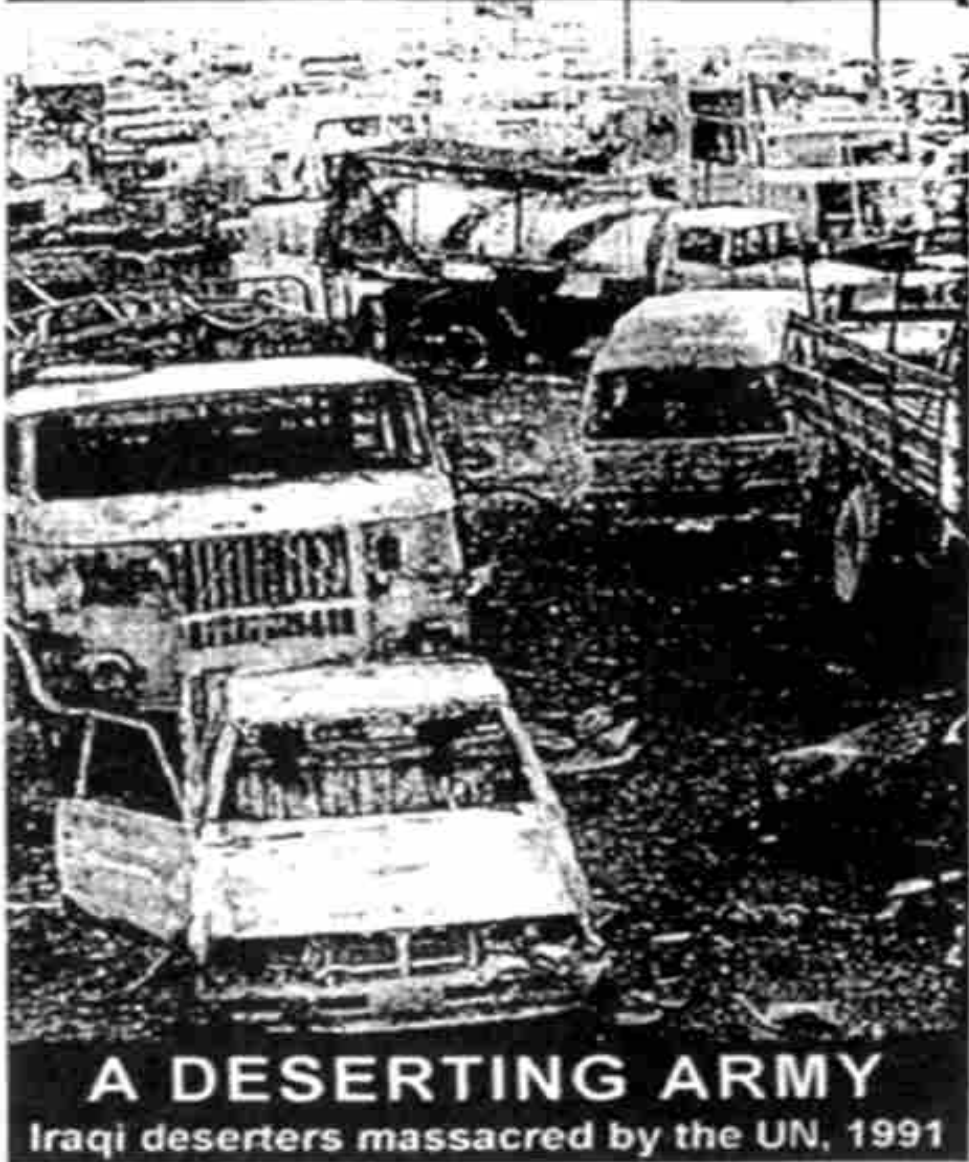


THE ARMY THEY MOST FEAR



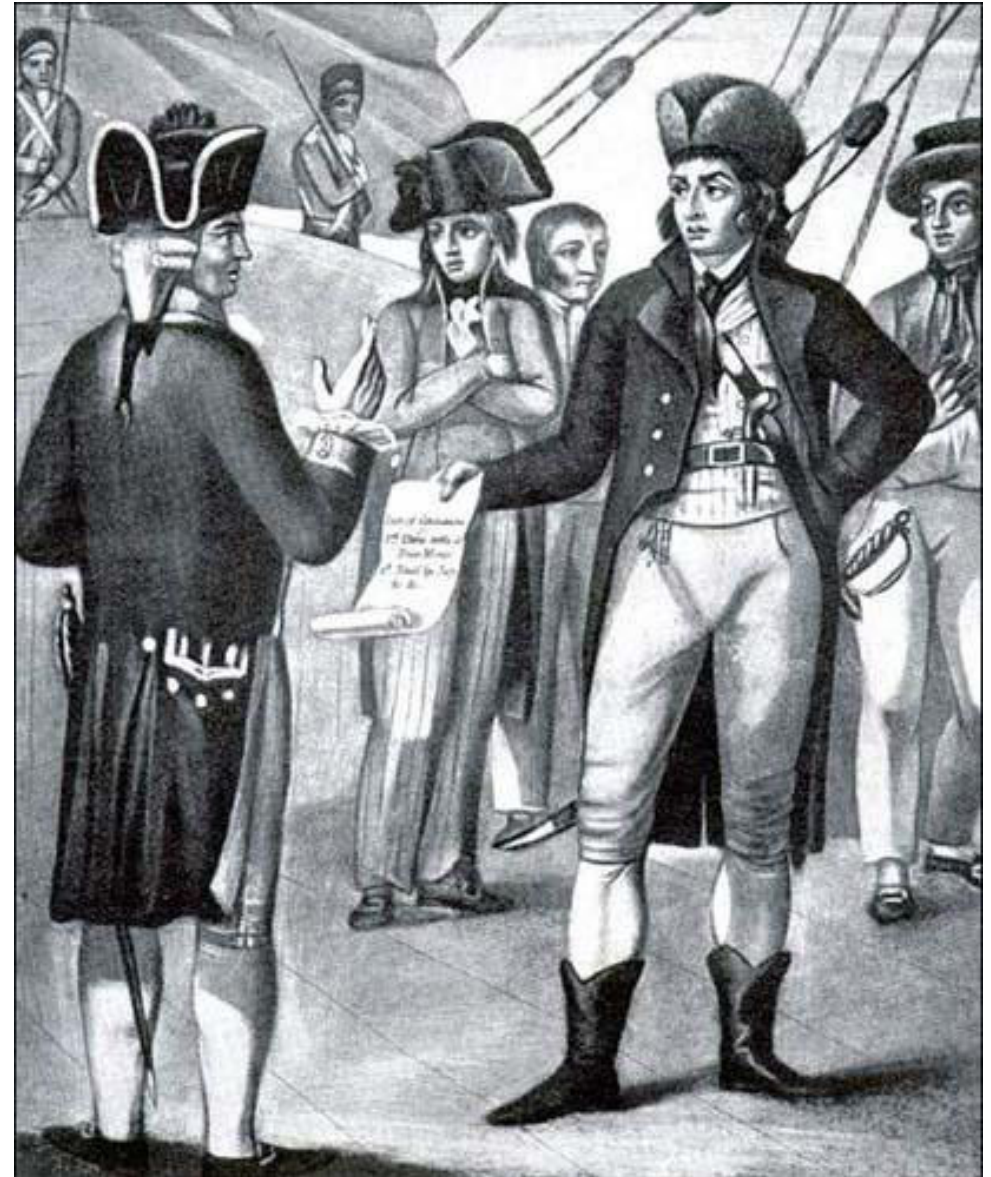
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MUTINIES



A HISTORICAL READER

TREASON PRESS PAMPHLETS

‘Anti-Capitalism’ as Ideology...and as Movement?

From the 2001 issue of the excellent annual communist journal from Britain, *Aufheben*, a critique of the anti-summit movement.

Behind the Twenty-First Century Intifada

Also from the 2001 issue of *Aufheben* a look at the proletarian elements of the Palestinian revolt in opposition to the usual presentation of it as a purely nationalist, state-building affair.

Class Struggle in Iraq

Three articles about war, mutiny and near-revolution in Iraq.

Global War for the World Order

Four articles from the German communist group *Wildcat* analysing the 9/11 atrocities and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Globalisation: Origins-History-Analysis-Resistance

An article from the 1999 issue of British eco-anarchist/communist journal *Do Or Die*.

Outside and Against the Unions

A communist critique of trade unions focusing on the 1984-5 miners strike in Britain from British group *Wildcat*.

‘Picket and Pot-banger Together’: Class Re-composition in Argentina

A long article on the proletarian revolts in Argentina from the 2002 issue of *Aufheben* along with two shorter articles on the situation there.

Society of the Spectacle

The classic 1967 critique of spectacular capitalism by Guy Debord of *The Situationist International*.

The Neoliberal Wars

Articles on the wars in Yugoslavia, Somalia, Chechnya and Afghanistan as well as a theoretical discussion of how neo-liberalism leads to civil war.

Whither the World

Co-author of the classic *Eclipse and Re-emergence of the communist Movement* Gilles Dauve and Karl Nescic discuss the current malaise of both capital and proletariat in this piece from early 2002.

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The cover illustration depicts a scene from the mutiny at The Nore, an anchorage in the Thames estuary, in May 1797. It shows the elected spokesman of the mutinous Royal Navy sailors, Richard Parker, handing the mutineers' terms to Vice-Admiral Buckner on board the battleship *HMS Sandwich*.

What started as a struggle against the inequitable division of prize money and brutality turned into a mini-revolution. Unlike the Spithead mutiny earlier in 1797 which had resulted in improved conditions for the sailors and a Royal Pardon, The Nore mutineers faced brutal repression after their revolt collapsed, with Parker and several others hung from the yardarm.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the media and the respectable leaders of antiwar movements endlessly repeating the lie that US forces withdrew from the Vietnam War due to peaceful protests in the streets of American cities we are not fooled. The US withdrew from Vietnam because it's military was on the verge of collapse due to widespread desertion, the killing of officers and small-scale mutinies. US Marine Colonel Robert D. Heinl Jr. describes this process in considerable detail and amusing despair in the first article in this pamphlet, "The Collapse of the Armed Forces" which first appeared in *Armed Forces Journal*, 7 June, 1971.

In "Harass the Brass!", Kevin Keating, a communist from San Francisco, examines the suppressed history of resistance and rebellion in the ranks of the US military. Much of Keating's information is taken from "The Collapse of the Armed Forces" so it may at first appear redundant to include both articles. However Keating obviously has far better politics than Colonel Heinl and includes some information about earlier revolutionary mutinies in Russia, Germany and Spain. Other writings by Kevin Keating can be found at: www.infoshop.org/myep/love_index.html

"Mutiny in Banja Luka" by the *Internationalist Communist Group* is about a mutiny by Bosnian Serb soldiers in 1993. All the recent wars in Yugoslavia took place despite considerable resistance from conscripts, especially in the various Serbian armies. Resistance to the Kosovo war by Yugoslav army reservists is described in the last article in this pamphlet, "We Won't go to Kosovo" by an unknown author connected to the London based group *No War but the Class War*. The *Internationalist Communist Group* has a website at http://www.geocities.com/Paris/6368/index_uk.htm. *No War but the Class War* has a website with a lot of information about mutinies at http://www.geocities.com/nowar_buttheclasswar/index.html

The quasi-mutiny that forced the US out of Vietnam led to the end of the use of mass conscript armies by the major Western states. This "modernist" organisation of the military that was so susceptible to mass revolt has now been superseded within the major powers by "post-modernist" militaries that do not rely on masses of poorly trained infantry. Instead they employ large amounts of extremely sophisticated and expensive weapons, surveillance and communications technology coupled with highly trained Special Forces and where necessary cheap mercenaries (eg the Kosovo Liberation Army and The Northern Alliance in Afghanistan). When the post-modern US military has fought modern armies (Iraq 1991 and 2003, Yugoslavia 1999) it has won due to the refusal of the enemy soldiers to fight in movements echoing the earlier revolts that ended World War One and the Vietnam War. While easily able to smash its enemies on the battlefield the contemporary US military is not equipped for occupation duties as shown by its rapidly unravelling occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. Given the reports of extremely poor morale among the US troops in Iraq perhaps I will soon have the opportunity to produce a pamphlet about the first mass revolt within a post-modernist military as a sequel to this one about revolts in modernist militaries.

Canberra, Australia
December 3 2003

There was a proposal to remain in the centre of Kruševac until the war is over and all soldiers have returned. People sit down next to the monument to the Kosovo heroes (of 1389) and waited for further news.

Some people in Kruševac went to the military district HQ. An officer said that the order to return to Kosovo only applied to volunteers. The crowd shouted "enough lies" and "red bandits".

Despite all the protests there were also a lot of loyal troops and cops on the streets.

Reservists from Aleksandrovac who had refused to go to Kosovo tried to go to Kruševac but were blocked by military police and loyal troops. They returned to Aleksandrovac and took part in a demonstration of more than a thousand people demanding the end of the war.

Demonstrations of some kind in Raška and Prokuplje.

Police stop protest rally in Cacak. Citizen's Parliament send letter to the president of Montenegro supporting his stand against Milošević and a letter to Milošević denouncing the government's "adventurist policy based on the ideology of collective suicide".

Monday 24 May 1999

A hundred people, mostly relatives of soldiers in Kosovo, demonstrate in Kruševac.

Local military commander announces on local TV that reservists who carry on refusing to go can be prosecuted by the military courts. Any kind of gathering in a public place is banned for the duration of the bombing, violators of this ban will be prosecuted by the military courts.

Some kind of demonstration in Prokuplje.

Cacak: Seven members of Citizen's Parliament arrested. Large group of people gathered in front of the court to applaud the accused. The class composition of the Citizen's Parliament can clearly be seen from the professions of those arrested: one doctor, two university lecturers, one lawyer, one journalist and two entrepreneurs.

A statement by the Citizen's Parliament said the kind of thing you would expect it to say: "No kind of repressive measure and force which the current regime uses towards the citizens will smother or crush the democratic consciousness and the citizen's desire for freedom". Nothing is known about the whereabouts of the mayor, who founded the group.

Tuesday 25 May 1999

Kruševac sealed off by both military and civil police, not just the roads but also river barges and ferries.

In Kruševac and Aleksandrovac the police arrested a large number of demonstrators (many of whom were women) A few were charged with public order offences and sentenced to 20-30 days prison with immediate effect.

Police raid the home of the mayor of Cacak. He is not in and goes into hiding.

Thursday 20 May 1999

No protests in Kruševac.

Reservists have accepted the deal that their absence from the front is official leave. They hand in their arms to the military authorities (always a serious mistake!) and go to their homes.

Friday 21 May 1999

Protest in Kruševac by 300 reservists stationed near Kruševac for the last two months who are now told to go to Kosovo. They decide to refuse to go to Kosovo and demand that all remaining soldiers return. They demand that SPS members should feel the burden of the war, not just common people. General Pavkovic offers to give reservists permits allowing them to go home.

Second meeting of Citizen's Parliament in Cacak: 100 people meet in bomb shelter. Meeting approves a letter to Milošević calling on him to "save the lives of all citizens of Yugoslavia". Most of the conscripts from the area are serving in Montenegro. The Citizen's Parliament calls on them to obey military law.

Protests calling for return of troops in Kraljevo, Raška and Baljevac. In Baljevac people carried placards saying "While one Serbia is in pain the other is singing". The mayor organised a petition calling for the return of all soldiers in the next 48 hours.

Saturday 22 May 1999

Reservists in Kruševac who deserted from Kosovo are called to assemble at the mobilisation point to rejoin their units – after the deal made with General Pavkovic they are being drafted again! The order is broadcast by the local TV station.

A few hundred reservists based in villages around Kruševac have refused to replace those who deserted in Kosovo. Some of them hold a protest meeting in Kruševac and repeat that they won't go.

Sunday 23 May 1999

More than a thousand protest in Kruševac (mostly reservists and their relatives), demanding an end to the war and the immediate return of all troops from Kosovo. According to some people on the demo there are 1000 reservists camped out in the hills of Kopaonik who have deserted from Kosovo. Deserters first gathered at the mobilisation point at 7 a.m. Others joined them. There were military police roadblocks but no serious conflicts. Slogans: "Bring back our sons", "We won't go to Kosovo", "We want peace", "You won't fool us anymore". Police roadblocks prevent participation by reservists from villages outside Kruševac.

Nobody from the local authority tried to speak to the crowd but a top army officer, "General Stojimirovic from Niš", appeared with a strong bodyguard around him. When the physically threatened him (dragging him and his guards down a side street) he said he agreed with their demands but that they should disperse and go home.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE ARMED FORCES

INTRODUCTION

The morale, discipline and battle worthiness of the U.S. Armed Forces are, with a few salient exceptions, lower and worse than at anytime in this century and possibly in the history of the United States. By every conceivable indicator, our army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and non commissioned officers, drug-ridden, and dispirited where not near mutinous. Elsewhere than Vietnam, the situation is nearly as serious.

Intolerably clobbered and buffeted from without and within by social turbulence, pandemic drug addiction, race war, sedition, civilian scapegoating, draftee recalcitrance and malevolence, barracks theft and common crime, unsupported in their travail by the general government, in Congress as well as the executive branch, distrusted, disliked, and often reviled by the public, the uniformed services today are places of agony for the loyal, silent professionals who doggedly hang on and try to keep the ship afloat. The responses of the services to these unheard-of conditions, forces and new public attitudes, are confused, resentful, occasional pollyanna-ish, and in some cases even calculated to worsen the malaise that is wracking. While no senior officer (especially one on active duty) can openly voice any such assessment, the foregoing conclusions find virtually unanimous support in numerous non-attributable interviews with responsible senior and mid-level officers, as well as career non-commissioned officers and petty officers in all services.

Historical precedents exist for some of the services' problems, such as desertion, mutiny, unpopularity, seditious attacks, and racial troubles. Others, such as drugs, pose difficulties that are wholly NEW. Nowhere, however, in the history of the Armed Forces have comparable past troubles presented themselves in such general magnitude, acuteness, or concentrated focus as today. By several orders of magnitude, the Army seems to be in the worst trouble. But the Navy has serious and unprecedented problems, while the Air Force, on the surface at least still clear of the quicksands in which the Army is sinking, is itself facing disquieting difficulties. Only the Marines – who have made news this year by their hard line against indiscipline and general permissiveness – seem with their expected staunchness and tough tradition, to be weathering the storm.

BACK TO THE CAMPUS

To understand the military consequences of what is happening to the U.S. Armed Forces, Vietnam is a good place to start. It is in Vietnam that the rearguard of a 500,000 man army, in its day and in the observation of the writer the best army the United States ever put into the field, is numbly extricating itself from a nightmare war the Armed Forces feel they had foisted on them by bright civilians who are now back on campus writing books about the folly of it all.

"They have set up separate companies," writes an American soldier from Cu Chi, quoted in the New York Times, "for men who refuse to go into the field. Is no big thing to refuse to go. If a man is ordered to go to such and such a place he no longer goes through the hassle of refusing; he just packs his shirt and goes to visit some buddies at another base camp. Operations have become incredibly ragtag. Many guys don't even put on their uniforms any more... The American garrisons on the larger bases are virtually disarmed. The lifers have taken our weapons from us and put them under lock and key...There have also been quite a few frag incidents in the battalion." Can all this really be typical or even truthful? Unfortunately the answer is yes.

“Frag incidents” or just “fraggings” is current soldier slang in Vietnam for the murder or attempted murder of strict, unpopular, or just aggressive officers and NCOs. With extreme reluctance (after a young West Pointer from Senator Mike Mansfield’s Montana was fragged in his sleep) the Pentagon has now disclosed that fraggings in 1970 (109) have more than doubled those of the previous year (96). Word of the deaths of officers will bring cheers at troop movies or in bivouacs of certain units. In one such division – the morale plagued Americal – fraggings during 1971 have been authoritatively estimated to be running about one a week. Yet fraggings, though hard to document, form part of the ugly lore of every war. The first such verified incident known to have taken place occurred 190 years ago when Pennsylvania soldiers in the Continental Army killed one of their captains during the night of 1 January 1781.

BOUNTIES AND EVASIONS

Bounties, raised by common subscription in amounts running anywhere from \$50 to \$1,000, have been widely reported to have been put on the heads of leaders whom the privates and specialist class 4s¹ want to rub out. Shortly after the costly assault on Hamburger Hill in mid-1969,² the GI underground newspaper in Vietnam, *GI Says*, publicly offered a \$10,000 bounty on Lt. Col. Weldon Honeycutt, the officer who ordered (and led) the attack. Despite several attempts, however, Honeycutt managed to live out his tour and return Stateside. “Another Hamburger Hill,” (i.e., toughly contested assault), conceded a veteran major, “is definitely out.”

The issue of “combat refusal”, (an official euphemism for disobedience of orders to fight — the soldier’s gravest crime – has only recently been again precipitated on the frontier of Laos by Troop B, 1st Cavalry’s mass refusal to recapture their captain’s command vehicle containing communication gear, codes and other secret operation orders. As early as mid-1969, however, an entire company of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade publicly sat down on the battlefield. Later that year, another rifle company, from the famed 1st Air Cavalry Division, flatly refused – on CBS-TV – to advance down a dangerous trail. Yet combat refusals have been heard of before: as early as 1813, a corps of 4,000 Kentucky soldiers declined to engage British Indians who had just sacked and massacred Ft Dearborn (later Chicago). While denying further unit refusals the Air Cav has admitted some 35 individual refusals in 1970 alone. By comparison, only two years earlier in 1968, the entire number of officially recorded refusals for our whole army in Vietnam — from over seven divisions - was 68.

“Search and evade” (meaning tacit avoidance of combat by units in the field) is now virtually a principle of war, vividly expressed by the GI phrase, “CYA (cover your ass) and get home!” That “search-and-evade” has not gone unnoticed by the enemy is underscored by the Viet Cong delegation’s recent statement at the Paris Peace Talks that communist units in Indochina have been ordered not to engage American units which do not molest them. The same statement boasted – not without foundation in fact – that American defectors are in the VC ranks.

Symbolic anti-war fasts (such as the one at Pleiku where an entire medical unit, led by its officers, refused Thanksgiving turkey), peace symbols, “V” signs not for victory but for peace, booing and cursing of officers and even of hapless entertainers such as Bob Hope, are unhappily commonplace.

As for drugs and race, Vietnam’s problems today not only reflect but reinforce those of the Armed Forces as a whole. In April, for example, members of a Congressional investigating subcommittee reported that 12% to 15% of our troops in Vietnam are now using high-grade heroin, and that drug addiction there is “of epidemic proportions.” Only last year an Air Force major and command pilot for Ambassador Bunker was apprehended at Tan Son Nhut air base outside Saigon with \$8 million worth of heroin in his aircraft. The major is now in Leavenworth. Early this year, an Air Force regular

Socialist Party, Milošević’s party), was booed when he told the crowd he couldn’t help them. The crowd then smashed windows in the local TV station although it was protected by a strong squad of police.

A thousand people were at the bus station in Aleksandrovac seeing off reservists who had just been home on leave before returning to Kosovo. “Someone spontaneously demanded that the soldiers shouldn’t go back there” (*Vijesti*) and the crowd stopped the bus from leaving. The mayor tried to appeal to the crowd but was knocked to the ground and kicked. The boss of the local SPS arrived but was also beaten despite having bodyguards. They were saved by a squad of military police who had arrived from Kruševac. The mayor was forced to hide in a shop toilet and ended up in hospital in Niš. The reservists eventually returned to Kosovo.

Tuesday 18 May 1999

Five thousand, mostly women, demonstrate in Kruševac. Windows smashed in municipal and military buildings, eggs thrown. Crowd break into local TV station.

That night, more than a thousand reservists from Aleksandrovac and Kruševac desert from Kosovo.

Commander of the VJ garrison in Kruševac accuses the protest organisers of “undermining the defence of the country” and “direct collaboration with the enemy”. When they say things like that about us we must be doing something right!

“Citizen’s Parliament” created in Cacak by the mayor, Velimir Ilic. A hundred people (“educated and professional”) meet and call for an end to the bombing and the return of all refugees.

Wednesday 19 May 1999

Early morning, 1000 reservists camp in villages near Kruševac and Aleksandrovac.

Noon, 400 reservists arrive in Aleksandrovac and say they will not go back to Kosovo. They parade along the main road “with automatic weapons raised” and then split up and go to their homes.

Reservists from Kruševac still camped out. Commander of the Third Army, Nebojša Pavkovic, offers a compromise: absence from the front will be treated as a short holiday. The troops refuse, demanding an end to the war.

Two busloads of reservists are supposed to go to Kosovo after being in Kruševac on leave. Only one bus goes.

Reservists tell *Vijesti* reporters that the two-day demos in Kruševac were the main reason they deserted. They heard about them from other reservists returning from leave. They were particularly irritated by threats from the army command to prosecute civilians organising demos.

A reservist told an AIM (Alternative Information Network) correspondent in Belgrade:

We managed to get home. There were many problems along the way. They even used water hoses to prevent us from going home. They demanded that we lay down our arms. We refused to obey. It was not enough that we were killed by bombs, now they are beating our parents. I shall not go back there. This is not a war, this is frenzy in which it is both difficult to survive and to remain sane. I want to keep my senses. I don’t want to kill anyone, nor do I want to be killed...

have given a relatively large amount of space to coverage of this group. It is quite possible that if Serbia continues to be at war in some form and an anti-war movement develops again, or there is some kind of insurrectionary movement against the regime, groups like the Citizen's Parliament will be presented as the semi-official leadership of the movement who express what it's really about. In this way the Western media, the Serbian liberal opposition, and the forces of the bourgeoisie in general, will try to divert this movement from its real proletarian terrain of direct action onto the bourgeois political path of demands for more democracy, less corruption, Draškovic instead of Milošević etc. The "Alliance for Change" block of opposition parties in Serbia have begun to organise a series of mass rallies against the regime this summer, demanding Milošević's resignation and free and fair elections under OSCE supervision. It is no coincidence that the first one was in Cacak. Ten thousand people demonstrated in the main square. Significantly, the police tried to prevent protesters from reaching Cacak but the army supported it, providing army buses to bring protesters from Kragujevac.

According to *Vijesti*, none of the opposition political parties were involved in the protests in Kruševac. Certainly none of them officially backed the movement. The nearest that the main opposition party, the SPO (Serbian Movement of Renewal), came to supporting it was a statement by their district committee in Kruševac that "Citizens of Kruševac are not protesting because their sons are defending Serbia but against the local politicians and profiteers". Just to make things clearer their leader Vuk Draškovic later said: "We are not in opposition to Serbia; we are fighting for Serbia. Today we are fighters against NATO. Tomorrow we will be fighting against Milošević". Similarly, the liberal magazine *Vreme*, which everybody normally expects to take a very anti-Milošević line, condemned the Kruševac protesters for undermining national defence. But this doesn't mean that the movement was inherently too radical to be recuperated. Even the most subversive actions of the proletariat, even armed insurrection and the mass slaughter of policemen (like in Hungary in 1956 or Iraq in 1991), can be claimed by the bourgeoisie as their own.

We have to be clear that the kind of liberal democratic politics put forward by the Citizen's Parliament has nothing in common with the proletarian direct action which has taken place in Kruševac and Aleksandrovac and, as always, is just as much its enemy as the air forces of Clinton and Blair and the military police of Milošević. While the respectable middle class citizens of the Citizen's Parliament were writing a letter to Milošević calling on him to "save the lives of all citizens of Yugoslavia", proletarians were saving their own lives by deserting from the front! The Citizen's Parliament was created by the mayor of Cacak, while in Aleksandrovac the mayor was hospitalised by angry proletarians! Most of the conscripts and reservists from Cacak were serving in Montenegro and the Citizen's Parliament called on them to obey military law. This has a double meaning: on the one hand, don't get involved in an illegal coup on behalf of Milošević; on the other, don't desert!

CHRONOLOGY

Sunday 16 May 1999

Around a hundred people (mostly parents of soldiers in Kosovo) demonstrate in front of the town hall in Kruševac. They demand to know what has happened to their sons. Demo sparked off by the arrival of seven dead soldiers on the previous Friday. In accordance with emergency military laws, the names of dead soldiers are not being published.

Monday 17 May 1999

Two thousand people (mostly relatives of soldiers) demonstrate in Kruševac. They demanded to meet the municipal and military officials to find out about casualties in Kosovo. Some were carrying the death certificates of their soldier relatives. The mayor, Miloje Mihajlovic, a member of the SPS (Serbian

colonel was court-martialed and cashiered for leading his squadron in pot parties, while, at Cam Ranh Air Force Base, 43 members of the base security police squadron were recently swept up in dragnet narcotics raids.

All the foregoing facts – and many more dire indicators of the worst kind of military trouble – point to widespread conditions among American forces in Vietnam that have only been exceeded in this century by the French Army's Nivelle mutinies in 1917 and the collapse of the Tsarist armies in 1916 and 1917.

SOCIETY NOTES

It is a truism that national armies closely reflect societies from which they have been raised. It would be strange indeed if the Armed Forces did not today mirror the agonizing divisions and social traumas of American society, and of course they do. For this very reason, our Armed Forces outside Vietnam not only reflect these conditions but disclose the depths of their troubles in an awful litany of sedition, disaffection, desertion, race, drugs, breakdowns of authority, abandonment of discipline, and, as a cumulative result, the lowest state of military morale in the history of the country.

Sedition – coupled with disaffection within the ranks, and externally fomented with an audacity and intensity previously inconceivable – infests the Armed Services. At best count, there appear to be some 144 underground newspapers published on or aimed at U.S. military bases in this country and overseas. Since 1970 the number of such sheets has increased 40% (up from 103 last fall). These journals are not mere gripe-sheets that poke soldier fun in the "Beetle Bailey" tradition, at the brass and the sergeants. "In Vietnam," writes the Ft Lewis-McChord Free Press, "the Lifers, the Brass, are the true Enemy, not the enemy." Another West Coast sheet advises readers: "Don't desert. Go to Vietnam and kill your commanding officer."

At least 14 GI dissent organizations (including two made up exclusively of officers) now operate more or less openly. Ancillary to these are at least six antiwar veterans' groups which strive to influence GIs. Three well-established lawyer groups specialize in support of GI dissent. Two (GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee and New York Draft and Military Law Panel) operate in the open. The third is a semi-underground network of lawyers who can only be contacted through the GI Alliance, a Washington DC, group which tries to coordinate seditious antimilitary activities throughout the country. One antimilitary legal effort operates right in the theater of war. A three-man law office, backed by the Lawyers' Military Defense Committee, of Cambridge, Mass., was set up last fall in Saigon to provide free civilian legal services for dissident soldiers being court-martialled in Vietnam. Besides these lawyers' fronts, the Pacific Counseling Service (an umbrella organization with Unitarian backing for a plethora of antimilitary activities) provides legal help and incitement to dissident GIs through not one but seven branches (Tacoma, Oakland, Los Angeles, San Diego, Monterey, Tokyo, and Okinawa). Another of Pacific Counseling's activities is to airdrop planeloads of seditious literature into Oakland's sprawling Army Base, our major West Coast staging point for Vietnam

On the religious front, a community of turbulent priests and clergymen, some unfrocked, calls itself the Order of Maximilian. Maximilian is a saint said to have been martyred by the Romans for refusing military service as un-Christian. Maximilian's present-day followers visit military posts, infiltrate brigades and stockades in the guise of spiritual counseling, work to recruit military chaplains, and hold services of "consecrations" of post chapels in the name of their saintly draft-dodger.

By present count at least 11 (some go as high as 26) off-base antiwar "coffee houses" ply GIs with rock music, lukewarm coffee, antiwar literature, how-to tips on desertion, and similar disruptive counsels.

Among the best-known coffee houses are: The Shelter Half (Ft Lewis, Wash.); The Home Front (Ft Carson, Colo.); and The Oleo Strut (Ft Hood, Tex.). Virtually all the coffee houses are or have been supported by the U.S. Serviceman's Fund, whose offices are in New York City's Bronx. Until May 1970 the Fund was recognized as a tax-exempt "charitable corporation," a determination which changed when IRS agents found that its main function was sowing dissention among GIs and that it was a satellite of "The New Mobilization Committee", a communist-front organization aimed at disruption of the Armed Forces. Another "New Mobe" satellite is the GI Press Service, based in Washington, which calls itself the Associate Press of military underground newspapers. Robert Wilkinson, GI Press's editor, is well known to military intelligence and has been barred from South Vietnam. While refusing to divulge names, IRS sources say that the Serviceman's Fund has been largely bankrolled by well-to-do liberals. One example of this kind of liberal support for sedition which did surface identifiably last year was the \$8,500 channelled from the Philip Stern Family Foundation to underwrite Seaman Roger Priest's underground paper OM, which, among other writings, ran do-it-yourself advice for desertion to Canada and advocated assassination of President Nixon.

The nation-wide campus-radical offensive against ROTC and college officer training is well known. Events last year at Stanford University, however, demonstrate the extremes to which this campaign (which peaked after Cambodia) has gone. After the Stanford faculty voted to accept a modified, specially restructured ROTC program, the university was subjected to a cyclone of continuing violence which included at least \$200,000 in damage to buildings (highlighted by systematic destruction of 40 twenty-foot stained glass windows in the library). In the end, led by university president Richard W. Lyman, the faculty reversed itself. Lyman was quoted at the time that "ROTC is costing Stanford too much."

"Entertainment Industry for Peace and Justice," the antiwar show-biz front organized by Jane Fonda, Dick Gregory, and Dalton Trumbo, now claims over 800 film, TV, and music names. This organization is backing Miss Fonda's antimilitary road show that opened outside the gates of Ft. Bragg, N.C., in mid-March. Describing her performances (scripted by Jules Pfeiffer) as the soldiers' alternative to Bob Hope, Miss Fonda says her case will repeat the Ft Bragg show at or outside 19 more major bases. Although her project reportedly received financial backing from the ubiquitous Serviceman's Fund, Miss Fonda insisted on \$1.50 admission from each of her GI audience at Bragg, a factor which, according to soldiers, somewhat limited attendance.

Freshman Representative Ronald V. Dellums (Democrat, California) runs a somewhat different kind of antimilitary production. As a Congressman, Dellums cannot be barred from military posts and has been taking full advantage of the fact. At Ft Meade, Maryland, last month, Dellums led a soldier audience as they booed and cursed their commanding officer who was present on-stage in the post theater which the Army had to make available. Dellums has also used Capitol Hill facilities for his "Ad Hoc hearings" on alleged war crimes in Vietnam, much of which involves repetition of the unfounded and often unprovable charges which first surfaced in the Detroit "Winter Soldiers" hearings earlier this year. As in the case of the latter, ex-soldier witnesses appearing before Dellums have not always been willing to cooperate with Army war-crimes investigators or even to disclose sufficient evidence to permit independent verification of their charges. Yet the fact that five West Point graduates willingly testified for Dellums suggests the extent to which officer solidarity and traditions against politics have been shattered in today's Armed Forces.

THE ACTION GROUPS

Not unsurprisingly, the end product of the atmosphere of incitement of unpunished sedition, and of recalcitrant antimilitary malevolence that pervades the world of the draftee (and to an extent the low-ranking men in "volunteer" services, too) is overt action. One militant West Coast Group, Movement

It must not be forgotten that when the cycle of war began in Yugoslavia in 1991 central Serbia was a region where there were many collective revolts by conscript soldiers. The biggest, which involved 7000 reservists refusing to move from their army base, was in Kragujevac which is about 50km North West of Kruševac. It is also a region where there have been numerous strikes by industrial workers against the conditions of austerity brought about by war, including in munitions factories and other sectors of industry directly involved in war production.

Throughout the almost continuous state of war which has existed in Serbia since 1991 there has always been a high level of draft dodging and insubordination on the part of conscripts. This partly explains why Milošević has had to make so much use of mercenaries, local nationalist militias and gangster warlords such as Arkan for his military adventures, rather than the regular Yugoslav Army (VJ). It is also a major reason for the "neutral" position taken by the Montenegrin government during the NATO assault – according to a parliamentary resolution of June 1998, the Montenegrin state is obliged to prevent the use of Montenegrin territory by the VJ in the event of "military actions by the international community". The level of draft dodging in Montenegro has been even higher than in Serbia. In Nikšić in February 1999 around 600 men were called up over a few days, only 5 or 6 responded! Opposition to the VJ has often taken a very public form. In February 1999 the family of a soldier killed in Kosovo placed an announcement in Montenegro's largest circulation daily newspaper *Pobjeda* denouncing "failed politics" as "the reason that the Lazarević household is paying a bloody tax for the third time since 1991". It has to be said, though, that the neutrality policy of the Montenegrin state has been largely successful in neutralising opposition to the army – creating a situation where demonstrations against the VJ are simultaneously demonstrations in support of the Montenegrin government and its police.

In Serbia too there was widespread opposition to conscription during the build-up to the start of NATO bombing. In interviews with opposition newspapers and radio stations many parents of reservists expressed their disgust for the mobilisation which was taking place. A parent from Kragujevac said: "Don't let Vuk Drašković, Vojislav Šešelj and the others incite war, we've had enough war, we are orphans. I call on all parents to revolt" (Radio B92, 18.March 1999). In Leskovac (30km south of Niš) there was even some kind of protest by around 100 reservists refusing to go to war. Discontent was far more intense in central and southern Serbia for the simple reason that the military authorities knew that it was hard to conscript people in Belgrade and so weren't really trying.

It is not possible to say if (or how much) draft-dodging declined when the NATO bombing started. There are conflicting reports and rumours, but it is clear that a significant percentage of the male population had no intention of answering the call-up. There was certainly desertion on an individual level. In an interview with Western journalists, a reservist described how he deserted from the Yugoslav Army in late April by swimming across a river into Bosnia. He said that when he was called up "I was surprised to learn that there were no more than two or three people in my unit who thought we should be fighting" (*Guardian*, 3 June 1999). Despite the high level of resistance to the army over the last eight years it has mostly taken the form of a lifestyle choice rather than an organised movement and recent resistance seems to have been carried on in much the same way. The sustained collective refusals of conscripted soldiers and their families in central Serbia, however, express a real qualitative advance on this.

At this point it is important to make a distinction between the proletarians who have taken direct action against the war effort and the attempt by some fraction of the bourgeoisie (Local? National? International? We can't say for sure...) to recuperate the struggle by rallying the liberal petty bourgeoisie into the so-called Citizen's Parliament created in Čačak (where there doesn't seem to have been any real mobilisation against the war). Some of the Western Press (notably *The Independent* in the UK)

WE WON'T GO TO KOSOVO

The movement of draft refusal and desertion in Kruševac, Aleksandrovac, Prokuplje, Raška... May 1999

INTRODUCTION

The sudden appearance of working class resistance to the war effort in central Serbia in late May should be an inspiration to proletarians in all of the war-affected countries. In the immediate term it probably won't be, but we owe it to our class brothers and sisters in this region to spread the spirit of their struggle as best we can. The conscript soldiers who deserted, their relatives and other proletarians who have physically attacked the media and local government (and even the occasional general!) showed an admirable lack of patriotism, a real spirit of defeatism – they showed that they literally didn't care if "their" country was invaded by foreign troops. They didn't merely quibble about the rate of killings but stated loudly and clearly that they wanted the war to end and for all conscripts to return from the front.

The following chronology takes its information from two main sources. The first is the Montenegrin daily newspaper *Vijesti* ("News"). This is the original source of almost all the news stories which have appeared in the Western press. The second is the (now defunct - ed.) web site *Free Serbia – other voices from Serbia*, which is produced by Serbian democratic oppositionists. They claim to have a Kruševac correspondent. Their accounts seem to tally pretty well with the accounts in *Vijesti*. The articles are available in Serbo-Croat and English. Bits of information have also been gleaned from Serbian newspapers which have web sites, notably *Vreme* (the well-known oppositionist weekly magazine from Belgrade) and *Nezavisna Svetlost* from Kragujevac. The media record of this movement seems to cease on 25 May. Does this mean it was completely crushed by state repression? Possibly... There is some information about the repression following the movement. Three reservists were sentenced to four years in jail by a military tribunal in Niš in early June. Later, another five were sentenced to three years. But discontent amongst conscripted soldiers flared up again after the NATO bombing. On Wednesday 23 June reservists from the 125th motorised brigade blocked the main road between Kruševac and Kraljevo as well as the Ibar bridge near Kraljevo. They were demanding the payment of their wages for the time spent in Kosovo. Around the same time another group of reservists blocked the same road at a different point. When senior army officers tried to visit the site they were pelted with beer bottles. About 50km away a few hundred reservists were blocking the Kragujevac-Belgrade road. The movement began to spread to other towns in central Serbia. After three days it was over, but only after generals had toured the soldiers blockades handing out wads of cash! A few days later 500 reservists from Raška launched a similar protest which ended on 2 July.

The movement seemed to be centred on two towns in central Serbia: Kruševac and the much smaller Aleksandrovac, which are only about 20km apart. To a lesser extent it seems to have spread over a much wider region. The other towns definitely affected were: Raška, Prokuplje, Kraljevo, Baljevac, Vranje, Vrnjačka Banja. We can be sure there were others. It is hard to say if it had much of an impact on the working class in the rest of Serbia. Naturally, the official national Serbian media said very little about the main events of the movement, but could not avoid mentioning that desertion and anti-war demos had happened. The main political parties even made press statements about it. It's certain that some people in Belgrade heard about it directly – from telephone calls from relatives and, more importantly, from soldiers returning from leave – but they were only a small minority of the population.

for a Democratic Military (MDM), has specialized in weapons theft from military bases in California. During 1970, large armory thefts were successfully perpetrated against Oakland Army Base, Forts Cronkhite and Ord, and even the Marine Corps Base at Camp Pendleton, where a team wearing Marine uniforms got away with nine M-16 rifles and an M-79 grenade launcher. Operating in the Midwest, three soldiers from Ft Carson, Colorado, home of the Army's permissive experimental unit, the 4th Mechanized Division, were recently indicted by a federal grand jury for dynamiting the telephone exchange, power plant and water works of another Army installation, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, on 26 July 1970. The Navy, particularly on the West Coast, has also experienced disturbing cases of sabotage in the past two years, mainly directed at ships' engineering and electrical machinery. It will be surprising, according to informed officers, if further such tangible evidence of disaffection within the ranks does not continue to come to light. Their view is that the situation could become considerably worse before it gets better.

TOUGH LAWS, WEAK COURTS

A frequent reaction when people learn the extent and intensity of the subversion which has been beamed at the Armed Forces for the past three or more years is to ask whether such activities aren't banned by law. The answer is that indeed they are. Federal law (18 USC 2387) prohibits all manner of activities (including incitements, counselling, distribution or preparation of literature, and related conspiracies) intended to subvert the loyalty, morale or discipline of the Armed Services. The penalty for violating this statute is up to ten years in prison, a \$10,000 fine, or both. Despite this tough law, on the books for many years, neither the Johnson, nor so far, the Nixon administration has brought a single prosecution against any of the wide range of individuals and groups, some mentioned here, whose avowed aims are to nullify the discipline and seduce the allegiance of the Armed forces. Government lawyers (who asked not to be named) suggested two reasons for failure to prosecute. Under President Johnson, two liberal Attorneys General, Ramsey Clark and Nicholas Katzenbach, were reportedly unsympathetic to military pleas for help and in general to prosecutions for sedition of any kind. Besides, the lawyers said, the courts have now gone so far in extending First Amendment shelter to any form of utterance, that there is doubt whether cases brought under this law would hold. Whatever the reason – and it appears mainly to be disinclination to prosecute or even test existing law – the services are today being denied legal protection they previously enjoyed without question and at a time when they need it more than ever before. Continuing failure to invoke these sanctions prompted one senior commander to comment bitterly, "We simply can't turn this thing around until we get some support from our elected and appointed civilian officials."

One area of the U.S. government in which the Armed forces are encountering noticeable lack of support is the federal judiciary. Until a very few years ago, the processes of military justice were regarded as a nearly untouchable preserve which the civil courts entered with reluctance and diffidence. Plagued by a new breed of litigious soldier (and some litigious officers, too), the courts have responded by unprecedented rulings, mostly libertarian in thrust, which both specifically and generally have hampered and impeded the traditional operations of military justice and dealt body blows to discipline. Andrew Stapp, the seditious soldier who founded the American Serviceman's Union, an organization aimed at undermining the disciplinary structure of the Armed forces, last year had his well earned undesirable discharge reversed by a U.S. judge who said Stapp's right to unionize and try to overthrow the Army was an "off-duty" activity which the Army had no right to penalize in discharging him. Libertarian Supreme Court Justice W.O. Douglas has impeded the Army in mobilizing and moving reservists, while his O'Callaghan decision not only released a convicted rapist but threw a wrench into military jurisdiction and court-martial precedents going back in some cases nearly two centuries. In Oakland, Cal., last year, a federal court yanked some 37 soldiers from the gangplank of a transport for Vietnam (where all 37 had suddenly discovered conscientious objections to war) and still has them

stalled on the West Coast some 18 months later. The long-standing federal law against wearing of Armed Forces uniforms by persons intending to discredit the services was struck down in 1969 by the Supreme court, which reversed the conviction of a uniformed actor who put on an antimilitary ‘guerrilla theater’ skit on the street in Houston, Tex. As a result the Armed Forces are now no longer able to control subversive exploitation of the uniform for seditious purposes.

TACTICS OF HARASSMENT

Part of the defense establishment’s problem with the judiciary is the now widely pursued practice of taking commanding officers into civil courts by dissident soldiers either to harass or annul normal discipline or administrative procedures or the services. Only a short time ago, for example, a dissident group of active-duty officers, members of the Concerned Officers’ Movement (COM), filed a sweeping lawsuit against Defense Secretary Laird himself, as well as all three service secretaries, demanding official recognition of their “right” to oppose the Vietnam war, accusing the secretaries of “harassing” them, and calling for court injunction to ban disciplinary “retaliation” against COM members. Such nuisance suits from the inside (usually, like the Laird suit, on constitutional grounds) by people still in uniform, let alone by officers, were unheard-of until two or three years ago. Now, according to one Army general, the practice has become so common that, in his words, “I can’t even give a directive without getting permission from my staff judge advocate.”

RACIAL INCIDENTS

Sedition and subversion and legal harassment, rank near the top of what might be called the unprecedented external problems that elements in American society are inflicting on the Armed Forces. Internally speaking, racial conflicts and drugs – also previously insignificant – are tearing the services apart today. Racial trouble is no new thing for the Army. In 1906, after considerable provocation, three companies of the 25th Infantry (a colored regular regiment) attacked white troops and townspeople of Brownsville, Texas, and had to be disbanded. Among the few pre-World War II War Department records still heavily classified and thus unavailable to scholars are Army documents on racial troubles. Racial conflicts (most but not all sparked by young black enlisted men) are erupting murderously in all services. At a recent high commanders’ conference, General Westmoreland and other senior generals heard the report from Germany that in many units white soldiers are now afraid to enter barracks alone at night for fear of “head-hunting” ambushes by blacks. In the quoted words of one soldier on duty in West Germany, “I’m much more afraid of getting mugged on the post than I am of getting attacked by the Russians.” Other reports tell of jail-delivery attacks on Army stockades and military police to release black prisoners, and of officers being struck in public by black soldiers. Augsburg, Kraitsheim, and Hohenfels are said to be rife with racial trouble. Hohenfels was the scene of a racial fraying last year – one of the few so recorded outside Vietnam. In Ulm, last fall, a white non-commissioned officer killed a black soldier who was holding a loaded .45 on two unarmed white officers. Elsewhere, according to *Fortune* magazine, junior officers are now being attacked at night when inspecting barracks containing numbers of black soldiers. Kelley Hill, a Ft. Benning, Ga., barracks area, has been the scene of repeated night time assaults on white soldiers. One such soldier bitterly remarked, “Kelley Hill may belong to the commander in the daytime but it belongs to the blacks after dark.” Even the cloistered quarters of WACs have been hit by racial hair-pulling. In one West Coast WAC detachment this year, black women on duty as charge-o-quarters took advantage of their trust to vandalize unlocked rooms occupied by white WACs. On this rampage, they destroyed clothing, emptied drawers, and overturned furniture of their white sisters. But the Army has no monopoly on racial troubles. As early as July 1969 the Marines (who had previously enjoyed a highly praised record on race) made headlines at Camp Lejeune, N.C., when a mass affray launched by 30-50 black Marines ended with a white corporal’s skull fatally smashed in and 145 other white Marines in the sick bay. That same year, at Newport, R.I., naval

But already today the resistance of proletarians in Banja Luka proves to us that the proletariat is never completely ready to be massacred in some new capitalist butchery without turning a hair. Nor to accept sacrifices, austerity, misery, death...

Class solidarity with the revolutionary defeatists of all camps !

Lets turn our guns against our generals, against our own bourgeoisie !

NOTE

Other collective movements of defeatism were also produced this year on other fronts, like, for example, in Azerbaijan where, to counter the wave of desertions which undermined the army on the front of Nagorny-Karabakh, the bourgeoisie ordered the suspension of all leave and the enrolment of all young men between 18 and 25 into the national army starting from April ’93. Sanctions against deserters have also been reinforced, thus confirming the defeatism which sweeps through the Azeri troops.



Profiting from these weaknesses, the State succeeded, after an initial period of impotence, in returning the movement to a strict framework of negotiation in order to avoid being outflanked. The objective was to reduce it to a particular situation, to reabsorb it and empty it of all subversive content. For such and such a unit the question of soldiers' pay was to be played for in negotiations, for another it was the dismissal of certain "corrupt" officers or politicians, etc.... It was the beginning of the end. The mutineers no longer even dared to affirm their superiority in the face of the almighty State. None of the various negotiators of high rank who successively came to parley with them were taken hostage, something which would have clearly expressed the seriousness of their demands. No, once under way, the negotiations developed according to the classic schema of pacifism and conciliation. Parliamentarism and negotiations became the real terrain on which the whole force of the bourgeoisie could be successfully imposed. The movement was prolonged for more than a week. But on both sides there was the *status quo*. After having tried in turn, threats, flattery and appeals to patriotism, the bourgeoisie were quite obviously banking on a deterioration of the movement. The time and lack of perspective of proletarians had strengthened the bourgeoisie.

They tried to play for time and to "justify" the demands, but not the methods, of the mutineers. In taking on board some of their demands the bourgeoisie tried to fix the movement while letting it decline. They thus hoped to put off proletarians by isolating the most combative, by accusing them of being "traitors". They appealed to them to go back to barracks, all the while waving the flag of "the fatherland in danger". Stigmatising the revolt as "helping our enemies" they made a vigorous appeal to the patriotism of the mutineers as the fighting redoubled its violence in Krajina.

In line with parliamentary logic the mutineers had scaled down their demand for "*energetic measures against war profiteers*". And who was this addressed to and demanded of?! To the State, to those who are the most important representatives of the class that LIVES off war: the bourgeoisie. Despite the fact that they affirmed that the existing MPs "*are not fit for their jobs*" which they abuse "*to enrich themselves*" their "*black list*" never included those that they negotiated with! This was another of these proletarians' contradictions.

Once destabilised and worn out the mutiny gave up its arms and fell under the two-pronged assault of promises and repression. The state awarded to the mutineers, who had repudiated their struggle, 10 days leave and a promise to satisfy their social demands, while a selective repression struck the principal leaders of the mutiny. The arrests were the final response of our enemies.

The continuation of capitalist butchery and the return to the diplomatic game (the negotiations in Geneva) could only be imposed when the proletariat was beaten!!! "*For a new Geneva, calm must reign in Banja Luka!*" The bourgeoisie have always known the art of running war like they run peace in their best interests - to pacify us, to lead us docilely to the killing fields, to the factory!!! Benefiting from all the weaknesses of the mutiny, from its lack of extension, from the democratic poison which corrupted it, the State crushed it to temporarily restore social peace and relaunch the war on the battle fields.

Despite the pitiless critique that we must direct against the weaknesses and expressed limits of this mutiny, communist militants shed light on such acts that show us that defeatist minorities are alive and well. Such actions express the point of view of the whole of our class. Tomorrow revolutionary defeatist mutinies will make the qualitative leap, which involves the liaison and organisation of the struggle against the war WITH THEIR CLASS BROTHERS AND SISTERS on the other side of the vile frontiers imposed on us by Capital.

station, blacks killed a white petty officer, while in March 1971 the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., outside Washington, was beset by racial fighting so severe that the base enlisted men's club had to be closed.

All services are today striving energetically to cool and control this ugly violence which in the words of one non-commissioned officer, has made his once tough unit divide up "like two street gangs." Major-General Orwin C. Talbott, at Fort Benning, has instituted what he calls "race relations coordinating groups" which work to defuse the resentments of young black troopers at the Georgia base. Major-General John C. Bennett, commanding the 4th Mechanized Division at Ft. Carson, Colorado, has a highly successful "racial relations committee" which has kept Carson cool for over a year. At once-troubled Camp Lejeune, Major-General Michael P. Ryan, the Tarawa hero who commands the 2nd Marine Division, appears to have turned off the race war that two years ago was clawing at the vitals of his division. Yet even the encouraging results attained by these commanders do not bespeak general containment of the service-wide race problem any more than the near-desperate attack being mounted on drug abuse has brought the narcotics epidemic under control within the military.

DRUGS AND THE MILITARY

The drug problem – like the civilian situation from which it directly derives – is running away with the services. In March, Navy Secretary John H. Chafee, speaking for the two sea services, said bluntly that drug abuse in both Navy and Marines is out of control. In 1966, the Navy discharged 170 drug offenders. Three years later (1969), 3,800 were discharged. Last year in 1970, the total jumped to over 5,000. Drug abuse in the Pacific Fleet – with Asia on one side, and kinky California on the other – gives the Navy its worst headaches. To cite one example, a destroyer due to sail from the West Coast last year for the Far East nearly had to postpone deployment when, five days before departure, a ring of some 30 drug users (over 10 percent of the crew) was uncovered. Only last week, eight midshipmen were dismissed from the Naval Academy following disclosure of an alleged drug ring. While the Navy emphatically denies allegations in a copyrighted article by the *Annapolis Capitol* that up to 12,000 midshipmen now use marijuana, midshipman sources confirm that pot is anything but unknown at Annapolis. Yet the Navy is somewhat ahead in the drug game because of the difficulty in concealing addiction at close quarters abroad ship, and because fixes are unobtainable during long deployments at sea. The Air Force, despite 2,715 drug investigations in 1970, is in even better shape: its rate of 3 cases per thousand airmen is the lowest in the services. By contrast, the Army had 17,742 drug investigations the same year. According to Col. Thomas B. Hauschild, of the Medical Command of our Army forces in Europe, some 46 percent of the roughly 200,000 soldiers there had used illegal drugs at least once. In one battalion surveyed in West Germany, over 50 percent of the men smoked marijuana regularly (some on duty), while roughly half of those were using hard drugs of some type. What these statistics say is that the Armed Forces (like their parent society) are in the grip of a drug pandemic – a conclusion underscored by the one fact that, just since 19168, the total number of verified drug addiction cases throughout the Armed Forces has nearly doubled. One other yardstick: according to military medical sources, needle hepatitis now poses as great a problem among young soldiers as VD. At Ft. Bragg, the Army's third largest post, adjacent to Fayetteville, N.C. (a garrison town whose conditions one official likened to New York's "East Village" and San Francisco's "Haight-Ashbury") a recent survey disclosed that 4% (or over 1,400) of the 36,000 soldiers there are hard-drug (mainly heroin and LSD) addicts. In the 82nd Airborne Division, the strategic-reserve unit that boasts its title of "America's Honor Guard", approximately 450 soldier drug abusers were being treated when this reporter visited the post in April. About a hundred were under intensive treatment in special drug wards. Yet Bragg is the scene of one of the most imaginative and hopeful drug programs in the Armed forces. The post commander, Lieutenant-General John J. Tolson, and the 82nd Airborne's commander, Major-General George S. Blanchard, are pushing "Operation Awareness," a broad post-wide program focused on hard drugs,

prevention, and enforcement. Spearheading Operation Awareness is a tough yet deeply humane Army chaplain and onetime Brooklyn longshoreman, Lieutenant-Colonel John P. McCullagh. Father McCullagh has made himself one of the Army's top experts on drugs, and was last year called as an expert witness by Harold Hughes's Senate Subcommittee on Alcohol and Narcotics.

NO STREET IS SAFE

One side-effect of the narcotics flood throughout the services is a concurrent epidemic of barracks theft and common criminality inside military or naval bases which once had the safest streets in America. According to the personnel chief of one of the Army's major units, unauthorized absence, historically the services' top disciplinary problem, is now being crowded by the thefts. Barracks theft destroys trust and mutual loyalty among men who ought to be comrades and who must rely absolutely on each other in combat. It corrodes morale and is itself an indicator of impossible conditions in a fighting unit. At Ft. Bragg, primarily because of addict thieves, soldiers in many units cannot even keep bedding on their bunks in barracks. After what used to be reveille, they strip their bunks of bedding and cram it away under lock and key with whatever valuables they dare keep on hand. Radios, sports gear, tape decks, and cameras – let alone individual equipment – are stolen on sight. Unlocked cars, on the manicured streets of this fine old post, are more likely to be stolen than not. Fayetteville, according to soldiers, abounds with off-post fences who will pay pennies for Army blankets and higher amounts for just about anything else. Unhappily, conditions at Ft. Bragg are not unusual.

Soldier muggings and hold-ups are on the rise everywhere. Ft. Dix, N.J., has a higher rate of on-post crime than any base on the East Coast. Soldier muggings are reported to average one a night, with a big upsurge every pay-day. Despite 450 MP's (one for every 55 soldiers stationed there – one of the highest such ratios in the country) no solution appears in sight. Crimes are so intense and violent in the vicinity of an open-gate "honor system" detention facility at Ft. Dix that, according to press reports, units on the base are unwilling to detail armed sentinels to man posts nearby, for fear of assault and robbery.

DESERTIONS AND DISASTERS

With conditions what they are in the Armed Forces, and with intense efforts on the part of elements in our society to disrupt discipline and destroy morale the consequences can be clearly measured in two ultimate indicators: man-power retention (reenlistments and their antithesis, desertions); and the state of discipline. In both respects the picture is anything but encouraging. Desertion, to be sure, has often been a serious problem in the past. In 1826, for example, desertions exceeded 50% of the total enlistments in the Army. During the Civil War, in 1864, Jefferson Davis reported to the Confederate Congress: "Two thirds of our men are absent, most absent without leave." Desertion rates are going straight up in the Army, Marines, and Air Force. Curiously, however, during the period since 1968 when desertion has nearly doubled for all three other services, the Navy's rate has risen by less than 20 percent. In 1970, the Army had 65,643 deserters, or roughly the equivalent of four infantry divisions. This desertion rate (52.3 soldiers per thousand) is well over twice the peak rate for Korea (22.5 per thousand). It is more than quadruple the 1966 desertion-rate (14.7 per thousand) of the then well-trained, high-spirited professional Army. If desertions continue to rise (as they are still doing this year), they will attain or surpass the WWII peak of 63 per thousand, which, incidentally, occurred in the same year (1945) when more soldiers were actually being discharged from the Army for psychoneurosis than were drafted.

it must break social cohesion not only in the units of the army but in the whole of society. For this it needs to finish once and for all with nationalism in affirming loud and clear that proletarians have no interest in this war, nor in this dying world. We call for ONLY ONE WAR, that which is against our exploiters, whether they are Serbs, Croats, Muslims or whatever. Against them there should be no mercy. To show any would be a sign of weakness.

Improving our conditions of life -and even GOING BEYOND them- can only be imposed by a generalisation of the balance of forces that the mutineers of Banja Luka were only able to establish in too local a fashion. In fact generalisation means directly attacking and destroying everything which represents the State. Proletarians from various units solidarising with the mutineers contented themselves with declarations of intent when the situation DEMANDED something else: not only PASSING openly into the camp of insurrection but also ACCELERATING this by a radicalisation of demands and globalising them to put an end to the butchery. The situation called for the arrest of their own officers, for the use of their arms to attack the State etc...

Words have never made any difference to our misery!!!

The situation now is characterised by a state of general weakness of our class across all the struggles going on in the world. There is a lack of continuity, of liaison and of extension. Wherever struggles break out, some strikes, some riots in separate places, and Capital manages to maintain this separation, there, as it happens, is where the community of misery and struggle can be found! While at Banja Luka the mutineers showed that they had lost when they began to accept the view that their demands could only be realised by the state, in Lithuania other soldiers mutinied. By this type of action proletarians bring more and more to the fore our only response as a class faced by wars of extermination: revolutionary defeatism, the refusal to march along with the plans of nationalism, to be sacrificed for "their" new country! Wherever the bourgeoisie is able to dragoon citizenised and atomised proletarians into this mass called "the people" our class sooner or later raises its head! Elsewhere, the Banja Luka mutiny might well have been "the first movement of soldiers' rebellion among the Bosnian Serbs since the start of the war" (as the whole of the media like to proclaim it) but it was not the first manifestation of proletarian defeatism against this conflict (see the numerous examples in our main text (1).

Despite the weaknesses seen the contagion of the Banja Luka mutiny nevertheless gains ground. On 14 September the newspapers announced that not only had the mutineers hardened their movement but that defeatism had extended to other units such as the garrison town of Sokolac near Sarajevo.

Riven with contradictions, the mutiny now balances between its strengths and its weaknesses. The proletarians fall into the trap set by the professionals of interminable discussion. More and more the mutiny is emptied of its subversive content and re-enters the hellish cycle of negotiations, proposals, counter-proposals, accords and other rubbish of the same type which changes ABSOLUTELY NOTHING concerning their intolerable conditions of misery. Little by little the insurgents came to find a place in the grand permanent spectacle of bourgeois politics. After some immediate demands aimed at improving their lot, the proletarians came to be poisoned by politicism and blamed their misfortunes on one faction of the State as opposed to another. In the quagmire of negotiations the insurgents forgot their strength in calling for the resignation of the nationalist government of Karadzic. At the same moment they allowed back in through the side window what they had kicked out of the front door: they called for... the anticipated general elections. Until then they had relied on their own weapons - strikes, defeatism - in order to impose the improvement of their conditions of life, then they gave way and submitted to the electoral circus.

MUTINY IN BANJA LUKA

September 1993

In the Serb bastion of Banja Luka (North Western Bosnia) three elite units, the First Army Corps of Krajina, the 16th Motorised Unit and the First Armoured Brigade, launched a mutiny on their return to the front on 10 September. The “Serbian” (in such a moment of confrontation nationality is dissolved!) mutineers entered the town with their armoured cars and took control of the main official buildings, notably the local radio and TV stations, the town hall and the Head Quarters of the army! The rebels immediately gave themselves a leadership, an “emergency general staff”, baptised “September 93”, led by non-commissioned officers and subalterns. At its head could be found a corporal!

Their demands were: an increase in their “*miserable pay*” (the equivalent of 1 Dollar per month for the ordinary soldiers), the arrest of “*war profiteers, who instead of being on watch in the trenches are getting rich with the blessing of those in power, leading an easy life at the rear, sometimes in fashionable circles*”. A “black list” of 700 of these “profiteers” was drawn up and arrests began. That same evening the mayor of the town had the honour of opening the dank dungeons. For a month before the soldiers, nothing more than proletarians regimented in the uniform of the fatherland, had denounced their conditions of non-existence and threatened repeatedly to “*turn their rifles on those in the rear!*”, in their own words. With each period of leave they feared returning to find their families reduced to desperation. A desperation which even their own death could not erase. The payment lavished on their families by the state wasn’t even enough to cover the costs of burial!

This movement revealed the profound social fractures that developed as the war dragged on. Here, it is clear that the union sacrée was BLOWN APART. All the “appeals for calm and reason” were in vain. From that moment the bourgeoisie imposed a prudent silence that said much about their fears of stoking the fires of class struggle. The bourgeois had to recognise “*their obsession with seeing the awakening of Serb-Serb conflicts the like of which had never been seen throughout history*”. Behind this journalistic verbiage in Le Monde the bourgeoisie tried to hide the spectre that haunts them, their terror at seeing proletarians taking up their real arms, class against class, against this nightmare.

In fact the mutineers took the town into their hands with the support of other proletarians. They were the formal and focused expression of a profound movement of discontent. In the town the situation was “calm”, no more shots rang out in the night. That is to say that the state did not dare or no longer had the means to send “reliable” troops to put down the rebellion. The “Rambos” on duty who always appeared on the front pages of the newspapers disappeared from the boulevards, swept away by the mutiny. For the first time in several months Banja Luka had an uninterrupted electricity supply. The insurgents seized the power stations and began to provide for the region which they controlled. Against all the sacrifices imposed by the bourgeois and their war economy the proletarian defeatists of Banja Luka IMPOSED IN THEIR ACTS AND BY FORCE the immediate satisfaction of our basic needs!

Very quickly, on the announcement of the mutiny in Banja Luka, numerous proletarians in various brigades of the Bosnian Serb army sent telegrams of solidarity. Thanks to this support the mutineers **declared** that they wanted to take control of ALL these units. Alas, it is not with fine phrases that you generalise a movement: declarations and telegrams of solidarity are not enough. Behind the words are the acts which matter. If the proletariat wants to definitively rid itself of the butchery which has massacred it for more than two years in the region the one and only solution is the GENERALISATION in acts of revolutionary defeatism. We must finish with “Serbs”, “Croats”, “Muslims” and other categories with which Capital tries to crush us. The development of struggle has its own requirements:

The Air Force, – relatively uninvolved in the Vietnam War, all-volunteer, management-oriented rather than disciplinary and hierarchical – enjoys a numerical rate of less than one deserter per thousand men, but even this is double what it was three years ago.

The marines in 1970 had the highest desertion index in the modern history of the Corps and, for that year at least, slightly higher than the Army’s. As the Marines now phase out of Vietnam (and haven’t taken a draftee in nearly two years), their desertions are expected to decrease sharply. Meanwhile, grimly remarked one officer, “let the bastards go. We’re all the better without them.” Letting the bastards go is something the Marines can probably afford. “The Marine Corps Isn’t Looking for a Lot of Recruits,” reads a current recruiting poster, “We Just Need a Few Good Men.” This is the happy situation of a Corps slimming down to an elite force again composed of true volunteers who want to be professionals.

But letting the bastards go doesn’t work at all for the Army and the Navy, who do need a lot of recruits and whose reenlistment problems are dire. Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., chief of naval Operations, minces no words. “We have a personnel crisis,” he recently said, “that borders on disaster.” The Navy’s crisis, as Zumwalt accurately describes it, is that of a highly technical, material oriented service that finds itself unable to retain the expensively-trained technicians needed to operate warships, which are the largest, most complex items of machinery that man makes and uses.

NON-VOLUNTEER FORCE?

If 45% of his sailors shipped over after their first enlistment, Admiral Zumwalt would be all smiles. With only 13% doing so, he is growing sideburns to enhance the Navy’s appeal to youth. Among the Army’s volunteer (non-draftee) soldiers on their first hitch, the figures are much the same: less than 14% re-enlist The Air Force is slightly, but not much, better off: 16% of its first-termers stay on. Moreover – and this is the heart of the Army’s dilemma – only 4 % of the voluntary enlistees now choose service in combat arms (infantry, armor, artillery) and of those only 2.5% opt for infantry. Today’s soldiers, it seems, volunteer readily enough for the tail of the Army, but not for its teeth. For all services, the combined retention rate this past year is about half what it was in 1966, and the lowest since the bad times of similar low morale and national disenchantment after Korea.

Both Army and Navy are responding to their manpower problems in measures intended to seduce recruits and reenlistees: disciplinary permissiveness, abolition of reveille and KP, fewer inspections, longer haircuts – essentially cosmetic changes aimed at softening (and blurring) traditional military and naval images. Amid such changes (not unlike the Army’s 1946 Doolittle Board coincidences intended in their similar post-war day to sweeten life for the privates), those which are not cosmetic at all may well exert profound and deleterious effects on the leadership, command authority and discipline of the services.

SOULBONE CONNECTED TO THE BACKBONE

“Discipline,” George Washington once remarked, “is the soul of an army.” Washington should know. In January 1781, all the Pennsylvania and New Jersey troops in the Continental Army mutinied. Washington only quelled the outbreaks by disarming the Jersey mutineers and having their leaders shot in hollow square – by a firing squad made up of fellow mutineers. The navy’s only mutiny, aboard USS *Somers* in 1842, was quelled when the captain hanged the mutineers from the yardarm while still at sea. If Washington was correct (and almost any professional soldier, whether officer or NCO, will agree), then the Armed Forces today are in deep trouble. What enhances this trouble, by exponential dimensions, is the kind of manpower with which the Armed Forces now have to work. As

early as three years ago, *U.S. News and World Report* reported that the services were already plagued with "...a new breed of man, who thinks he is his own Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Attorney General. He considers himself superior to any officer alive. And he is smart enough to go by the book. He walks a tightrope between the regulations and sedition." Yet the problem is not just one of trouble-makers and how to cope with them. The trouble of the services – produced by and also in turn producing the dismaying conditions described in this article – is above all a crisis of soul and backbone. It entails – the word is not too strong – something very near a collapse of the command authority and leadership George Washington saw as the soul of military forces. This collapse results, at least in part, from a concurrent collapse of public confidence in the military establishment. General Matthew B. Ridgway, one of the Army's finest leaders in this century (who revitalized the shaken Eighth Army in Korea after its headlong rout by the Chinese in 1950) recently said, "Not before in my lifetime ... has the Army's public image fallen to such low esteem ..." But the fall in public esteem of all three major services – not just the Army – is exceeded by the fall or at least the enfeeblement of the hierarchical and disciplinary system by which they exist and, when ordered to do so, fight and sometimes die. Take the case of the noncommissioned and petty officers. In Rudyard Kipling's lines, "the backbone o' the Army is the non-commissioned man!" Today, the NCOs – the lifters – have been made strangers in their own home, the regular service, by the collective malevolence, recalcitrance, and cleverness of college educated draftees who have outflanked the traditional NCO hierarchy and created a privates' power structure with more influence on the Army of today than its sergeants major.

NO OFFICE FOR THE OMBUDSMAN

In the 4th Mechanized Division at Ft. Carson, Specialist Class 4 David Gyongyos, in his second year in the Army, enjoys an office across the hall from the division commander, a full-time secretary, and staff car and driver also assigned full time. He has the home phone numbers of the general and chief of staff and doesn't hesitate to use them out of working hours when he feels like it. Gyongyos (with a bachelor's degree in theology and two years' law school) is chairman of the division's Enlisted Men's Councils, a system of elected soviets made up of privates and Specialist Class 4s (NCOs aren't allowed) which sits at the elbow of every unit commander down to the companies. "I represent, electively," Gyongyos expansively told this reporter, "the 17,000 men on this post." The division sergeant major, with a quarter-century in the Army, who is supposed to be the division's first soldier and – non-electively – father and ombudsman of every soldier, has an office with is not even on the same floor with the general (or Specialist Class 4 Gyongyos either). He gets his transportation, as needed, from the motor pool. He does not "rap" freely over the phone to the general's quarters. The very most that Gyongyos will concede to the sergeant major, the first sergeants, and the platoon sergeants – the historic enlisted leadership of armies – is that they are "combat technicians." They are not, he coldly adds, "highly skilled in the social sciences." The soldiers' soviets of the 4th Division represent an experiment in what the Army calls "better communications". Conditions throughout the rest of the Army do not quite duplicate those at Carson, but the same spirit is abroad. And experienced NCOs everywhere feel threatened or at least puzzled. Most major units of the Army, Navy, and Air force have some form of enlisted men's councils, as well as junior officer councils. Even the trainee companies at Ft. Ord, Calif. have councils, made up of recruits, who take questions and complaints past their drill instructors to company commanders and hold weekly meetings and post minutes on bulletin boards. General Pershing, who once said, "All a soldier needs to know is how to shoot and salute", would be surprised.



NOTE

¹ A few far-sighted individuals among the U.S. political elite apparently fear that U.S. involvement in a ground war could trigger large-scale domestic unrest. According to *Newsweek* magazine, at a meeting in the White House during President Clinton's intervention in the Balkans, a heated exchange took place between Madeleine Albright, then ambassador to the United Nations, and then-National Security Adviser Colin Powell. *Newsweek* gives the following confusing and semi-coherent account:

...Powell steadfastly resisted American involvement. He initially opposed even air drops of food, fearing that these would fail and that U.S. Army ground troops would inevitably be sucked in. His civilian bosses, who suspected him of padding the numbers when asked how many U.S. troops would be required, grew impatient.

At one meeting, Madeleine Albright, then ambassador to the United Nations, famously confronted Powell. "What's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?" she demanded. In his memoirs, Powell recalled that he told Albright that GI's were "not toy soldiers to be moved around on some sort of global game board."

An official who witnessed the exchange told *Newsweek* that Powell also said something quite revealing that has not been reported.

"You would see this wonderful society destroyed," the general angrily told Albright.

It was clear, said this official, that Powell was referring to his beloved Army.

("Colin Powell: Behind the Myth," by Evan Thomas and John Berry, *Newsweek*, March 5th, 2001)

Colin Powell was a junior officer in the fragging-plagued Americal Division during the Vietnam War. On numerous occasions, Powell has said that the US defeat in Vietnam was the main influence on the way he sees the world. Powell clearly understands that the armed forces are a function of the larger civilian society that spawns them.

Was Colin Powell speaking about the US Army – or about US society itself with his comment about seeing "this wonderful society destroyed?" You be the judge!

THE VOCALISTS

As for the officers, said a four-star admiral, "We have lost our voice." The foregoing may be true as far as admirals are concerned, but hasn't hampered short-term junior officers (including several West Pointers) from banding together into highly vocal antiwar and antimilitary organizations, such as the Concerned Officers' Movement (COM). At Norfolk, the local COM chapter has a peace billboard outside gate 2, Norfolk Naval Station, where every sailor can profit by the example of his officers. Inspection – one of the most important and traditionally visible tools of command – is being widely soft-pedaled because it is looked on as "chicken" by young soldiers, sailors, and airmen. In a move "to eliminate irritants to Air Force life" all major Air force commands got orders last year to cut back on inspection of people and facilities. "You just damn near don't inspect barracks any more," said one Air Force colonel, "this is considered an irritant." Besides, he added, (partly to prevent barracks theft and partly for privacy), airmen keep the keys to their own rooms, anyway. Aboard ships of the Navy, where every inch of metal and flake of paint partakes in the seaworthiness and battle readiness of the vessel, inspection is still a vital and nearly constant process, but even here, Admiral Zumwalt has discouraged "unnecessary" inspections.

If officers have lost their voices, their ears have in many commands been opened if not burnt in an unprecedented fashion via direct "hot lines" or "action lines" whereby any enlisted man can ring up his CO and voice a gripe or an obscenity, or just tell him what he thinks about something or, for that matter, someone. Starting last year at Naval Air Station, Miramar, Cal., sailors have been able to dial "C-A-P-T" and get their captain on the line. The system so impressed Admiral Zumwalt that he ordered all other shore stations to follow suit, even permitting anonymous calls. At Ft. Lewis, Wash., soldiers dial "B-O-S-S-" for the privilege of giving the general an earful. At the Air Force Academy, cadets receive early indoctrination in the new order of things: here, too, a cadet (anonymously, if he wishes) can phone the Superintendent, record his message and, also by recording receive the general's personal thanks for having called.

WORD TO THE WHYS

"Discipline," wrote Sir John Jervis, one of England's greatest admirals, "is summed up in the one word, obedience." Robert E. Lee later said, "Men must be habituated to obey or they cannot be controlled in battle." In the Armed forces today, obedience appears to be a sometime thing. "You can't give them an order and expect them to obey immediately," says an infantry officer in Vietnam, "they ask why, and you have to tell them." Command authority, i.e., the unquestioned ability of an officer or NCO to give an order and expect it to be complied with, is at an all-time low. It is so low that, in many units, officers give the impression of having lost their nerve in issuing, let alone enforcing orders. In the words of an Air Force officer to this reporter, "If a captain went down on the line and gave an order and expected it to be obeyed because 'I said so!' – there'd be a rebellion." Other officers unhesitatingly confirmed the foregoing. What all this amounts to – conspicuously in Vietnam and only less so elsewhere – is that today's junior enlisted man, not the lifer, but the educated draftee or draft-motivated "volunteer" – now demands that orders be simplistically justified on his own terms before he feels any obligation to obey. Yet the young soldiers, sailors and airmen might obey more willingly if they had more confidence in their leaders. And there are ample indications that Armed Forces junior (and NCO) leadership has been soft, inexperienced, and sometimes plain incompetent. In the 82nd Airborne Division today, the average length of service of the company commanders is only 3½ years. In the Navy, a man makes petty officer 2d class in about 2½ years after he first enlists. By contrast, in the taut and professional pre-WWII fleet, a man required 2½ years just to make himself a really first-class seaman. The grade of corporal has practically been superseded in the Army: Specialist Class 4s hold most of the corporals' billets. Where the corporal once commanded a squad, today's Army gives the job to a staff sergeant,

two ranks higher. Within the squad, it now takes a sergeant to command three other soldiers in the lowly fire-team.

“This never would have happened,” somberly said a veteran artillery sergeant major, “if the NCOs had done their jobs ... The NCOs are our weak point.” Specialist Class 4 Gyongyos at Ft. Carson agrees: “It is the shared perception of the privates that the NCOs have not looked out for the soldiers.” When B Troop, 1st Cavalry, mutinied during the Laos operation, and refused to fight, not an officer or NCO raised his hand (or his pistol) or stepped forward. Fifty-three privates and Specialist Class 4s cowed all the lifers of their units. “Officers,” says a recently retired senior admiral, “do not stand up for what they believe. The older enlisted men are really horrified.” Lieutenant William L. Calley, Jr., an ex-company clerk, was a platoon leader who never even learned to read a map. His credentials for a commission were derisory; he was no more officer-material than any private in his platoon. Yet the Army had to take him because no one else was available. Commenting on the Calley conviction, a colonel at Fort Benning said, “We have at least two or three thousand more Calleys in the Army just waiting for the next calamity.” Albert Johnson, the tough Master Chief Petty Officer of the Atlantic Fleet, shakes his head and says: “You used to hear it all the time – people would say, ‘The Chiefs run the Navy.’ But you don’t hear it much any more, especially from the Chiefs.”

A HARD LOT AT BEST

But the lot of even the best, most forceful leader is a hard one in today’s military. In the words of a West Point lieutenant colonel commanding an airborne battalion, “There are so many ways nowadays for a soldier that is smart and bad to get back at you.” The colonel should know: recently he reduced a sergeant for gross public insubordination and now he is having to prepare a lengthy apologia, though channels to the Secretary of The Army, in order to satisfy the offending sergeant’s congressman. “How do we enforce discipline?” asks a senior general. Then he answers himself: “Sweep it under the rug. Keep them happy. Keep it out of the press. Do things the easy way: no court-martials, but strong discipline.”

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, after years of costly, frustrating and considerably less than successful war, Britain’s armed forces were swept by disaffection culminating in the widespread mutinies in most of the ships and fleets that constituted England’s “wooden walls” against France. Writing to a friend in 1779, Britain’s First Lord of the Admiralty said, “The Channel Fleet is now lost to the country as much as if it was at the bottom of the sea.” Have things gone that far in the United States today? The most optimistic answer is – probably not. Or at least not yet. But many a thoughtful officer would be quick to echo the words of Brigadier General Don A. Starry, who recently wrote, “The Army can defend the nation against anything but the nation itself.”

Or – in the wry words of Pogo – we have met the enemy, and they are us.

EDITOR’S NOTES

¹ A rank with equivalent pay to a corporal but with no authority to give orders.

² Nearly eighty soldiers of the US Army’s 101st Airborne Division were killed seizing Hamburger Hill from well-entrenched North Vietnamese Army troops in a battle lasting nine days from May 11th. US forces abandoned Hamburger Hill shortly afterwards. It was the last major battle fought by US ground troops in the Vietnam War.

the relative prosperity of the post-World War Two economic boom. Life wasn’t as bad for as many people as it is now, and that’s why US involvement in a similar protracted ground war, in Colombia or Mexico for example, could have a much more explosive impact on American society in the near future. History shows that a conscript or draftee army is more prey to sedition than an all-volunteer force. This might be one reason that all-volunteer armed forces are becoming the norm for the world’s major industrialized democracies.

It’s an ugly fact that war and revolution were intimately linked in the most far-going social movements of the 20th century. With the US governments’ self-appointed role as the global policeman for capitalist law and order, it’s likely that the crisis that will be necessary to cause an irreparable break between the rulers and the ruled in the United States will come from a war. It will be a war the US can’t quickly win or walk away from, a war they can’t fight with a proxy army like the Nicaraguan Contras, a war with a devastating impact on the civilian populace of the US: a minimum of 5,000 Americans coming home in plastic bags. Protracted civil unrest or full-scale revolution in Mexico is one situation that could give rise to this. At that point widespread fraternization between anti-capitalist radicals and enlisted people will be crucial in bringing an end to this nightmarish social order.¹

An examination of what happened to the US military during the Vietnam War can help us understand the central role the “the military question” will play in a future revolutionary struggle. It isn’t a question of how a chaotic and rebellious civilian populace can out-gun the well-organized, disciplined armies of the capitalist state in pitched battle, but of how this mass movement can cripple the effective fighting capacity of the military, and bring about the collapse and dispersal of the state’s armed forces. What set of circumstances can compel the inchoate discontentment endemic in any wartime army or navy to advance to the level of conscious organized resistance? How fast and how deeply can a subversive consciousness spread among enlisted people? How can rebels in uniform take effective, large-scale action against the military machine? This will involve the sabotage and destruction of sophisticated military technologies, an irreversible breakdown in the chain-of-command, and a terminal demoralization of the officer corps. Circumstances must make it clear to officers that they are fighting a losing war, and that their physical safety can best be guaranteed if they give up, surrender their weapons and run away. The “quasi-mutiny” that helped defeat the US in Vietnam offers a significant precedent for the kind of subversive action revolutionaries will have to help foment in the fight against 21st century capitalism.

As Capital’s global dictatorship causes living conditions to deteriorate for the majority of humanity, working class troops will be given an expanding role in suppressing the rebellions of other working class people. The use of US armed forces during the Los Angeles riots in the spring of 1992 was a taste of the military’s likely future domestic role in maintaining this exploitative social order. But the forces that lead to mass rebellion in one area of the globe will also give rise to rebellions in other parts of the globe; our rulers’ power and their economy can be collapsed from within by the working class women and men whom they depend on.

Information for this article has been taken from the book *Soldiers in Revolt*, by David Cortright, published by the Institute for Policy Studies, the pamphlet *Mutinies* by David Lamb, (available at www.geocities.com/cordobakaf/mutinies.html), and various issues of the Detroit, Michigan anarchist newspaper *The Fifth Estate*. Information on the Spanish Civil War is taken from *The Spanish Revolution: The Left and the Struggle for Power*, by Burnett Bolletín.

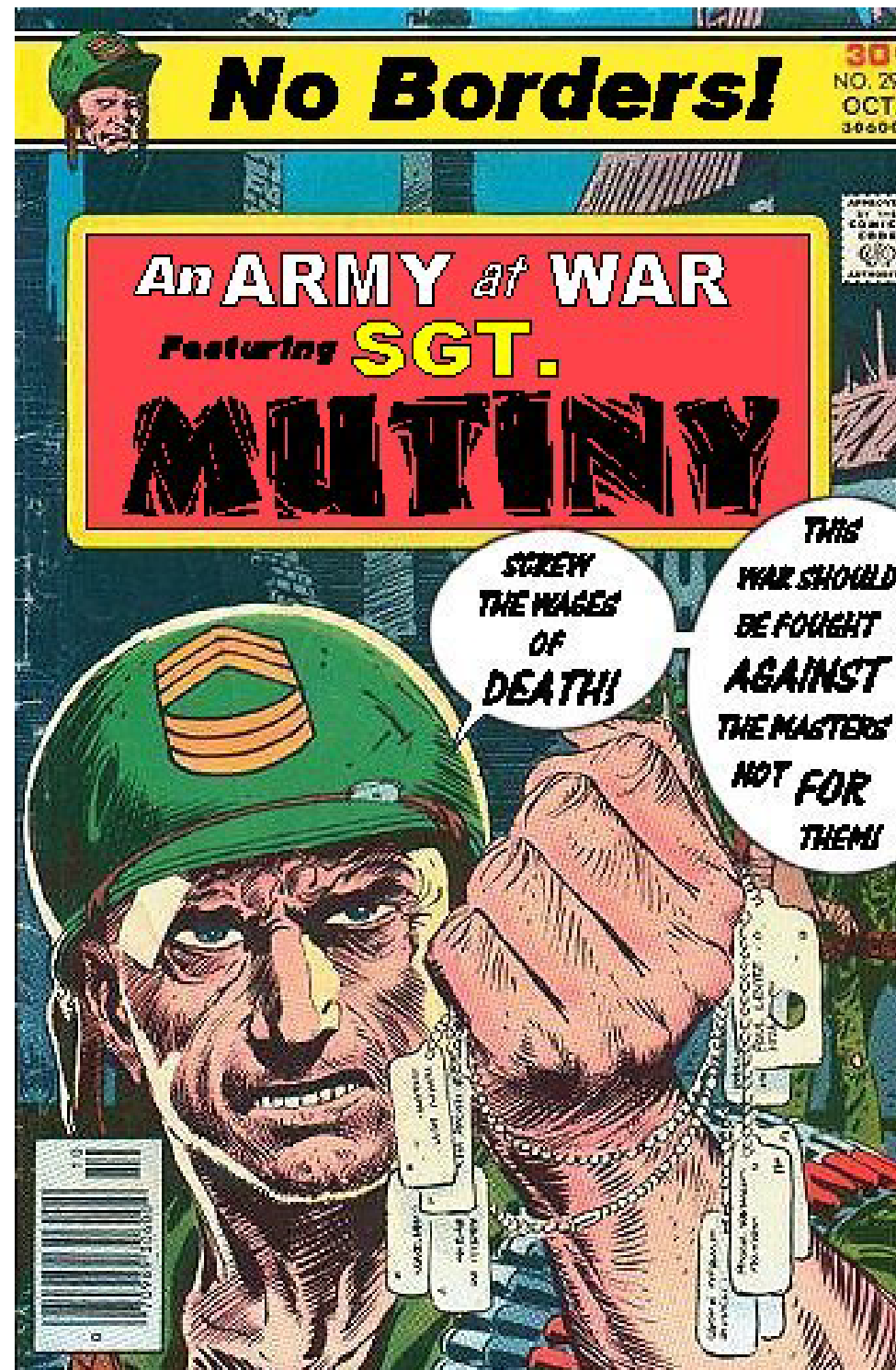
Resistance to the war effort by men in uniform was a product of circumstances favorable to revolt. A civilian anti-war movement in the US had emerged on the coat-tails of the civil rights movement, at a time when the pacifism-at-any-price tactics of civil rights leaders had reached their effective limit, and were being questioned by a younger generation of activists. Working class blacks and Latinos served in combat units out of all proportion to their numbers in American society, and major urban riots in Watts, Detroit and Newark had an explosive effect on the consciousness of many of these men. After the assassination of Martin Luther King major riots erupted in 181 US cities; the rulers of the United States were facing the gravest national crisis since the Civil War. And the radical movement of the late 1960's was an international phenomenon not limited to the US. There was revolt everywhere, even against the Maoists in China; its high point was the wildcat general strike that shut down France in May 1968, the last time a major industrialized democracy came close to revolution.

The relationship between officers and enlisted people mirrors the relationship between bosses and employees, and similar dynamics of class conflict emerge in the military and civilian versions of the workplace. The military is never a hermetically sealed organization. The armed forces are vulnerable to social forces at work in the larger society that spawns them. Revolt in civilian society bleeds through the fabric of the military into the ranks of enlisted people.

Ten years ago, in an article in *Mother Jones* magazine, corporate liberal historian and New Leftover Todd Gitlin claimed that the US anti-war movement of the Vietnam period was the most successful opposition to a war in history. Gitlin was dead wrong; as a bourgeois historian Gitlin is paid to get it wrong. The most effective "anti-war" movement in history occurred at the end of World War One, when proletarian revolutions broke out in Russia, Germany and throughout Central Europe in 1917 and 1918, and a crucial factor in the revolutionary movement of that time was the collapse of the armies and navies of Russia and Germany in full-scale armed mutiny. After several years of war and millions of casualties the soldiers and sailors of opposing nations began to fraternize with each other, turned their guns against their officers and went home to fight against the ruling classes that had sent them into the war. The war ended with a global cycle of mutinies mirroring the social unrest spreading across the capitalist world. The naval bases at Kronstadt in Russia and Kiel and Wilhelmshaven in Germany became important centers of revolutionary self-organization and action, and the passing of vast numbers of armed soldiers and sailors to the side of the Soviets allowed the working class to briefly take power in Russia. The French invasion of Revolutionary Russia in 1919 and 1920 was crippled by the mutiny of the French fleet in the Black Sea, centered around the battleships *France* and *Jean Bart*. Mutinies broke out among sailors in the British Navy and in the armies of the British Empire in Asia, and even among American troops sent to aid the counter-revolutionary White Army in the Russian Civil War.

Organized revolutionary mutiny doesn't happen in every war, but it occurs more frequently than military historians generally acknowledge. One of the most significant naval mutinies in history occurred in the Spanish Navy in July 1936, at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. In response to massive working class unrest, the Spanish military launched a coup d'etat led by Francisco Franco. Franco's army was to invade Spain from North Africa with the aid of ships of the Spanish Navy. But a majority of Spanish sailors were class-conscious socialists and anarchists, and these men planned a coordinated revolt in response. After several days of shipboard combat the sailors won. This almost broke the back of Franco's coup attempt. A later study by the Spanish Republican government estimated that 70% of the Naval officer corps was killed in the mutiny.

The crisis that racked American society during the Vietnam War was a grave crisis for what has been a historically very stable society, but it wasn't profound enough to create an irreparable rupture between the rulers and the ruled, or give rise to a full-fledged revolutionary crisis. The US was still coasting on



HARASS THE BRASS!

Mutiny, Fraggings and Desertions in the U.S. Military

Is it “Fleet Week” in San Francisco again? Let’s rename ‘Fleet Week’ Mutiny Week!

‘Fleet Week’ is an annual event in San Francisco, held over a four or five day period every September. Ships of the US Navy sail into port, and a team of the Navy’s ‘Blue Angels’ stunt fighter aircraft pretends to strafe the city. No wonder they call San Francisco ‘Baghdad-by-the-Bay!’ Thousands of young enlisted people from the visiting ships flood SF’s tourist traps in North Beach and Fisherman’s Wharf. What follows is the latest and longest version of a leaflet distributed to them on three or four occasions since 1985.

A friend who was in the US military during the Persian Gulf War told me that when George Bush visited the troops in Saudi Arabia before the war, many enlisted men and women in Bush’s immediate vicinity had their rifle and pistol ammunition taken away. The bolts were also removed from their rifles. If this was so, it makes it clear that Bush and his corporate handlers may have been afraid of the US enlisted people who Bush would soon be killing in his unsuccessful re-election campaign.

The suppressed history of the Vietnam War shows that the Commander-in-Chief had good reason to fear and distrust the troops. Our rulers want us to forget what happened during the Vietnam War, and they want us to forget what defeated their war effort – and the importance of the resistance to the war by enlisted men and women.

Until 1968 the desertion rate for US troops in Vietnam was lower than in previous wars. But by 1969 the desertion rate had increased fourfold. This wasn’t limited to Southeast Asia; desertion rates among GIs were on the increase worldwide. For soldiers in the combat zone, refusing to obey orders became an important part of avoiding horrible injury or death. As early as mid-1969, an entire company of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade sat down on the battlefield. Later that year, a rifle company from the famed 1st Air Cavalry Division flatly refused – on CBS TV – to advance down a dangerous trail. In the following 12 months the 1st Air Cav notched up 35 combat refusals. From mild forms of political protest and disobedience of war orders, the resistance among the ground troops grew into a massive and widespread “quasi-mutiny” by 1970 and 1971. Soldiers went on “search and avoid” missions, intentionally skirting clashes with the Vietnamese and often holding three-day-long pot parties instead of fighting. By 1970, the Army had 65,643 deserters, roughly the equivalent of four infantry divisions.

In an article published in the *Armed Forces Journal* (June 7, 1971), Marine Colonel Robert D. Heintz Jr., a veteran combat commander with over 27 years experience in the Marines and author of *Soldiers Of The Sea*, a definitive history of the Marine Corps, wrote: “Our army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and non-commissioned officers...”

Heintz cited a *New York Times* article which quoted an enlisted man saying, “The American garrisons on the larger bases are virtually disarmed. The lifers have taken our weapons away...there have also been quite a few frag incidents in the battalion.” “Frag incidents” or “fraggings” was soldier slang in Vietnam for the killing of strict, unpopular and aggressive officers and NCO’s. The word apparently originated from enlisted men using fragmentation grenades to off commanders. Heintz wrote, “Bounties, raised by common subscription in amounts running anywhere from \$50 to \$1,000, have been widely reported to have been put on the heads of leaders who the privates and Specialist Class 4s want to rub

out.” Shortly after the costly assault on Hamburger Hill in mid-1969, the GI underground newspaper in Vietnam, *GI Says*, publicly offered a \$10,000 bounty on Lieutenant Colonel Weldon Hunnicutt, the officer who ordered and led the attack. “The Pentagon has now disclosed that fraggings in 1970 (209 killings) have more than doubled those of the previous year (96 killings). Word of the deaths of officers will bring cheers at troop movies or in bivouacs of certain units.” Congressional hearings on fraggings held in 1973 estimated that roughly 3% of officer and non-com deaths in Vietnam between 1961 and 1972 were a result of fraggings. But these figures were only for killings committed with grenades, and didn’t include officer deaths from automatic weapons fire, handguns and knifings(!). The Army’s Judge Advocate General’s Corps estimated that only 10% of fragging attempts resulted in anyone going to trial. In the Americal Division, plagued by poor morale, fraggings during 1971 were estimated to be running around one a week. War equipment was sabotaged and destroyed. By 1972 roughly 300 anti-war and anti-military newspapers, with names like *Harass the Brass*, *All Hands Abandon Ship* and *Star Spangled Bummer* had been put out by enlisted people. “In Vietnam,” wrote the *Ft. Lewis-McCord Free Press*, “The Lifers, the Brass, are the true enemy...”

Riots and anti-war demonstrations took place on bases in Asia, Europe and in the United States. By the early 1970s the government had to begin pulling out of the ground war and switching to an “air war” in part because many of the ground troops who were supposed to do the fighting were hamstringing the world’s mightiest military force by their sabotage and resistance. With the shifting over to an “air war” strategy, the Navy became an important source of resistance to the war. In response to the racism that prevailed inside the Navy, black and white sailors occasionally rebelled together. The most significant of these rebellions took place on board the USS *Constellation* off Southern California in November 1972. In response to a threat of less-than-honorable discharges against several black sailors, a group of over 100 black and white sailors staged a day-and-a-half long sit-in. Fearful of losing control of his ship at sea to full-scale mutiny, the ship’s commander brought the *Constellation* back to San Diego. One hundred thirty-two sailors were allowed to go ashore. They refused orders to reboard the ship several days later, staging a defiant dockside strike on the morning of November 9. In spite of the seriousness of the rebellion, not one of the sailors involved was arrested.

Sabotage was an extremely useful tactic. On May 26, 1970, the USS *Anderson* was preparing to steam from San Diego to Vietnam. But someone had dropped nuts, bolts and chains down the main gear shaft. A major breakdown occurred, resulting in thousands of dollars worth of damage and a delay of several weeks. Several sailors were charged, but because of a lack of evidence the case was dismissed. With the escalation of naval involvement in the war the level of sabotage grew. In July of 1972, within the space of three weeks, two of the Navy’s aircraft carriers were put out of commission by sabotage. On July 10, a massive fire swept through the admiral’s quarters and radar center of the USS *Forrestal*, causing over \$7 million in damage. This delayed the ship’s deployment for over two months. In late July, the USS *Ranger* was docked at Alameda, California. Just days before the ship’s scheduled departure for Vietnam, a paint-scraper and two 12-inch bolts were inserted into the number-four-engine reduction gears causing nearly \$1 million in damage and forcing a three-and-a-half month delay in operations for extensive repairs. The sailor charged in the case was acquitted. In other cases, sailors tossed equipment over the sides of ships while at sea. The House Armed Services Committee summed up the crisis of rebellion in the Navy:

“The US Navy is now confronted with pressures...which, if not controlled, will surely destroy its enviable tradition of discipline. Recent instances of sabotage, riot, wilful disobedience of orders, and contempt for authority...are clear-cut symptoms of a dangerous deterioration of discipline.”