

G.I. VOICE

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CHEMICAL REVOLUTION?

Marx pointed out that religion is the opium of the masses. It is tragic that opiates are becoming the new religion for large or at least conspicuous parts of American society. The drug-rock music culture of the late '60s, born of city slums, alienation and desire for escape from repressive bourgeois society, has become an expression of rejection of that society. The imperialistic war now waged in Viet Nam was the first exposure many youth had to the overwhelming contradictions inherent in decaying American capitalism - and for many the shock of exposure resulted in a turning inward, an attempt to shut out the world with drugs.

In the army, where the pressures of society as a whole are sharpened and intensified, the use of drugs is even more widespread than in civilian life. Drugs have become a daily part of soldier's lives. The first exposure to drugs for many is in Viet Nam, where marijuana is almost as common as cigarettes. When there is an overwhelming need to escape one is driven to use it. Men driven by the hell of an existence they had no part in creating, which to them is totally irrational, must leave it any way they can.

The real tragedy of drug use is that it leads to passivity and acceptance of that society which drives men to drugs in the first place. You don't see any clearer when tripping out; you just don't care what you see. War, poverty, oppression? Doesn't hurt a bit, just don't ever wake me up. The individual may think he has freed his mind from such nasty things, but it remains firmly attached to his body, which society, being stronger than any one individual, still commands.

The Activist, a new movement paper put out by Youth Against War & Fascism (YAWF) insinuates that the CIA is attempting to poison youth with drugs. This is absolutely ridiculous. No special effort is required to drive youth to drugs; the misery of capitalist society is quite sufficient; and furthermore, unless one assumes that the government always works at cross-purposes, what the hell is Project Intercept all about? Such an attack is typical of YAWF's adventurist raving, although they do make one good point, as follows:

"But aren't the rulers against the drug-taking youth? Yes, they are, but only relatively. They much prefer the drug-taking youth to the revolutionary youth. It has been suggested that the CIA or some other super-secret government organization must arrange for the pumping of dope into Harlem and other potential centers of rebellion in the U.S. While the allegation is difficult to prove, the reasoning behind it is rather obvious: drug addiction, while spelling the end of all productive activity, also makes rebellion a virtual impossibility. Thus, for the price of losing a few wage slaves, the rulers hope to head off a full scale revolt."

YAWF is correct in pointing out that drugged youth are no threat. It is not true however that capitalism loses a few wage slaves - on the contrary, drugs make it easier to do the boring, repetitive work capitalism requires of the working class. Drugs make it easier for the soldier to obey his commands. So attempts to find some sort of personal escape in drugs lead not to greater freedom, but to increased submission and slavery.

For radicals the political implications of drug-escapism are obvious. A G.I. who is against the war can put his position as a soldier to unique advantage. Furthermore he has a moral responsibility to do so. In the face of what the war means drugs are a dead end. The war was created by capitalist society. There can be no personal individual solution to the war. One cannot escape the existing order by burying one's head in the sand like an ostrich (a vulnerable target) but by trying to change that order.

To the brass drug use is a tool. They recognize that the mass of G.I.s are against the war, that each man is a potential threat, a potential crash in the capitalist world club. They also recognize that a man who uses drugs is a potential brig rat, and won't open his mouth for fear of being busted, that he is running scared. It is almost impossible to dodge the cops day in and day out and still function politically. The occasional G.I. who is both a head and an activist won't be difficult to eliminate.

The army, the brass and its justice are the tools of someone else: the capitalists. These men have no moral right to wage imperialist war, nor have they the right to arrest anyone protesting it. Neither do they have the right to condemn and punish men for the conditions of drug addiction which they have created. But capital thinks only in terms of capital, and any desire it can use for profit it will.

The way to end the oppressive conditions we live under, and stop the bloodshed is not to mash memories and voluntarily neutralize one's power with drugs. The Viet Nam war and the capitalist system that produced it can only be ended when men decide to stop being used, unite, and then use their minds and strength in the interests of all men for a socialist world.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

During the past months G.I. Voice has received many letters, some of which raise crucial questions about the G.I. anti-war movement. Because additional clarification of our position is important, and because all worthwhile correspondence deserves airing, we will attempt to publish as many of these letters as possible. We regret that it only can be done in the present limited manner and hope that in future our format will expand to allow our readers a regular forum.

All letters and articles from G.I.s will be printed as letters to the editor, without your name unless you request otherwise. G.I.s who are considering having letters published should consult AR 360-5 9b(1).

(continued on back page)

Dear G. I. Voice:

I am disturbed by the divisiveness of the G. I. anti-war movement. As I appreciate the tone of G. I. Voice and the sensible approach to the vital issues at hand, I can understand the printing of a quantity of the letters you ridiculed in the BOND. The ASU has been described by you in print as being somewhat akin to the "Mafia". The ASU is the only organization which has seriously attempted to organize servicemen. Such an organization is more than rooms on 5th Avenue. It is an idea in the hearts of thousands of G. I. s. It has been recognized by the press and the Pentagon not so much as a recognized union, but as a potent force, growing, asserting itself, and drawing together more and more men against the system. The demands of the ASU are not altogether negotiable. (i. e., "End to Racism", "The right to disobey illegal orders, like fighting the war in Vietnam.") But the demands for collective bargaining, for federal minimum wage, for the right to free political association, and rank and file control of Courts-Martial are effective issues for drawing together G. I. s. This organization has begun to spread much like the early trade unions. We are the laborers in Uncle's machine. We must organize as best we can to become active in the politics that have grown out of control, that wage a war on rice farmers, and practice intellectual and socio-economic war on portions of our own populace.

You must remind yourself of where the working man's head is "at". Most of the guys on this ship, for example, didn't know that there was an election in France, much less that the candidate Krivine was a G. I. and a radical. The finer criticisms of his (i. e. the allusion to "Guevarism") convictions, while of interest to many of us, would fail to arouse the least bit of interest to most G. I. s.

Either in G. I. Voice, or by letter, I would greatly appreciate your response to the ASU issue, and the speculated progress of any movement without an organization of its members. Perhaps a re-vamping of the ASU? Or even endorsement of another party which would enable the G. I. s to participate in our governmental process. You are certainly not organizing career people in the service. So consider the average age of the bulk of Uncle's army and navy. How much political exposure have most of them had? For many, this is the first. Our two-party system has not excited too many of them. What better time to broaden the base of third parties? ...

Sincerely,
YN2
USS Roosevelt

REPLY

We too are disturbed by the divisiveness of the G. I. anti-war movement. There is great discontent in the army which the war has intensified. The flurry of G. I. anti-war newspapers which has appeared over the past year, put out by radical G. I. s, reflects this discontent. However, the low level of these "underground" papers reflects not primarily the low level of consciousness of the average G. I., but the rotten politics of the guys who put them out. These papers are not radicalizing in nature--quite the opposite--by descending to the level of what they consider the average G. I., and leaving him there, telling him what he already knows, and always did know--it leaves the G. I. disgusted and turned off to the whole left.

Your letter assumes, first of all, that we are interested only in the average guy, and second, that this average guy wouldn't be interested in politics anyhow. Finally, and most importantly, you place yourself apart from "most G. I. s" in a way most condescending to those not as enlightened as you. Being a guiding light, throwing out carefully graded propaganda to the ignorant masses may be good for one's ego, but it is both insulting and wrong.

A G. I. press ought to have articles which will appeal both to already radicalized soldiers and those not yet involved or especially interested in political issues. Obviously radical G. I. s should discuss everyday problems, but they should relate common problems to their political implications, trying to change existing attitudes.

Everybody knows things are lousy, the war seems pointless and stupid, but only correct politics can show why such things are and how to change the situation. There is no point in trying to reach G. I. s and workers where they're at except to move them up from there. The only reason to reach consciousness is to change it.

To give support to the Bond, as your letter advises, just because it has "seriously attempted to organize servicemen"--even if the Bond-ASU is misleading these servicemen, even if its politics will lead ultimately to disaster and you know it, even if it is wrong--is a betrayal of the G. I. anti-war movement.

What must be done is to show G. I. s why battles against wrong ideas and misleadership are necessary, and the implications of our political alternatives on a concrete everyday level. That is, we have to show why YSA's strictly civil libertarian and the Bond's strictly adventurist approach to G. I. struggles won't work--won't do what servicemen desperately want them to do. It's a lie and an insult and a sellout to tell G. I. s: "Well, all that sectarian stuff doesn't matter anyhow--forget it!"

To say it doesn't matter what our politics are further confuses and turns off an already confused and turned off G. I. movement. It means; to you it doesn't matter, assuming the "average" G. I. is a dumb clod to be manipulated and who couldn't understand it anyhow. I don't blame G. I. s for being turned off to the left if it takes that line.

There's only going to be one vanguard. The working-class G. I. and workers in general instinctively know this. The most common argument one runs across in talking to workers and G. I. s is: "Well, yeah, but the left is all broken up, tiny and always at each other's throats, and so why should I join some little outfit that can't do a damn thing for me and spends all its time arguing with other little groups about something I never heard of anyhow?" The working class knows the importance of a large, powerful and unified organization. So do we, which is exactly why we spend so much time fighting to convince other anti-war G. I. s and radicals of our correct program, for only with correct politics can we have real unity and power behind us. We are fighting for unity in the anti-war movement, but unity without correct politics is meaningless.

OUR PROGRAM

We demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all American troops from Viet Nam and all other occupied countries.

We demand an end to racism in the Services. We recognize that the root causes of racism are economic and inherent in American society.

We demand the end to the use of G. I. s as strike-breakers and political police, and as occupation troops in civil disorders.

We demand full constitutional rights for G. I. s - that there be no deparation of civil rights between civilian and military, and that G. I. s be fully entitled to due process of law.

We support the right of G. I. s to form organizations, such as a Serviceman's Union, to win the above demands.

G. I. VOICE

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