

# national gi week

## A Message To GIs...

You have seen kids against the war, marching around with their signs. The lifers will tell you these kids are your enemy. And the brass will issue you orders that they are your enemy. (The brass would like to issue you everything but brains.) But the truth is the kids against the war are people, most of them your own age, who want to see you come home alive.

Every kind of American is now against the war. You all know someone—a teacher, a preacher, a truck driver—who says we have no business turning over the lives of thousands of Americans to a bunch of crooks running the corrupt government of South Vietnam. You may know that even retired brass like General Shoupe and General Gavin say that American interest in Vietnam is not worth a pile of peanut shells. Probably the Americans most against this war are the men who fought it—the Vietnam veterans.

Each day, more and more Americans stand up against the senseless slaughter of GIs and Vietnamese. These Americans make up the “anti-war movement.” You may only know them as the kids with long hair, the ministers of your own religion or the guy beside you in the barracks. They get called peaceniks, Communists, and unAmericans—especially by the people who make a fortune in keeping the war going.

But as a soldier, you know better than anyone what it means to be harassed and humiliated by the lifers and the brass, especially if you open your mouth the wrong way. And everyone in the anti-war movement knows something about harassment too, for opening their mouths for American soldiers’ right to return to civilian life.

Probably you resent the fact that peace demonstrations include kids who can wait out the war in college. You have every right to be mad about that.

But do you know that the anti-war movement is trying to do away with the draft laws that give special privileges to some? In fact, the anti-war movement is trying to do away with all the laws that force people to fight and die in Vietnam while a few politicians haggle over how to keep the war going forever.

The lifers, the brass and the old people who run this country will stop at nothing to keep the spirit of the anti-war movement locked out of every base. So in case your commanding officer didn’t tell you, the kids against the war support soldiers. They support the man who says he may be forced to give his body to Uncle Sam but damn if he’ll turn over his brain. And they support the idea that when a war cannot be defended, even by a double-talking, money-making politician, GIs have a right to come home—now.

## A Message to the Anti-War Movement...

The average GI is under the thumb of the military machine; he is not the operator of it. Either he was drafted, or he volunteered under pressure from a society that won’t give a non-college man a job unless he has an honorable discharge—especially if he is black.

His first two months are spent in basic training at a huge post, far from home (by design) and far from any major city. In “basic” he is whipped into good physical shape and taught elementary skills such as rifle-firing. Most important of all, he gets broken down emotionally and intellectually by a process known as Harrassment. The trainee is forced to buff floors that don’t need buffing, scream instead of talk, run instead of walk, memorize meaningless lists, prepare his belongings for inspections so petty that hygiene is forgotten (you have to have an unused tube of toothpaste in your locker)...

After basic comes AIT—“advanced individual training”—or, for the vast majority, advanced infantry training. Men are given specialties: typing, machine-gunning, radio operation, and so on. Then they are assigned duty stations—Vietnam, most likely.

The GI’s immediate enemy, from basic on, is the non-commissioned officer, or NCO, also known as the E-5, 6 or 7 (a reference to his pay grade) or “lifer.” The lifer is a man who knows that his Army standard of living beats anything he could attain in the civilian world. Most lifers are poor southerners, white and black. They have sold their souls to the military, very much like factory foreman who owe their jobs to devotion to the boss.

The officer corps has its lifers, too, but—especially in Vietnam—it is made up mostly of college graduates. Sometimes generation ties replace caste ties. That is, young second lieutenants, in the field, sometimes join their men in blowing grass while the older officers and EMs drink alcohol. In general, though, the Army is like the rest of America—the well-educated give the orders, the less educated carry them out.

From barracks to the front-lines, the mood of the American soldier is, today, thoughtful. A basic trainee, like a college freshman of the same age, is going through a hell of a time deciding what he wants to do with his life and what he wants the world to be like. He knows that the war is costing him and his buddies more—limbs, lives—than it costs the rest of the American people. Given the huge percentage of people who oppose the war, and the fact that young people are significantly more liberal than their parents, ours is certainly one of the most reluctant armies in histories.

Of course, the officers and NCOs pressure GIs constantly to stop thinking, to simply obey. But men have always overcome attempts to bully and blind them, and this is what American soldiers are doing, in rapidly increasing numbers, today.

#### A Message To Everyone About National GI Week...

On November 1-5, the anti-war movement is calling a demonstration. It will not be the usual demonstration you sometimes see. No signs. No walking around. It will be a demonstration of support to GIs.

Civilians opposed to the war will visit many bases across the country. They will try to inspect conditions in stockades which the brass hides from the public. They will bring rock bands and entertainers to various posts and invite soldiers to "love-ins"—the hip and the unhip. They will pass out papers that say the anti-war movement supports GIs right to come home.

This demonstration of support to American soldiers is called "National GI Week." The hip soldiers are calling it "FTA". The brass and the lifers are calling it names that cannot be printed.

We hope that American soldiers and civilians who want out of Vietnam will take time to talk with one another during National GI Week. Just before this Presidential election, we should find out how much we agree or disagree with the three Presidential choices—all of whom say they will continue Johnson's policies in Vietnam. We should talk about how to get out of Vietnam when the politicians seem hell-bent on going on with this senseless war. We should talk about getting ourselves together, inside the army and outside the army, to make our views known and our power felt.

National GI Week is the beginning of something new in America. The lifers, the brass and the leading civilian commanders are in for big surprises if they think they can turn men into sheep and people into fools. National GI Week is a signal that people with long hair and people with shaved heads are starting to get together for something more in life than the "spirit of the bayonet."

#### Events That You Can Organize For National GI Week

- delegation, large or small, to a military base. Suggest picnics, love-ins, leafletting, talking with soldiers about grievances.
- leafletting airports, bus stations, train depots—where GIs congregate—with message of support
- Special church services on Vietnam and the American soldier, Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 2 & 3
- teach-ins on the military in the United States
- special guerrilla theatre programs for GIs in USOs across the country.
- anti-war rallies. Invite Vietnam veterans to speak
- student strike on November 5 in protest of the draft, the war and the election hoax.
- demonstrations on election day that repudiate the three Presidential choices and dramatize popular support for immediate withdrawal of the troops.

for more information

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