

# Anti-war activists supporting troops

*Looking back at Vietnam; the 'opposition is to government policy'*

by Amy Hudson

(CPS)—Hoping to curry public favor and distance themselves from the anti-military strain of the movement to end the war in Vietnam, students against the Persian Gulf war are trying to make sure people know they are not angry at the U.S. soldiers personally.

At nearly every anti-war demonstration since fighting actually started Jan. 17, protesters have carried signs or worn ribbons to carefully note they support the troops.

"It's been really important," agreed John McMillan, a student at the University of Oregon. "We've definitely made statements saying we support the troops."

"Our opposition is to government policy," said Charles Betz, a member of the National Student and Youth Campaign for Peace in the Middle East, a Washington, D.C.-based coalition of national and regional organizations.

"They aren't responsible for the government's policy," said University of Wisconsin-Madison history Prof. Stanley Schultz about the Americans in the desert.

"Presumably, there's a lesson we learned (from Vietnam): We should support the men and women over there," Schultz added.

Students genuinely seem to want to make sure that they don't hurt the feelings of soldiers who see them oppose the war effort.

"We do support the soldiers and realize that they are not the people who made the decisions that got us into the war," Potsdam College student Donna Kachites said during a Jan. 20 war protest attended by students from Potsdam, Clarkson and St. Lawrence universities.

It's a far cry from sentiments expressed by many student opponents of the war in Vietnam al-

most 20 years ago.

Enraged by the endless and none-too-understandable carnage, some anti-war activists condemned the soldiers who agreed to help politicians conduct a war that Congress never declared and that, as a result, was unconstitutional.

Anti-war literature was full of comparisons of Americans who unthinkingly complied with their government's order to fight an "immoral war" in Vietnam to German soldiers who complied with their government's order to commit mass murder during World War II.

There have been no such comparisons during this conflict so far.

"Those people flying those planes are our brothers and sisters. Their lives are as important as our lives," said Indiana University protest organizer Bill Breeden.

Signs at rallies at the University of Southern Maine and Duke University, among other places, urged policymakers to bring troops home safely, "not in body bags."

Many demonstrators at the huge Jan. 26 anti-war march in Washington, D.C., wore yellow ribbons, a symbol of a welcome return for the troops. During the anti-Vietnam war movement, the flag was considered a symbol of blind obedience to cruel authority figures.

On the other hand, authority figures also have been profoundly more civil to students who question their policies this time around.

A flurry of anonymous press leaks the last week of January suggested President Bush had ordered his staffers not to question the patriotism or motives of the protesters.

"I know—of course I know—that some disagree with the course that I've taken," Bush told a meeting of religious broadcasters Jan. 28. "I am convinced that we are doing the right thing. And toler-



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ance is a virtue, not a vice."

By contrast, when 100,000 students converged on Washington, D.C., to protest the invasion of Cambodia and the killing of four Kent State University students who "disagreed" with his course, President Richard Nixon had troopers literally sweep and beat students off the street. They were then "detained" for several days in RFK Stadium without being formally charged with a crime.

All the polite, mutual respect could dissipate quickly, however. Some observers say there also was plenty of support for troops during the opening stages of the Vietnam War. Support for the troops "changed dramatically" after the Tet Offensive in 1968, and contin-

ued to plummet after the My Lai Massacre and American TV began showing nightly war scenes, Wisconsin's Schultz recalled. He predicts that unless Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein resorts to using horrifying chemical or nuclear weaponry, support for the troops will dwindle with time.

"It's happened in every war except World War II," he declared. And this generation, though bombarded with movies and TV shows that sympathize with war veterans, will be no different, he said. "I don't think (the popular culture) affects opinions one way or the other," Schultz said. "Students already have a mind-set before they see 'China Beach.'"

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his GPA and credits earned immediately upon being questioned. It is unthinkable that he should sit in office during the time he formulates a "defense" against charges that he has no right to be there. It is unconscionable that Joe Bunin should act as president over a student body in which his membership has been questioned. Joe must go.

Bunin, as an officer of Student Government, is compromised. He has zero credibility if he needs a lawyer instead of a report card. He should take one of two options open to him; 1) produce his grades, or 2) step down until the issue is resolved. Student Government, as a whole, is compromised with him as its leader.

The Yellin' Rebel calls upon the Senate to enact an emergency measure requesting that President Joe Bunin step aside during the time his case is pending. The Senate should formally request that Bunin voluntarily reveal his grades, and demonstrate that he did, in fact, complete six credits and earned a "C" or better in those classes.

The Senate must stand up to Joe Bunin, and demand that he make this issue "go away" by voluntarily disclosing the information he finds so distressing that he feels he needs a lawyer to help him negotiate the issue.

A GPA can be, if one is any kind of "student" at all, something to be quite proud of.

*The above is the opinion of The Yellin' Rebel.*

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