

MOBILIZATION DIRECT ACTION PROJECT

PART I

The National Mobilization has, on several occasions, reaffirmed its commitment to develop a strategy of sustained confrontation with the warmakers. The central long term assessments which underly such a strategy are threefold. 1) The grass-roots opposition to the war is sufficiently widespread that, if properly mobilized, it is capable of seriously impeding the war effort, not merely protesting it. 2) If an arena of action, alternative to Johnson's "dance of death", is properly placed before the American people, a sufficiently large segment will choose such an arena of life so as to make continuation of the war impossible. 3) Any program capable of moving people in this direction will, by its very nature, also educate people in the directions of social change and acceptance of increased responsibility for such change. That power of confrontation strategy as a means of educating people about issues and moving them to action has been amply demonstrated by the Freedom movement. This educational function must remain central in all of our thinking and planning.

When an attempt is made to translate this commitment to a strategy of confrontation into more immediate, programmatic terms a number of short term considerations and goals emerge which impose natural boundary lines within which such a program must lie. I shall attempt to summarize the major points that have so emerged after several weeks of consultation with various individuals and groupings within the peace and freedom movement, and to outline a program of actions which fall within these boundaries.

The theme must be so defined that a maximum number of people can relate to it emotionally or intellectually even if they cannot participate programmatically. It must be as simple as possible for ease of communication.

The physical target or targets must be chosen so that a small group of people can execute a significant action. At the same time, the targets must also be relevant to groups from different regions, draft resisters, veterans, professionals, Black Americans, etc.

The most stringent requirements apply to the possible program of action themselves.

- 1) The program must be of sufficient militancy to reflect the growing strength and commitment of the movement and to capture the attention of the country. As much as possible, it must be oriented around demands rather than requests or protests.
- 2) The actions must be easily explainable and easily repeatable. The possibility of establishing a simple pattern of action is essential if we hope to be able to sustain it and build on it for October 21 and after.
- 3) The actions should be a stimulant to local and regional activity. For this, and other reasons, the actions should not make large manpower demands for their effective execution.
- 4) The action must be conceived and executed as an integral part of an over-all program of which the October 21 confrontation is a key part.

PART II

One of the most impressively dynamic parts of the peace movement in the past several months has been the resistance to the draft, despite the great personal risks involved for participants and organizers. The rest of the peace community, however, has been at a loss for a strategy other than support of resisters (when possible) and the circulation of "advocacy and complicity" statements. The organized efforts of adult support groups are absolutely essential so long as young draftable men are allowed to carry the major burden of the struggle. However, it is not surprising that these efforts lack the

dynamism and directness of the draft resistance movement itself. It seems completely obvious that a logical and necessary position for the entire peace community to take is: "no more boys for Vietnam. We need them at home." We must be willing to say to the congress and the Johnson Administration, with as much force and commitment as shown by the draft resister: We will not let you take our boys to fight in this stupid, barbarous, illegal war. Until we take this position, we are pursuing the same policy as the government. We place our young men, the draft resisters, on the front line of our battle and cheer them on safely from the sidelines.

The natural targets for such a campaign are those instruments of government directly responsible for creating and executing manpower procurement policy.

A) The Armed Services Committees of the House and Senate.

B) The Selective Service Headquarters

It is a fortunate circumstance that, due to the physical set-up of each of these places, a small group of people willing to risk arrest can impede their proper functioning.

I propose that the action in Washington, D.C. begin when Congress reconvenes on September 11, following the Labor Day recess. At that time, and for a period of about two weeks, small groups should begin to visit both Armed Services Committees with specific proposals centered on abolishing the draft. These groups should be prepared to demand that they be heard and given priority over all other business of the committee. Assuming, as will certainly be the case, that the groups will not even receive an opportunity to present their case, we would be compelled to move to the second phase of our action. Namely; to disrupt and, if possible, to close down the Selective Service Headquarters. The timetable here suggested would involve about two weeks of activity at the Congressional Committees and a maximum of three weeks at Selective Service Headquarters prior to October 16 when the large draft resistance demonstrations are planned.

As this action gains visibility, it will serve as an impetus for local actions aimed at closing down draft boards, induction centers, recruiting stations, and so on. It will also set the national stage for the October 16 action of draft resisters as well as the October 21 confrontation in Washington, D.C.

If this program is to be adopted, a great deal of preparation can and should be started as soon as possible.

1) Organizing the groups that will be willing to go to Washington and establishing tentative dates.

2) Preparations can be made to visit the local offices of Senators and Congressmen when they come home for their Labor Day recess (Sept. 1 - Sept. 11). The confrontation can start at that time.

3) Special groups may draw up specific demands and courses of action particular to their own interests, eg.; a) Parents of sons between 18 and 21 years of age might be prepared to exercise their responsibilities as legal guardians in creative ways. This could include the stand that they will not permit any communications from the S.S. Boards to reach their sons, as well as the demand that the Boards cease all communication with their sons. This could become an issue for signature gathering as well as delegations to Washington. b) Vietnam Veterans opposed to the war might demand that they be allowed to send a statement of their own to all draftable men on the S.S. rolls.

Much more work can be done to develop other creative actions for young women, professionals, Black Americans and other groupings. I believe that with proper planning such a program designed to physically stop the induction of our young men into the armed forces can become the "freedom rides" of the Peace movement. The Armed Services Committee rooms, the Selective Service offices in Washington and locally can become the counterparts of the "lunch counters" of the South.

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Preliminary Draft

THE PEACE FORCE: A PROGRAM FOR DIRECT ACTION AND RADICAL EDUCATION

Submitted to the Spring Mobilization Committee by Robert Greenblatt

It is an ever more widely recognized fact that the unilateral U.S. intervention in Vietnam is not an aberration in an otherwise acceptable U.S. foreign policy. Rather, it is an outgrowth and extreme example of an American foreign policy which, over a long period of time and under a variety of administrations, has been ready and willing to rely on the full destructive capabilities of an unprecedented and unmatched military might to enforce a narrowly defined national interest. Adopting the ostrich-like posture that social revolutions anywhere in the world constitute a threat to U.S. national security and acting unilaterally as self-appointed policemen of the world, this country has moved swiftly since World War II to replace and surpass Germany as the unprecedented threat to world peace and social progress.

Both in the formulation and execution of these policies in Vietnam and elsewhere, we have exhibited the same kind of blindness to the real problems and needs of the peoples of the world as we have to the problems and needs of segments of our own people at home. There is an alarming parallel between our policies towards the underdeveloped non-white nations of the world and the economically and politically disenfranchised non-white population at home. Cloaked in empty pieties and the rhetoric of freedom and democracy, this country is quickly becoming the Mississippi of the world. It becomes crucial, therefore, to see how well we have learned the moral and strategic lessons taught us by the civil rights movement and how capable we in the peace movement are of applying them on this larger and more critical scale.

The decision taken by the Spring Mobilization at its Workshop Conference in Washington D.C. to advocate and develop organized resistance and nonviolent direct action as part of its program was one which was forced upon the peace movement by existing political realities and not taken lightly. It is a decision absolutely necessary when the elected and appointed members of our national government violate and erode the very social contracts upon which their authority rests. For this is the true meaning of such a euphemism as "the credibility gap," the palatable name given to the structured practice of evasions, distortions and lies by public officials. Evidences of breaches in this social contract are exposed everyday in our public media. Stories of CIA subversion of our academic institutions, jingoist venom pouring forth from public officials at all levels, hysterical calls by legislators that we do away with the first amendment and similar calls by the President that we do away with both dissent and dissenters, the list could go indefinitely. But the most fundamental breach of the social contract upon which representative democracy rests took place in 1964 when we watched an incumbent President, with war maps in his pocket, cynically manipulate our earnest desires for peace by campaigning successfully on a peace platform.

The peace movement can no longer confine its program to traditional protests or electoral politics. It is foolish and may well be disastrous to confine ourselves to rules which are rejected by the political leadership of both parties and when these rejections are being institutionalized and legalized by these same leaders.

The peace movement must address itself to the task of challenging and confronting the political leadership of this country and thereby make people so fully aware of the real dangers confronting us that change will become possible. Massive nonviolent confrontation as the civil rights struggle in the South has shown, is the potential instrument for bringing about such a radical awareness. It is a strategy which is consistent with the principles of a total peace movement and may well be the ingredient without which such a movement may fail.

The basic strategic objective of massive nonviolent confrontation or structured conflict is to bring the struggles for peace and against militarism within the functioning reality of the people we are trying to reach so forcefully and so constantly that they must deal with them and make decisions about them. This effort must be accompanied by more traditional methods of political education so that the decisions are not made in a vacuum. For some, an unjust and illegal war 10,000 miles from our shores is close enough to break into our reality. Others will not take positive action until someone close is threatened by induction. Still others are awakened by a local confrontation such as the demand that the neighborhood school offer 'peace assemblies' in lieu of the military assemblies which is often the practice.

The "Peace Force", the "cutting edge" of such a movement, can only be recruited from among the young people of high school and college age. Not alone because, in the case of males, their lives are more immediately threatened, but because they are not yet cynical, because they are more impatient with sham and hypocrisy, and because they do not yet have a vested interest in preserving the status quo or defending past mistakes. It is to the youth, therefore, that a good deal of our energy and resources must be directed. At the same time, the nature of nonviolent struggle demands that this Peace Force be rooted in a wider base of support and not become isolated and cut off from the rest of the community.

It would be presumptuous to attempt to set down a detailed program for mobilizing a Peace Force. Our experience is too limited and the communities where such programs would have to start vary drastically. However, it is possible to set down some guidelines of strategy and organization to initiate the program.

A) Task Forces

A task force should consist of about a dozen or more young people and at least one experienced organizer, all working full time in a fixed neighborhood or community. This fact and the inexperience of most members of the task force in community organization sets one of the immediate ground rules.

The community selected should be one in which a peace oriented constituency already exists and to which the task force members can readily adjust (i.e. don't send an all white group of middle class college students into a non-white ghetto.). The first several weeks should be devoted to making contacts and establishing ties in the community and with existing peace groups in particular. It has been our experience with several areas of Brooklyn that these groups can be very receptive.

Another key part of this stage of the program is to solicit hosts for each worker who will furnish lodging and, where possible, meals as well. We have met with complete cooperation thus far in each of these areas and some of the women's groups are initiating small fund raising functions for us.

We are now in a position to hold meetings and begin the recruiting process. Whenever possible, we work through existing groups and help in their programs but with the clear and open understanding that we are not general purpose volunteers but a group for the intensification of peace activity to a stage of structured confrontation.

In addition to the general public meetings referred to earlier, we hold our own workshops in nonviolent strategy and tactics, organizational problems and so on. We also hold periodic meetings with our hosts and other sympathetic adults to keep them informed of our activities and allied with us. Indeed such meetings are central mechanisms for radicalizing the community and extending our base of support.

The next phase of organization should consist of orientation sessions and workshops for young people who are potential members of the task force and those who, while ready to work with the group and take part in actions that may come up, are not yet willing or able to work full time. At the same time, having gained some first hand knowledge of the community, the selection of a focal point for confrontation should begin, which must be a logical one in the local context. During all of this, there must be a continuous program of activity aimed at heightening visibility and to serve as a source of recruiting. These can range from saturation leafleting to recruiting and signature collection in "restricted" areas (e.g., schools, playgrounds), marches, picketing, sit-ins, etc. The specifics can only be determined by the strategic demands of the situation and the support built up at any given point. One fundamental guideline should be stressed: confrontations with police or other authorities should not be pursued without the presence of a sufficient number of people who have participated in non-violent orientation sessions and who are able to react as a group. While this is often the only real element of control one has once a demonstration is underway, a surprisingly small group of people can set the tone of a relatively large demonstration.

It is this last observation which forms one of the main arguments for putting a number of task forces into the field. In addition to establishing a constituency with strong community support and ready for direct action, the very existence of such a constituency becomes a political lever in itself while also making it possible to organize truly massive nonviolent direct actions that can be sustained for long periods of time.

ROLE OF SPRING MOBILIZATION

The coalition nature of the Spring Mobilization makes it, in effect, the visible national adult peace community. As such, its minimal relation to the Peace Force should be similar in spirit to that outlined between a task force and a local peace committee. But more is necessary since Mobilization is the only group that is in a position to bring such a program into existence and foster its growth by providing facilities, initial visibility, supporting cover, and technical and financial resources. At the same time, the fund raising capabilities of an organization such as Spring Mobilization is itself dependent on a visible action program. In light of this, it is more than likely that Mobilization's fund raising potential will be enhanced by its initiation and support of such a program.

At the early stages, the basic demands of any single task force would be for minimal space (phone and desk), a small literature budget for each project, and salaries for the core organizers. The group now working in Brooklyn already has eight young people fully committed to this project and receiving no salaries at all. It is also important to point out that their commitment is completely open-ended. They have taken leaves of absence from school and are prepared to work as long as it seems necessary and fruitful. In addition to this initial group, there are several other young people who are working very closely with us but who also have other commitments. Still others have expressed interest in working with us or establishing new task forces but we do not have sufficient supervisory personnel.

If the project proves as successful as is so far indicated, larger financial commitments by Mobilization would become necessary in order to encourage implementation on a much wider scale.

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The Paradox of Power

A Report from the Mobilization Direct Action Project

The events at the USN destroyer Newman K. Perry this Hiroshima day illustrate quite well the sort of non-violent confrontation which the Mobilization Direct Action Project has been experimenting with in Brooklyn since the beginning of June. We were lucky at the Newman K. Perry--our mistakes weren't noticed, while those of the Navy and the police were--but even so, the root of our success lay not in the accidents of the day, but in the theory.

In outline, we formulated a simple and reasonable demand, one uncomfortable for the established powers. The powers then had to decide whether to give in or to move us out. As soon as they decided to use force, they had lost, though several more moves were made before their loss became evident. This technique exposes the paradox of power, especially where the force on which the established powers depend is hidden behind supposed laws.

The Newman K. Perry, which had been in action off the coast of Vietnam, was opened to the public on Hiroshima day, Sunday, August 6th. We in the Direct Action Project felt that we had to counteract this attempt on the part of the government to make mass murder a Sunday-afternoon-bring-the-kids affair. In order to bring the real world to the ship's visitors, we wore ash-colored death masks as we attempted to visit the ship ourselves.

New York City has a law forbidding the wearing of masks in public. As we had expected, the police attempted to stop us with this law long before we were able to get to the ship. We had previously decided that we were not interested simply in contesting the mask law, so we removed the masks, and wore them on the backs of our heads. The police were so eager to get rid of us that they actually began to arrest us before we requested time to remove the masks.

We vigiled for about half an hour as the supporting picket line marched around us. The picketers and leafleters continued working outside the pier throughout the action, even after those wearing masks were removed, until four o'clock, when the ship closed to the public. Their presence was invaluable in informing bystanders what the ruckus was all about.

At one o'clock, when the public was allowed into the warehouse, those wearing masks got in line. To our surprise, we were let into the building.

The warehouse from which one enters the ship is a long, high building. Two ships were docked there, an Italian ship and beyond it the Newman K. Perry. It was some distance to the ship, and while we slowly marched, ringing our small bells, the police moved those behind us forward. Since very few, if any, were let inside behind us, we were soon at the very back of the line. No more than a dozen or so were let on the ship at a time, so we stood in line over an hour, while being thoroughly photographed and recorded.

Everyone ahead of us was finally let on the ship, but a chain was snapped across the gangplank when we approached. The captain of the ship came forward and announced that in view of our misconception

that a destroyer is an instrument of destruction and in order to expedite visits by the public, we would not be allowed to board. He offered to show us around the ship after the closing at four o'clock, an offer which we have learned he did not intend to keep. Our spokesman, Rod Robinson, replied that we considered ourselves a part of the public and therefore wanted no special privileges.

After we were told we could not board, we stayed in front of the gangplank. I suppose that at that point we could have been arrested for blocking, but the navy and the police had evidently decided to be cautious. Rather than clearing us away, they used as an entrance the exit gangplank, which was about ten feet away from the original entrance. After consultation, four of us moved to the other gangplank in an attempt to board. We made it quite clear that we did not wish to block navy personnel or anyone leaving the ship, but a wall of sailors was formed to separate us from the rest of the public. The sailors began pushing us back, hard enough so that we were forced to sit down to protect ourselves. The group at the original entrance also sat down. After conferring, we decided to try to join the line again. We stood up, and again the sailors, linked arm in arm, pushed us. The two girls were pushed into the paddy wagon which had by then appeared, but they quickly clambered back out. The sailors pushed us back a fair distance from the gangplank before they let up.

We held another conference and decided that Rod should request the police to restrain the navy. The police captain's reply was that his authority in the warehouse extended only to the protection of life and property in case of an actual breach of the peace. We then put on our masks, since the police apparently had no authority to stop us. A few minutes later we were arrested.

It is impossible to gauge with any accuracy our effect on the other visitors to the ship. We heard a few parents reply to their children's questions that we represented dead Vietnamese, but we also heard people calling us Communist pigs. Hopefully, the press coverage of the action will have good effects. But further, we demonstrated once again that the peace movement will not stand idle while the government tries to fool the public. I hope that the events of the day will show that the government has no compunctions about lying or locking people up when it suits their purpose. This lesson may prove of importance as we continue through resistance our drive to end the war.

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A REPORT ON THE MOBILIZATION DIRECT ACTION PROJECT

Since late May, the Mobilization Direct Action Project, which consists of ten full-time volunteer staff, one field advisor, and two part-time adult advisors, has been experimenting in building a direct action movement in the Flatbush area of Brooklyn. We have used direct action as a tool not only to reach those not yet organized, but also to increase the commitment of those already involved in local peace work.

We feel that without relevance to the community, no direct action program can be effective. Therefore, our first effort was to get to know the community as well as possible. The volunteers have lived with families in the area, and members of the project have regularly attended meetings of local peace groups to discuss reciprocal cooperation in program and activity. This cooperation has been to a large extent achieved.

During this first period of our work, we held a number of public meetings to discuss the war and actions against it. We have experimented in publicity and program depending on the audience expected.

A great number of contacts were made through our cooperation with other groups and through our meetings. These have become vital in communicating to the community our outlook and program.

We learned a great deal during the initial period of our work about the response of various groups in the community -- the organized anti-war groups, the police, minor officials, pro-war groups, etc. In particular, we found that many people in the community who considered themselves part of the peace movement were not, during the summer, stimulating visible anti-war activity. There was little adhesiveness or communication among the separate groups, and there was a general unwillingness to initiate action outside the standard peace activities.

Direct action confronts the individual with his own responsibility to either oppose evil or to tolerate it. The direct action workers place themselves in a position such that the evil will react if present. Those who observe the reaction are then forced to decide what to do. Those who decide to oppose the evil are brought into a close communication with others who have made the same decision. New forces are created, which may last after the specific action which creates them. Patterns of behavior are established which make it easier for an individual to oppose evil afterwards.

The direct action we took in Flatbush was simply to establish a peace information and recruiting table beside military recruiting stations. We made careful preparations to make our action as reasonable as possible. We informed the police and the recruiting stations in advance. We attempted to explain to the officers in the stations our reasons for the action. These preparations and others prevent the stupidity and evil of the military and the police to become lost in a mass of technicalities. We informed the community of our action in advance and invited their suggestions. It was not our intention to fool, but to expose.

As the action turned out, the major evil was most evident in the reaction of the pro-war elements in the community, rather than the police. A large crowd gathered which heckled our action and which eventually attacked several members of the Project. Two members of the Project were hit, one was dragged around a corner, and down half a block before rescued. One was shoved to the ground and kicked in the face. He spent several days in the hospital, where he was operated on for a broken nose. The police, though present, did not act in time to prevent the violence.

An emergency public meeting was called to inform the community of the violence on their streets to those exercising the rights supposedly being defended in Vietnam. A woman from the community whose son was working with the Project expressed her anger that the police could not protect her son only four blocks from his home.

From the meeting a supporting picket line was called. Eighty people marched for two hours in a light rain to protest the loss of liberties during war-time. In addition a telephone campaign was arranged to complain to the police about their inaction.

The support we received is now growing into much greater community involvement in peace activity. A new group has been formed to continue the table which led to the attacks. This group is also interested in setting up a peace school. In addition, people in the community have, since our action, come to us with their own proposals for action. But a major part of the work remains to be done. The new interest and activity must be consolidated and focused.

The program we have used can be used in various forms in many communities, for the evil most dramatically expressed by the war is subtly widespread. If direct action movements can be created in many places, two important tasks become possible -- each community can increase the effect of its activities in its own area, and a constituency is built for mass actions in national targets.

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ALL ADDRESSES ARE IN BROOKLYN UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

DIRECT ACTION TEAMS

A direct action team (DAT) is a group of people organized into a team who are committed to the idea of direct action. Composed of 15-20 persons, these teams would have a program centered around direct action and confrontation. They would be ready and able to take to the streets whenever and wherever necessary. They would develop and implement a direct action program to spearhead the peace and freedom movement.

Each team would have a program consisting of several elements. First a continuing program of direct action, initiated and planned by the team. Possibly in conjunction with other DATs or other groups. These programs would be designed to continually bring public attention to the issues of the war and the movement, on a continuing basis. Secondly they would be in a position to respond quickly to events. Experience has shown that the longer the period of time between an event (such as the arrest of Muhammad Ali, the attacking of the marchers in L.A., the bombing of Haiphong etc.) and the demonstration about the event the less coverage and attention is paid the demonstration. News medias are eager to get reaction to an event hours after it happens but are not interested in demonstrations that occur days after. DATs could be mobilized and get into the streets with-in hours of an event if they were properly set up.

In addition each DAT would have the task of organizing a base in a particular area such as Flatbush, Upper West Side, etc. With-in that area they would carry on three major, interrelated programs. 1-Organizing support for direct action in general and their team in particular among elements of the community that are sympathetic. This support would take many forms, bail, money, demonstrators, calling police & news, public expressions of support etc. 2-carrying on educational programs with-in the community to broaden the base of the ~~war~~ movement and involve new people. 3-to recruit new members for DATs, to replace members of their team who have dropped out and to form new DATs based in other areas. These 3 programs are obviously interconnected and can often be done simultaneously. For example direct action with-in the base area can be

used to fulfill and carry out all 3 of the organizing functions. A good example of this was the setting of the the RECRUIT FOR PEACE tables.

A DAT would consist of 15-20 persons who have committed themselves, as far as possible, to be able to go into direct action anytime, anywhere. 15-20 persons is enough to man a respectable picket line and enough to have a good sizable group to go to jail yet it is small enough to develop the internal group dynamic and "esprit de corps" necessary for this type of program. These teams would have to be small enough to develop trust and confidence of the members in each other, to know each other well, their strengths and weaknesses. As more and more people are recruited ~~an~~ additional DATs would be set up, probably with a "seed" group of 3 or 4 from an already established DAT. Some members of the DAT should be residents of the area where the DAT is based (I.E. Flatbush). Others should be "outsiders" that are living in homes with-in that community. At least 3 or 4 of the members of the team must be able to work full time for the team. The more full time people the better. Others of the team can and should have part or full time jobs or be students. Not all the members of a particular team would have to live with-in the area that they are based in but the majority of the team members should. The 3 or 4 full time workers would have to live with-in the area that the team is based in. (It should be noted that although a team is based in an area it would not necessarily have to do it's direct action in that area, just as an army unit is based at a fort but usually does not do it's fighting there)

One of the necessary functions of the DAT would be to build the internal group dynamic and "esprit de corps" that ~~immensely~~ can sustain the ;members of the team in times of stress. A mutual trust and confidence must be built up. Part of this can be done over the course of training together, working together etc. What really is needed is the same type of group loyalty and spirit that was present in the underground resistance movement during WWII and in;the revolutionary movement of the last 50 years. The members of the team must be mindfull of the need for this group cohesion and strive to build it. Artificial devices might be used to further that effort.