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G.I. Joe's a Red!

Dennis Davis

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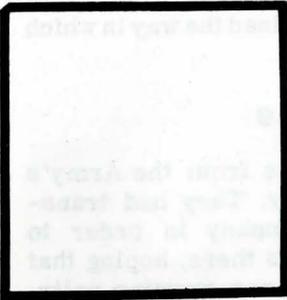
St. Joe's School

Boys' Box

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'The Army Was Scared to Death...'

G.I. JOE'S A RED

By Dennis Davis

FROM December 1967 until my discharge in April 1969 I was stationed at Fort Gordon in Georgia. During this period of time I consciously tried to educate my fellow G.I.'s about the nature of the war in Vietnam, about racism and about the nature of the system—imperialism—that perpetuates racism and war.

When I first arrived at Fort Gordon I had no friends and I didn't know the feelings of the G.I.'s or what their reaction to my ideas would be. At first I just listened to what they had to say. I was especially interested in hearing what these guys thought about Vietnam.

Our room had four Vietnam veterans and four G.I.'s who expected to be sent. Waiting to let them express what they felt about Vietnam soon became very frustrating, because there was very little serious discussion about the war. I began doing a little asking of my own.

When I began discussing the war with one Vietnam vet I found him very eager to talk about it. As he expressed his views, I began to air mine. As we talked, others who overheard us joined in. Soon others who happened to wander in also joined us. The discussion became very intense. Everybody was putting his two cents in. The two of us started talking about 9 or 10 p.m. and the group of us finished at 6 in the morning.

From discussions like this I learned several important lessons. Everyone felt intimidated by the Army and assumed that all others around them fully supported the Government while only they themselves had questions. Once I took the initiative the ice broke very quickly—the discussions became mass in nature. To break down what the Army had set up by intimidation took an "agitator," someone to take the initiative.

I learned that all the G.I.'s had questions about what was going on around them. I had feared the Vietnam vet because I felt he would be bitter toward anyone not supporting the "cause" his buddies had died for. I found that the vets

most of all wanted to know what this cause was that they and their buddies had risked their lives for. They had acted; now they wanted to understand: for what?

I very quickly became known as a "protester." I wasn't quite sure how the guys would react to my being a communist. As I got to know certain individuals better I became open about my membership in PLP (Progressive Labor Party). To my surprise there was no bad reaction. Since I had made my views very clear in my discussions with them, they rejected the line that had been pumped into their heads that "communism is bad," though many still thought it was "unrealistic."

After four months of discussion and exchanging literature with the G.I.'s in this company I was suddenly relieved of my duties. The reason given was that I did not have a security clearance; but everybody knew it was because of the discussions we had been having and the literature that had been spreading throughout the barracks. I received a lot of support from the guys in the barracks. I learned that if things were explained openly, G.I.'s could be relied upon for support.

The Army then shipped me to another company on the post, whereupon I immediately explained to my fellow G.I.'s why I had been transferred. I openly expressed my antiwar views and told them I was a communist. The guys were very much interested in reading the antiwar literature I had in my locker, and it immediately spread throughout the company. I was soon to learn how afraid the Army really was. Within two weeks the brass arrived to inspect all the lockers in the first platoon (my platoon oddly enough). They immediately confiscated my literature, my address book, all my old letters and notebooks, even pieces of paper in my wallet.

A mass investigation (intimidation) soon began. Thirty of my fellow G.I.'s were called

into G2 (a section of Army intelligence) for investigation and interrogation. Most of the guys called decided to just "blow G2's minds." When asked if they read or subscribed to certain "subversive" antiwar papers, some responded with "yes" and then pulled a copy out of their pocket asking "Here, would you like to see a copy?"

Some were daringly open about their antiwar views and took the attitude "Screw them, what can they do to us." We soon learned a real lesson. Talking to G2, telling them little things like what books you borrowed from whom, what bar you went to the night before, etc., became very helpful for G2 in questioning the next guy. When presented with all these little facts he would feel that if G2 knew all these little things they surely know everything, and thus was very easily intimidated. We began to inform everyone of their rights under Article 31 and encouraged everyone to refuse to speak to G2 at all. They are our enemies. If they want to find out something let them find it the hard way.

Their desire to get some kind of legal evidence on me was made clear from the way they handled one of my friends. He openly stated that he had asked me to send for a subscription to an antiwar G.I. paper for him, and that he felt he was quite capable of determining whether the ideas in the paper were in his interest or not. Since only signed statements could be used legally, G2 decided to get tough in order to force him to sign. My buddy had taught school for several years before being drafted. Upon his initial refusal to sign they reminded him that he could lose his security clearance if he didn't sign the statement, and that there was no way they could keep headquarters from informing his school board if they just happened to want to do such a thing. "In other words, you mean I may never be able to teach school in this country again?" They replied, "That's a possibility."

More and more of the G.I.'s I was with began to see the connection between those running the Army and those in power in the outside world (civilian life), how the two worked together, and generally that the laws and rights guaranteed to us in the Constitution did not exist in reality. "Free speech" was fine if you agreed that the war was a good war—that is, if you agree with what the ruling class is doing. A good percentage of the G.I.'s saw clearly that if we spoke out in front of those in charge (or held mass meetings and demonstrations, etc.) that this would just enable the rulers to spot us and isolate us by shipping us off or throwing us in the stockade. This

general understanding of the class basis of constitutional rights determined the way in which we worked.

Army Tries Red-Baiting

We learned many lessons from the Army's attack, but so did the Army. They had transferred me out of one company in order to separate me from my friends there, hoping that this might put an end to our growing unity. But the transfer only gave me an opportunity to meet more people and make more friends. No one had been warned of my communist ideas. They had not attempted to guarantee hostility to me. So the Army tried a new tactic to isolate me from my friends and to keep me from making new ones.

After I had been in this second company only five weeks I was again transferred. This new company was made up of men training for Vietnam along with a number of Vietnam veterans. The Army was vulnerable here and knew it. In general the company was made up of people from working-class backgrounds. Apparently they had sent me here because they figured they could count on the hostility of the Vietnam veterans. However they were not going to rely on that alone. They were going to make sure by setting it up before I got there.

As I found out later, a meeting had been called before my arrival of all the G.I.'s who were to work and live with me. It was announced that a communist was to be assigned to the company. As a friend of mine later told me, I was made out to be something like a fire-breathing monster—colored red! It was implied that they, the G.I.'s, could handle me in any way they wanted. Another friend of mine told me that the First Sergeant and several other NCO's had encouraged some of the G.I.'s to "take care of me." My advance publicity became very apparent my first week in the company when a new guy unsuspectingly moved into my double room with me, and one hour later—after a talk with the First Sergeant—moved out.

The Army's fear of my communist ideas became even more apparent. I was given no regular job in the company, just sent to an orderly room that had only two other draftees working there. For nearly a month I sat there reading without anyone wanting me to do anything else. (My off-duty hours, however, weren't quite so passive.)

Since I had made friends in other companies all over the fort, I initially spent most of my nights going around seeing these people and not spending much time in the new barracks. But



CARTOON REPRINTED FROM THE "LAST HARASS"

one night I returned to find quite a few of the guys drinking in the hallway. I happened to get into a discussion between a Black Vietnam vet friend of mine and another G.I. about the war, and immediately the other G.I. implied I thought he was "an imperialist." About six of his friends also came over and before I knew it one of the guys hostilely said, "You're a communist, huh?" My answer was "Yes." He then said that he had heard that I was passing out "communist propaganda" to the trainees. I told him that I had not been doing this but that I had handed out communist literature and antiwar G.I. papers in the other units I had been in. I then showed them a couple of copies of a newspaper, Vietnam G.I., that I had lying openly on my desk.

I could see that they had not expected me to be so open about being a communist and it caught them off guard. They were clearly looking for a fight, but one G.I., a Vietnam veteran who was in their crowd, spoke up: "Hell, I was against the war before I went, I didn't like it over there when I was there, and I don't want to go back. I don't know about you guys, but I'm going to bed." So the disunity in their own ranks, caused by the obvious contradiction between what they were told and what was real, and the fact that I openly advocated my communist beliefs and willingly showed them my propaganda, defeated the Army's attempt to use the G.I.'s against me.

The Army's fear of the people was shown by the lies they had told the guys about me and about what communism is. The lesson I learned was that the main method of defeating red-baiting was not to be afraid of the people but

to rely on them! My experience showed that if I explained my ideas to the guys they could be relied upon for support when an attack came.

With these lessons under my belt, and with the help of the Army shipping me to different companies in quick succession, I made friends all over the fort, and thus our unity began to grow. Many were eager to do something instead of just sitting around griping. We consciously set out to meet other G.I.'s and discuss our views with them. Since we were limited in the number we could reach just through discussions we decided to hand out leaflets at a local movie theatre where G.I.'s went. We discussed the war and exposed the lies presented in the movie showing at the time, "The Green Berets." We immediately made contact with a number of men and our collective began to grow.

New G.I. Paper Needed

We began to realize the support we had all over the fort but which we were unable to contact on an individual basis. Our experiences made it clear to us that most of the G.I.'s were already against the war in one way or another. The only way to do anything about this was to get together with these guys, openly discuss our differences, collectively decide what we could do about our situation, and then take action on these ideas. We needed a tool to bring this about.

We had been using several nationally distributed G.I. papers. However these were all dead end for a variety of reasons. They ranged from drug-culture oriented, McCarthy politics

advocating individual rebellion (The Ally), to the "left-wing" Trotskyite Workers World-Youth Against War and Fascism scheme to "unionize the Army" (The Bond), to the right-wing Trotskyite YSA-SWP telling G.I.'s to fight for their "constitutional rights" (Task Force). We needed a paper that had more faith in the ability of the G.I. to understand the true nature of the war and the system that is responsible for it. It had to discuss the issues at hand and explain how those in power—the factory owners, bankers, landlords and capitalists in general—are responsible for the war and poverty at home. We needed a paper that was based on what we learned from the G.I.'s and that reflected their needs.

The first issue of the new paper came out in October, 1968. We called it Last Harass. We instantly developed much support among the G.I.'s. However, we had been very loose in our organization. A 17-year-old WAC who had come to a few of our meetings was contacted by Military Intelligence and became an informer. Since she was very naive and did not understand fully the political nature of our work, she was easily misled into working for MI. She told them where the paper was produced and who was involved. Some of the main people in the group were immediately shipped to other forts and overseas. But we had already made many solid contacts through the paper, and despite the mass "deportation" we were much stronger than before.

Because of our experience we tightened up the organization and brought people into the group only after we knew them better and felt we could trust them. We clearly explained to them who we were (i.e., there is a communist in the group), what the Army wanted to do to us or anyone that joined us, etc. We felt that we had to know them, and they had to know us.

This is a different approach altogether from that of the various Trotskyite sects, who have recently set up lavish apparatuses for "doing G.I. work." The right-wing Trotskyites, the Socialist Workers Party, and its youth group, Young Socialist Alliance, had failed to attract any kind of support on campuses and factories. They therefore decided to make this the "Year of the G.I." It thus became a real contest to see if they or the Army would screw the most G.I.'s. Here are some of the activities these fake socialists promote among the G.I.'s.

1. G.I.-civilian antiwar demonstrations in which G.I.'s are encouraged to publically take part and speak.

2. Petition campaigns on post over G.I. grievances.

3. Public G.I. meetings on post easily observed by Army Intelligence.

4. Legal defense for G.I.'s caught taking part in public activities.

Their call for these demonstrations only promotes illusions among the men. They imply that all we have to do is come out en masse and then our good-hearted rulers will at last realize that they have made a mistake and pull out of Vietnam. But in fact we have seen many mass demonstrations since 1964—some with over 500,000 people in them—yet none of these have had any impact on our rulers. The ruling class is not afraid of large groups of people held together by the ideology of pacifism.

Every public demonstration held in the Army just gets more G.I.'s spotted by G2 and MI and thus lends them a helping hand in keeping the movement under surveillance and under control. This allows them to bust up the G.I. groups with ease. The few men that are persuaded to take part in such demonstrations soon get arrested. The SWP-YSA then comes to their



Dennis Davis, ex-PFC

aid with legal defense. In other words, having lied to you that you can rely on the "integrity" of the Army and demonstrate, they now tell you after you get arrested you can put your life in the hands of the courts of the ruling class that makes huge profits off the war in Vietnam (and will love you for opposing their huge profits). In other words it is not the system

that is bad, but merely the military. We can rely on the "good" ruling class civilian courts to protect us from the "bad" (ruling class) military.

The SWP-YSAers knew clearly that the consequences of such public G.I. activities would be busts, even though the few G.I.'s that were misled by them did not. But it got the SWP-YSAers what they wanted: a lot of publicity from the bourgeois press. Built up by such bourgeois organs as the New York Times and Guardian as the main organizers within the Army, they hope to use this prestige as a wedge into the student and working-class movements they are so isolated from now.

The SWP-YSAers actually serve the ruling class and are the enemies of the G.I.'s and the working-class movement in general because their strategy and tactics completely deny the truth that the state is a repressive force of the ruling class. But we cannot expect the ruling class to allow us to build a mass anti-ruling-class movement within their army. To build this movement we must rely on the G.I.'s and not on the Constitution. But all the Trotskyites, the SWP-YSAers and Youth Against War and Fascism, have their real faith in the bourgeois courts, the bourgeois laws and the bourgeois press to build a so-called antibourgeois movement.

The SWP policy shows them up as extreme opportunists. They don't care what they lead the G.I.'s to do. For example, YSA claimed to have organized a public teach-in demonstration on the base at Fort Jackson. After all, G.I.'s have the "constitutional right" to express their ideas! But the military brass exercised its even more powerful constitutional right and arrested all the leaders of the teach-in demonstration. This didn't hurt the YSA-SWP gang, since now they had some publicity fodder. This is a typical example.

Since they pass themselves off as communists, the effect is to turn soldiers away from socialism, and this only helps to perpetuate imperialism. So we must fight to expose and kick out the Trots wherever they go.

The second issue of Last Harass completely caught the Army off guard. They had hoped their actions after the first issue had either wiped us out or at least intimidated us. But because we refused to be intimidated, were self-critical towards the work we had done before and were willing to correct our mistakes, we grew and became stronger. We relied on the G.I.'s support to keep us from being detected by Army security agents. We openly explained and discussed our views with the

G.I.'s at every opportunity, struggled with them over issues like Vietnam, drugs, racism, etc., and in general had confidence in their ability to determine what is in their interest when the facts are presented.

Attack and Counterattack

Reliance on the G.I.'s stood us in good stead during the massive attack on us after the second issue of our paper came out. The names of some of our people appeared on shipping lists for Germany and Vietnam. At the same time I was notified that I was being recommended for discharge from the Army on the grounds of "unfitness." "His unfitness has been demonstrated by his participation in the publication and circulation of material containing incidents of discreditable nature and contemptuous of the President and senior military officers. This material is designed to promote and encourage unrest and disloyalty among the members of the armed forces. Additionally, he assisted a member of the Armed Forces to go AWOL."

Our plan was to counterattack by taking the issues to the G.I.'s and rely on their support for our defense. Most of them understood very clearly the reason for my discharge: The Army was scared of the truth that was presented in Last Harass. In other words they were scared to death of the mass of G.I.'s. My proposed discharge was a form of intimidation; for anyone else who attempts to organize the G.I.'s to fight in their own interest, you have this or worse in store for you. We set out to show that we couldn't be intimidated.

The Army knew that Last Harass was not just a one-man show, so their decision to discharge only me was an obvious attempt to play down the mass nature of the paper and to discredit it by saying that "the chief is a commie."

However, just the fact that the Army was attacking us was enough to get us the support of a good many G.I.'s all over the fort. Despite all the pro-Army local radio stations, tv and papers reporting the case, G.I.'s would come back from the service club saying that the band had dedicated songs to "PFC Davis and the Last Harass." The G.I.'s knew from their everyday experience that if the Army didn't like it, it couldn't be all that bad.

Army intimidation and harassment ended as we left the fort; then the local police took over. As we gathered at an apartment in Augusta to discuss our plan of action we found the place surrounded by police, Military In-

telligence agents, and civilian stakeouts. We decided to set up shop somewhere else so the paper could be kept a secret till the day of its issue. We set up operations in another part of town and diligently worked for several weeks to produce the third issue of the paper, which we planned to distribute the day of my trial. We had a relatively large number of people taking part in the production of the paper. Eleven people wrote articles for the 40-page edition and about 20 helped in other phases of the operation, with many times that number helping in distribution.

Our G.I. support became evident on the first day of the trial when we handed out the paper. Both civilian and military sympathizers came to the courtroom with copies of the latest Last Harass in their hands. Our distribution had gone completely undetected. The chief of G2 was one of the Army's witnesses. He had been overheard saying that he thought this trial would mean the end of Last Harass. Just as he finished this statement, a reporter came into the room saying that the new Last Harass was really something and that it really hit hard. The Colonel's mouth dropped and he muttered a few things like, "what Last Harass, where, uh, er, etc."

Security's failure to discover that a new issue was coming out, even though so many people had helped, and our mass distribution of the paper over the whole fort without detection, clearly showed how isolated the Army was from the mass of G.I.'s and the support we had from the G.I.'s.

G.I.'s Protect Their Paper

Last Harass was obviously not a one-man operation. But the Army attempted to make it look that way to the G.I.'s. They had a plan in bringing charges just on me. Since I was the only communist on the staff they felt they could attack me as the "leader," smear me because I am a member of the Progressive Labor Party, and try to discredit the whole antiwar, anti-imperialist movement as "traitorous." Since the whole society as well as the Army had been pumping into our heads that communism is bad and anticommunism is good, it seemed like a reasonable plan for turning the G.I.'s against the paper.

It could never have worked for anybody that had ever been close to the paper or who was in the barracks where we had people, because I had consciously made my membership in the Progressive Labor Party known. The G.I.'s association with me had been their choice.

But this attack could very well have an effect on those men who were not close to the movement. So rather than let the Army tell them what I was and how "bad" my views were, I felt the best thing was to declare my beliefs as widely as possible myself and explain the whole case. I wrote a five page article for Last Harass that explained PLP.

When I read this article to the paper's staff some were afraid of the G.I.'s reactions.

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THE BOOT FOR DENNY DAVIS

Dennis Davis is a 26-year-old person from Addison, Ill., who would have finished his two-year Army hitch as a draftee (private, first class) on April 30 if he hadn't been dealt an undesirable discharge on April 14.

Davis' offense: He was running an underground alleged newspaper called the Last Harass and circulating it in the armed forces. The sheet carried propaganda against the U.S. Vietnam war effort.

Davis' lawyer, who says he will appeal the case, also says Davis has been a member of the Progressive Labor Party since 1965. The PLP is loyal to the Chinese Communist Party. Further, Davis refused when inducted to sign the customary loyalty statement.

We wouldn't for a moment deny Davis' right to appeal. But neither should anyone deny the armed forces' right to protect themselves from subversives and traitors, and to give the grand boot to any of such persons as soon as they are discovered inside those armed forces.

The Daily Noose is lying, as usual. The Army knew about Davis' membership in PLP before it drafted him. In fact, it "investigated" him for a full-year before his induction. And of course Davis was booted not for propaganda against the war, but for organizing G.I.'s against the U.S. ruling class.

They were afraid of being openly associated with a communist on the grounds that it would isolate them from the men. Others said that to come out openly as a communist would just turn all of the G.I.'s off.

I explained that anticommunism was a method the ruling class uses to keep the working class split. They keep us isolated from the truth about communism, push into our heads that it is bad, and then when any rank-and-file movement develops to fight against their exploitation, they call it "communist" to discredit it. The way to defeat that is to accent the challenge, take your communist ideas to the people and let them make up their own minds. I further pointed out that whether I said I was a communist in our paper or not, the local newspapers were going to attack us on that ground anyway. The only choice is letting the people see what we are by getting the facts to them, or letting them look at us through the lies that the Army and the newspapers feed them.

After a long tense discussion we agreed to print my article. But since there was still some fear, the noncommunists on the staff wrote an editorial to explain that not everyone on the staff

agreed with my communist ideas.

The actual distribution of the paper was the real test of our arguments. The mass of G.I.'s read and discussed the articles in the paper and helped to distribute it over the whole fort. In many cases where copies were confiscated the G.I.'s demanded them back.

The reaction to my article was good. There were a number of discussions in various barracks of about 20 soldiers each where the G.I.'s



picked a chairman so that all the guys could democratically discuss the differences and ask their question about communism, the war, and about capitalism. There was much agreement about the rich capitalists profiting from the war while the people suffered, but most also felt that communism was "too idealistic" ("Just look around you—everybody is out for himself—it's just human nature") or communism's bad, "just look at Russia's invasion of Czechoslovakia." I told them that Russia is not a communist country but a new imperialist country, and tried to defeat the argument that everyone was always just out for himself by pointing to the working-class struggles that go on every day, where the workers are contradicting their "human nature" by fighting the boss collectively.

The guys in my barracks all got a copy of the paper on the day of my trial. Since it was illegal to distribute literature on the post without the permission of the commanding general (which obviously would never come), I had to let the guys "borrow" my copies (indefinitely of course). The next day, however, a mass meeting of all the men in the barracks was called by the C.O. He

waved a copy of Last Harass and told the meeting that this was the paper that Pfc. Davis put out. He pointed out that it was communist and proceeded to read a regulation that stated that any literature is prohibited from being distributed on post without the prior approval of the commanding general. The C.O., then told us that therefore this paper is forbidden on post.

I immediately pointed out that it was not prohibited on post, that anyone can read it and possess a copy. It was only forbidden to distribute it. I pointed out that the rule also prohibited distributing the New York Times, but that it obviously would only be enforced in the case of Last Harass.

Instead of falling for the "it's communist" line (they had all known that I was a communist for some time) a few of the G.I.'s—Vietnam veterans—told the C.O. that they were allowed to read the Communist Manifesto in high school, and that they could see no reason why there weren't capable of reading and forming their own conclusions about Last Harass.

The discussion soon got too hot for the C.O. to handle. He cut it short by saying "Well, you can't read this copy so if you want to see a copy that's between you and Pfc. Davis." He said he thought ignorance was good in certain situations and left. Immediately after this abortive meeting several of the G.I.'s who had not yet seen the paper came up to me and asked for a copy.

Mutiny in the Fort

The consensus in the barracks was that the Army was scared to death. The G.I.'s loved to see them in this position and many were wondering how we could get away with it, how come we all weren't in jail. I gave the obvious answer: "Because we all stuck together." One G.I. came up to me and told me that he respected what I was doing because "it took a lot of guts to stand up to those bastards like that." I could only point out that I would never have stood up to those bastards had I been alone, that you can only begin to stand up to them as we begin to stick together.

After my first day in court about 10 people were called in by the Colonel for questioning. He was looking for someone to testify that I had given them a copy of Last Harass. They found one possible witness but in court he testified that "I asked Davis for a copy," which turned the tables on them.

The C.O. also looked for a fink. He walked through the barracks asking everyone if they

had read a copy of Last Harass and how they had gotten it. One G.I. admitted he had read the paper, but when the C.O. asked if Davis had given it to him he said, "Oh, I know what you want me to say. You want me to say that Davis gave it to me. Uh uh! I got mine out of the trash can."

The people who worked in the orderly room with me were all friends of mine, though we had many political differences. I had worked with some for as long as eight months. They openly associated with me, went drinking with me, even walked to lunch with me right in front of the C.O. even though I was under attack. To try to break down these friends of mine he called several into his office, one at a time, closed the door and attempted a "father-to-son" talk with each. One of his questions was, "You mean you actually made friends with Davis, even though you knew he was a communist?" When presented with the answer "yes," he would become very hot and go into his "my country right or wrong—it's your duty" routine. These father-to-son talks only isolated the C.O. even more.

Completely frustrated, the C.O. called a meeting of all the people who worked in the orderly room (except me of course). When it was assembled he read the article in the Universal Code of Military Justice that covered mutiny. After the reading he pointedly commented that the maximum penalty was death! He further pointed out that he wasn't trying to intimidate them but was only reading it for their own good so that they would know what they were getting into. I, of course, wasn't suppose to know about this meeting but I did within five minutes.

Everything else failing, they then called a meeting of all noncommissioned officers to be chaired by the Colonel himself. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Last Harass, whip up a chauvinistic spirit in these NCO's and use them to clean out the newspaper from the lower-ranking enlisted men. The main argument the Colonel used against me was that I was a communist (big news) and that was reason enough to throw me out of the Army. Since quite a few of these professional soldiers had read my article they did not fall for this and pointed out that I had made my PLP membership known to the Army a year before I was drafted, that they investigated me for a year and took me nonetheless. Now all of a sudden two weeks before his discharge he is unfit! The Colonel abruptly ended the meeting.

The Army did not leave much to chance in the courtroom. My jury consisted of three of-

ficers: a captain, a lieutenant colonel, and a second lieutenant. The lieutenant gave us all a lot of faith in the court's fairness, he spent most of the time in court in a state half way between asleep and awake. The only time we could be sure he was awake was during the coffee break.

G.I.'s Pack the Courtroom

The Army had the jury but we had the G.I.'s behind us. There was always a gallery of G.I.'s and also some civilian friends in the courtroom during the four days of the trial. Prior to this, the presence of G.I.'s in a military courtroom at Ft. Gordon was unheard of. Since the trial was held during duty hours most of the men on post could not come. However there were some G.I.'s who worked nights. It was these night workers that came to the courtroom. On several occasions during the trial, groups of six or eight G.I.'s would walk into the courtroom in single file, sit down and watch the proceedings.

The case thus became very embarrassing to the Army. The G.I.'s could analyze the facts presented, watch the Army's maneuvering and in general see the class nature of the court. Their laughter became very embarrassing. (You just don't laugh at officers, especially colonels.) My civil libertarian lawyer, concerned about offending the jury, suggested that it would be good if I instructed my "followers" not to laugh at the Government witnesses! The Army helped my lawyer with this problem. When the next day of the trial came up, some of these G.I.'s had been conveniently switched to the day shift.

For over a week and a half I waited for the decision of the jury. (It normally took five to thirty minutes for them to announce the decision in other cases.) Then I was suddenly notified that I had been given an undesirable discharge and was to be off the fort for good by 4 P.M. that day. Discharged soldiers are ordinarily given about a week to process off the fort. I was given five hours. They assigned a sergeant to drive me around to clear the post. I was dropped outside the gate with all my bags at 4:45 that afternoon.

The Army's fear of communist ideas and of someone that would attempt to put these ideas into practice was the basis of the Title 18 I received along with my undesirable discharge. The Title 18 made it clear that if I was ever caught on the premises of Fort Gordon I could be fined \$500 and given a six month jail sentence.

The New York Times gave the following ex-

planation for my undesirable discharge:

"...A military discharge under less than honorable conditions, the lawyer said, is frequently a bar to civilian employment.

"Army spokesmen said that General Tillson could have discharged Private Davis on the ground of 'unfitness' specified in the order published at Fort Gordon today but under 'honorable' or 'general' conditions.

"The harsher undesirable discharge, how-

ever, according to Major Richard Lamb, the camp's public information officer foreclosed Private Davis from continuing his 'antimilitary organizing activities' in the Army Reserve or the National Guard."

Clearly the Army does not want me to organize in the reserves because of its fear that my communist ideas would receive much support there also.

G.I. COFFEE AND COP-OUT JOINTS

In many towns near army bases "antiwar" coffeehouses are popping up. Their purpose, according to the owners, is to organize G.I.'s by getting them to come to these coffeehouses to discuss the war, racism, etc. But in reality these places serve the ruling class in two ways: as a place to cop-out, and as a cop.

Many G.I.'s are looking for a way out. The coffeehouse pulls off the few "politically conscious" G.I.'s and offers them a comfortable, nonhostile atmosphere to escape into every night. Most of the G.I.'s frequenting these coffeehouses are in honest search for a solution. But the most important thing pushed in these joints is the drug culture. The atmosphere is usually psychedelic escapist. The G.I.'s are constantly being bombarded with drugs. Many at Fort Hood's Oleo Strut only come in order to make a connection.

A group of G.I.'s from Fort Gordon visited the UFO coffeehouse in Columbia, S.C., much to their disappointment. They all immediately noticed the passive do-nothing attitude of everyone there. The coffeehouse was also an attraction for the local hippies and pushers, who made it their hangout. When we asked the UFO owners what kind of issues they discussed with the G.I.'s their response was, "Oh, that's not my bag. Personally I would like to set up some kind of art store." In other words, the people who are picked to staff these coffeehouses are basically concerned about themselves and not the mass of soldiers.

Many G.I.'s wouldn't even enter the place; they just looked through the windows as at a freak. Thus the coffeehouse not only kept the working-class G.I.'s separated from some of the more honest politically-conscious G.I.'s who were there, but it served to divide the antiwar G.I. movement from the local working class and the people in general.

Another dangerous aspect of the coffeehouse concept is that it encourages everyone to gather in the hottest spot possible in order to "organize." The houses are open to all, including Government agents, and they are constantly watched by Military Intelligence. Everyone that is against the war and plans to attend might just as well register directly with Army Intelligence.

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