

trol. Echoes of the problem are heard from time to time at the U.N., but it will be light years before the MNCs are regulated by treaties or international conventions; trade unions are only now beginning to work out plans for joint action in dealing with corporations that play workers of one nation against those of another. The fact that their activities may be a force making for an increasingly integrated world economy should not blind us to the fact that the MNCs currently exercise vast power without public accountability.

Even granting that they may be a force for peace—despite past history and recent disclosures of ITT opera-

tions in Chile—a number of questions remain: what kind of peace? maintained in whose interest? by what means? with what social, political and economic consequences? The MNCs have never been given a mandate to function as international economic stabilizers or guardians of the peace; these are functions they assert, not functions delegated to them. The immediate problem is to launch a comprehensive in-depth analysis of their far-ranging intricate operations and the consequences thereof. The curtain-lifting inquiries now under way will at best merely set the stage for the large-scale continuing investigation that should follow. □

THE TRUTH ABOUT DESERTERS

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Myths abound about deserters. A colorful Howard Johnson's place mat warns diners on the New Jersey Turnpike that picking up hitchhikers can be dangerous—many of them are AWOLs. Even liberal Sen. Philip A. Hart characterized AWOLs at the Kennedy hearings on the draft and amnesty last spring as "guys who take off with the company cash."

In the growing debate over amnesty in the new cease-fire period, everyone is getting into the anti-AWOL act. In a carefully orchestrated media campaign, Administration spokesmen, including columnist William S. White, White House special counsel Charles W. Colson, and speechwriter Patrick S. Buchanan, have tried to minimize the number of deserters and to label them "malingerers, opportunists, criminals and cowards." Even the usually moderate editorial page of *The New York Times*, in discussing amnesty (February 23), draws "a sharp distinction between them [draft resisters] and those who deserted the Armed Forces."

On the surface, those who degrade deserters seem to have a solid case. They point out that unlike draft evaders, AWOLs have already taken an oath to serve their country; many of them have criminal records, or are fleeing prosecution. They add that legal avenues of redress of grievances were open to them. Finally, and most significantly, they claim that the motivations of deserters were neither conscientious nor pure. In support of this final point, one of great rhetorical strength in the amnesty debate, they often allude to or quote Pentagon studies from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs [OASD(M&RA)] that purport to show that only 5 per cent of all deserters were motivated by anti-war feelings.

These myths are held for various reasons. Most of the public is simply ignorant about AWOLs. They rely on

World War II clichés and stereotypes of the bad guy slinking away from his buddies under fire. Or, lacking the data or background to challenge them, they simply accept official explanations. Some politicians inadvertently add fuel to the myths when, hoping to appear reasonable and pragmatic, they speak about amnesty for draft resisters, but neglect deserters in order to gain support.

The current Administration campaign to disparage deserters and perpetuate misconceptions is another matter. [See "What Nixon Forgets: Congress Bestows Amnesty" by Harrop A. Freeman, *The Nation*, March 26.] By portraying the number of deserters at large as insignificant, and impugning their motives as confused at best, but more likely as dishonorable and criminal, the Administration hopes in one blow to discredit its amnesty opposition, justify its war policies, and cover up longstanding abuses in the armed forces.

In this climate, we need a fresh, hard look at deserters. The facts are difficult to come by, but they clearly explode all of the old myths. First, it must be emphasized that the term "deserter" is simply a convenience. It is used by the military to refer to those persons who have been absent without leave for a period of thirty days or more, been dropped from the rolls of their unit, and then *administratively* classified as deserters for purposes of record keeping, notification of the FBI, etc. No person absent without leave is legally a deserter until convicted of that offense under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Desertion, as an offense, requires an *intent* to remain away from the military permanently, and is rather difficult to prove. Thus Pentagon statistics about deserters refer only to those persons who have been dropped from their unit rolls, and do not include a far larger number of persons who at any given time are AWOL for less than one month.

The number of deserters during the Vietnam era is staggering and is probably underreported. From fiscal 1965 through early fiscal 1973 (August 1, 1964-December 31, 1972) the Pentagon reports 495,689 cases of desertion, not counting the Coast Guard. Of these cases, the Pentagon claims that more than 90 per cent have returned to military control (either by apprehension or

voluntarily) and that only 32,718 are still at large. Even accepting Pentagon figures for the moment, we can quickly understand the current Administration attempts to vilify deserters. In addition to the well-known GI movement, another significant segment of the armed forces (about 5 per cent of the Army and Marines) protested the war the best way they knew how—by leaving.

If one considers that in 1971 in the Army alone, 79,000 soldiers, or nearly six full divisions (7.3 per cent of all Army personnel), deserted, the problem becomes clear. This desertion rate was more than triple the highest rate during the Korean War. It was also much higher than any rate recorded for World War II, when a greater percentage of U.S. troops were in combat zones and there were no one-year rotations. If it is kept in mind that low-ranking soldiers and those in combat-arms units are most likely to desert (only about one in ten GIs engage in combat), it is evident that in some Army units desertion reached *epidemic* proportions during the war in Vietnam.

If one adds the short-term AWOL rate in the Army (17.7 per cent in 1971) to the desertion rate (there is some overlap for those who had multiple AWOLs or went AWOL before deserting), nearly one-quarter of all GIs walked away from their units for periods ranging from a couple of weeks to years. What were they escaping from? Given the unpopularity of the war at home, the reports of maltreatment and mismanagement of personnel throughout the Vietnam era, a massive GI movement, and desertion rates far higher than for any previous war, one would assume that desertion was related to anti-war feeling. In fact, the rates match escalation and de-escalation in Indochina in an almost perfect bell curve. For instance, in 1972, when the air war was escalated and received more national attention, Air Force desertion rates doubled from the year before.

Not so, says the Pentagon. The official Department of Defense Information Guidance Series claims:

It is human nature that the grass somewhere else sometimes appears greener. Since the beginning of military forces, the urge to "go over the hill" has been more than some could resist. The reasons are also as old as man: financial or family troubles, romantic involvements, earlier misconduct that led to disciplinary action, inability to adjust to military life or family pressures before going overseas. . . . Only a small percentage . . . of the deserters who have fled to a foreign country in recent years have been motivated by political reasons or anti-Vietnam feeling.

Col. Victor A. DeFiori, the Pentagon AWOL expert and spokesman, points to the now widely quoted studies from his office at OASD(M&RA) that show that "only 5 per cent" of those who desert are motivated by anti-war feelings. The Pentagon studies deserve close analysis, since they are the only official studies of desertion available. The methodology, assumptions and interpretation of findings used by the Department of Defense would cause any self-respecting sociologist to go AWOL from the profession.

Although many, if not a majority, of those who desert remain within the United States by going "underground" in large cities or even in their home towns, the samples

used in the studies are based on servicemen who are known to have deserted or have attempted to desert to foreign countries. Maj. Gen. Leo S. Benade, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, added confusion about the source of the studies when he testified at the Kennedy hearings that the surveys were based on 660 of those returned to military control from overseas. This kind of questioning in the face of penalties would have been enough to discredit the study. In appendices to the hearings, however, Benade disclosed that he had been in error, and that the motivation studies were based only on reports from commanders in the field who estimate a man's motivation for leaving through an investigation of statements, interviews with friends, etc. These reports are then filed with OASD(M&RA) on Form DD-N(A) 1039. These reports have been required only since December 24, 1970, and are entitled "U.S. Military Absentees Who Have Placed or Have Attempted to Place Themselves Under Control of a Foreign Nation to Protest Against the U.S. or Commit Disloyal Acts." Thus, given the method of collecting data—the compilation of estimates of motivation by field commanders—and realizing that such information became desirable only as political exiles received attention, the Pentagon studies can be seen as a collection of unsupported impressions. They are not even as solid as the answers would have been from those returning to military control—the method presumed by many persons to have been used after General Benade's testimony.

Given all these inadequacies, the Pentagon studies still reveal some astonishing conclusions. Only one-third of the sample had had previous "disciplinary or administrative action" taken against them. And, it must be remembered, upward of 80 per cent of all military courts-martial are for the "crime" of going AWOL. Other military crimes include such vague acts as "disrespect to a superior officer," or the famous catchall of military justice, "all other acts prejudicial to good order and discipline." This provision, Article 134 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, caught many an anti-war GI in its disciplinary dragnet, and only recently was struck down as unconstitutionally vague by the Washington Court of Appeals.

The reasons for desertion offered in the survey break down as follows: 47.5 per cent, no reason stated; 20 per cent, aliens, or to live with an alien spouse; 10 per cent, under charges or investigation, or escaped from confinement; 5 per cent, Vietnamese War; 4 per cent, family, financial, or personal; 2.5 per cent, claimed C.O. or pacifistic beliefs; 3.5 per cent, inability to adjust to military life; 5 per cent, fear of being killed; 7 per cent, miscellaneous.

If we neglect the 20 per cent aliens as an untypical distortion due to sampling, the Pentagon either does not know the motivations of nearly half the deserters, or they supplied reasons that, to the average mind, are clearly anti-war or anti-military. ("Inability to adjust" might be better translated as, "My drill sergeant was driving me crazy," or "I just had to get out of the Army.") Only 4 per cent are listed under the widely trumpeted and "time-honored" personal reasons. In short, even if the meth-

odology of the Pentagon's study were sound, its conclusions are virtually useless as an indicator of deserter motivation. If anything, they show that GIs did *not* desert simply because "the grass is greener." Privately, Colonel DeFiori admits that motivations are extremely difficult to determine, especially on the basis of such field reports. He adds that the attempt to distinguish between the motivations of draft evaders and deserters is bound to be a futile exercise.

Department of Defense statistics on the numbers of deserters are presented with an equal aura of infallibility, but are equally suspect. On January 1, 1972, OASD (M&RA) released untotaled figures showing the number of deserters from fiscal 1959 through the first few months of fiscal 1972. These were broken down into armed forces members dropped from units and returned to military control by service and year. The figures for those dropped from fiscal 1965-early fiscal 1972 added up to 421,104, while those returned, when added up, came to only 286,625. These figures would indicate that as of January 1972, there were 134,479 deserters at large.

When questioned about this discrepancy, Lt. Col. James Heinbaugh of OASD(M&RA) stated, "That chart is now marked, 'not to be used, inaccurate.' We no longer give the breakdown figures by year for numbers returned to military control. You have the last chart of that type." The chart, however, exactly matches current figures from DOD on numbers *dropped* from unit rolls, which are still given by year. Only the numbers *returned* and the num-



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bers *still at large* are no longer offered by year. They are available only in summary. The conclusions to be drawn are obvious and ominous. Either Pentagon record-keeping from 1958-72 was inaccurate to the tune of 100,000 deserters, or the current figures of those returned to military control have been manipulated to hide a massive problem and serve political ends.

Even if one believes the notion of previous book-keeping errors and accepts the current figure of 32,718 deserters at large, that figure, too, is open to serious question. The Pentagon likes to pretend that it has a

perfect record of the more than 8 million Vietnam-era GIs. This is simply not the case: the recent return of a POW who had been officially buried is but one graphic example of the fallibility of Pentagon records.

Jon Landau, staff attorney for the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO) in Philadelphia, has handled countless returning AWOL cases and has been in touch with other attorneys and counselors. He states, "I'm personally aware of at least twenty cases where returning AWOLs gave themselves up only to find no personnel records of them at all. Other times, the base where a serviceman returns has to communicate with a man's previous unit for information, even though it's supposed to be in Washington." Other military counselors report similar experiences, including numbers of men who were never reported AWOL at all. Rev. L. William Yolton of the Presbyterian Church Emergency Ministry on Conscience and War, says, "Just recently, I counseled with a young woman who was receiving a dependent's allowance the whole time her husband was in Canada." Given incidents like these, and the general unreliability of Pentagon paperwork in the war years, from civilians at My Lai listed as "128 VC killed" through GIs sent home to await orders which they never received, the Pentagon figure of 32,718 deserters at large must be seen as a rather shaky *minimum*. And, if the suddenly withdrawn records are correct, there may be 134,000 or more deserters still at large. Similarly, the number of deserters reported by the Pentagon to be in foreign countries is far larger than the 2,705 or so currently claimed. This number counts only those persons whose whereabouts are, *officially known* to the Department of Defense through investigation and intelligence services. Obviously, large numbers of deserters have been remiss in reporting changes of address.

Whatever the true number of deserters still at large—and they are great enough to cause high-ranking heads to roll in any other army—why do so many service personnel go AWOL? Those in a position to know best are the deserters themselves, other GIs, and the military counselors who have maintained a flourishing practice during recent years. Attorney Robert S. Rivkin, author of *GI Rights and Army Justice* and *The Rights of Servicemen*, served in legal services as an enlisted man and currently defends GIs in Germany for the Lawyers Military Defense Committee of the ACLU. He writes, "Experience has taught us that many GIs are away without leave because of something the military did or failed to do."

Thus, in addition to anti-war feelings that are prevalent in most returning AWOLs seen by military counselors, many GIs were finally motivated to leave because of lack of proper discharges, physical, psychological or racial abuse, improper medical treatment, unfair disciplinary actions, and other failings of the massive and impersonal military bureaucracy. Their individual stories vary, but most originally enlisted in the armed forces, come from working-class families, and do not articulate their feelings well. The main difference between them and the middle-class draft resisters is that often they object only *after* their direct experience of war or life in the armed forces. By then, their legal options and access to outside

support and expertise are severely limited. With only a drill sergeant, or unfriendly commander, or career chaplain to turn to, they leave. Like so many refugees, they have voted with their feet.

Take Archie, a Memphis youth recruited into the Marines despite periods of blacking out and a hearing impairment. At boot camp, Archie was continually beaten and abused because drill sergeants thought he was faking when he passed out. So he went AWOL. Finally picked up by the FBI, he was sent to the Philadelphia Naval Base, where he was thrown into the brig despite a physician's recommendation. There he blacked out again, was beaten and thrown under a scalding shower by a guard for his "faking." He was then hospitalized and received death threats if he talked. Finally, Archie was discharged as "undesirable."

Or Tom, a black Marine from Philadelphia who had to quit high school to help his mother, on welfare, raise nine other children. He joined the Marines to earn money. When his wife began having complications with her pregnancy, Tom went to his drill sergeant for help, but got none. It was then that he left Camp Lejeune to support his mother and expectant wife. Someone in his neighborhood thought it would be "best" if he were reported. It wasn't long before the FBI picked him up and returned him to face general court-martial charges.

Stuart is another to whom legal redress was unavailable or improperly denied. He slowly developed conscientious objection to war and requested discharge when his ship at New London, Conn. was armed with nuclear-tipped missiles. The *Welsh* decision broadening C.O. status to persons whose objections were not religious had yet to be handed down, so Stuart could not qualify for discharge. Like many others he faced an almost impossible choice of up to five years of hard labor in a military prison or violating his conscience. He left.

Although Louie had applied for C.O. status from his local draft board (he was turned down) and had been part of an apprentice program in a machine shop (worth a 2-A deferment), he was drafted and sent to Fort Dix. Objecting to war in the first place and feeling that he shouldn't be there at all, Louie soon left Fort Dix and returned to his home town near Harrisburg, Pa. He tried to begin life again, but eventually the FBI began to close in. Louie was lucky; he came to a military counselor who discovered that, like many young men, he had been illegally drafted. A federal judge freed Louie on a writ of *habeas corpus* within a matter of hours. But he and his young wife could never regain the time lost at Fort Dix, or the months of hell as the FBI closed in.

Scott is typical of the many Vietnam veterans who deserted after they got back to the States. (The problem was so severe that in 1971 the Army quickly dropped its one experiment with allowing Vietnam GIs a mid-tour leave to the continental United States. He had enlisted in the Marines from Peoria. Soon he was fighting along the DMZ where his position was overrun the first week. Scott has a formidable collection of medals to show for his bravery, but as he fought he became sickened by killing, especially the senseless destruction and killing of civilians by U.S. troops. He turned to his chaplain for help, explaining that he could no longer kill, and wanted out. But

he was simply told to stick it out; no mention of C.O. discharges. Like many soldiers in Vietnam, he turned to drugs for escape and became dependent. Upon his return to the States, he again turned to a chaplain for help with his drug problem and his feelings against war, but was merely advised to pray. In desperation, he went AWOL and sought drug counseling. He shook his habit, and then turned to military counselors for help. Despite counseling and an excellent war record, he, too, received an undesirable discharge. Even if a GI is "lucky" enough upon his return to receive an undesirable discharge in lieu of court-martial and stockade time, he is branded for life.

Dan was thrown into the Camp Pendleton brig on a minor charge. Like a number of prisoners there in the late 1960s, he was beaten and hanged by his wrists on a fence for long periods of time. He developed severe psychological problems and went AWOL to Canada. Like many deserters in Canada, he was unable to make it in a strange country and returned to military control despite his hatred and fear of stockades. He too was discharged as undesirable. Since then, he has bounced from one menial job to another and continually threatens suicide. He is barred from VA benefits and very few employers will hire him. Even fewer people seem to care about his days hanging from the fence at Camp Pendleton.

All of these men should have been easily and honorably discharged when their problems first arose, but like most AWOLs they were the unfortunate victims of a policy of retaining personnel at any cost. Although the number of administrative discharges rose rapidly in 1971 as the armed forces tried to reach the reduced force levels ordered by Congress, and have shown a rapid increase in the Navy recently as racial problems remain unresolved, proper discharges were given in miserly fashion. [See "Administrative Discharges: The 'Less Than Honorable' Solution" by John Grady, *The Nation*, February 19.]

One instructor at the Army's Adjutant General's Corps School at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Ind., where personnel officers are trained, bragged that while stationed at Fort Sill, Okla. "he had never let a single discharge get through his office." His attitude—that most GIs seeking discharge are merely shirkers—is not atypical, despite regulations that provide for discharge in a number of clear-cut cases. But even these provisions are not publicized by the armed forces, and are often unknown to GIs.

In order to fill this gap, CCCO had to print and distribute free to GIs thousands of booklets on each of the five types of discharge. Even then, despite a Supreme Court ruling, *Flower v. U.S.*, permitting leafletting on open bases, the Army went to court to bar distribution of pamphlets that merely explain the legal rights to discharge. Only recently was the Army overruled in *CCCO v. Fellows*, and distribution of information on discharges permitted.

The results of these policies have been disastrous. For example, the discharge available for persons who become C.O.s after entry to active duty is not even mentioned in the curriculum at the Adjutant General's School, and most GIs still believe, incorrectly, that it is impossible

to get out if you did not declare C.O. status to your draft board. Despite this, more than 8,000 GIs applied for C.O. discharge, while thousands more were intimidated after an initial inquiry by being told no such provisions existed. Or they found that their paperwork mysteriously was lost or arbitrarily denied at the local level. Until federal court intervention in the process in 1969, almost all applications that reached the Pentagon were turned down. Thousands of other GIs, of course, never qualified at all because the courts still do not recognize objection to a particular war. Many of these GIs, faced with harsh sentences in military stockades, or violating their consciences, simply went AWOL.

The record is similar with other discharges for erroneous induction/enlistment, hardship, medical or psychological problems. Dr. Curtis Tarr testified before Senator Kennedy's hearings on the draft in 1972 that large numbers of men had been illegally drafted. The Gates Commission, among others, reported that before recent pay raises, many GIs were destitute and living on welfare. Dr. Peter Bourne has written that the psy-

chological stresses of basic training are even more severe than those experienced in combat. And, of course, reports of racial abuse, stockade beatings, spinal meningitis, and lack of medical care were rampant. Peter Barnes observes in *Pawns: The Plight of the Citizen Soldier* that "every week at Fort Dix, New Jersey, the Army's major Northeastern training base, there are an average of four suicide attempts. . . . Nine actual suicides occurred at Fort Dix in 1968."

It is no wonder that the Nixon Administration is trying to discredit deserters. To acknowledge their true numbers and their real motivations would require an admission that massive numbers of ordinary, enlisted GIs rejected the war, and that countless thousands were denied humane treatment and legal discharges by a military that felt it could keep its troops in the field only by fear and force. If the truth were known about deserters, the Administration might be forced to consider sweeping changes in military justice and personnel policies—including, not insignificantly, the right to dissent from war, and the right to quit one's job. □

NEW CHAVEZ STRATEGY

ARIZONA FACES A RECALL

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Gubernatorial recall elections are as rare as buffaloes in the American political landscape. So the fact that a farm worker-led coalition in Arizona is about to force the first such election in forty years, and the second ever, is a remarkable event.

But far more is at stake in Arizona than the election itself. What began as a protest against a farm labor law has evolved into a campaign to create a new political force in a conservative Republican stronghold.

The recall was sparked last May by Gov. Jack Williams' refusal to veto a law which prohibits boycotts and strikes during harvests—both major weapons of the United Farm Workers Union—and limits the union's power to organize in the fields. Since Cesar Chavez dramatically initiated the recall drive with a twenty-four-day fast, environmentalists, women's rights groups and educators have joined the effort. On March 26, the recall forces filed petitions with 150,000 signatures, far above the 103,000 required to force an election.

In many respects the strength of this unique coalition is still nebulous, and its political power can probably be ascertained only after the election. With legal complications threatening months of delay, recall forces are now focusing their resources on organizing for 1974.

Achievement of the initial political base was greatly aided by a walking tour of the state by the recall's designated candidate for governor, Gerald Pollock, 40, a lib-

eral Phoenix attorney and twice unsuccessful candidate for the House against Rep. John J. Rhodes, a Republican. Pollock's attacks on Governor Williams have emphasized the Governor's "lack of leadership" in areas of welfare, environment, taxes and education.

It is the hope of many recall proponents that ultimately, when the movement attains greater strength, it will merge with the Democratic Party and assume a leadership role. Others feel that working as a separate liberal force at the perimeter of the party enables the movement to remain a catalyst for change while not directly aligning itself with the political establishment. Retaining the union identification, it is argued, would permit money to be raised outside the state through the union.

At present, the conservative and moderate wing which dominates the state Democratic Party views the recall as almost catastrophic to the party. The recall's response has been that for years there has been no Democratic Party to destroy, and that they are simply starting from point zero and building upward. The party has fallen into near lethargy in the face of Republican inroads, and the recall movement has consistently confronted Republican roadblocks through court and legislative battles.

Republican opposition has been strong and well publicized by the state's dominant daily newspaper tandem, the *Arizona Republic* and the *Phoenix Gazette*, an aggressively conservative press run by Eugene C. Pulliam. The Governor has said almost nothing publicly about the recall, but has allowed Republican surrogates to carry the ball. "Here you have a governor not popular in his own party," says Herbert Ely, a Phoenix attorney

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