

The 26th of March

Fifth Estate Collective

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National days of protest March 25–26 constituted the largest concerted world-wide action for peace in history. Demonstrations to protest the war in Vietnam took place in 30 countries, according to the National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam—initiator of the campaign.

In the United States, the protests surpassed those called by the NCV last October, indicating that the anti-war movement has grown significantly in response to the Johnson Administration's escalation of U.S. intervention in Vietnam.

"The international days of protest were a monumental achievement for the anti-war movement," a spokesman for the coordinating committee told the *Guardian* from the NCC's headquarters at 420 W. Washington Ave., Madison, Wis.

"People in great numbers have moved since October beyond questioning the war to actively opposing it," the spokesman said. "Despite news blackouts and other harassments, the demonstrations exceeded all our expectations. We have shaken the government into the realization that to many, many Americans this is a deplorable war; and this is only the start.

"The major success of March 25–26 in the United States is that we are demonstrably reaching the grass roots. We are reaching new people. In nearly all the reports we've received from various groups throughout the country that participated in the action, there was a common theme: new people, bigger demonstrations."

Although complete accounts are not yet in, protests were conducted in at least 100 U.S. cities, communities and campuses. The NCC estimates that as many as 125 areas were involved all told as compared with 93 known actions last October. In almost every case, the protests were larger.

In New York City, a crowd of no less than 50,000 persons participated in a march down Fifth Avenue and a rally in Central Park—the greatest peace action of its kind in America.

In Chicago, 5,000 marched; in San Francisco, 6,500; in Detroit, nearly 2,000; in Washington, 1,200 picketed the White House; in Los Angeles, 8,000 are estimated to have attended a 12-hour teach-in at UCLA; in Denver, 800.

And in Sidon, Miss. (population 410), 30 people attended a prayer meeting for peace in Vietnam—one of nine such meetings in small Mississippi communities.

As well as being larger in numbers, the demonstrations were distinctly more explicit in their opposition to the war than those five months ago. "Bring the troops home now," an exceptionally controversial slogan at one time, especially to liberals, was accepted as a valid position in most of the protests.

Overseas, the NCC reported, an estimated 10,000 persons marched in Paris, one of 77 French cities and communities where protest actions were reported to have taken place. In Italy, a crowd estimated at more than 20,000 attended an anti-war rally in Rome during a cold rain. Demonstrations were held throughout West Germany and in East Germany also. In London there was a torchlight parade; in Auckland, New Zealand, more than 1,000 people attended a rally.

In the U.S., counter-demonstrations and heckling—in general—appeared to have declined considerably since last October. Overt pro-war sentiment and hysteria seemed confined to obvious far-rightists. And there was little

talk of organizing war parades in reaction to the peace activities, in contrast to widespread proposals of this kind after the first international days of protest.

Official Washington, which responded to the last protests with threats against some of the groups involved and innuendoes that the demonstrations were "communist-inspired," was relatively silent this time. The Administration, no doubt aware that the massive outpouring lends support to growing congressional opposition to the escalation of the war, apparently did not choose to recognize the demonstrations, in hopes that they would generally be ignored.

The National Coordinating Committee, which is no more than an office in Wisconsin and a small staff of young activists, organized the world-wide action in less than three months. The decision to hold the second international days of protest was made at the NCC convention in Washington late in November. Work began a month later. The NCC was founded eight months ago as a loose coordinating body to bring together and give some direction to the resurgent American peace movement. As many as 150 peace, student and political groups are affiliated.

Starting with this issue, pages three and four of the *Fifth Estate* will function as the Detroit Committee to End the War in Vietnam's newsletter. We hope that *Fifth Estate* readers and Newsletter readers will enjoy the change.

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