

Emancipation

ANARCHIST ASSOCIATION OF THE AMERICAS

Unfinished Business

More Deaths By Suicide Than Combat

Only last May of '83, ex-inmates of Veterans Administration psychiatric wards and their supporters staged the first demo in the country against psychiatric attacks by the V.A. It took place in Syracuse.

N.Y. Demonstrators chose the Syracuse site because a V.A. National Headquarters circular sent out on Feb. 7, 1973, designated the hospital as one of four in the country allowed to practice "any neurological procedure designed for the alteration of behavior", or "Surgery for abnormal behavior (psycho-surgery)". The memo singles out "aggressive" epileptics as well as others.

Inside the military machine, people are locked up and drugged in psychiatric wards for dissent. While the excuse for incarceration in civilian wards is that the person threatened to "hurt himself and others", in the military it is clearly the opposite -- that the person refused to hurt themselves or others! The number of vets currently diagnosed as "psychotic or other psychiatric disorders" by the V.A. has jumped from 3,908 discharged in calendar year '67 to 77,791 for fiscal year '82 discharges. At the end of the Vietnam period, most V.A. centers were ill-equipped to deal with the chronic problems of Vietnam veterans, including alcohol and drug abuse, stress, flashbacks, divorce and emotional trauma. Most centers were telling veterans that their problems simply started before the war, or afterwards and were not service-related. No treatment. Or if vets persisted, they were sent to long-term lock-up wards to be experimented on. Chillicothe V.A. hospital in Ohio was doing brain surgery on them in the '70's. The V.A. regulations nationally allow any veteran to be designated mentally incompetent without a hearing, and the V.A. will appoint a legal guardian to exhaust the personal "estate" of the veteran down to \$500 before the V.A. begins to bear the expense of care and "treatment".

Drugs and other techniques to control "patients"



in civilian hospitals are tested first on veterans in the V.A. system today. At any given point, some 8500 veterans are being experimented on in the V.A. system each month. The V.A. is guided by federal regulations, which are less protective of civil rights in the military system. For example, vets have no choice but to return to the same V.A. hospital regardless of problems with "treatment" there. Though both are daily abusing people with their methods, the V.A. and military psych centers get less attention and oversight than civilian centers. The phenothiazing drugs used most commonly

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