

# Army found guilty...sentenced to death

Fifth Estate Collective

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SEATTLE—GIs from Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base held a trial of the Brass and its war in Vietnam before an audience of 1,500 at the University of Washington. A jury of twelve active-duty soldiers found the military “guilty” on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and violations of soldiers’ rights.

Fifteen GI witnesses, most of whom had been in Vietnam, told of observing atrocities like the massacre at My Lai. They also spoke of the full support given the National Liberation-Front of South Vietnam by the peasants.

Ninety per cent of the GIs who participated in the trial are members of the American -Servicemen’s Union, as were nearly all the 100 soldiers and airmen in the audience. The men had come to the trial despite attempts at intimidation by the Brass. The trial was organized by the Shelter Half coffee house in Tacoma in cooperation with students at the University of Washington in Seattle.

One of the soldiers to testify, Dennis Leonard, is an American Indian who participated in the Indian occupation of Alcatraz Island. He told how he had entered the Army “ready to do anything,” but refused to go to Vietnam after seeing Army training films glorifying the Indian wars.

“America grew on genocide,” he told the jury, and described how he realized that the Vietnamese were being treated in the same way as the Indians.

Leonard explained that after refusing to go to Vietnam, he was sentenced to six months in the Presidio stockade, where he was beaten by the guards. Leonard has been an active ASU organizer at Fort Lewis, signing up his whole platoon in the union.

Another ASU member, Tyrone Riddle, told how the black GIs are getting together and standing up to the brass. Referring to a meeting of the brothers that had been broken up by the Brass, Riddle got tremendous applause when he quoted the Panther slogan, “You can jail a revolutionary but you can’t jail the revolution.”

A tape recording made by Pvt. Wade Carson, who had been put on restriction to keep him from attending the trial, was played. He had been very active in organizing the large number of GI participants in the trial.

Carson has since been charged with Article 134—attempting to cause disaffection—and held in the stockade for distributing *The Bond* and *Fed-Up*, the respective newspapers of the national office and the local chapter of the ASU.

All the soldiers testifying stressed their sympathy for the Vietnamese people and the National Liberation Front. One Vietnam vet told of having witnessed elections for the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG). Seeing how the NLF carried out its tax collection and elections convinced him that they had the full support of the people.

The high point of the trial came when a young man with a beard came up to the stage from the audience surrounded by a defense guard of 25 ASU members. He was asked his name. “Bruce McLean.” Affiliation? “U.S. Army.” Status? He raised a clenched fist and said, “I am AWOL.”

The audience went wild and cheered and clapped for five minutes. When things had died down, McLean explained why he had gone AWOL. Because of his opposition to the Vietnam war, he had applied for conscientious

objector status. According to military law, he could not be transferred while a decision on his CO appeal was pending.

But the Army tried to shanghai him anyway. In the middle of the night he was awakened, told he was being transferred and taken to the airport. When he found out that he was being sent to Vietnam, Bruce locked himself in an airport bathroom and escaped out the back window.

Bruce McLean ended his testimony by declaring, "I support the NLF!" Then, — while the crowd was wildly cheering, he was whisked off the stage by his "military escort" and driven away before the many Army Intelligence pigs in the audience could do a thing.

Bruce's story was corroborated by another witness, Don Sherman, who worked in the Overseas Replacement Center. He told how the Army had cut illegal orders to send Bruce McLean to Vietnam.

A veteran of Hamburger Hill described how the Marines had had their own "truce" with the NLF. There just wasn't any shooting going on. When one gung-ho lieutenant tried to get the men into combat, the Marines put a price on his head, and the Brass had to transfer him to another company.

A psychiatrist who has been with the Green Berets in Vietnam, Dr. Peter Bourne, reported that the My Lai massacre was not an isolated atrocity. He had talked to many soldiers who had witnessed or participated in similar slaughters. He had reported some of these crimes himself, but the Army did nothing. In one case, he was told, "We can't do anything because the Major is getting the Silver Star."

Among the civilian witnesses at the trial were Fred Gardner of the GI coffee houses and a union representative from the grape strike who accused the Army of strikebreaking (the Defense Department now buys five times more grapes than before the strike).

The Brass were dealt a final blow by John Lewis, National Field Organizer of the ASU. Lewis went into the class nature of the brass, the "businessmen in uniform," who send young workers to die in defense of the profits of U.S. imperialism. The NLF is fighting the U.S. ruling class, he emphasized, which is the GIs enemy too. Lewis read a statement from a black GI who deserted in Vietnam to fight with the NLF.

After elaborating on the Union's demands, the ASU organizer pledged that union brothers will never go into the ghettos to kill their class brothers or into factories to break strikes.

The jury of twelve servicemen needed little time to reach their verdict of "guilty" on all counts. And they didn't equivocate on the sentence-either.

The GIs sentenced the Army to death.

Then they went back to their bases to organize their buddies and carry out the sentence.

**Editors' Note:** The preceding article was taken from *The Bond: The Voice of the American Servicemen's Union* (ASU). Information about joining the ASU or a subscription to the paper may be obtained from Room 538, 156 Fifth Ave., New York, New York 10010.

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