

NATIONWIDE DEMONSTRATIONS BIGGEST YET:

May 2 Protests Hit U.S. War in Viet Nam



By FRED JEROME

A thousand cheering, chanting young men and women came, some from as far away as New Orleans and Detroit, some from as near-by as Harlem and the Puerto Rican community on New York's West Side, and most from the schools and universities in and around the big city--a thousand demonstrators on May 2nd to protest with our banners and our bodies against the bloody U.S. war in South Viet Nam.

The outdoor protest rally at 110th Street and Eighth Avenue, sponsored by the May 2nd Committee, was the largest single demonstration against U.S. intervention in Viet Nam, to be held in this country so far. As it took place, simultaneous, although smaller, meetings were held in San Francisco, Seattle, Madison (Wisconsin), Miami, and San Juan (Puerto Rico), among other cities.

And after the speeches, we marched--at least 500 of us--with our banners and our voices high, along the sidewalks of New York, down Columbus Avenue, then Broadway to crowded Times Square, then east across 42nd St. to the United Nations. . . . five miles of marching as thousands and thousands saw us and heard us. . . . five miles with hoarse throats, "Stop the War in Viet Nam, Bring the Troops Home!"

And when it was over, it was just begun.

"The fact that the police did not dare interfere with our march was a great victory," said Levi Laub, one of the coordinators of the May 2nd Committee, at a conference following the march. The conference decided unanimously to continue the May 2nd movement as an organized center for mass action against the U.S. war in Viet Nam. A draft policy statement read at the conference, will be sent out to all May 2nd participants in the immediate future.

The commercial U.S. press has blacked out almost all the news of the demonstration, the march, and the May 2nd movement.

Highlighting the New York demonstration were speeches by Conrad Lynn, civil rights lawyer and national chairman of the Freedom Now Party; Russ Nixon, managing editor of the National Guardian; Mrs. Helen Lamb Lamont;

Benjamin Ortiz, president of the Puerto Rican Pro-Independence University Federation (FUPI); William Scott, Rockland County leader of the Freedom Now Party; and Bill Epton, vice-president and Harlem organizer of the Progressive Labor Movement. Folksinger Phil Ochs entertained the crowd with a number of songs satirizing U.S. war policies.

Russell Stetler of Haverford College, chairman of the May 2nd Committee, presided over the outdoor meeting, and announced messages of support from numerous organizations and individuals, including Bertrand Russell.

(Stetler has been under pressure recently from reactionary elements in Pennsylvania who are trying to cancel his scholarship from the Philadelphia Board of Education. At a Board hearing on May 1, the witnesses who testified for Stetler included the President of Haverford College and the head of the Philadelphia chapter of the American Association of University Professors.)

In his address, Conrad Lynn said that the same U.S. policy-makers responsible for the War in Viet Nam are the ones responsible for the violence against civil rights fighter in Birmingham and New York: "It is the same power structure, the same U.S. ruling class, which is behind both--and the only solution, ultimately, is an end to the present system and the establishment of a new system--socialism."

Russ Nixon quoted Senator Wayne Morse's statement that "Every American boy killed in South Viet Nam is unjustifiably killed and the blood is on the hands of the U.S. government," and added that the U.S. government is responsible for everyone killed in Viet Nam, whether American or Viet Nameese. He also pointed out, "This is not just

McNamara's war. It is Johnson's war, and Kennedy's war, and a war imposed by all those in Washington who have been deceiving the American people for the past 15 years."

Mrs. Lamont attacked the war not just as a critic of U.S. policies, "But also as a mother who will not send her son to be killed in Viet Nam." Bill Epton linked the fight against the U.S. war policies to the revolutionary struggles for independence in Asia and Africa, and to the worldwide movement for socialism.

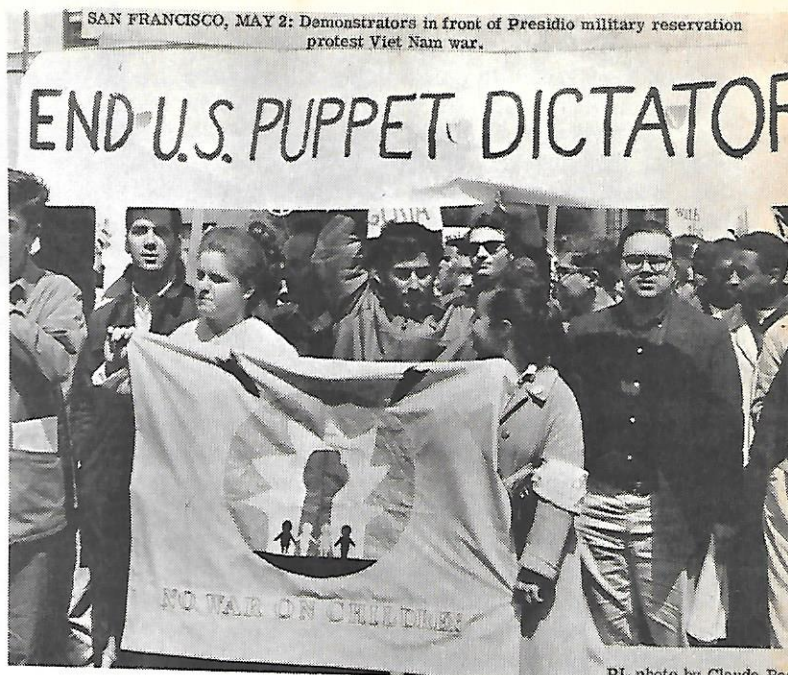
In a stirring declaration made in Spanish, Benjamin Ortiz pledged: "The students of Puerto Rico will not fight in any war for U.S. imperialism. We are not afraid to fight but when we fight it will be against that very imperialism which enslaves Puerto Rico today, as it enslaves Panama and as it is trying to enslave South Viet Nam."

Also addressing the demonstration was Phillip Luce, who is sponsoring a signature campaign by young men of draft age pledging not to fight in South Viet Nam. Luce's call on all those at the rally to join in this pledge was greeted by a cheering ovation. Later, he said that 125 young men have already signed the pledge, and he has received requests for copies from Chicago and California.

The five-mile march through Times Square and to the United Nations was conducted to a steady, enthusiastic chant of slogans, including: "Stop the War in Viet Nam, Bring the Troops Home;" "McNamara's Dirty War Isn't Worth Fighting For;" "Send the Slumlords to Viet Nam, Bring the Troops Home;" "Fight Unemployment, Not Viet Nameese;" and "No More Koreas, Bring the Troops Home."



FUPI PRESIDENT Benjamin Ortiz addresses N.Y. rally



Organizations supporting the demonstration included the Progressive Labor Movement, the Puerto Rican Pro-Independence Movement (MPI), the NYU Socialist Club, local student peace groups from a number of campuses, the Young Socialist Alliance, Youth Against War and Fascism, Advance, and the Spartacists.

As the U.S. intensifies its aggression in Viet Nam, the May 2nd movement intends to mobilize growing opposition to the war among the American people. As the draft declaration read at the May 2nd Conference says:

"Until such a (U.S.) withdrawal, we will join with the growing world-wide opposition to this U.S. war, through campaigns of mass action demonstrating to the U.S. government and to the world that the American people, or at least a good part of us, do NOT support this war."

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(For complete coverage of the formation and development of the May 2nd movement and the growing resistance to U.S. aggressive policies in Viet Nam and elsewhere, see the next issue of PL--Ed.)

TRYING TO SCREEN OUT THE TRUTH

On the night of April 22, three Federal agents--from the FBI and the Customs Bureau--entered the West Side headquarters of the Progressive Labor Movement in New York, 68 West 106 Street, and, without a warrant, seized a copy of a film on Viet Nam which had just been shown. The film, produced by the National Liberation Front of South Viet Nam (Viet Cong), shows the life of the people in the liberated areas of South Viet Nam and their guerrilla against the U.S. aggressors.

Other copies of the film were shown before the seizure and have been shown since the seizure on campuses and elsewhere around the country without incident, as hundreds of interested students turned out for every showing.

The most recent showing took place on the evening of May 2nd at a PLM dance at the Hotel Manhattan Towers. More than 250 attended the dance and saw the film. Although the police had made threatening noises and tried to intimidate the hotel manager into preventing the showing, they made no move to seize the film.