

# G.I. VOICE

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## FOR AN ANTIWAR WORKER-STUDENT GENERAL STRIKE

TURN ANTIWAR ACTIONS INTO

ANTI-CAPITALIST POLITICS

### Year of the Antiwar Bourgeois

The nature of capitalism is such that it can be suffocated by its own success. In regard to the Viet Nam War, sections of the bourgeois have had too much of a good thing. Another social parasite of the Viet Nam War, the antiwar movement, never seems to get enough. So again, we gather together in respectful impotence to plan another antiwar "action."

The Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) heralded 1969 as the "year of the Antiwar GI." The dying antiwar movement would be "revitalized" by putting GIs in the front of peace parades with the "notables" (like that venerable hippy, Dave Dellinger) and by capitalizing on the social patriotic and sentimental slogan of "Bring The Troops Home Now." Instead, 1969 has proven to be the "Year of the antiwar Bourgeois." The pottifoggers and priests of the liberal bourgeois, the Joseph Clarks and George McGovern, minister to the liberal conscience as well as their sectional class interests. Under social and economic pressures generated by the War such as rising prices (giving rise to the reign of Nixon The Deflator), gold outflow (flowing into the numbered Swiss bank accounts of the Saigon Thieu-Ky gangsters), tight credit, labor shortages and increased labor militancy, have forced many sections of the bourgeois to join the "Bring 'em Home" campaign. For example, both Life and Time have joined the banner-waving black arm band wearing X-thousand dead GIs since the Paris Peace talks began (or how about X-thousand dead GIs since the anti-war movement began). Life published, yearbook style, snapshots of GIs killed in action for one month and Time gave front cover prominence to the combat-weary troop and his desire to get the hell out.

The "Antiwar Bourgeois" are motivated neither by benevolence nor stupidity. The social pressures, which forced certain sections of the capitalists to oppose the war are pressures generated by capitalism. Their fight against the war is a fight to preserve capitalism. They are in complete agreement with the Spread-Eagle Lifer in Congress like Mendel Rivers on maintaining American military supremacy throughout the world and permanent Cold War Economy at home.

The antiwar movement substitutes its "mass street actions" for the social pressures generated by imperialist war. The cock crows and the sun rises. The antiwar legions, armed with buttons and flowers, crow "Peace Now" and the bourgeois shelve Johnson, "stop" the bombing and start the peace table rapping. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) which has seized the Peace Parade Pentagon and its OCS, YSA, have become the most fervent exponents of this kind of logic. When they want to get 'em in the streets, SWP-YSA correctly points out that the bourgeois shelved Johnson to replace him with Super-Hawk Nixon; the Peace Talks are an attempt to win a DRV-NLF sell-out, the bombing was not stopped but shifted to the South, the total bombing of Viet Nam actually increased, and that all three "peace concessions" were used to confuse and drug the war-weary masses. At the same time, when SWP-YSA want to trumpet the accomplishments of the antiwar movement they claim that the ominous threat of twice-a-year peace parades has "scared" the bourgeoisie into making these "peace concessions". Then you must hold the antiwar movement responsible for the consequences: it is the antiwar movement that has given us Nixon and Laird, it is the antiwar movement that has set up the Peace Table for the DRV-NLF sell-out, it is the antiwar movement that has intensified the bombing in Viet Nam, and it is the antiwar movement that has drugged and confused the American masses.

It is true that the bourgeois could never dream of a drug more potent than the "single-issue street action" approach of the antiwar movement which fosters the illusion that twice-a-year mini-pilgrimages to some public shrine will bring peace. Indeed it does, but peace only to the antiwar movement, which slumbers away until its next "action."

The antiwar movement must rise up from its slumbers, from the stupor of endless "street actions" and recognize that only the organized working class has the will and the social power to end the Viet Nam War on our terms—the immediate withdrawal of all American troops from Viet Nam rather than on the terms of the "antiwar bourgeois," i.e. the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all DRV troops (which we are already witnessing), a negotiated Korea garrison state solution, and the smashing of the Vietnamese Revolution.

### The Antiwar Movement & The Working Class

The American bourgeois has been able to conduct an imperialist war with impunity for six years. Why? Because there does not exist in this country a mass independent working class party in this country to wage the struggle against the Viet Nam War. It is the workers who see their labor wasted, their living and working conditions eroded, their sons and brothers murdered, in a distant war that even most of the ruling class no longer wants. Their reaction has been increased militancy on the picket line to defend their working and living conditions from the effects of the war. At the same time, workers have moved politically to the right as the Wallace campaign, and more recently, the elections in Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and New York so starkly reveal.

The antiwar movement is no substitute for building a labor party in this country either in the fight for socialism or in the fight against the war. Immediate withdrawal is the correct slogan, but behind a slogan lies the question that the antiwar movement dare not and cannot ask: How is the fight for immediate withdrawal, how is the fight against the capitalist state with its own plans for Viet Nam and future Viet Nams to be conducted? The antiwar movement cannot imagine any other "struggle" for immediate withdrawal than carrying the slogan on mass-produced placards in mass-produced parades.

What we see here at the Cleveland Conference is the attempt to give organizational legitimacy to another "single issue street action." Of course there will be a vote on whether or not to hold the Citizen's March in Washington but the decision was reached long before the Conference. The Cleveland Area Peace Action Council (CAPAC) and the antiwar conference are machines to grind out another parade. Why can CAPAC do no more?

SWP-YSA calls organizations like CAPAC "united fronts." In point of fact the only unity in "united fronts" like CAPAC or the Viet Nam Peace Parade Committee in New York, is the unity of the garbage heap. These groups are "Popular Fronts" not united fronts, and the 1st law of motion for popular fronts is the law of political gravity; the tendency for the program of such a grouping to sink to the lowest level of the trash heap. No matter how revolutionary-sounding the program of SWP-YSA is on paper, once they block with the Stalinists, the liberals, the Quakers and labor fakery, their politics dissolves as quickly as an Alka Salzer in the stinking stagnant pond of Quaker-faker liberal-pacifism.

### For An Antiwar Worker-Student General Strike

The Student Mobilization Committee (SMC) will meet and dutifully vote approval of the Washington Citizen's March. In addition they will approve a student "strike" against the war. The McCarthyite senior class presidents and student paper editors, the future pottifoggers and priests for the liberal bourgeois, has changed the name from "strike" to "moratorium" to keep it all nice, respectable chicken-shit. GI VOICE believes that the student STRIKE should be turned into an antiwar worker-student general strike, a one day work stoppage in both schools and shops. The intense radicalization of students has forced them to rediscover in history and in the French May events, the revolutionary role of the working class. Six years of neglect will not be overcome by one day of leafleting at the shop gates. Nonetheless, students can (and have) join in militant working-class struggles such as the oil strike on the West Coast. In order to do so they must smash the "single-issue street action" drug of the antiwar movement and relate the common grievance of the workers to the political issues of the War and the class nature of the American state which generates wars like Viet Nam for its own perpetuation.

The above leaflet was handed out at the Cleveland National Antiwar Conference. Our predictions of what would occur were more than prodigiously vindicated: that after the peace parade windbags had dredged up from their trash heap every hair-brained bleeding-heart peace stunt they had performed over the last four years, the heap would bloom again and bring us a fall harvest of even more massive mass marches, even larger "readings of the war dead" (the peace movement's Thyestean festival), even antier-imperialist kamikaze-confrontations, even more antiwar recosces or "moratoriums". More of everything, especially superlatives.

The reason that endless "street actions" do not end an endless war and have no social consequence, is that the participants' actions do not have the social power to oppose the captains and generals of big business and finance who are completely mobilized and united behind the war. Closing down the high schools and colleges may reflect the growing radicalization of students due to the Viet Nam War, but shutting down the schools or marching in the streets for one day or one hundred days will not stop war-profit hungry capitalists and the promotion-hungry brass from continuing the war. The only social force whose interest is uncompromisingly opposed to the war and which has the social power to oppose and defeat the warmongers is the working class. The history of the antiwar movement is the history of lost opportunities to reach the working class, to build a bridge between radical youth and workers, and to include workers in meaningful mass actions that can actually stop the war. Instead, the antiwar movement has served to isolate radical students from militant workers more effectively than any amount of Meany "commie-hippy" baiting could have. Nothing is more indicative of the cynical attitude of the antiwar movement toward winning worker support than the position delegated to trade unions in the April 5 antiwar action in New York. Trade unions were sixteenth, in between "university faculty" and "Democrats and Republicans For Peace". Also indicative is the inviting of labor-fakers like Al Evanoff to antiwar conferences as "representatives of labor". The movement wants a few token workers like its few token GIs as another feather for its peacock ass when it goes courting the liberal-pacifists. And what could be more token than a labor-faker Evanoff.

Even if they were put up front of "street actions" with the GIs and "notables" workers would not give up the Mets or a day at the beach to march arm-in-arm with Al Evanoff and Dave Dellinger. Workers know from their experience in the labor movement that the way you fight profit-hungry bosses is not by Sunday strolls but by weekday workstoppages, by hitting them in the pocket. The recent militant upsurge of strikes, many of them wildcats, are directed against the war related erosion of working and living conditions. While these strikes are often long and militant they generally have a low political level. They occur in isolated trades and are further limited by the trade union leadership. Though limited, these strikes are unconsciously antiwar and anti-capitalist. When workers go out on strike in a key industry they hit at the guts of the war machine, disrupting the production and movement of war goods. To raise the political level of this strike wave, which is not an abstraction but a concrete reality now, the current erosion of living standards must be shown to be related directly to the war and the need for united, nation-wide general strikes of all workers against the war, the Democratic and Republican war-machine engineers and the trade union brass.

The rising militancy of workers will not by itself, or under the tutelage of George Meany and Walter Reuther find independent political expression. Instead, it will be channelled into flag-loving and race-hating Wallace-Yorty camps or into the liberal Kennedy camp. Independent political action must be presented by the radicalized students and intellectuals, the gap between workers and radicals must be bridged and they must learn together how to wield mass political weapons like the strike.

In our Cleveland leaflet, GI VOICE proposed that the student strike scheduled for 14 Nov. be turned into a worker-student general strike. As we pointed out then, one day of leafletting in front of the shopgates cannot overcome six years of neglect. However, there are many concrete actions in which radicals can join workers on the picket line and interject the strike demand in leaflets. Many unions already have antiwar positions on paper, these positions were formulated in response to rank and file discontent, such as District 65 in New York. Radicals could approach these unions and call for the rank and file to call their leadership's bluff. At first the response will be restricted to a few unions but this exemplary action will have national implications and serve as a beacon for building a real movement against the war. Such a movement is neither foreign to our times or our own history. In Japan workers have effectively stopped the movement of war goods bound for Viet Nam from passing through their country. At the end of WW II, in the U.S., a militant upsurge of labor unrest matched with massive "Bring Us Home" demonstrations by GIs stationed overseas, smashed the imperialist ambitions of the US ruling class to intervene in the Chinese civil war, and forced rapid demobilization.

Within the GI antiwar movement, GI VOICE calls for a soldiers' union to emphasize the class alliance that GIs have with the organized working class in the fight against the Viet Nam War and military oppression, and in order to defend their rights. While GIs cannot strike they can form a real working alliance with labor struggles and raise their own struggle by interjecting the union demand at critical moments. For example, at Ft. Jackson GIs United petitioned the brass for on-base facilities to discuss the war, racism, and harassment of their members. The petition was rejected by the brass with the statement that: "The Army does not recognize a collective bargaining unit representing members of the Army. Membership in such an organization is not specifically prohibited by law or regulation; however, many actions associated with collective bargaining are inconsistent with the requirements of military discipline". The brass, in their usual grudging, underhanded way, admitted that the union demand was not, in itself, illegal. At this point the leadership of GIs United could have said: "Yeah, we are the collective bargaining unit for our members, we are a soldier's union, and we plan to take our struggle to the labor movement as well as the courts, the press, etc." They could have sent an immediate letter of support or a representative to the struggle of Charleston hospital workers, being conducted no more than one hundred miles away, and begun forging a working alliance in their joint struggle for the right of association and union recognition. This could have forced GIs United's struggle to the center of the labor movement, to the attention of every worker at least in the South and on the east coast, in a way that all the articles in the Times and all the petitions in the federal courts never could. GIs United would then be in a position to raise the general strike demand within the labor movement, both as an independent political action against the war and against their own military repression.

However, the leadership of GIs United was the same mis-leadership we find in the antiwar movement, the SWP-YSA. Instead of taking the class-struggle road of calling for a soldiers union, forming a working alliance with the labor movement and interjecting the demand for general strikes in their joint struggle against the war, GIs United took the chicken shit road, claiming that they were not a collective bargaining unit but only a discussion group and please give us our rights, restricting the struggle to a free speech issue so that the only working alliance that could be formed would be with the bourgeois press and courts. GIs United has taken the road that leads to endless free speech fights which initially have some value as an organizing tool but when repeated become absurd, just as the antiwar movement takes endless strolls that lead only to more parades.

The role of the leadership in the antiwar movement and radical groups like SWP-YSA has been to keep radicals in the streets and away from workers and working-class politics just as the Meanys have done everything to keep workers away from anything political much less radical. Radicals, GIs and workers must throw out the Meany misleaders in their respective organizations and build a working alliance in the fight against the war and war making state. As we have stressed time and again, this alliance will not occur overnight. However, had the sections of the population radicalized by the Viet Nam War begun the building of a working-class movement rather than the antiwar bowel movement, we would be well on the road to having the most effective weapon in fighting the warmongers, the union misleaders and the political backwardness of the American working class: a workers party.

For six years the bourgeoisie has gotten away with war-profiteering and smashing the Vietnamese Revolution. Not one minute more. The Struggle Must Begin Now.

TURN THE NOVEMBER 14 STUDENT STRIKE INTO A WORKER STUDENT GENERAL STRIKE

FOR BUILDING AN INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS POLITICAL PARTY

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