

G.I. VOICE

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G.I.s and Black Power

Given the predominance of the "black liberation" movement on the American political scene and the fact that black soldiers do a far more than proportional share of the fighting in Vietnam, it is understandable that many anti-war G. I. s, both black and white, view the G. I. anti-war movement within the broader framework of the "black liberation" movement. This view is further strengthened by the fact that the Vietnamese War is a colonial war waged against a non-white people, and one in which white racism is an important factor in explaining the widespread indifference to American atrocities committed against the Vietnamese people.

However, those G. I. s who try to present opposition to the war as just another aspect of the Black Power movement had better understand that arguing this way only destroys the real basis for winning over to their side the masses of white soldiers, who after all make up a large proportion of the Army. If, as the Nationalists believe, the only real, permanent division in American society is racial, and if the war in Vietnam is essentially a war of whites against a dark-skinned people, then logically white men should be willing to fight there. A few years ago, the Socialist Workers Party's main anti-war slogan was "Bring the Black G. I. s Home", with the obvious conclusion that white G. I. s had some legitimate reason for dying to maintain American Imperialism. To base opposition to the war on racial and national loyalty is to deny any reason why whites should oppose the war, other than considerations of abstract justice and sympathy for the less fortunate.

The historic and special oppression of American Blacks helps make many more of them, unlike white soldiers, see through the lie that the U. S. is fighting in Vietnam to end tyranny. However, the mass of white G. I. s have absolutely no more real interest than Blacks in the expansion of U. S. Imperialism in Vietnam or anywhere else, regardless of how they feel about the war.

Many anti-war G. I. s may believe that the removal of Blacks from the army as well as the rest of U. S. society will decisively cripple U. S. Imperialism, regardless of what whites do. This is not true. Even in the unlikely event that anti-war and pro-Vietcong sentiment were so widespread among the black population that black soldiers became completely unreliable, the large white majority of the army would remain effective. The United States is a rich and populous country. And while the removal of the black population would create serious dislocations, as long as the mass of the white population remains loyal to the system - and Black Nationalism really only strengthens that loyalty - U. S. Imperialism will survive and prosper.

Black Liberation -- Vietnamese Liberation?

It is just as incorrect to see the struggle of the

Vietnamese people and their revolutionary aims as similar in kind to the Black Liberation movement as it is to believe that all white people have something to gain by smashing the Vietcong. However the Vietnamese War is not only a national struggle. The aim of the Vietnamese revolution is not simply to drive the Yanks out, after which all Vietnamese will live happily ever after. For although the struggle has a definite national character, the Vietnamese rebellion is fundamentally a class struggle between the workers and peasants, fighting to be rid of exploitation, inflation and ruinous taxation and the landlords and capitalists who, far too weak to survive without massive American support, are only too happy to have the Yankees come in to break wages and gouge rentals in their interest.

Of course, the Yankees aren't exactly happy the way things worked out, what with the troops and the killings and all the bad publicity. The American ruling class certainly didn't want to have to occupy Vietnam and run it so obviously as a colony. Even the most hawkish politicians would have preferred Ngo Diem, had he been able to prevent or suppress the Vietcong uprising without having to call in half a million American troops. Those who see the struggle as primarily a national one would be, logically, completely uninterested in the same struggle - it would have come anyway - if only the U. S. weren't involved, if they had been able to find a true colonial hack to administer behind the scenes for them.

The situation facing the black people in the U. S. is not at all the same as an under-developed, colonial nation whose economy and development can exist outside of American society. American blacks are deeply integrated in the U. S. economy - 25% of all steel workers are black, 15% of all truck drivers, 10% of all factory workers. The oppression and degradation black people have suffered from stems from their class role in American society - first slaves, then as sharecroppers and tenants, and now as the most exploited section of the working class. American blacks are fundamentally affected by economic conditions and their effect on the working population. Thus, the massive migration to the Northern ghettos was caused by the technological revolution in cotton farming, which drove tens of thousands of small farmers out of business and reduced the demand for farm workers.

The integration of blacks in American society is nowhere more evident than in the Army, where large numbers of G. I. s and non-coms are blacks. What happens to black soldiers can't be considered separately from what happens to the army as a whole. If the war expands more black soldiers, as well as more white soldiers, will fight and die in Vietnam. If the war ends, black soldiers, as well as white soldiers, will return to the States. The fate of black G. I. s and that of white G. I. s is intimately linked, regardless of how they feel about each other.

G.I. runs for President of France

Although they received mountains of publicity, the American student ferment of this past May, all the "soul studies" sit-ins and People's Park street fighting, were but a Rheingold "ten-minute head" compared to the French worker-student upheaval of May '68. The May events in France, which included the general strike of ten million workers with occupations of the factories and schools, almost kicked out the French capitalist ruling class and replaced it with a worker's government.

The French ruling class, having lost their Empire

(Viet Nam included), the Empire which had maintained their social position and wealth, decided to convert the already-exploited French workers into industrial coolies. What profit could not be drained off by colonial banditry abroad was to be replaced by intensifying the exploitation of workers in France.

Though they lost their Empire, the bourgeois hoped at least to preserve French PRESTIGE. And prestige, like Empire, requires a modern super-equipped nuclear-powered ARMY for its defense, supported and recruited

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at the worker's expense. To keep the workers disciplined while the capitalists speeded up the green machine, they brought in that mixture of a king, a cop, a priest and a lifer, Gen. De Gaulle. After the years of Gaullism-Capitalism, the workers rebelled. Where the king-cop-priest feared to tread, the Judas misleader of the workers, the French Communist Party, rushed in getting the workers back to work and De Gaulle back to the Elysée Palace.

De Gaulle had not the strength to make his own restoration, but the long faded-away soldier had enough gall left to execute his own beheading by calling for a referendum in which he was defeated. In the presidential elections the ruling-class parties offered a choice (freedom of choice in bourgeois elections is like the freedom to change t. v. channels during the summer season) between George Pompidou and Alain Poher (the choice between a Nixon and a George Romney). The French Communist Party ran their ex-pastry-cook septuagenarian, Jacques Duclos. Duclos, along with a mountain of other atrocities, had voted for the Indo-chinese War budget in 1947, the "special measures" (which included the draft) for the Algerian War in '56 and was an enduring stalwart of the Stalin cult long after the "great leader" had died. As the "grand old man" of the French CP, Duclos has been in the advance guard of every CP sell-out to the bourgeois, including La Grand sell-out during May of last year. He represents all that is servile, backwards and reformist in the party.

Opposed to the Nixiecrats a la Francais and the pastry-cook Stalinists stood the candidacy of a private in the French Army, Alain Krivine. Krivine was first jailed, then drafted for his role as a student militant during the May events. The French ruling class, wishing to preserve the illusion of free elections while regulating them to insure their own perpetuation, were up-tight about the Krivine candidacy. According to French law, a candidate for president must have satisfied his military obligation. Since Pvt. Krivine was still on active duty, the minister of the army shouted "non." However, upon appeal, interim President Poher permitted Krivine to run. The bourgeois, after stripping Krivine of his few political rights and dressing him first in prison gray, then in Army green, returned to him a rag or two of his civilian rights. Where they can afford the luxury of relaxed repression, the bourgeois, like the brass, oscillate between tyranny and mercy. The government imitates its paymaster, the capitalists, by stealing all to maintain its parasitic existence and returning a crumb or two to maintain the myth that it governs in the name of the people.

A second problem posed for the bourgeois and the brass was that if Private Krivine had become President Krivine, he would also be, like the American President, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. For example, Krivine could order France's Prestige Army to the aid of the Vietnamese liberation struggle.

Krivine's program included the following:

1. Immediate restoration of the gains made in wages, and working conditions by the May general strike.
2. Formation of factory committees to fight for veto power over all firings, speed-up and factory closings.
3. The right of all political and trade union organizations to have their own units in the Army.

Krivine's program suffered from one fundamental blemish. During his campaign, he called for the socialism personified by the Latin American Robin Hood, Che Guevara as the positive alternative to the Stalinist deformation of socialism personified by Duclos in France and Breshnev and Kosygin in the Soviet Union. Though lacking their paunch, Che belongs to the same pastry-cook Stalinist outfit as Duclos, Kosygin, & Co. While the Kosygins prefer to sell out the workers in the elegance of negotiation, Che's brand of guerilla-socialism would lead workers into ambush. Both share contempt for the revolutionary role of workers. Che's contribution to the Stalinist FTW (Fuck the Working Class) ideology is that the revolutionary vanguard (recruited primarily from the Sorbonne philosophy department) must leave the city for the forests and hills, live like boy scouts on a jamboree, organize the corn huskers and cow herdsman into guerrilla bands and someday march back into the city and seize the state palace.

The Krivine campaign presents several useful lessons to radical GIs in the US. Prior to "satisfying his military obligation," Krivine was a graduate student and a "revolutionist." His entire political career had been in the student arena. During his campaign Krivine received the endorsement of and access to thousands of militant workers. Krivine's access to workers was

enhanced by appearing before them as a lowly Army private and not as the "student vanguard." The Army is a very real bridge to the working class, the makers of revolutionary change. That bridge is of particular importance in the U.S. where the student radical has been completely isolated from the workers.

Recognizing how fragile and fleeting are bourgeois political rights and recognizing the utter duplicity of bourgeois political forms, Krivine was able to use these rights and forms to advance a revolutionary communist program both to his fellow G. I. s and the French working class. His faith in the working class and in exploiting bourgeois public forms was in complete contradiction to his Guevarism. Aside from his Guevarism, we admire Krivine's convictions and his courage. For American G. I. s we suggest reading AR 600-20 para. 43 to see how you can run for President.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

G. I. Voice provides an open political forum for letters and articles written by G. I. s and of particular interest to G. I. s. We will also print material by civilians as space permits. We will not print bitch or love letters such as the following model:

Dear Andy:

I am fond of the Bond A. S. U., I love you.
The Army sucks. Here's my buck.
Pvt. E-1
Ft. Leavenworth.

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

8 April 1969

Dear People:

Recently your paper has come to my attention and as one GI serving over here in Nam I'd like to congratulate you people for taking the stand that many more are going to have to take before we can rid ourselves of this Big Brother brain police army-government system we presently are ruled by.

I've been in the Nam for fourteen months now and its blatantly obvious that the sole reason we are here is to help America grow stronger and richer while South Vietnam grows more war-weary, more economically and politically unstable, and the people just hate us all the more.

Please add my name to your list of subscribers. There is a tremendous shortage of truth in literature over here so believe me, your paper will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

Private
Viet Nam

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