

All The Way With FTA

Jeffrey Shero

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Ed. Note: Jeffrey Shero is a former national vice-president of Students for a Democratic Society. He recently returned from an extended journey to the Soviet Union, Eastern and Western Europe.

They used to whisper, "Pssst, soldier! Dirty pictures?"

But times have changed. Just as likely now that long-haired kid hanging around the European train station or soldier's bar is offering abettor deal—Freedom. "Hey, man, FTA, (Fuck the Army), take one of these." That's the new hustle.

An elusive cobweb army of hippies, Provos, new lefties, and some GIs themselves, spread the word. In all the places the soldier rests—Paris, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Frankfurt—they are there. The number is growing.

"Who wants to march? That's worn out. That's for church people and pacifists. The police give you the permit."

"Too many hip guys getting drafted. Too many black guys who fought the national guard. Do something real—help them get out, and make an example. The army equipped with the best weapons science can devise, is still only as good as its morale. Our job is to demoralize the army." The argument threads through Student Unions, passes between beer drinkers in those quaint sidewalk cafes, and finds its way to the fermenting minds of young members of workers clubs.

In Germany where the organization is bad, the German SDS begins to move. France improves its system for smuggling guys into the country and getting them work papers. Sweden takes more.

The army guides young men to the hygienic whoredom of Amsterdam, while the Dutch movement searches among them for the right man for the legal test case for asylum. England prints leaflets, and the international floaters smuggle them to the continent. The troops won't be safe in relaxed Italy anymore; this summer the movement spread.

The international underground, resources: thousands of crow quick minds, incredible mazes of contacts, and a few dollars, versus the 70 billion dollar American defense machine, with its twenty five years of coarsening drum-beating, propaganda, and hordes of sterile, denatured administrators led by the IBM brain of Robert MacNamara.

The Europeans know the fight is unequal; it's always been unequal. But it must be made because freedom in Europe can only be achieved when the American control of the politics and the economic life of the western half of the continent comes to an end. The Provos proclaim this as clearly as the orthodox Marxists.

To promote desertion isn't just to save one man from going to Vietnam and killing Vietnamese because his wife and kids are waiting for him back home, nor is it because the fight waged by the Vietnamese with their vastly inferior resources has the quality to inspire sympathy and work for their cause. The struggle against the American war is part of the struggle to regain control of each country's life and culture.

The agents of the American government have already penetrated the movement in Europe. But those who went through the many political confrontations of the last year think, "What the hell. Maybe the cops who infiltrate our ranks can be turned-on to life; maybe we can recognize and fool them; maybe we'll organize in such a decentralized way their conspiratorial minds can never figure out how to bust us wide open."

So the people in the once secure NATO countries begin to declare their independence from their “American protectors.”

A new sign can be found chalked on walls: “U.S.A.-S.S.” The symbol that along with the desertion movement has sprung to life a desire to be free from association with a new American barbarism which finds its clearest expression in Vietnam, and which for the active young Europeans is equated with the deeds of the Nazis.

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