

# ABOUT FACE

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## STATEMENT FROM VIETNAM ERA VETERANS

They want to call us heroes for serving the country. They offer us recognition and honor, even a national monument. Heroes for serving a country that burned down villages and shot anything that moved. Recognition for being the pawns and agents of a ruthless death machine that systematically tortured and butchered civilians, that rained flaming jelly gasoline, toxic Agent Orange and other poison chemicals on everything from old people to children. Receiving a past due debt of honor for using the most advanced, blood curdling and flesh-tearing weapons of terror the world has ever known. A monument for being the tools of a modern imperialist army that vainly attempted for over ten years to crush, grind and pulverize the people and land of Vietnam into the Stone Age, for being in an army that finally sank to a well deserved defeat at the hands of a just and determined peoples' war and in the eyes of an outraged world. Should we pin medals on the chests of the guards at Auschwitz! Should there be a cheering ticker-tape parade for the flight crews that dropped atomic death on Hiroshima and Nagasaki or fire-bombed Dresden! Perhaps we should build a monument to the nun-murdering troops of the Salvadoran National Guard or to the National Guard at Kent State!

They want us to be proud of what we did for them. Never. We are proud, but not of these crimes, not of the things we were forced and suckered into by this barbaric monstrosity of a system called America. We are proud of our resistance. We are proud of our opposition to that war and its father, imperialism. We are proud of the tens of thousands of us who began to learn the truth and found the ways to resist and rebel: Those who wrote for, supported, read and distributed any of the over 200 anti-war and revolutionary GI newspapers all over the world; those who circulated petitions and leaflets in the field and on the ships; those who refused to fight or deserted, some joining the other side; those whole companies and naval units who mutinied and disobeyed orders; those who taught gung-ho officers profound and sometimes fatal lessons; and those who contributed in countless ways to the almost complete collapse of the fighting capacity of the U.S. ground forces. Those who returned home to join with the powerful anti-war and anti-imperialist movements, including revolutionary upsurges against national oppression, those who told the story of what we had seen and what we had done, and those who stunned and inspired the world in 1971 when we took off our medals for service to country, our "badges of honor," our "symbols of recognition," and hurled them clattering to the Capitol steps amid epithets and speeches of fury and anger. These are the real heroes of the Vietnam GIs and veterans and this is what we are proud to be recognized for.

They want us to forget the truth, to cease all opposition and rejoin the fold, to puff up our chests and play Deer Hunter. They are desperate to reverse the criminal verdict stamped in blood on the U.S. role in Vietnam and they would honor us to honor the war, to prettify and rekindle patriotism, to buy us off and enlist our aid. And why? Why would they now call us unrecognized heroes rather than crazed dopers? Because they have another war coming, a war with their Soviet rivals which will make the last pitiful in comparison — a giant horror for the glory of profit and empire. They fear our resistance. They need us to cheer on and train the next generation of cannonfodder, to applaud and participate in the next round of flag waving parades and nationalistic speeches, to support their war moves from Central America to the Middle East, to help smoothe over the memory and bury the lessons of Vietnam and pave the way into hell. But nothing will make us sink so low. Not dozens of books, movies and TV shows. Not patriotic Vietnam veterans begging for a parade or a pat on the back. Not a monumental obscenity in Washington, D.C.

No. We have other plans. We will not abandon lessons learned in blood. We will not be bought off and we will never betray the international struggle against any imperialist oppressor, either East or West. At the Capitol in 1971 we swore: "If we have to fight again, it will be to take these steps." Today in 1982, we swear: "The fight is on!"

Joe Urgo—GI antiwar activist in Vietnam, 1968; former national officer of Vietnam Veterans Against the War; organizer for Winter Soldier Investigation and Dewey Canyon 3, 1971; first Vietnam vet to travel to Hanoi in support of the revolutionary struggle of the Vietnamese people; member of VVAW (Anti-Imperialist)

Carl Dix—Black member of Fort Lewis 6 — GIs who refused orders to Vietnam in 1970 — sent to Leavenworth Military Prison for two years; national panel moderator for the 1981 Mass Proletarian War Crimes Tribunal; member of VVAW (AD); member of the Revolutionary Communist Party.

Randy Rowland—Army medic, refused to go to Vietnam; one of 27 GIs in the 1968 San Francisco Presidio stockade mutiny, spent a year and a half in military prison.

Father Roy Bourgeois—U.S. Navy, Vietnam; Catholic priest who supports the revolutionary struggle in Central America; spent time with the guerrilla movement in El Salvador in 1981.

Harold Appel, M.D.—Military conscientious objector during Vietnam era; former member of Concerned Officers Movement.

Melvyn D. Escueta—Vietnam veteran and author of anti-Vietnam War play, *Honeybuckel*.

Rich Bangert—Vietnam veteran; former national officer VVAW ('73-'74); served six months in federal prison camp for burning an American flag in support of the Iranian takeover of the U.S. embassy.

George Veasey—Marine Vietnam veteran; member of the Trident Nein, a group of nine militant pacifists of the Atlantic Life Community who boarded the Trident submarine the U.S.S. Florida, "remodeled" two missile firing tubes, two sonar domes, and with paint and blood rechristened it the U.S.S. Auschwitz.

W.B. Ehrhart—Former Marine Sergeant and Vietnam veteran; author of *The Awkward Silence*; co-editor of *Demilitarized Zones: Veterans After Vietnam*; contributor to *Winning Hearts and Minds: War Poems by Vietnam Veterans and Peace Is Our Profession: Poems and Passages of War Protest*.

Patrick Finnegan—Vietnam veteran 1st Bn. 173rd Airborne Brigade; refused to go to the field after six months; lost a brother in Vietnam; vice-president of the Albany chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America.

Darnell Summers—Black Vietnam veteran and former member of VVAW; revolutionary musician; recently extradited from W. Germany on trumped-up charges of murdering a Michigan state police officer in the 1960s.

Walter Burney—Black Vietnam era vet; 1979 Washington Monument seizure in solidarity with Iranian revolution; Fort McPherson 2 defendant from 1982 occupation of FORSCOM headquarters, Atlanta.

The above individuals were among many Vietnam veterans who have so far signed this statement. This statement is being circulated among Vietnam era vets. Write and let us know what you think of it. Copy and distribute to vets and others. All assistance welcome in publicizing it, spreading its lessons broadly and raising funds to do so.

Write to: Vets Statement 204 W. 20th St. New York, NY 10011



# Message from a Laotian Refugee

When I learned that the U.S. government is building a Vietnam war memorial and will conduct grand ceremonies to celebrate the unveiling of this monument, I was very outraged with this action by the U.S. government. It can be said that no matter what the individual circumstances were, the soldiers killed in action whose names are engraved on the monument are assassins of our countrymen. To openly and with such fanfare erect a monument to these assassins, and even more, for those behind-the-scenes masterminds who goaded and dispatched these assassins to kill and rape our compatriots, to act as if they were pure and innocent of crimes, is unforgivable.

Still vivid in my memory are scenes of U.S. troops bombing, shooting, burning, napalming and poisoning with chemicals. I can never forget as long as I am alive. And the same kind of crimes were committed against people in other parts of the world. In particular, I note the re-

cent invasion of Lebanon by Israel under U.S. direction. From television, we could all see the barbaric scenes of Israeli U.S.-made jets bombing Beirut, and I was angry. U.S. imperialists have not changed and never will change their nature. Almost exactly the same kind of methods were used in Lebanon as were used against our countrymen in the past. If there are any differences, it is only that their crimes are now even more cruel and vicious. (We could at least go to the jungles and dig tunnels for air raid shelters against massive bombings and napalms that set the whole area on fire. Moreover, all of Indochina was carrying on armed struggle against U.S. imperialism. But as for the unrestrained bombing of the people of Beirut, the people had no arms or places of shelter. The whole world condemns with one voice the massacre of innocent citizens at the two Palestinian refugee camps.)

These things are taking place in the

context of contention between the U.S. and Soviet blocs which is making the world situation even more urgent. With this urgency of the world situation and the trend toward world war, even the possibility of nuclear war, the situation today is even more pressing than at the time of the Vietnam war. So I think that this honoring of those who died in the past is being done with the future in sight. One of the intents behind this whole affair is to let people know that to sacrifice for the government and country is glorious and worthwhile, that such loyalty and giving a life is valuable and will be rewarded with recognition and honor. Thus, when the draft comes, people will more willingly serve as troops, and at the same time broad public opinion will be created to lessen the opposition to the draft and sending of troops overseas.

War is something that we personally experienced. It is cruel, and people receive much suffering. When imperialists

invaded, we had no other way but to pick up the guns and oppose them. People do not like war, but the imperialists again and again force war upon the people. Unless the imperialist system is overthrown, there is no possibility of ending war. This comes out of the nature of the imperialists. Just look at how not so long after World War 1, World War 2 exploded, and now World War 3 is approaching and will break out sooner or later. There is even the possibility that nuclear weapons will be used, bringing on casualties far exceeding the two previous world wars. And in between the world wars, regional wars have never stopped. The Vietnam war memorial is a part of the war preparations.

A Laotian refugee  
San Francisco  
Translated from Chinese

## Some Letters on the Statement

For a long time, past the guilt years, the ashamed years, and now the mad enough to try and stop U.S. imperialism period, I have not sided with any Vietnam veterans groups I have been in contact with. For some reason they all talked proud politics even though bemoaning their present status. Your vets statement comes right on schedule. Thank you.

I really do not believe in a post war trauma syndrome and I've taken responsibility for my life, fears, guilts and prides. But I feel this country needs guidance out of its downpressor

politics. Whoever you are, whoever wrote this statement, right on.

Please keep me informed of this letter and further works.

San Diego

I got your letter and statement from the *Voice*. I think the anti-jingo campaign is a fine idea and your statement is very good. You shouldn't give up trying to get the attention of *Voice* editors, and I'd also try the Boston *Phoenix*, the LA *Weekly* (I forgot the exact title), *Win*

Magazine and, above all, *In These Times*.

May I offer just one word of advice? There's a phrase in the statement that bothered me: "this barbaric monstrosity of a system called America." Of course I know what you mean, and you're right; but think how a lot of your not-yet-politicized fellow veterans are going to react. (Think how you probably would have reacted before you were radicalized.) They may feel confused and angry, even betrayed, but they still love something they vaguely call "America." And they're right. America is something

more than the Pentagon and the Moral Majority and the Fortune 500. So what I'd do is just say "this barbaric monstrosity of a system" and leave out the words "called America."

Best of luck,

Vet Brothers,  
I'm a vet too. Knew the Navy's fascism in 1967-71. Good luck.

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## FREE DARNELL SUMMERS!

*Darnell Summers in the 1960s* — In the midst of the high tide of the Black liberation struggle in 1968, Darnell, a Black GI, is extradited from Vietnam, framed for the killing of a Michigan State red squad cop who was sent to Inkster, Michigan to suppress the community's outrage over the attempted closing of the Malcolm X Cultural Center there. Darnell is known as a leader at the Center. The frame-up fails when the key prosecution witness declares his testimony was totally false and scripted by the police.

*Darnell Summers in the 1980s* — Well known in West Germany as a revolutionary musician, as a supporter of the revolutionary GI newspaper *Fight Back*, and for his other revolutionary political activity among the U.S. troops, immigrants from Turkey and the youth movement in Germany — Darnell comes to the attention of U.S. and German authorities. "Mysteriously," "new evidence" appears in the 13-year-old case. It is the same old discredited testimony, this time given by a second witness (who was arrested, herself threatened with prosecution for the killing, and then granted immunity in return for her testimony against Darnell). German authorities break speed records and rule books to extradite Darnell to Detroit in July of this year. No sooner is he back than the second witness also recants, saying her testimony is false and extorted by the police. But no matter. The police produce that same first witness again (who is now serving a 60-to-90 year term on a separate, unrelated charge, but has a parole hearing next year). He repeats the same lying testimony one more time and the railroad is on! Darnell Summers is now to stand trial for murder in the first degree, on the sole testimony of an admitted liar who 13 years earlier had renounced the same story! How much blood will the state try to extract from Darnell Summers!?

Pick up the gauntlet! Free Darnell Summers!

For more information and to send statements of support to Darnell, write:

The Coalition to Free Darnell Summers  
P.O. Box 206  
Inkster, MI 48141

Send funds to:

Legal Defense for Darnell Summers  
c/o First Independence National Bank  
234 State Street at Washington Blvd.  
Detroit, MI 48226

Darnell Summers (left) in Chu Lai in 1968, during a period of intense struggle by Black GIs against racism. Just before this picture was taken he had climbed up on the roof of an officer's cabin and ripped down a confederate flag that had been flying—and burned it.



We Won't Be Used Again

# About Face to Warmongers' Monumental Obscenity!

In Basic Training the "low-crawl" in the sawdust pit was a humiliation drill the army used, to teach us that we were no better than worms or crawling maggots. We were supposed to crawl for them and act like we could think of no higher goal in life. After we got out of Basic, it wasn't too long before we found there's a very fine line between crawling for America and killing for it. Vietnam.

How many people were slaughtered before many of us, forced to serve as accomplices to these atrocities, found the courage it took to rip away the blinders of psychotic "patriotism" and look the horror of U.S. imperialism straight in the eyes — and rebel? The same Agent Orange that is poisoning us today, we helped to spray on millions of Vietnamese. For every one of us who came back in a body bag or is locked up in VA storage centers, how many people in Southeast Asia, fighting for their liberation, were tortured, maimed and butchered? If we are going to talk about "forgotten heroes," we as veterans should be the first to honor the Viet Cong: not only because Charlie kicked the ass of the U.S. army, but because Charlie — teenager and old peasant, jungle-fighter and urban guerrilla — taught a hell of a lot of us how not to crawl: how to rebel against the imperialists who press-ganged us to serve them as slaves in their aim of enslaving the world. That's how many of us did become heroes of the Vietnam war: When we did quit crawling; when we did refuse the order of "Forward March"; when we did a historic About Face that blew the fuses of every computer in the Pentagon; when the 90-day wonders were just as scared of

their own platoons as of whatever lay in wait beyond the Claymore Mines on the perimeter.

Today, seven years after the last Americans left the roof of the U.S. embassy in Saigon clinging to the skids of an army chopper, Vietnam veterans are being told to do the low-crawl again.

In 1982, doing the low-crawl means first of all, forgetting that we ever learned any other posture. During the war, many of us threw away the medals America gave us for burning Vietnamese villages. But today, we're supposed to whine and pretend that we're having deep emotional problems because we "didn't get honor and recognition" for loyally committing genocide.

The pigs who run America say they are offering us a monument. Bullshit. They built themselves a monument, and we are invited to come and admire it and say, yes, we did fight in Vietnam "for our country," and we're proud of what we did to the people of Southeast Asia. And some of us are allowed to add that, please sir, maybe we'd like some better benefits, too.

This so-called veterans monument,

supposedly apolitical, is really a slap in the face directed at all the millions in this country who resisted the war, often putting their very lives on the line. Buttering up Vietnam veterans as "forgotten heroes" is, among other things, a cynical maneuver aimed at portraying those who fought bravely in the anti-war movement, and all the revolutionary movements of the time, as "cowards" or worse. All this puts even more responsibility on vets to oppose this monument — and unite with the anti-war forces who do so.

As for the come-on of "better benefits," we doubt if there has ever been a more obvious demonstration of their hypocrisy and the real contempt they hold for us. Because of their own systematic policy of depriving Vietnam veterans of medical and financial assistance, they are now confident that we have been reduced to such a sorry state that we will say or do anything in the hope — probably vain — that they'll toss a few pennies our way.

We're supposed to keep quiet about what we know, about what we saw and experienced firsthand, and come looking

for a handout, like pot-bellied E-7s, bitching about being shortchanged on their comp time, or drunken retired lifers at the first of the month, hoping the "eagle shits" before the bars open.

Some people say it doesn't matter if we know the government is trying to use us to shoot the country up with war fever: we can just "get over" if we "play their little game."

We don't want to hear about "getting over." We got stuffed into a green uniform at the age of 18, our heads pumped full of lies about the democratic U.S.A. defending freedom all around the world. A lot of things were done, a lot of blood was spilt and a lot of people died before a significant number of U.S. troops began to speak out and actively resist. Vietnam veterans came home and played a vital role in encouraging resistance to the war and exposing the aims and interests behind it. Are we now going to bury that truly heroic legacy — and collaborate with the government in filling the 18-year-old kids today with more of the same lies, more of the same chauvinist, racist, patriotic garbage? For what — for a "monument" to those who low-crawled so loyally?

How can we look a kid of draft age today in the eye and tell him that "we fought for freedom" in Vietnam? Anyone who does that should choke on their cost of living increases.

But that's what the government wants us to do. They know that people listen to us, that what we say carries weight, because "we've been there," we saw history firsthand. This is especially true of those who were too young during the war to know what was happening — the generation the imperialists are counting on now to fight the next war.

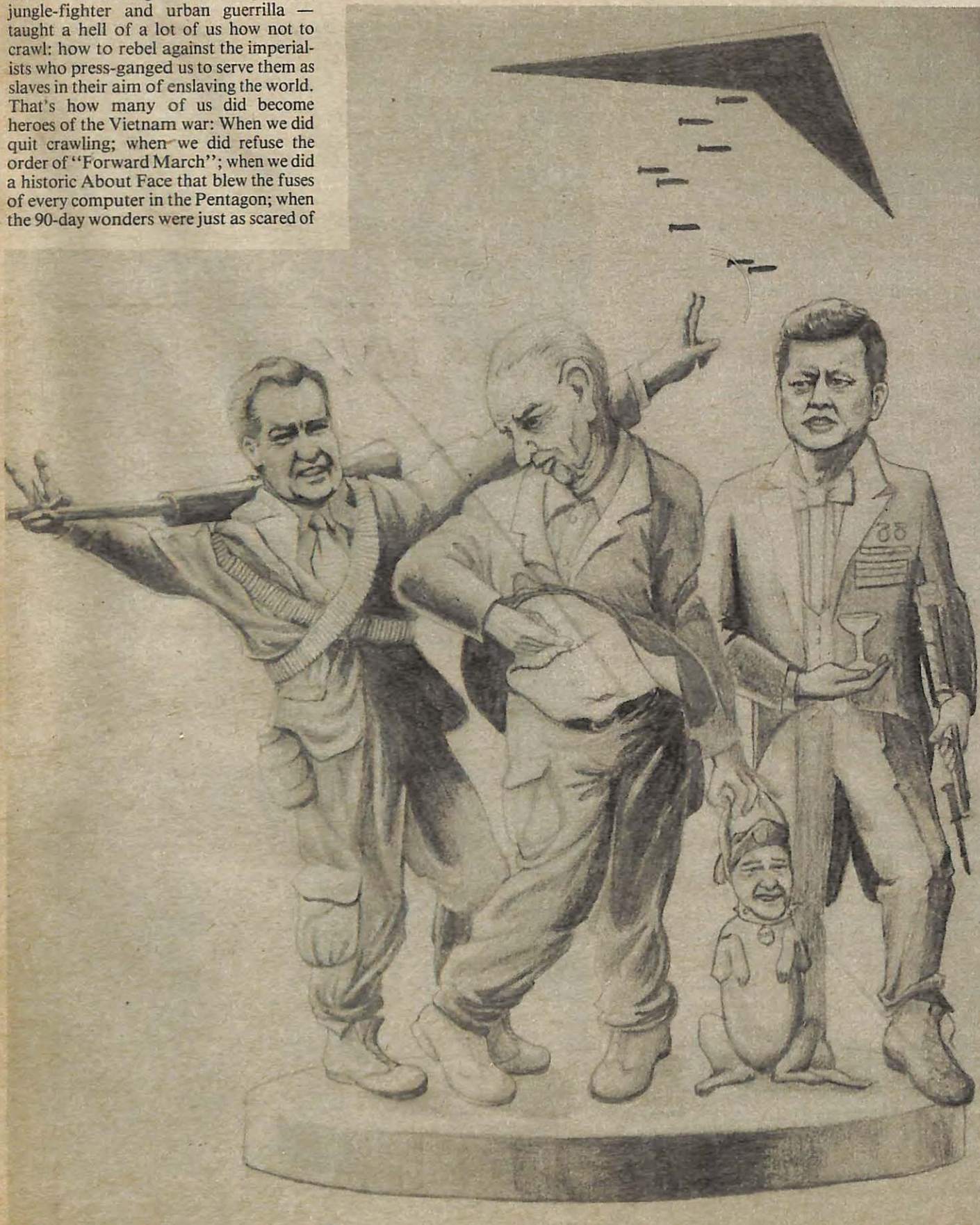
We should think about that before we shrug and say, "Sure, we'll low-crawl for the man one more time, if it means getting a few extra benefits." We should think about what the stakes are this time around: about the next war, the world war shaping up between the U.S. imperialists and their Soviet imperialist rivals.

We should lift up our heads. The man will never leave us alone; he will always demand that we crawl for him and serve him and his wars. They still wheel out veterans of the Spanish-American war. If we let them do it to us, they'll have us drooling and toothless, telling lies for them and covering up their crimes to build support for World War 4 and World War 5, or until finally those who reject the road of the low-crawl and the imperialist call of "Forward March" into the next bloodbath rise up in revolution and destroy imperialism all over the world.

In the face of their call of "Forward March," we call on veterans to execute an "About Face."

They call on us to march to their Monumental Obscenity and worship at a shrine commemorating one of the most horrible and blood-soaked chapters in the history of U.S. imperialism. About Face! They urge us to dust off the greasy red, white and blue rag of "National Honor" and wave it around with shit-eating grins. "About Face" on that. They whisper in our ear that we should tell the world that the nightmares we've suffered and the mental anguish we've endured is not the result of the scars from being used by America and from the fight to free ourselves from its death grip, but should all be blamed on "the anti-war movement" and the "ungrateful reception" we received when we came home. We shout in their face that we did an About Face in Vietnam that gave a few generals nightmares, too, and we're doing another About Face today.

They want to use us as a symbol and a rallying point for World War 3. But instead, we as veterans can and must become a rallying point and a symbol of rebellion once again, inspiring and helping lead others to execute a second, historic and even more thorough and significant "About Face." They want us to march in a colorful parade with balloons and banners, headed straight for imperialist nuclear war. And they need us, desperately, to lend vital political strength to their war machine. Let's desert that parade, and lead others to desert. We're doing an "About Face." We're going Absent Without Leave and taking as many as we can with us; we're deserting to the camp of revolutionary internationalism, and pitching our tents with the people of the world. □





## Vietnam Vets Testify

I humped the rice paddies of the Mekong Delta in '68-'69 with the 199th Infantry. The army indoctrinated me very well into accepting the horrors of napalm, Agent Orange, B-52 air strikes and cluster bombs, so that it took me a whole year after I came home to realize how my government manipulated me. Even during my ignorance of imperialism, I was never proud of having that license to kill.

Now the government wants to give all Vietnam vets the recognition they deserve for trying to blow Vietnam back to the stone age. Now we can have a memorial that says: "Hey, these guys did not die in vain — the genocide that Vietnam was all about is something to pay tribute to."

Well, I was suckered once by this barbaric system, and it's not going to happen again. This government will get no help from me to help cheer on the next generation of cannon fodder. The memorial, to me, is obscene, and I will do my best to be in Washington at that time to participate in any and all counter-demonstrations.

In the struggle,  
Teaneck, New Jersey

### A Shift of Dignity/A Shift of Purpose

Shift one: Block-allocated set of orders for RVN. 1966.

Shift two: Traveling alone, at 18, to an obscure base in Quang Tri Province.

Shift three: Attending a ceremonial funeral procession for a self-immolated Buddhist monk (Hue) and meeting an ARVN recoilless rifle, aimed point blank at the group. The procession ended.

Shift four: Not having the words to defend my direct involvement.

Shift five: Sending back the badges of war.

Shift six: (14 years later) Wishing the destruction of a ridiculous monument honoring those who were too easily forgotten/those who won't forget.

October 1982  
San Diego, California

I'm writing this letter, answering the call to oppose the Vietnam Veterans War Memorial because I feel the only way that we'll be able to honor the 57,000 GIs and the millions of Vietnamese that died in that war is by overthrowing the system that sent me there.

My participation in the Cambodian invasion was the point in my life that I guess you might say is when I turned into one of the people that I was sent to murder. It was there that I realized that the freedom and democracy that America has to offer the people of the world comes from the barrel of M-16s, the rocket pods of Cobra gunships, and as the people of Lebanon have so recently learned, cluster bombs from Phantom jets.

It was in Cambodia that for the first time I saw through the feigned respect and terror of the people, the true hatred and contempt they held for us. I saw one mother crying over her dead son, and another trying to stop the flow of blood from her daughter whose arm had been blown off, this because they had tried to run into the jungle.

**BATTLE REPORT:** Village secured, two enemy dead, one wounded POW. No casualties to friendly forces.

They talk of honoring the dead with this memorial. Bullshit! I saw seven bodies on a road for two days because of lack of transportation and meanwhile Colonels and Majors are coming in hourly in helicopters to get first pick of souvenirs from the cache site we had just captured.

And how did we treat the Vietnamese dead? We stomped First Cav patches into their foreheads and left them out in the open for all the "enemy" to see to let them know how bad we were.

I saw and participated in many minor acts of rebellion against the war. I talked to one brother on LZ Buttons who had been sentenced to burn shit the rest of his tour for refusing to go out into the bush. When I asked why he wouldn't go out, he replied, "I have nothing against these people, I'd much rather burn shit than kill anybody."

One morning, at the cache site I spoke of earlier, we received boxes of razors and shaving cream and were told to clean ourselves up because a General was coming to pin medals on us for a job well done. When he arrived he

landed in an LZ surrounded by trees with peace signs and FTA (Fuck the Army) slogans in shaving cream all over them. To the side was a pile of burning razors.

He pinned a medal on my chest that day for killing a child and it wasn't until two weeks later I found out that on that very day four students were shot down at Kent State protesting that murder and all the others that were going on during that invasion. And since then I have considered the millions of people that took to the streets in protest of that war as my homecoming parade and always will. The only people that have spit on me since I've returned home are those flag-sucking patriots that have gone along with the plans of the U.S. imperialists to dominate the world, and I do not consider them worthy of my recognition — except when they take to the streets to try to put out their America first B.S., then I'll be there.

And I'm calling on all Vietnam Vets to join with VVAW (A-I) in a counter action in Washington, D.C. and expose this memorial for the fraud that it is. The rulers of this country will not rewrite the legacy of the 1960s and their plans to close the door on the heroic struggles of the Vietnamese people will not go unanswered.

Private E-2 retired

The Vietnam War was, is, and will always remain fundamentally insane, conspired to kill poor people and enrich rich people. The Vietnam War exposed the hypocrisy of so-called American patriotism.

USMC retired 2118926

Let me introduce myself. I am a Vietnam vet who spent 28 months in Vietnam. I received a silver star, two bronze stars, the Vietnam Medal of Gallantry twice, three campaign ribbons, two purple hearts and was a Green Beret. I received all this and for *what!* Now I hear seven years after the war they're going to honor the Vietnam vet. For what? To recruit young kids to see the glory of war. Those people in Washington have no right to honor us; they don't understand us and never will, yet now they'll use us as a come-on to get this New Generation to join the army. I deplore war and detest this farce they're using as a war memorial.

SFC E-6 Special Forces  
Chicano member of  
Swords to Plowshares

The mother of a close friend of mine recently received a letter from the Colonel of the U.S. Marine Corps, Colonel James M. Mead. Her son is a foot soldier, a candidate for a body bag, in the Marine peacekeeping force which invaded Lebanon in late August of this year, and also a part of the force which at this very moment is patrolling the streets of Beirut. The letter begins as follows: "During the period 25 August 1982 to 10 September 1982 your favorite Marine participated ashore in Beirut, Lebanon in a mission described to us by our President in a 24 August 1982 message as 'a mission of great importance to our nation and the free world. The conditions under which you carry out your vital assignment are, I know, demanding and potentially dangerous. Your task to be once again what Marines have been for more than 200 years: peacemakers.'"

At 20 years old Johnny had been in the Marines a little over 15 months when he first set foot on the shores of Lebanon, his daughter was born in September, a daughter he has never seen, his main reason for joining the Marines was to get training in computers. Needless to say he hasn't seen one transistor. His mother really summed it up when she said, "There are just no jobs. My son has two choices, either go on welfare or sign up for the military." She goes on to say, "Young Black men are being forced onto the frontlines and have absolutely no reason to give up their lives for this country." The whole story is sharply reminiscent of the stories that were being told when I was a soldier during the Vietnam era. Thousands of families whose sons threw away their lives for the red, white and blue received similar letters of praise and condolence, letters that distorted and lied about the true role of U.S. imperialism throughout the world. The role

of the U.S. military for the past 200 years has been anything but the role of peacemaker. I'm sure that John and some of his fellow soldiers are staring a few stark naked realities in the face. John finds himself in a hostile environment but that should not alarm him for he was born out of a volatile situation. One year searching and not finding jobs or educational opportunity, the next year standing in a cold sweat on some rubble-strewn street of war-torn Beirut.

When the ruling class of this country rolls out the blood-soaked red carpet to dedicate the Vietnam War memorial in Washington this month, they will once again be attempting to rewrite and distort history and on a grand scale. They will be seeking to reverse the verdict of the '60s. They will be seeking to ignore the millions of people who took to the streets in militant protest against U.S. imperialism in Indochina. They will be attempting to ignore thousands of soldiers in their own ranks who during the Vietnam era mutinied, fragged, and cut their way through all that patriotic bullshit. They will try to ignore and even forget LBJ — Long Binh Jail, the infamous Army stockade where thousands of U.S. soldiers were tortured and some even died for refusing to fight for their slave-masters. I know — I was there. But in the midst of their latest activity to prepare for World War 3, to whitewash history, many revolutionary-minded Vietnam vets will be throwing that garbage right back in the face of the bourgeoisie. This foul monument has been built on the suffering, the plunder of millions of people. This monument rests on the broken bodies of men, women and children. This monument is a monument to oppression, a monument to mass murder, a monument to U.S. imperialism.

Darnell Summers

For the rulers of this country, unveiling the monument to their carpet bombing of Indochina, defoliation of the Vietnamese countryside and CIA assassination programs represents a leap in their offensive to overturn correct verdicts lodged against them by people of the world and a stepping stone to preparing us for what their version of the future holds, war against their Soviet rivals for world domination.

But in maneuvering toward the monument something else was exposed: that there is tremendous potential for all this to blow up in their face. It isn't like all they have to do is pull together the sentiment that exists out there among vets, especially Vietnam vets, in society as a whole, no matter how much some of their spokesmen claim to speak for vets. More it's a question of trying to create a reactionary consensus around Vietnam and impose that on vets by chiseling away at the understanding that many had come to around Vietnam and ramming it down the throats of those who won't fall into line willingly.

But they have quite a bit to chisel away at and really quite a bit to fly in the face of. I remember in 1970 when I got hit with orders for Nam, talking with returning vets on the west coast who pointed with pride to the fact that they had refused to fight the "enemy" for months and that the last hostile actions their unit had had was when they fragged their CO. Talking with Black vets who got captured by the VC and asked why they were helping to oppress the Vietnamese people when their people weren't free and then released. Being shocked by reports of vets and GI's in uniform marching in anti-war rallies and several weeks later joining them myself. I also remember 1971 in Leavenworth in the hole hearing that the commandant/



In December of 1971, Vietnam veterans seized the Statue of Liberty in New York in opposition to the bombing of North Vietnam and in support of the Vietnamese people. In support of the vets' takeover, French radicals burned a replica of the Statue of Liberty in Paris.



# We Are Proud of Our Resistance

## to U.S. Aggression in Vietnam



warden had taken to telling the press that he had a VC unit in his segregation wing and how proud the 12 of us held there were to be recognized as the enemy.

More recently I traveled around the country as part of the Mass Proletarian War Crimes Tribunal of U.S. Imperialism and got a little taste of what vets have refused to forget. Air strikes against defenseless villages, throwing VC prisoners out of moving helicopters to scare them into talking, what napalm and Agent Orange did to the Vietnamese countryside and people, massive assassination programs, blowing away women and children. But also the resistance. Widescale refusals to fight, fraggings, burning down the military pen at Long Binh, thousands of vets throwing medals back onto the Capitol steps. I even met vets of the late '70s who had organized resistance to NATO war games in Europe. Experiences that as one brother said have ruined many forever as patriotic citizens of this country.

It was really striking to get my memory refreshed on how many vets not only hated the war but wanted to spit on the system that had spawned it. And they write that only sons and daughters of the middle class opposed the war. How deceitful and disgusting. What a bullshit attempt to create reality by cooking up a lie and then running it in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, etc.

This must be thrown back into their faces! I remember in 1981 in reference to participating in the Tribunal, lots of vets and others who would bring to light a lot of exposure on U.S. imperialism raising the question of what good it would do. That same question is raised in a different light by the dedication of this monument. What difference will it make if their monument goes down without opposition, if they are able to promote their distortion of history as representing the sentiments of Vietnam vets? On the other hand, what difference will it make if vets and others who came to hate this system and understand its blood-sucking nature through that war step out in opposition to their attempts to reverse correct verdicts? Especially what difference will this make in the context of them desperately preparing for bloodletting on a world scale?

Carl Dix

One of the Fort Lewis 6, panel member of the Mass Proletarian War Crimes Tribunal of U.S. Imperialism, and a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party

I am a Vietnam war veteran with epilepsy which was brought on by the stress and pressure from the U.S. Vietnam-puppet-regime-backing action. I was drafted to defend this country's actions in the '60s. I never questioned its policies because the U.S. was always correct and just remembered Kennedy saying "Ask not what your country will do for you but what you will do for your country." So I ended up in Southeast Asia to defend the freedom of the Vietnamese even though the U.S. government had rejected Ho Chi Minh's request in 1945 to have the U.S. as his ally in helping him form a unified Vietnam with democratic freedoms.

My arrival was during cleanup actions of the 1968 Tet Offensive up at Hue. I was crew chief of a Chinook helicopter. We carried artillery base supplies, troops, body bags (internally and externally) . . . Me and my buddies, we had to supply the "hamburger hills" Khe Sahn bases, taking in live troops replacements and taking out your neighborhood young kids in bloody body bags. At the same rate those men arrived, it was just lucky we took them back not just dead but dismembered or not just wounded but paralyzed with loss of limbs.

While this was all going on, the officers who gave orders were never with their men and ROTC only knew this by the book. This stress starts pulling your mind apart, starts questioning the government and why we were there. To relieve this mind-blowing pressure, I started using dope, finding ways to keep out of action, forming revolutionary force inside the army against the war. Teargassing the NCO barracks. Making the officers afraid of us so

much they kept away — so away that their whole area was made separate and barb-wired.

All the bloody bodies and going to rescue a hilltop company from being wiped out and the officers saying, "I'm not going in and pick those guys up because of the incoming." So he flew us back to base. Then the next day going back and having to pick up everyone and find out they were all dead then, having to find the body pieces and stuffing them all in body bags. Shortly after I had my first epileptic seizure. The army since has lost my medical records and says that they are not responsible so I receive no medical disability.

Now I don't have a job, can't get a job. Went to school on the GI bill but am told I have too much training. All because I have epilepsy I have to take nine downers, medical pills, every day.

Seattle

In 1968 like millions of other draft age people I was forced to make an agonizing choice over "what to do" about Vietnam. The army, getting out of the country or going underground — none of these seemed to be cool but I had to do something; time was running out. So I joined the U.S. Coast Guard.

I figured I had escaped the war which for me was becoming more and more ugly and wrong. I had escaped the war and besides I was in a "humanitarian" branch of the service, dedicated to saving lives and protecting property. It sounded really good but at the time when I said "I do" I didn't realize that protecting property would involve the Mekong Delta in Vietnam.

Five months later I found myself on a river patrol boat protecting property, working a twin .30 calibre machinegun. It was almost like a dream come true. Here I was a big bad 18-year-old acting like "combat" in every John Wayne film I saw. A fantasy! — it was for 3 days until the reality of what my stated purpose was and I snapped back into the real world. Being shot at and facing the people's war.

Even as a kid I never liked cops, but there I was acting like a cop for the U.S. government. Our duties were mainly to patrol our area, stop and search sampans and basically to harass and intimidate the people in our area. In the 8-1/2 months I was there, I think our squadron got into three or four fire fights. So basically what we did was just go up 25 miles, turn around and head home every day; our policy was not to go out at night. Besides fear and anxiety, we had to deal with boredom. The first two you can't do a thing about, it's there with you until you leave. Boredom was a different story. The main cure for a mental disorder was pot, getting stoned, firing some rounds with tracers and getting off on the trails they would leave behind. Or watching an air strike made by Phantoms dropping napalm at night. Something inside of me began to snap seeing that big bright ugly orange and red ball of flame rising over the trees. And with tears rolling down my face I began to ask the most feared question in the military . . . Why?! I'd seen the effects of that shit; if it doesn't burn you up you'll suffocate because it just eats up all the oxygen in the area of the blast.

Anger became my fourth mental disorder. I turned this anger in on myself and outwardly. One way this outward anger was handled was by blowing away things; anything, trees, old boats, huts, etc. It was a release just to tear the shit out of it. The most cruel was killing water buffalo, I mean these animals were the people's draft animals, their means to plant the rice fields. It was sick. I was angry not at the people but at this government. For the first time in 12 years since then I am finally going to say to those people that I'm so very sorry.

There's no way I can ever make it up to them except by overthrowing these motherfuckers who sent me over to that war and who are planning for their next war on a grander scale. They created quite a few of their gravediggers over there in Vietnam, people who they will wish never came back alive. Because we will be out there tearing up all their lies and bullshit about what really went down there then and what they have in store for the people of the world. We're

*Dewey Canyon III in 1971 was an "incursion into the land of Congress"—a militant protest demonstration, organized by Vietnam Veterans Against the War, against the Congress and U.S. government. Almost a thousand Vietnam veterans camped for a week on the mall in D.C., and through various activities disrupted the normal routine of politics and tourism, especially by conducting guerrilla theater reenactments of what they did to the Vietnamese people on the steps of different government buildings. The vets defied a Supreme Court ban on camping on the mall, and in a final blast on April 23, thousands of vets threw their medals and various military regalia at the Congress, expressing their solidarity with the Vietnamese people and denouncing the U.S. government in no uncertain terms. Following are some of the brief statements by the brothers at Dewey Canyon III as their medals flew through the air:*

*"Bruce, New York, I have a Vietnam campaign ribbon, a Vietnam service ribbon, national defense ribbon and purple heart. . ."*

*"My name is John and here's a bunch of bullshit!"*

*"More bullshit."*

*"My name's Peter and I got a Purple Heart here and I hope to get another one fighting these motherfuckers."*

*"Robert, New York, and I symbolically return all Vietnam medals and other service medals given me by the power structure that has genocidal policies against non-white peoples of the world!"*

*"This is for the brothers and sisters at Kent."*

*"For the brothers and sisters this year."*

*"Second Battalion, First Marines, Power to the people."*

*"22nd Cavalry strike Danang. I hope they realize this is their last goddamn chance."*

*"Spec 4, Army, retired. I've taken in 9 Purple Hearts, Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Bronze Star, Army Commendation and a lot of other shit. This is for my brothers!"*

*"We're not gonna fight anymore, but if we have to fight again, it will be to take these steps!"*

going to be out there preparing minds and organizing forces for the war against them.

And if the imperialists do start World War 3 how many scared, frightened and angry kids will be asking themselves that same feared, in the minds of the bourgeoisie, question: Why!?!

R.P.,  
VVAW (AI)

This memorial to honor Vietnam vets that the government is setting up in Washington, D.C., is the final degradation — the suicides, the mental cases, the unemployed — those are the "memorials." They dumped 55 million gallons of Agent Orange in Vietnam and it is still killing thousands of people in Vietnam and here and they want to dedicate a memorial! It's nothing but a scam — U.S.A. means United States of

Amnesia — that memorial is part of trying to wipe out and falsify what Vietnam was and what U.S. foreign policy is — genocide on behalf of U.S. interests.

My best friend was killed and they brought out the flag and fired the guns, but what was I supposed to tell his mother — that he died for this country when in fact he died *because* of this country?

Vets have a real obligation to speak the truth about Vietnam — it was *genocide*, mostly by bombing — the "clean technology." And vets aren't going to get over the guilt of taking part in that, never find any real peace unless they resist this monster that was responsible for Vietnam and now is getting ready to do it on a global scale.

George Veasey  
Vietnam veteran  
and one of the  
Trident Neln



## The Women in Occupied Territory

I'd like to start my testimony with something that reveals the kind of training U.S. indoctrinators gave us in preparation for carrying out our avowed mission of "defending the South Vietnamese people's aspirations for democratic liberties" from the "brutal, aggressive attempts of the communists to impose a Moscow/Peking-controlled tyranny over them." This seems particularly relevant to me today when you can hear these same indoctrinators screaming and whining about "international terror" and the absolute, crucial difference between "totalitarian (pro-Soviet) regimes and authoritarian (pro-U.S.) regimes" on the one hand, while sending armed-to-the-teeth U.S. Marines to tromp along bombed-out pavements of Beirut to, these vultures claim, defend "the Lebanese people's aspirations for a free and independent Lebanon."

One of the first things I remember seeing when I was sent to the San Diego area for "survival training" prior to being sent to Vietnam was a huge painting covering the whole outside wall of a Marine barracks depicting a lone Marine trooper, bloody Vietnamese bodies piled around his legs while he fired his M-16 wildly into the distance; the caption, visible for hundreds of yards, read: "THE ONLY THING I FEEL WHEN I KILL IS THE RECOIL OF MY WEAPON!" We were also subjected to the standard Vietnam-era training technique of being confronted with sudden "surprise" targets all over the base which consisted of nothing more than the silhouettes of Vietnamese heads (and sometimes bodies) immediately recognizable as "the enemy" because they all wore "coolie" hats—just like every Vietnamese peasant I would later see in Vietnam. Of course, the point of this training was to fire on sight—and we were disciplined and humiliated if our reaction time was too slow. After all, we were being trained to "do a job" for when we got "over there," and we sure as hell better learn to do it good. Constant howling that "our buddies' lives" would depend on such instant reflexes were also used to drill these conditioned reflexes into our heads.

I arrived in Saigon in early 1970, immediately after the Cambodia invasion/Kent State student strikes that swept the country—in fact, I took part in the week-long Portland State strike in Oregon while on leave and left for Travis Air Force Base (enroute to Vietnam) just two days after the TAC Squad had charged our lines, beating brothers and sisters (including myself) with their brand new riot batons. So I wasn't exactly a gung-ho trooper by the time I arrived at "Pentagon East" in Saigon, the giant headquarters complex that ran the U.S. war effort, not just in Vietnam but throughout all Indochina. But obviously, there was still something holding me back from "crossing over to the other side"—from seeing my place being alongside those "surprise silhouettes" instead of with those who trained us to shoot them on sight.

Two things struck me immediately upon my arrival in Saigon—the "Mama Sans" and MACV (Military Assistance Command-Vietnam) Standing Orders concerning past records and military paper work.

The "Mama San" or Vietnamese women, generally middle-aged (the younger women were forced to work in the hundreds of brothels serving the GIs), who had been forced off their village farmlands by B-52 raids, napalm raids, or just plain "population removal" raids (frequently connected with the infamous U.S.-concocted and U.S.-controlled Strategic Hamlet Program). Most of these women—like the majority of the Vietnamese population as a whole in Saigon—lived in the shanty towns that crowded along the poorer streets of the city. They lived in miserable little shacks made from the cardboard of discarded C-Ration cartons, strips of cloth, bits of metal—and, if they were really lucky, wood from the empty ammo crates. The floors, of course, were of mud and in the monsoon season they became a morass just like the streets along which they were built. Now once in a while the U.S.-installed Saigon regime would decide to send out some of their "concerned government

workers" in a big convoy of trucks—TV cameras and foreign correspondents all over the place (for, I'm sure, the viewing and reading pleasure of their "stateside" American audience)—and there they'd be, these "concerned" Saigon officials handing out some bricks and corrugated metal so that their "fellow citizens" could improve their "unfortunate" living conditions. Much more frequently, however, convoys of U.S.-supplied government bulldozers would roll into these neighborhoods unannounced (no cameras or correspondents to be seen anywhere at these times) and proceed to obliterate whole streets of these people's homes: "Removing public eyesores" and "illegal squatters" they called it. Of course the people who had been living there had no place else to go except other nearby streets and in fact, new shanty towns would usually reappear in the very same spot before very long.

(Now if this seems overly shocking, just remember—this is in Saigon, the very capital city of this marvelous little "American experiment in Asian democracy" the very part of the country that American "economic aid and influence" most directly affected.)

Anyway, this is where the "Mama Sans" (and thousands upon thousands of other Vietnamese) lived. But what first caught my attention when I arrived in Vietnam was how they lived; that is, what they did for a living. Basically, the "Mama Sans" were slaves for the GIs.

These women would often come on base at dawn (braving the lethal punishment for curfew violation)—if, of course, they had the proper ID which, naturally, they had to buy at whatever the going rate was. Once on base, they would wash our clothes, shine our boots, starch our uniforms, make our beds, clean our rifles and—if they were at all "good looking"—serve our sexual whims; all for whatever price they could get. And make no bones about it, whatever price the "Mama Sans" themselves asked for their hard, day-long work, we GIs would feel we were "being ripped off" by the "thieving, ungrateful gooks" if we didn't force that price down by a considerable amount. (After all, we were the ones who were fighting their fucking war for them weren't we?) Given the position of Americans in Vietnam, it was always the "Mama Sans" who lost out on how much they got paid—but we still complained constantly that they were ripping us off! These were the people whose "democratic aspirations" we were supposedly defending—whose "hearts and minds" it was claimed we were "valiantly" and "idealistically" struggling to win.

The other thing that struck me immediately upon my arrival at U.S. headquarters in Saigon were the "unofficial" Standing Orders concerning past records and military paper work (especially as it concerned previous and ongoing American operations in the Vietnamese countryside). Military clerks were shit-canning, shredding and burning records, papers and documents left and right—"sanitizing the files", you might say, of any record of what U.S. operations were doing—and were designed to do—in Vietnam. You see, the massacre of Vietnamese men, women and children at My Lai was a "hot item" in the newsstand at that time and the object of a supposedly thorough, top-to-bottom investigation. I say supposedly because while any trooper who had been in Vietnam for any length of time at all knew that My Lai was merely the day-to-day reality of U.S. military operations in the Vietnamese countryside, every effort was being made to present this bloody war crime as an "aberration"—which, of course, required removing the evidence that refuted this. So the files were "sanitized."

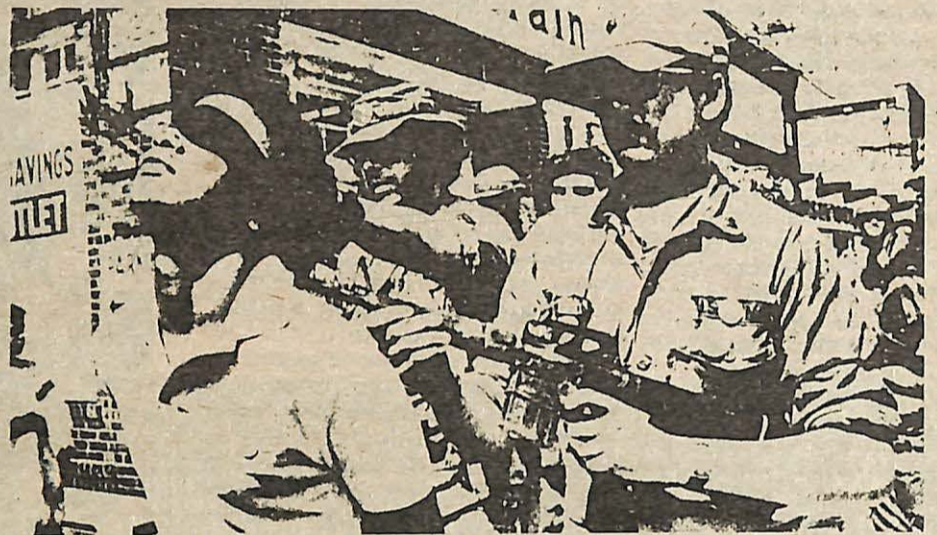
During the 3 months I was stationed in Saigon, I had plenty of opportunity to see the extent of the U.S. government's (and U.S. puppet government's) "respect" for the Vietnamese people. It was a common U.S. practice whenever a Vietnamese civilian was inadvertently killed by an American (run over in the street by a speeding jeep, say) to simply pay the person's family a sum of "compensation" money and then shoot them out the door. In one instance, a friend of mine accidentally ran down a Viet-

namese woman when he swerved to avoid an on-coming vehicle carrying American GIs. He himself was sick with grief and guilt but all the brass and lifers were constantly coming around and telling him how great it was that he didn't hit the GIs—the woman's family was actually lucky because they'd be getting more money out of the deal than they'd ever have seen with her alive. Further, they insisted, it would have been his duty to take the same action if it had been only one American headed toward him and a whole family of Vietnamese he would have had to hit to avoid him, because, obviously Americans were more important. (You can imagine how this made my friend feel.)

Sometimes at least a pretense of legal action had to be made. I was assigned to the Judge Advocate Office (military legal department) when a Marine was brought in for trial because he shot a Vietnamese student. The Marine was later found to just be carrying out his duties of guarding the supplies on a truck he was guarding (he claimed the youth was trying to "loot" supplies from the truck and ignored his orders to leave the vehicle) even though the body was found 200 feet away hang-

ing the "brutal, oppressive assholes" that abounded because I didn't go out of my way to humiliate the women and make them feel like shit, I didn't curse them, pour beer over their heads or beat them like some of the others did. But I didn't think twice about paying for the use of their bodies—after all, that's what they worked in those places for, right? I thought I was different because I wanted to find one Vietnamese prostitute I could have a "relationship" with—a "relationship" where I would only come to her in my free time, I would bring her whatever I could from the PX for her family, we could go to the Vietnamese restaurants and Vietnamese movies, basically do more than just have sex when we were together—but, and this never bothered me for a moment (then at least), such a relationship was based on my ability to use her body when I wanted to, period. (Whether I did or not was a matter of my choice not hers; even when I didn't because she felt ill or something, it was still true that I could have demanded it.) And this didn't bother me at all—it was just the *outright* brutality I objected to.

Incidentally, this American "respect" for the Vietnamese people also extended to the South Vietnamese soldiers.



Operation Rapid American Withdrawal (1970)—Vietnam vets march 86 miles through northern New Jersey and Pennsylvania performing simulated search and destroy missions to "bring the war home." The vets were aided by a guerrilla theater troupe who volunteered to go along to play civilian prisoners. The scene above took place in Flemington, New Jersey.

ing by its heels from a fence near the door of a school. The Marine himself told guys in the barracks that the kid had actually just been sitting on the fence reading and he had shot him because he was bored, having to sit there on that stupid truck in the hot sun with nothing to do for hours. Of course, since the Court Martial found that the Vietnamese youth was a would-be looter, his family didn't even get the usual "compensation money."

As far as "winning the hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese people, one of the most common sights on the walls of U.S. military offices was a Xerox cartoon that said: "WHEN YOU GET THEM BY THE BALLS THEIR HEARTS AND MINDS WILL FOLLOW!"

As always, the worst treatment was reserved for the women—and this wasn't limited to "prisoners" unless you (correctly) considered the entire Vietnamese population as American prisoners! Here I've got to say that, while I didn't go to some of the despicable and filthy extremes as some of my "fellow" GIs, there is absolutely nothing I can feel proud of in the way I treated Vietnamese women. This is something that was very hard for me to come to grips with later—especially as I had thought that I had behaved in a not-so-oppressive manner—and laying this out, I think, very important for revealing the extent of the brutal, dehumanizing, oppressive relations between imperialist troops and the people (especially women) of an oppressed country.

Outside just about every U.S. military base in Vietnam, regardless of the size of the town itself, were "bars" and brothels where younger Vietnamese women (some barely teenagers) were forced to work in order to support their families, many of which had been driven off their land by the war. Sprawling Saigon had hundreds of such places—and I, like every other GI I knew, went to them every chance I got. I thought I was somehow different from

GIs were constantly saying how they weren't worth anything as soldiers and it would serve them right to get blown away. I saw an ARVN trooper bleed to death in the sickbay of our Patrol Boat base because the American doctor refused to treat a Vietnamese—the kid (I was only 19 but he couldn't have been that old) just bled to death right there before my eyes. I couldn't believe it.

I also had a chance to see how the U.S.-installed government drafted its troops. I just happened to be in a very poor section of Saigon when suddenly all these Armored Personnel Carriers, jeeps with heavy machine guns and a couple of tanks come barreling into the neighborhood. All the side streets are blocked off and heavily armed ARVN troops just start sweeping the streets, rounding up every male between 15 and 40 and herding them into the APCs. When they had a full load they gunned their engines and roared off—the guys didn't even have a chance to say good-bye (or even that they were going) to their family and friends.

I'll never be sorry that the U.S. got its ass whipped in Vietnam. I'll never be sorry that thousands of people demanded to know what the hell I was doing over there—and how the hell could I defend it—when I got back to the U.S. I'm not at all sorry we didn't get any "victory parades" welcoming us as "conquering heroes"—our "parades" if you will, were like the one where 1000 Vietnam vets marched in D.C. to the Capitol steps to hurl their bloody medals back into the laps of our real enemy. And our recognition as heroes comes, to me, in things like the statement of a British vet from the war in Northern Ireland where he said he and others like him look to the role Vietnam Veterans Against the War had played in preparing to play the kind of role he felt he had to play now.

Hayden Fischer,  
former gun-thug for U.S. imperialism  
One of the 3 who raised the red flag over  
the Alamo in 1980

# DOWN WITH U.S./SOVIET WAR MOVES!



The following is an interview with Joe Urgo, a member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (AV) and the first Vietnam vet to visit north Vietnam during the war.

**Urgo:** I went in in 1966 and spent a year and a half in the States. I had had two high school teachers who were very adamant about promoting the idea of the communist menace sweeping down. They did it with charts and sweeping red lines. They drilled that home, the idea that there was something to be defended in Southeast Asia.

Then I got to Vietnam and that went away pretty quickly because I was there during Tet of 1968. I was guarding airplanes on the flight lines. And then during Tet I was perimeter security on the edge of the base that was attacked, on the western end of Tan Son Nhut air base, where the Vietnamese made an incursion.

**Q:** Where is Tan Son Nhut Air Force Base?

Tan Son Nhut was right outside Saigon. I pulled base security there almost all the time I was in Vietnam. The security police is divided up into security and law enforcement. I never did law enforcement, only perimeter security or flight line security. I got to Vietnam in the end of 1967, beginning of '68. Tet was the end of January '68. I was on the perimeter and there was a bunker there, an old French bunker that the French had manned during their attempt to put down the people. I had pulled post on that bunker several times. It was just my chance that night that I wasn't in the bunker. That bunker got hit during the night by the Vietnamese liberation forces and four of my friends died. We never understood what was happening during that attack on the base or how to respond to it. It took hours for people to get down to that end of the base. Nobody believed or understood what they were doing and the Vietnamese were able to make some gains in that total confusion; besides that, the soldiers in the ARVN army didn't want to fight. One guy opened the fucking gate for them so that he helped them (the Viet Cong). But this friend of mine dying in the bunker really made a difference because it brought to us that this thing was real. The thing that happened with this bunker is that when I was getting out of the service in the end of 1969, the Air Force—and this was after a whole history of my becoming opposed to the war—the Air Force printed in the centerfold of the Air Force magazine a painting of the bunker done from the rear. That painting had a big effect because it brought back all the memories about being there, why the war was wrong. There was a certain process about being defeated. I mean the Vietnamese had defeated us. And that helped push me into trying to understand the Vietnamese, their history, their revolution. So this painting went up on my wall.

In 1971 when I got the chance to travel to Hanoi they took us to the Museum of the Revolution, and in this Museum of the Revolution they had all kinds of anti-draft and anti-war posters from around the world in one room. They had a VVAW button and literature inside this glass case. It was a tremendous thing to see both the effect of the GI's but also the effect of the anti-war movement worldwide and how it was being displayed in

## The View from the Other Side of the Bunker

this museum. And they took me through this museum, room after room, maybe ten rooms, and it's the whole history of the Vietnamese revolution going back 2000 years. In one room with the American resistance they had a whole series of photos, paintings. One painting sort of struck me as very weird. I looked at it and looked at it, and it dawned on me; I thought it was the bunker, that same bunker at Tan Son Nhut. But I didn't want to say that because if I suggested that, maybe with the language problem, they might misinterpret it. So I said, where is that? And they said, Saigon. I said, where? They said, Tan Son Nhut. And it was clearly the same bunker. A Vietnamese artist had sketched the attack on the bunker from the front of the bunker. So this was like a transition point in terms of where I was coming from. I went from thinking about Americans dying to taking up and seeing things from the Vietnamese point of view. And this trip to Hanoi concentrated that.

There's a whole history before that. The effect of being defeated at Tet unleashed a huge wave of disgust and demoralization about what we were doing there. And then the way it began to come to a head was the role of the Black GI's. I remember sitting in the theater with two of my friends, two white guys. The flag ceremony (the Star Spangled Banner and putting the flag on the movie screen) is the way they opened up movies in Vietnam. And up to that point we stood and went along with it, put our hands over our hearts. But these Black guys were refusing to do this. And then we had this big debate just among us whites. What the hell is going on here? Why aren't people standing for the fucking flag? That then began to grow into all of the cultural manifestations, the dap among Black GI's, the Afros growing. But it also became something we had to bounce off of with our anti-war sentiments. In other words: why are these people doing this; we came back and tried to figure out why we were there, etc. The standards that were being set by these Black GI's who were openly rebelling, saying, this isn't my fucking war, I'm going home to fight, my war is back home. And there were lots of discussions with Black GI's in my unit and on post. It really came to the point that by the end of the year among this section of whites, it became a principle not to stand for the flag and to sit down and be disrespectful.

Within two weeks after I got out of the service I started looking for an organization of veterans. I made the rounds for several weeks to different movement groups. I hooked up with them. Finally I found VVAW. VVAW was in a transition stage at that point of going from being a debating organization to becoming more activist and mass-oriented. Several of us came together... In July of 1971 we,

VVAW, were part of an anti-war coalition and the coalition received a request to send a delegation to Hanoi. Three organizations were picked. VVAW was one and I was picked to represent VVAW. The person in our organization who was first contacted, told me, look, there's a delegation going to Japan to attend the 17th Conference Against the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. It was organized by pro-Soviet revisionists, etc. But it was a big anti-war meeting in Japan against the use of nuclear weapons and particularly to expose the U.S. for dropping the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and it was going to take place that week in August. He said, look, it's also possible that you might go to Hanoi, what do you think about that? I said, hey, that's heavy, you know what I mean. I was up for it because all of the activities that we had carried on more and more convinced me that I was on the wrong side in Vietnam. In other words, the support for the liberation of Vietnam, support for the revolutionary struggle of the Vietnamese people was where I had to go. And this was part of going toward that.

I knew based on all my experience in VVAW, all the marches that we had carried out, all of the demonstrations, the Winter Soldier Investigation where GI's got up (and if you read the testimony of the Winter Soldier Investigation, you'll see the exposure in there about what the nature of American society is and what we did to the Vietnamese people) convinced me beyond a shadow of a doubt that there was a big sentiment on the part of many GI's in support of the Vietnamese, openly sympathetic support for the Vietnamese culture and nation, and among sections of those guys, open support for the revolutionary struggle. So, I felt more like I had this tremendous responsibility, that I didn't know whether I could rise to the occasion with this responsibility. I wasn't going so much with a fear of the enemy, but it was, oh shit, I've got to represent everything I know and understand and have seen. I am representing all these guys in the service and the veterans who were coming home who had this tremendous hatred for what we did over there. It was that kind of thing that made it weigh on me. It was a great weight. It was not lessened by going to Hiroshima and Nagasaki and seeing what the United States did there, going to the museums and traveling and meeting Vietnamese, north Vietnamese and south Vietnamese in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and listening to people who were there when the atomic bombs dropped. It was a very intense experience. It was very emotional to sit there with the Vietnamese and listen to this and know that we were still bombing Vietnam and that we were still trying to wipe out their struggle, killing people. This weight only

increased. I remember having to consciously struggle this through. I wanted to see some POW's—I was looking for some of the anti-war POW's, I figured that is who they will have us meet with—and I wanted to see where these people were at and be able to take that experience back. They wouldn't let us meet with them but they did give me a tape that had been released from four POW's that summer. It was sent to the United States but the U.S. government hadn't released the tape and so the tape had not gotten out.

The thing about being fully in support and now being on the other side came about—I decided that whatever they asked me, I'm going to tell them everything that I know. I'm not holding back anything because if I can aid them in any way to win from the position that I am in, only visiting, then I will do that. And when we sat down and they asked, what's happening to the GI's in Vietnam? Why are they committing these atrocities? I tried to use this experience, not my first-hand experience, but the experience of the Winter Soldier Investigation about what it is about imperialist society that can brainwash a large number of GI's to do this. I tried to explain that. And I tried to explain that those contradictions were real in people's lives and that it was coming out in a lot of drug use, in a lot of ways people were trying to escape. And that it was also coming out in rebellion, and that that rebellion was the way that things had to go and that we were supportive of that. Any way that I could aid that.

When we came back I was asked to speak in some places and I went out and did it. We did not make the best use of it, but there was never any organized resistance to my going. I think that this is significant as it represented something for the vets out there, that a Vietnam veteran went to Hanoi and talked to "our enemy." Much more the sentiment was that these were our friends, and we were on their side. To this day Jack Anderson's column quotes the CIA report that said that 500 Americans who deserted to the NLF had fought with the NLF. These were not just desertions to hide out in Saigon. And he quotes the statistics. I don't know if that is true, but for whatever reason he is running out that figure I think it is a significant tribute to the strengths of the Vietnamese revolution and how many GI's had to take on and struggle that through and how many guys came back and consciously saw themselves as being revolutionaries, however they understood that, with all the unevenness and everything else. I remember at Dewey Canyon III there was a poll taken of 200 guys. The poll shows that they mainly came from fairly "conservative" backgrounds in terms of how they identified themselves. The day of the poll 50% of them identified themselves as very radical. These revolutionary ideas were there, the influence of China and Mao Tsetung. There was the Red Book which many of us were reading at the time. It was the strength of the revolutionary struggle of the people of the world, it wasn't just the Vietnamese, but it was this whole thing that was in motion around the world that gave us strength and courage. It fueled us constantly to be stepping out and doing things.

I was part of a whole process of GI's and veterans becoming more in unity with the revolutionary people and becoming revolutionary themselves. Certainly one of the key lessons that I learned was that at every stage along the line it was the advanced vets and GI's, it was the advanced struggles of the people of the world, it was the advanced people within the movement, who were key. There was always this process; you bounced your ideas off of the most advanced ideas at that time. At that time we were not trying to bow down and tone down our arguments and try to play down the politics within the organization. We didn't understand a lot. We weren't studying Marxism-Leninism and taking up the science of revolution. But certainly our thrust and our emphasis was in that direction. That was obviously what was behind the Winter Soldier Investigation. That was the thrust behind it, that we could take on all the questions in the society. We had a program that talked about everything from sexism to racism. We wanted to expose and take on all of the questions and really make some kind of fundamental change. □



A group of active duty GIs during the Vietnam war display "the enemy's" flag.



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