

REPORT FROM GREAT LAKES MOVEMENT FOR A DEMOCRATIC MILITARY

This report is mainly in response to the CAMP proposal, but is somewhat more detailed than that proposal called for. We hope that it will give people a general idea of where our project is at politically, and what kinds of things we are doing and want to do.

I. NATURE OF OUR PROJECT AND OUR WORK:

What is now MDM grew out a small number of sailors and civilians who got together to put out NAVY TIMES ARE CHANGIN' (NTAC), in the first months of 1970. About five months after NTAC first came out, MDM was formed from the people working on the paper, adopting basically the same program as Pendleton MDM. Altogether, NTAC and MDM have been here almost two years. Our project works mostly with sailors at Great Lakes Naval Training Center's Service School Command, and the Transient Personnel Units. Great Lakes with a total population of 42,000+, is the largest of the three Basic Training-Technical Education facilities maintained by the Navy. It also has a very large hospital complex, and a school for Corpsmen and Corpswomen. It is located in North Chicago, one of the heavily industrialized northern suburbs of Chicago, about 40 miles north of the city. Presently we are working out of an apartment about a five minute walk from the base; until last June we had an ideally located office which was an even shorter distance from the base but our lease expired and the landlord was less than anxious to renew.

Great Lakes is an oddball base, in that among other anomalies it is located in the middle of the country, and with the exception of the Admiral's yacht, it has nothing to do with boats. The nature of our project and our work are determined largely by the nature of the base: predominately white, overwhelmingly male, and a relatively privileged temporary duty station, the average length of stay here being about 5-6 months. We have varying but generally limited contact with Third World (hereinafter TW) people, and almost no contact with the small Wave contingent; the former as a result of the practically all-white composition of MDM and the resulting low level of activity, the latter as a result of a lack of time and personnel. We also are very isolated from the boot camp, and more especially, they are isolated from everything. We have some contact with people doing work in our community, but it is generally limited to coordinating some political education activities and mass demonstrations. There is very little that can be done around Navy wives and dependents, since not all that many people here are married, and the few that are usually don't (can't) spend the money to have their families move here for such a short time.

Our work is in several areas- publishing NTAC on a more or less monthly basis; weekly political education classes dealing with communist theory and struggles around the world; weekly films, speakers, and discussions on a more general political level than the PE class; on-going mass work such as the Tyrrell-Hallmark boycott and propaganda distribution; and serve the people work in the areas of counseling and legal aid, with this latter work being in conjunction with CAMP, with whom we have worked practically without interruption for well over a year. In our PE and counseling we attempt to consciously relate to the working class origins of the majority of the people that we meet.

We see our work here as being primarily consciousness raising and educational; the nature of base making it difficult to envision a stable, growing mass movement on or off the base.

Mechanically we have four levels of organization: 1.) Large numbers of people who follow our mass work, read NTAC, and generally dig what we are doing but generally do not participate out of apathy, fear, dope, etc. 2.) People who with some regularity work on NTAC, picket, com the flicks, distribute propaganda, and so on, who view themselves as being "in MDM." 3.) This group, those who are especially enthusiastic, take on responsibility, show political commitment, etc., are recruited to the staff. The staff consists of varying numbers of GI's, civilian woman, and two male Navy vets. The civilians all work, two full time, one part time. Recruitment criteria are flexible, save only that pacifists are not recruited for practical

The staff operates on the basis of democratic centralism, practices crit-self crit, is required to participate in PE classes, and become familiar with various weapons and their uses in bi-monthly practice at a nearby range. It is important for us to note (altho it doesn't quite fit in with anything mentioned so far), that the staff has for all intents and purposes decided to "phase out" women at this project, or at least we will not actively recruit single women to come here. The reasons are many, the most obvious being male chauvinism and isolation from other sisters. We invite discussion of this, but will not go further into it right now. 4.) More politically advanced people who express a desire to become communists are invited to join the collective which exists outside of the MDM structure proper. The collective evaluates the work and individuals against communist criteria, and engages in crit-self crit and PE more intensively than the staff as a whole can be expected to.

II. OUR VIEW OF AMERIKAN SOCIETY:

We view present day Amerika as an over developed imperialist nation which has grown fat thru the exploitation of the entire working class, the super-exploitation of TW workers, and the plundering of the rest of the world. It survives in part as a result of the pacification of some segments of the white working class by force, fear, racism, and the tid bits some workers receive as a result of the super exploitation of the internal and external Amerikan colonies. Nevertheless we view the working class as a whole as being the only social group that can bring about the final destruction of imperialism, and build socialism, and this we believe it will do. We see racism and sexism as being basic parts of the foundation upon which the empire is built. Theoretically we view the class struggle as being fundamental to all else, but at this time we think that the struggle of TW people against the imperialists (at home and abroad) is the primary contradiction with which we must deal.

Presently the imperialists are fighting for the survival of the US as the pre-eminent imperialist power. Under attack from within and without, the US government is resorting to openly fascist repression of all progressive struggles, and attempting to reassert its control over an increasingly restless labor force. From this turmoil we see two possible outcomes: absolute fascism or socialist revolution. The potential for either is very nearly balanced, and the potential for any long range alternatives are nearly exhausted. Ultimately, of course, socialism will triumph; the question is whether or not a period of fascism can be averted.

III. THE MILITARY IN AMRIKA:

The military is the mainstay of US imperialism. It is the largest consumer of people, money, and equipment, and the most powerful defender of capitalism at home and abroad. It is a condensation of all the worst aspects of US society: it is a bastion of racism, sexism, and political reaction, and makes the class divisions of civilian society a point of law. Like any military establishment, it mirrors the society it serves- it is wracked by struggles against racism, rotten living conditions, fascism, sexism, fascism, and bullshit. Like the working class from which most GI's are drawn, it is increasingly unreliable.

As the contradictions between TW people, the entire class of poor and working people, and imperialism intensify (and as increasing pressure is brought to bear by revolutionary movements internationally), the military will more frequently be used domestically, as in the past, as a club over the heads of the internal colonies and the working class as a whole. However the high level of consciousness of GI's ingeneral and TW GI's in particular will make this a tactic of questionable advisability. This is an important element in the strategy of both sides in the developing struggle. The US government can no longer be certain that it can rely on its troops to defend the empire half way around the world or in its own back yard. Consequently we are seeing the mercenization of the military, and the militarization of the entire society.

The primary contradiction within the military, we think, is between the class/national origin of GI's, and the ruling class that they must serve. VOLAR and New Navyism are attempts to resolve this contradiction in favor of the imperialists.

IV. OUR PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE:

Past: Our work at Great Lakes has been pretty consistently of the type described above: consciousness raising and educational. We have three mass demonstrations to our credit- two AFD's and a rally-rock festival. Our STP programs in counseling and legal aid have also been consistent and of high caliber.

The existence of MDM at this base has put many people thru a lot of changes politically. We have sent quite a few potential and actual revolutionaries to the fleet, and returned many more to civilian society. We rarely find out what happens to the people who pass thru MDM, but we like to think that we have had a little influence on the events on the Constellation and Coral Sea. We also make an effort to steer vets into movements in their home towns when we can.

We have made a lot of mistakes in the past, and expect that more will be made in the future. Altho we often times can't or don't prevent relapses and new fuck ups, we have learned enough to be able to recognize our errors when they occur.

Present: Our present work has been described above: PE, NTAC, the boycott, etc. We mention one problem we are having in hopes that people may have some suggestions. Our problem results from circumstances fairly well out of our control. The owner of our apartment has forbidden us to advertise our address. The effect of this has been a downward spiral in the numbers of people who know where we are, consequently fewer and fewer people are able to learn from others, and with the high rate of attrition here, it won't be long before we are sitting here all alone. In addition, the GI cadres who have been working with MDM the longest are up for discharge shortly. We are fortunate enough to have two of them planning on staying here to work with the project, but a strong civilian staff with nothing to do is of little value. The logical solution of course is to find a place that we can publicize, but such places are few and far between up here. We have considered buying a house (and that looks like what we will end up doing), but we don't want to stick that much money into something for lack of anything better if we can help it. Also, none of us are especially anxious to sign our names to a 30 year contract. Any suggestions will be appreciated.

Future: Unless conditions here change drastically, our goals are basically to involve great numbers of people in developing really effective programs of political education, agitation, and serving the people. We know that it is sometimes possible to organize fairly large numbers of people in individuals schools around living conditions and harrassment, but these tend to be short lived and dead ended. Ideally we would like to see a militant movement drawn from all sections of the base- but we are not idealists and we see our project mainly as a farm team for the movement in the fleet.

V. THE GI MOVEMENT AS SEEN FROM GREAT LAKES

We see the GI Movement (GIM) as an anti-imperialist movement with great revolutionary potential. We believe that it should function to : spread the consciousness of the nature of US imperialism in its many aspects; fully exploit our ability to strike concrete blows against the imperialists; and become an integral part of a broad based anti-imperialist movement. These three functions we term education, action, and integration.

EDUCATION: We should educate ourselves and the masses about the nature of imperialism, and the role of the military in an imperialist society. We should concentrate on the role the military plays in maintaining US domination of the Third World; the ways in which the military perpetuates racism and is a tool of a racist ruling class; the ways in which the military is used to defeat the people's struggles for better living conditions; the uses of the military as a means of fascist repression, and the fascist nature of the military in general; and the ways in which the military perpetuates sexist attitudes and practices. Because of our analysis of the military as a working class institution, and in order to lay the basis for a people's army essential to the defense and achievement of socialism, we should develop a clear class perspective in our

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educational work.

ACTION: The GIM already has won many victories, and will have many more. We should be ready to move as quickly, as decisively, and as militantly as possible whenever possible and necessary. We can and should look to the time when turning the guns around becomes a political and practical reality on a mass scale. Our particular areas of attention should be around international adventures such as SE Asia, or more likely in the future, Dominican Republic type actions; around riot control and strike-breaking activities; and fascist rip offs by the military.

We should engage in day to day struggles against racism, sexism, and the usual bullshit of the military, and never ignore our ability to toss one, two, many monkey wrenches into the works. We should become better able to serve the people by increasing our capabilities in the areas of legal aid and counseling.

The whole movement should begin thinking hard about a non-bureaucratic national structure that will facilitate exchange of information, coordinate actions, develop our politics and unity on higher levels, and generally be less haphazard about the whole thing. We support the idea of a recognized national newspaper as a first step in that direction.

INTEGRATION: Our education, agitation, and actions must not only be concerned with the movement in the military. We should learn from our experiences and continue to relate our struggles to what is going on in our communities and around the country. We should offer whatever support we can to the day to day struggles of people in base communities, particularly strikes in nearby factories and on the base. This kind of solidarity goes far in moving the entire struggle to a higher level.

It is important to develop a consciousness that oppression does not stop at the gates of the base. By linking up struggles now, we strengthen the entire progressive movement, and encourage GI's to become involved in the civilian struggle following discharge.

We should be looking to the development of a very broad anti-imperialist movement. GI's, because of their direct relationship to us imperialism can and should play a leading role in the fight against imperialism. Furthermore, since the GI Movement is essentially a movement of working class people, it should consciously become a working class movement, and put forward those politics in all that it does.

That's all folks!

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE !!!!!

GREAT LAKES MDM