

Soldiers Busted

Fifth Estate Collective

1969

On Saturday, January 4, Victory Fidelman and Ron Halstead, two members of the Resistance, along with two servicemen, Seaman Norman Gelnaw and Ray Greer, a member of U.S. Army Military Intelligence and a Vietnam veteran, distributed copies of *The Bond* to active duty servicemen at Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

The Bond is the official newspaper of the American Serviceman's Union.

After getting favorable responses from at least 100 military personnel, the group was approached by two members of the Wayne County Sheriff's patrol and two military policemen. The patrolmen warned the civilians that they could not pass out literature in the terminal without permission (a position counter to that of recent Supreme Court decisions).

The police then left. The two servicemen, Greer and Gelnaw, were briefly questioned and taken into custody. They were not informed of any charges against them, nor were they informed that they were under arrest. They were handcuffed and transported to the army stockade at Ft. Wayne.

While in the stockade they were subjected to verbal harassment. They were not informed of their rights. Their lawyer was denied access to the two men and was not even told what charges were being brought against the men.

In the meantime a demonstration was quickly put together through the cooperation of groups including Clergy and Laymen Concerned About- Vietnam, Young Socialist Alliance, People Against Racism, Resist, and the Resistance.

About fifty demonstrators gathered at the gates of Ft. Wayne in the bitter 10 degree cold. The gates were locked and guarded by MPs toting M-14's who threatened to shoot anyone who violated the sanctity of the base.

The demonstrators chanted, "Free speech for GIs" and "FTA." It was later learned that the two prisoners were aware that a demonstration was in process. Also, sympathetic clergymen kept the phones busy calling about the condition of the two men. The callers included a state senator.

The concern for the servicemen had been intensified because of the physical harassment experienced by men at the fort in the recent past.

Both men were held from 4 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. At that time Gelnaw was released and was ordered to report back to his command for possible disciplinary action. Greer was later released to his command and restricted to his quarters.

Both of the servicemen expect further harassment. A sergeant at the stockade told them that they could expect a two-year sentence for their activities.

In a statement on Monday, January 6, groups and individuals supporting the rights of the men said: "Such harassment must not be allowed to continue. GIs rights must be protected. Norman Gelnaw and Ray Greer were engaging in activities which are clearly protected under the First Amendment to the Constitution. The two civilians who were with them were not arrested. Such discrimination against military personnel cannot be allowed to continue.

Related

See *Fifth Estate's* Vietnam Resource Page.

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