business

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with GI's and veterans (mellaril, stellazaine, thorazine, prolyxin) have long-term brain-damaging effects, can lead to "sudden death" and create irreversible disease -- tardive dysknesia -- that causes muscles in the face and hands to spasm uncontrollably. Electro-convulsive treatment (ECT) -- shock treatment -- can cause another form of permanent brain-damage, bringing long-term or permanent memory loss, lack of concentration and other problems.

Many of these techniques were begun at the end of WWII. A film about them made for the Army by John Huston, "Let There Be Light", was suppressed by the Pentagon for 30 years. These techniques were used first to punish and discredit GI resisters -- members of the "Back Home Movement", gay people in the military, and anyone who made trouble. Their use was continued and expanded upon by the V.A. But not until the Vietnam period did the military or the V.A. use them on so many people. Following the return of thousands of vets with recurring problems, work by people like Wilson, Figley and Lifton took a reality know to vets as "Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome" and turned it into a psychiatric disease know as "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder".

While it helped explain some veterans' actions and crimes, the term led the V.A. to begin large-scale diagnosis and "treatment" with phenotyazines. As the Disabled American Veterans proclaimed that there was indeed a "psychopharmalogical cure for stress sydrome" which could be administered by psychiatrists "sensitized" to the needs of the "P-TSD" veterans, money for community-based veteran self-help alternatives, rap-groups, up-grade centers for discharges, educational and employment assistance was cut off. It is easier and cheaper for the the V.A. to deal with P-TSD with drugs, and also avoids any raising of either the victims' or the publics' consciousness of the continuing price paid for the Vietnam war.

Today, many vets insisting on alternative forms of treatment for their distressing problems are locked up in the psychiatric wards instead. No vet should submit to psychiatric treatment in the V.A. or elsewhere until they have gotten good information on the dangers involved and on their civil rights while incarcerated. Support groups exist across the country and legal assistance is available.

In order to "disappear" Vietnam and create an "amnesia" for the American people, the government has had to forget the veterans. A society that cannot face the terrible destruction that it did to the Vietnamese and refuses to pay any reparations to that country cannot afford to admit what it owes to the veterans. The vets' enforced silence and isolation, their chronic unemployment, and family problems have been the real cause of their "dis-ease". More veterans have committed suicide since the end of the war than died as servants and victims of the war. The "official" V.A. figures suggest at least 60,000 suicides, compared to 57,500 casualties during the Vietnam war years. In reality, the number of post-war suicides is probably much higher.

This country's rulers have been trying to bury the dissent of the living veterans, angry and frustrated at returning to a society where they had almost no one to turn to about what they had experienced in Vietnam. The government, the straight media, the military has to bury the dissent of the living which can uncover the stench of the dead, the true odor of this nation's foreign policy. Beneath lies of mental incompetence and moral degradation on the part of the GI's who failed; of traitorous national disunity before the "enemy"; of foriegn deceit and power-mongering, they try to bury the truth of our murderous intervention against an oppressed and rebelling population; of the national hypocrisy of the "democratic" mission; of the courageous and frightened insubordination of soldiers and sailors to combat orders in an unjust war.

Sadly, the minimal reaction following the invasion of Grenada and the apathetic complacency of most Americans in the face of irrefutable evidence of covert and overt aggression in Central America seems to indicate that they have fairly well buried the truth under their monument of lies.

Yet we must continue to let people see. The rulers are busy preparing for world-scale war. Draft registration and military budget increases are the beginning. Cemetery space for up to one million gravesites is being sought in the U.S.A, while in West Germany U.S. troops are being drilled in the making of mass graves. Chaplains are being recruited at a rate not seen since WWII. Medics coming into the military now are all trained as MOS 91C--combat ready. The 513th Military Intelligence Group, the one that runs "internment camps", has just been re-activated. Black GI's are being dumped out of key infantry units in large numbers, since the system correctly sees them as "unreliable" in Third World interventions.

If we can give people a look at the unfinished business of the Vietnam war -- the unreconciled human destruction done to veterans here and Vietnamese abroad; the destruction of a generation here to wage a genocidal war there -- perhaps more and more of us will decide that the discomfort of following our conscience is far easier -- and wiser -- than the disaster of following the authorities. We cannot allow ouselves to be confused

IN EXHORTATION

D'yu think, D'yu wonder
D'yu know

Of the veterans of that
"police action"
How many years ago?

No more Vietnams we say
As if it's finished, gone away
No longer happening

Hav'yu looked, Hav'yu bothered
Hav'yu heard

Of the survivors of that
"engagement"
And what they're going through

Because their war was our war
their pain is our pain
their deaths are ours
to record

More More More
Suicided in peacetime
than killed in war

Did'yu know Had'yu heard
D'yu care

Carol Winstanley

If we can give people a look at the unfinished business of the Vietnam war -- the unreconciled human destruction done to veterans here and Vietnamese abroad; the destruction of a generation here to wage a genocisal war there -- perhaps more and more of us will decide that the discomfort of following our conscience is far easier -- and wiser -- than the disaster of following the authorities. We cannot allow ourselves to be confused by the patriotic sweet-talk dished out the the Vietnam vets by Reagan, Congress, and the straight, square veterans organizations. We do need to find it in ourselves to comfort the victims of the last great tragedy as well as to confront the victimizers! Let the dissent be heard and let's act on it.

Chris Ecks

Many thanks to John Judge, whose original "Unfinished Business" -- written in May of '83 -- I re-arranged, slightly updated, and somewhat poetic--licenced without permission.

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Vets (or anyone else) can also write to:
Madness Network News, P.O. Box 684, S.F. CA 94101 (drugs, inmate rights)
Veterans Against Military Psychiatry, Box 42503, Phila. PA 19101
Short Timers' Journal, Box 9246, Berkely Sta., CA 94709
Veterans' Rights Newsletter, Box 42130, Washington, D.C. 20015 (legal rights)

N.Z. Update

Throughout July and into August, events in the Antipodes excited no interest at all in the American media. Then in the August 22 Washington Post, tucked away on the inside of the A section under **World News Briefs**, was a small item telling of a meeting of South Pacific nations (small islands all except for continental Australia) to set up a nuclear-free zone in the Pacific. Participating countries could at their discretion allow or restrict the entry of nuclear powered vessels into their harbours.

It would seem that a diplomatic compromise has been reached that will save face for both the governments of N.Z. and the U.S.A.

The compromise is, I think, cause for mild celebration. Any move that draws us back even a small step from the nuclear disaster that threatens us is welcome and timely news.

Kia Ora (Cheers)