

ANTIWAR REPORT, by Lew Jones, October 18, 1968

Two recent demonstrations clearly show the potential that exists for mobilizing antiwar sentiment during the upcoming protests called by the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (SMC). On September 28, one month after the Chicago Democratic Party events, the Chicago Peace Council and the Chicago Student Mobilization Committee called a demonstration against police violence and the war. 25,000 participated in the largest antiwar protest in the history of Chicago.

On October 12, the Bay Area antiwar movement held a demonstration oriented toward supporting GIs in which active duty GIs played a major organizational role. 15,000 people and 300 active duty GIs participated in this demonstration.

These actions indicate that despite pressure from the election period and the Paris negotiations antiwar sentiment is deepening and can be mobilized into action. This is especially true of GIs themselves. Antiwar expression in the armed forces has greatly increased since the last major antiwar demonstrations in April.

This deepened public antiwar sentiment has exacerbated the split in the ruling class over the war. Unable to "win" the war militarily or at the negotiations and unable to quell student and black unrest with the usual election gimmicks, new fissures have appeared in the ruling class. In a speech at DePauw University William Bundy, formerly one of the administration's chief architects of the war, proposed that the United States extricate itself from the war regardless of what the North Vietnamese or the NLF do. Bundy said that the war obviously could not be won militarily and that it was questionable that the Vietnamese would agree to a settlement. It is therefore necessary, he said, because of the war's unpopularity to end by "United States initiative."

This speech was most likely a trial balloon for Humphrey. But that does not negate the fact that the speech sharply exposes the increased division in the ruling class.

This division, combined with a stalemate in Paris, increasing casualties in Vietnam, and a three hawk presidential race, has deepened antiwar feelings and spread them into new areas of the American population. Given no traditional bourgeois electoral outlet for this antiwar sentiment the possibilities for mobilizing massive antiwar actions, Oct. 21 to Nov. are large.

The spread of antiwar sentiment has been most evident among GIs. What we saw beginning some time ago was confirmed firsthand in Vietnam during Fred Halstead's tour and by the GI response to the Myers and Kos defense cases. The San Francisco march and such things as the protest by black GIs against going to Chicago during the Democratic Party convention underline and point to this deepened sentiment and the opportunities for the antiwar movement.

In the face of these opportunities, we have seen a full scale retreat from the fight against the war on the part of what had become the functioning national antiwar coalition and leadership. A cold split now exists in such organizations as the National Mobilization Committee and the New York Parade Committee, and in varying degrees of intensity in other coalition groups throughout the country.

Many of the larger groups on the right wing of the movement, such as Womens Strike for Peace and SANE, have moved directly into campaigning for this or that "peace" candidate. Others, such as the leaders of NMC (Dellinger, Davis, Greenblatt) have made opportunist adaptations to these candidates, going so far as refusing to criticize McCarthy publicly.

At the same time the pacifists and ultraleftists have intensified their campaign for small "militant" actions designed to radicalize the masses. This squadron approach, exemplified in the Chicago August action, is the ultraleftist mirror image of the rightward drift away from mass action. As shown in Chicago, the ultraleftism and the opportunism can both be displayed in the same action, and even simultaneously by the same individuals.

In spite of this split during an election year when "peace negotiations" are occurring, the militant wing of the movement has made impressive gains. The SMC at its national conference projected an international week of activity, October 21-26, which was to have as a major focus the plight of GIs and attempting to involve GIs in the movement. The NMC, in an attempt to undercut the SMC, projected its own week, Nov. 1-5, also directed at GIs but with the axis on individual desertion and the "right of GIs to return to civilian life." The NMC also proposed demonstrations at polling places on election day oriented towards an election boycott. In spite of elaborate plans and rhetoric, it appears that very little is actually being organized by the NMC.

Regardless of the cold split that exists now in many areas, it is likely that once the election period is over, the national antiwar coalition can be rebuilt on a broader scale than previously. Therefore we have sought in different areas to 1) build the SMC dates as the central actions of the fall, and 2) participate in and build the NMC actions where they occur. We seek to build the SMC as rapidly and as broadly as possible while maintaining contact with those we disagree with, anticipating that the possibility of rebuilding the coalition may occur in the near future.

The opportunities for building the SMC through the upcoming actions have never been greater. All opponent groups, including the Radical Organizing Committee (ROC) have left the field wide open for the SMC, and as the campuses have opened up many areas have reported large campus antiwar committee meetings. Utilizing these opportunities to build the SMC and to mobilize people for the fall actions is politically important in the immediate sense but it is also vital for the future, for it is through a strong, authoritative SMC that a broadened united front can be built.

The response to the international call is impressive. England will have a demonstration on October 27 which will be the largest antiwar action ever held there. On the same day, demonstrations will occur in France, Germany, and Italy. On the 26th, a major action, under broad sponsorship, will be held in Montreal.

In most major areas of the U.S. actions will occur around the SMC dates and perspectives. In Atlanta a GI day has been declared on Aug. 26. A rally will be held by the Atlanta Alliance for Peace where Gen. Hester will speak and an open microphone for GIs will be provided.

The Washington Student Mobilization Committee and the Black Student Mobilization are planning a "students and GI" march with various feeder contingents and a rally with GI speakers. They report a good response and anticipate a large demonstration. Philadelphia SMC and other groups are holding a Oct. 26 march under the theme, "Support our men, not those who send them there." GI participation is anticipated.

New York SMC plans a march at Ft. Dix, New Jersey on October 26 in support of free speech for GIs. A previous march there sponsored by Philadelphia and New York SMC was very successful. Also in New York, the Parade Committee and the SMC will hold a demonstration at the Humphrey and Nixon campaign headquarters on Nov. 2. The NMC, in a wild set of maneuvers, is planning other "squadron" actions in New York, but at this point, their concrete plans are unknown.

In Boston, the November 9th Mobilization Committee is organizing a march which calls for "GI's -- Join Us! Thousands will be marching in support of you." Ongoing activities at Ft. Devens, Mass. have been held there. A GI Week culminating in a demonstration on Sat., Oct. 26 will occur in Cleveland, followed by a march on Nov. 2 sponsored by the Cleveland Area Peace Action Council and the SMC. (Also, latest information indicates that a march will occur in Detroit on October 26).

Chicago plans a GI Rally on October 26. Initiated by the SMC and cosponsored by the Chicago Peace Council, Veterans for Peace in Vietnam, and the National Mobilization Committee, it has received significant press coverage. Also planned is a Nov. 1 anti-Humphrey demonstration on the occasion of a visit to Chicago by Humphrey.

Seattle has planned a major week of activity centered on Ft. Lewis, a nearby base with a conference on the 26th to which GIs are invited. In Los Angeles, the SMC and the Peace Action Council will conduct a march to McArthur park, with three of four feeder marches one of which will be a SMC march.

These plans taken together constitute a significant victory for the SMC's projected actions. So that the SMC can gain the widest publicity for these actions it is important that each area get reports to the national office of the SMC at 9 S. Clinton St. in Chicago as soon as the actions occur. The SMC national office staff is putting extra work into the remaining period to maximize the effectiveness of the actions. Gus Horowitz of Chicago has joined the staff for a few weeks to help in this effort. The SMC will be giving special attention to the international actions that will occur during the week of protests.

The most important aspect of the SMC activity has been broadening of antiwar activity to appeal to and involve GIs. Areas that have tried various activities have all met with a friendly response from the overwhelming bulk of the GIs. Most successful and significant politically to date has been the Oct. 12 GI demonstration in San Francisco.

A part of this activity which will take on increased importance is the defense of GIs under harrassment or charges. In both San Francisco and Ft. Dix when GIs have spoken out or acted against the war the brass has attempted to either intimidate or punish them. Quick action by the antiwar movement prevented the brass from taking this unconstitutional action and this should be the response of the antiwar movement to all such developments.

In this regard a new defense committee, the GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee (Box 355, Old Chelsea Station, NYC, NY 10011) has been established in New York. Already the committee has taken two cases, Allen Myers (Ft. Dix) and Walter Kos (Ft. Bragg), and both have so far been victorious. Myers was acquitted for lack of evidence and charges have been dropped against Kos after civilian counsel pressed for particulars. The defense committee anticipates that cases of this nature will continue and plans are being laid to enable the defense committee to come promptly to the aid of harassed GIs.

Additional GI antiwar activities that have some importance are the circulation of the GI antiwar newspapers, especially Task Force and Vietnam GI, distribution of leaflets directed toward GIs such as the official telegram circulated in San Francisco, and providing an open microphone for GIs at appropriate rallies.

Each area should send reports to the NO regarding the final plans for the upcoming week of activity and then another report after the events, evaluation them.