.S. military at the end of World War II. One plan called for invasion of mainland China to support Chiang

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A Visit With A Chinese Army Unit



IN AUGUST, 1974, A MEMBER OF VVAW FROM NEW YORK CITY TRAVELED TO THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA. IN NANKING SHE VISITED THE 179TH DIVISION OF THE PEOPLES LIBERATION ARMY (PLA) WHERE THE ORIGINAL IDEA OF "GUNG HO" CAME FROM. AMONG HER OBSERVATIONS:

*THERE ARE ONLY TWO RANKS IN THE PLA--COMMANDER AND SOLDIER. THE ARMY COMES FROM THE PEOPLE, RELIES ON THE PEOPLE, AND SERVES THE PEOPLE. THE PLA IS KNOWN AS A FIGHTING FORCE, A PRODUCTIVE WORK FORCE, AND A POLITICAL WORK FORCE.

*WHEN IT CAME TIME TO LEAVE I PRESENTED THE DIVISION COMMANDER WITH A VVAW BUTTON--UNLESS SOMETHING WAS LOST IN TRANSLATION, THE 179TH DIVISION IS THE FIRST VVAW CHAPTER IN THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA.

Cont. from Page 2
Vets "Preference"

veterans' preference comes from the real world--it's not just some pie-in-the-sky thing invented by veterans in order to insure themselves a comfortable way to slide by. Because vets have to give up anywhere from two to four years to the military they cannot use that time to train for a job (despite military promises about job training) or to gain seniority in a job. Vets preference was established in 1944 to equalize the handicap that vets face. And that situation has not changed since 1944.

It's an old trick: women demand jobs so the government says, "Yes, we have jobs but they're all going to vets because of vets' preference." Vets say that we need jobs, so the government responds, "Well, yes, you should have jobs, but these women are demanding that we end preference for vets." It's called "divide and conquer," or divert the struggle--try to get people fighting among themselves and hope like hell they forget who the real enemy is. So long as it's more profitable for the capitalist rulers of this country to lay people off, force people to work overtime, and to keep a large army of the unemployed, it's going to be tough for women to find jobs, for Blacks to find jobs, and for vets to find jobs. Phoney government programs aren't the answer, and fighting among ourselves for the crumbs sure isn't the answer. Decent jobs--union jobs at union wages: that's an answer that makes sense.

As always there's a certain amount of jive in the government's statements on the subject--they'll always try to sneak in as much as they think they can get away with. If vet's preference gives such an unfair advantage to vets, why are there still such a high number of unemployed younger vets--disproportionately minorities at that? With the huge numbers of unemployed minority vets, why end vets' preference? Without the preference what would vets' unemployment rates be like?

Certainly there are abuses of the vets' preference: some over-stuffed ex-admiral or general who retires from the military on a fat pension after 30 years with a stipend or two from his board of directors, sure doesn't need "veterans' preference" to get himself another chunk of the taxpayers' money.

The vet who lost a couple of years in the military serving the interests of the rich does not now need to face "serving" the rich again by being part of the army of the unemployed.

**JOBS or INCOME
for ALL WORKERS !**

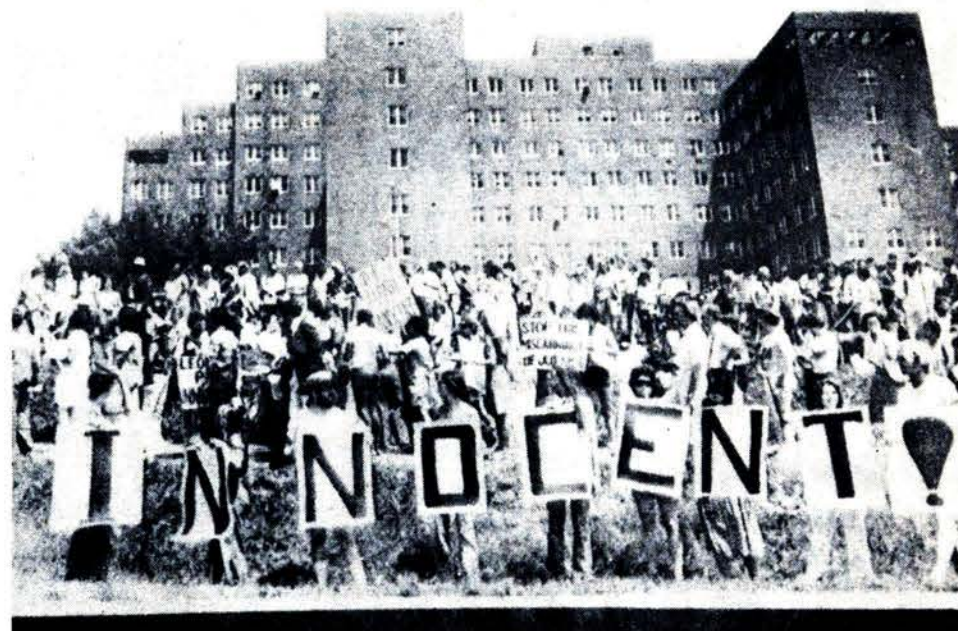
THE VETERAN, SPRING, PAGE 14

2 YEARS OF STRUGGLE VA NURSES FREED

In early February, to the horror of the Veterans Administration, Filipina nurses Leonora Perez and Filipina Narcisco, nurses at the Ann Arbor VA Hospital, had all charges against them dropped. Earlier, they had been found "guilty" of the murders of five patients at the hospital, patients who had been administered lethal doses of Pavulon, a powerful stimulant. But as a result of widespread popular support, the conviction had been overturned, and after taking time to survey the field, and finding a real grassroots movement building to free the nurses, the government decided to drop their ridiculous and unsubstantiated charges.

The entire case was a classic of U.S. justice and Veterans Administration cover-up. All "evidence" was circumstantial. Many possibilities were not investigated--for instance, one supervising nurse who confessed to the crimes before she committed suicide. Hospital chief of staff Martin Lindenaur instructed FBI investigators not to talk to doctors, hoping to cover up widespread ignoring of regulations in using Pavulon. That the nurses were Filipinos, were nurses instead of doctors, were women and not men, all seem to have played roles in their selection as victims in the case.

When all the evidence was in, however, the real criminal began to emerge and it was not the nurses; instead it was the Veterans Administration hospital system and the larger system that lies behind it--one that will gladly send off people to fight and die for it but will attempt to ignore and shuffle off the veterans of its wars. The



OVER 800 PEOPLE GATHER TO DEMONSTRATE IN SUPPORT OF THE NURSES; THIS KIND OF ACTION LED TO THEIR FREEDOM.

regulations concerning the powerful drug were ignored, testimony showed, because the hospital was understaffed. While nurses and doctors try to do their jobs as best they can, conditions don't allow them to give the kind of care they would like to give.

Since there is no money to be made from V.A. hospital care, the government and its corporate bosses consistently try to find ways to cut back on funds. Because they would rather put money where it will create a profit, they use the VA hospital system as a training ground for underpaid interns or residents-in-training. The veterans become the guinea pigs. A recent report from the National Academy of Sciences notes that 88% of all surgery in VA hospitals is done by interns or trainee-residents; 69% of these operations

are not even supervised by a VA staff surgeon.

The nurses won their freedom through large popular support. In November petitions with 38,000 signatures from 33 cities were presented to the court. Support groups sprang up in cities across the country. The real culprit is still trying to get away unnoticed--but hundreds of thousands of veterans know from their everyday experience what the quality of VA care is, know of the rotten conditions and surroundings in many VA hospitals, know of the understaffing and excessive administrative personnel tied up in mountains of red tape, and know that vets will not sit silently by while the VA tries to shift the blame and healthcare deteriorates further.

VICTORY TO THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN PEOPLE FATIGUES FOR FREEDOM FIGHTERS



**VVAW as part of the building for African Liberation Day will be collecting uniforms (jungle fatigues & boots and web gear) for a company of freedom fighters. As GIs we wore fatigues to crush the people's struggles in places like Vietnam. NOW, THEY WILL BE WORN BY PEOPLE FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM DOWN WITH WHITE MINORITY RULE!
VICTORY TO THE PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA!**

The VETERAN: VVAW's campaign for FATIGUES FOR FREEDOM FIGHTERS was part of last year's African Liberation Day; what do you think of this and will it help the struggle in South Africa?

Pan Africanist Congress:
Both in terms of material and in terms of psychological

support for our fighters, this is a good act by the VVAW--VVAW comes and says that they used these fatigues in Vietnam to fight for the interests of the corporations; now, since it is the same corporations which are to a large extent responsible for the situation in my country, now

these fatigues will be used by the people who are fighting against these corporations who sent thousand and thousands of Americans thousands and thousands of miles away to fight for the interests of these corporations. So I say both in terms of material assistance the psychological effect, it is a good thing.

Protest Visit of Farah, Shah's Wife



IRANIAN STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE IN NEW YORK

"5000 Cops To Guard Shah's Wife." "Heavy Security Mobilized, Thousands of Police Detailed to Protect Farah."

These statements were read and heard in the media on January 12th in New York City. The reason for the size of the protective force was obvious: in November, 1977, the Shah of Iran and his U.S. ruling class friends were taught one hell of a lesson. Pictures of the Shah wiping his tear-gassed eyes on the White House lawn while

members of the Iranian Student Association (ISA) duked it out with SAVAK agents and Washington police were still fresh in the minds of people around the world.

This dinner had one basic purpose: to reaffirm the bloodstained alliance between the murderous regime of the Shah and America's rich and powerful. The Rockefellers, Kennedys, Mellons, Buckleys and Lady Bird Johnson made up a part of the infamous guest list.

Once again, however,

leave billions of bucks invested in South Africa. So the cases are kept as quiet as possible.

But not even the strict censorship of the Vorster regime can completely silence what is going on. Already, international pressure had led to one victory in these trials: in Maritzburg, two of the patriots were found innocent, then rearrested on minor charges of "attempting to leave the country." The

members of the ISA and their supporters including VVAW decided that the Shah, his wife, or any other representative of the fascist regime in Iran would not be welcome.

Because of the previous experience in Washington, the government and New York City police department were scared stiff of a repeat performance. That's why, on the evening of the dinner, 500 police in riot gear were mobilized for the few square blocks near the Hilton. It looked more like a military maneuver than just police protection. They also stood out as a clear illustration of the fear felt by the ruling class.

On the block south of the hotel there was a staged pro-Shah demonstration of about 500 people. A number of the participants, when interviewed by the press, claimed that all expenses were paid for them to fly to New York to take part in this farce. To the north of the hotel, the ISA, VVAW, the Revolutionary Student Brigade and the National United Workers Organization as well as others were assembled 1500 strong waiting for the opportunity to give Farah as hot a welcome as possible.

"The Shah is a murderer!" "Down with the Shah!" "Down with U.S. imperialism!" These

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third defendant there was found guilty but, despite the threat of a death sentence, was only sentenced to 8 years in prison.

To increase the worldwide pressure on the South African government, the PAC asks that people write to the South African Embassy in Washington and to their Congressmen and Senators to protest this series of trials and the racist regime behind them.

It's hard to imagine U.S. officers in Vietnam attempting to explain to the GIs why there was a need to prop up the government of President Thieu or why it was in the interest of the GIs to fight against the NLF soldiers who had the same interests that we did--freedom and liberation. In fact as the Vietnam war went on, some elements of the "Gung Ho" concept did appear, though not in the way Carlson used them. U.S. troops simply refused to carry out ridiculous orders from their officers and, as there were more and more incidents of rebellion and resistance, as more and more people--including Vietnam veterans--hit the streets in the U.S., and most important, as the Indochinese people refused to retreat, the U.S. was forced out of that unjust war.

Continued from page 16 Recollections

"Yeah, see ya back in the world."

I watched the truck pull out. Roy waved once.

VUNG TAU ARMY AIRFIELD
VIETNAM; OCTOBER 1968

I stopped by the mailroom and picked up whatever was there. One item was the regular letter from my grandpa. He clipped the local papers for me --who got married, who died, who won the football games.

I sorted through the clippings. Becky Harvey got married--too bad. One had a picture of some GI; I unfolded it. "Oh god damn no! 'Pvt Roy Jenkins was killed in the service of his country (bullshit!) on August -- 1968.' On that fucking truck convoy out of Cam Ranh--the next day. Oh god damn no!"

I went back to my locker, cracked a fifth of scotch and proceeded to drink and think.

Roy wasn't the first I knew to die, but there were so many. I was the last person from Doddridge County to see Roy alive. God damn it, that means something, doesn't it?

Roy and the other guys bought it and I didn't really know why. I knew there was no good reason for it.

Monk Underwood knew all along but we wouldn't have listened. He didn't have a way with words, like the rich bastards who promoted and profitted from the war.

SEND YOUR "WAR STORIES" TO VVAW

The episode printed here is only one example of the kinds of experiences that vets had in Vietnam. Vietnam Veterans Against the War hopes to print a book of such recollections, whether from Vietnam, from basic training, from being stationed in Korea or anywhere else around the world--actual happenings as remembered by the vets who saw them or lived them. Given the flood of publications and movies about the Indochina War, we see the need to have material which goes beyond the idea that the war was a "terrible mistake." We invite veterans to think back over their collection of "war stories," write them down, and send them in. The exact nature of the final book will depend on the contributions we get, but we believe it can be a powerful statement of some of the experiences which helped us come to realize why we should "Fight the Rich, Not Their Wars."

Continued from page 4 South Africa

pretend that the pot isn't boiling. The South African government and its economy depend on investments and support from countries like Britain and the U.S. If the multinational corporations get the impression that people in the country are arming and taking military training, they might decide it's no longer in their best interests to



CHINESE LEADERS, CHU TEH, MAO TSE-TUNG, CHOU EN-LAI

Continued from page 13 Gung Ho

Kai-shek's reactionary government against the revolutionary Red Army. The attempt to stop growing revolutionary and liberation movements in Korea, in

the Phillipines and in Vietnam was also being plotted in the secret halls of Washington, DC. The "Back Home Movement" which grew among numbers of GIs at the end of the war put a serious crimp in all these master plans.

Recollections of Vietnam

"IT MEANS SOMETHING, DOESN'T IT?"

WEST VIRGINIA, SPRING 1966

Roy Jenkins wasn't a real good friend of mine but in a small West Virginia county like Doddridge, you knew everybody by name, and you either got along with them or you didn't. I got along with Roy. He was likeable enough and a damn good guy to have with you in a Saturday night beer joint brawl.

Doddridge County was poor, really poor: no industry, few jobs except for farm work and the state road commission, and a lot of welfare. For young people coming up there was only one solution--get out. Go to the mills up north or the mines down south or into the military service for awhile.

Roy, myself and many of the other guys were going into the service. What with the war in Vietnam and all, the recruiters were thick as flies, buying coffee and beer and hamburgers, making promises and telling jokes--and we were like sheep on the way to the slaughter house.

I signed up for the Air Force and passed the tests--I suppose mostly 'cause they promised job training you could use when you got out. Roy chose the Army--he couldn't pass the test for the Navy or Air Force, and he wanted out of Doddridge as much as the rest of us.

Roy and I had the same date for the Armed Forces test and physical in Fairmont, about 80 miles away. We arranged a ride to Clarksburg with a truckload of men who made the 100-mile round trip to the Union Carbide plant in Clarksburg every day. From there, we were going to hitchhike on up to Fairmont.

It was a beautiful spring morning in May. The sun hadn't come up yet and the fog still lay in most of the low places and in patches up on hillsides when I climbed in the back of the pickup truck. Most of the men were trying to catch a few winks so I didn't say much other than hello. We picked up Roy in front of the Red Parrot Inn just outside of Sedalia.

By then it was a little lighter out, and Roy and I could hardly contain our enthusiasm, talking about everything that crossed our minds. Most of the men just eyed us sourly and tried to sleep, except for Monk Underwood who sat there staring at us like he didn't know us or something.

After awhile I felt a little



uncomfortable so I turned to Monk and said, "How ye been, Monk?"

"Fair to middlin, Bill," he responded; "You boys going in the service, huh?"

"Yeah, today's when we take the final tests," I said. Roy didn't open his mouth, but he never talked much, particularly to people he didn't know well.

"You young bucks hot to git in the war, I reckon."

Nobody ever put it to me that way before and I hesitated before I said, "Yeah, I suppose."

Monk straightened up on the bench, spit some tobacco juice in a can in front of him, leaned forward and rasped, "What the hell you know about war, boy?"

"Not much," I bristled back. "What the hell you know about it, Monk?"

"Damn sure more than you do, boy. I was in Korea."

"Yeah, Monk, but this here's different."

"Bullshit; they're all the same. You don't know what you're in for."

"Listen, Monk. I'm going into the Air Force, they don't have to carry guns and the recruiter said I wouldn't have to go overseas."

Monk sat there for a minute, spat into the can again. "Bullshit," he grunted, pulled his hat down over his eyes and slid down a little lower and didn't say a word the rest of the ride.

Roy and I jumped out in Clarksburg, grabbed some coffee and rolls, stuck out our thumbs and we were off to Fairmont.

It was a holiday for us: for me, a day out of high school on a spring day, and for Roy a day off from bust-ass work on some farm. A real holiday. I put what Monk had said out of my mind. Vietnam was many thousands of miles away. Roy didn't have the slightest idea of where it was.

CAM RANH BAY, VIETNAM;
AUGUST, 1968

Cam Ranh Bay looked the same from the air as it did on the ground, a stinking sand pit. I came in-country there and was glad to be sent down to Vung Tau, a paradise in comparison.

This trip I was on a scrounge mission to get all the spare parts I could for our junk equipment to fix our junk aircraft. If they turned me loose in the parts room, like they usually did, I'd rip off everything that wasn't nailed down to sell or trade to other outfits later on.

My pilfering done, I wandered over to the Air Force EM Club to drink myself into oblivion and see what kind of shit I could get into.

The club was a real treat--sand, spilt beer, broken glass, and plenty of fights. The big attraction that night was an overweight, middle-aged woman singing songs about whatever city or state you requested. Whenever she hit on any place there was always a cheer and stomping. Everybody wanted to get home and get out of this goddam hole.

I got a pitcher of beer and sat down. I drank about half

of it without looking up. I leaned back to take in the show --fucking officers get all the good shows, we get this shit!

Looking around for any of the guys I knew at Cam Rahn, I damn near jumped out of my seat. "That guy looks like Roy Jenkins," I thought. A couple of tables away some Army dudes were drinking. "Shit, it is him," I thought again. Jumping up I practically ran over. "Roy, Roy, you old son of a bitch!" He jumped up grinning, both of us pumping our hands like crazy.

A million question went through our minds at once-- "How the hell are ya, what outfit you with, where you at in-country"--and on and on.

He introduced me to the other guys at the table as his hometown buddy; they nodded and turned their attention back to the show.

We went back to where I was sitting and started talking. Roy looked bad, real bad. Not just the sun-burned, red dust weary look most of the combat troops had, but a nervous, haggard, beat-up look.

"So how ya been, Roy?"

"Not good, Bill, not good."

"How'd ya get here, Roy?"

I asked.

"Ah we came in a truck convoy from Nha Trang. Got the hell kicked out of us. Took a lot of casualties."

"You going back the same way?"

"Yeah, I reckon we are."

"What the hell for?"

"Ah, some bullshit about keeping the highway open."

"Ain't that some shit."

"Yeah, what the hell. When we ain't there the VC own it and when we run down it, they kick the hell out of us."

"Yeah, this is some war we got here, huh Roy?"

"The only one we have buddy," he said.

We both laughed.

We talked about home for hours, then he said he had to go. The truck was leaving soon back to the Army compound. I walked with him out to the truck.

When we got there, he stopped and kind of kicked some sand around with his toe. Looking at me he said, "I wish to god I'd never come here Bill."

"Yeah, me too, Roy. This war sucks." He nodded.

"Listen, Roy, I got to go too. Keep your ass covered, OK?"

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