

Civilian-GI Anti-War Marches Sweep Country

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1969

The anti-war movement surged back onto the streets Easter weekend with major demonstrations taking place in six cities, and smaller actions in 44 others.

On April 5, 100,000 people rallied in New York City to hear speeches supporting the Black Panther party, the Presidio 27 and the Chicago "Conspiracy." The demonstration was orderly throughout; the speeches marked a departure from the "broadbased, liberal-radical coalition" to reflect a growing class consciousness.

The largest antiwar demonstration ever held in Chicago brought out 35,000 people April 5. They heard speeches from a high school organizer, an active-duty GI and a Black Panther, while 5000 National Guardsmen were withdrawing from Chicago's black ghetto.

Locally the April 5th Action Committee sent over 200 persons on buses to the Chicago march while many others went by means of private transportation.

In San Francisco, 10,000 people marched April 6 from the Civic Center to the Presidio Army base. According to Guardian reporter Robert L. Allen, several hundred GIs participated.

The group was to be addressed by Terence Hallinan, attorney for many of the Presidio 27 (GIs accused of mutiny for staging a sit-down protest in the Presidio stockade), and Mrs. Ginger Bunch mother of Richard Bunch, whose death touched off the stockade sit-down last October.

Organizers of the march charged that military authorities had assigned extra duty over the weekend to prevent 3500 men at the Presidio from participating. Authorities admitted that there were going to be riot-control exercises last weekend at the base. But, they claimed,

As the rally was breaking up, some kids threw rocks and bottles at MPs at the Presidio gate. Several MPs are believed injured.

In Atlanta April 5, activists held a 44-hour vigil at the State Capitol honoring Martin Luther King. About 200 people participated. The next day, up to 4000 people marched through the city streets. According to reports from *The Great Speckled Bird*, hundreds of active-duty GIs participated in the weekend actions. Dave Dellinger and Ralph Abernathy addressed the crowd at Hurt Park in downtown Atlanta.

A public forum on U.S. war policy in Vietnam was held April 5 at the Moore Theatre in downtown Seattle. Many soldiers participated in the forum, sponsored by the GI-Civilian Alliance for Peace.

Speakers included Terence Hallinan, Aaron Dixon, captain of the Seattle Black Panther party and Sidney Mills, an activist in the Indian rights struggle. The turnout was about 150 people.

A workshop on GI civil liberties and other GI issues was also to take place with soldiers from nearby Ft. Lewis and McChord Air Force base were expected to attend.

Between 4,000 and 5,000 people marched in Los Angeles April 6. Some Cuban refugees hassled them along the route.

Anti-war actions also took place last weekend in 44 smaller cities across the country, according to Bob Eaton, coordinator of April Action, an ad hoc coalition of pacifist groups for a weekend of "resistance and renewal" to

mobilize communities as yet unreached by anti-war organizers, and to give cities that weren't in major GI-Civilian action areas a chance.

In Philadelphia, activists milled-in at more than 10 local draft boards. Organizers occupied one board for 17 hours, reading name by name a list of 33,000 GIs who have died since the Vietnam war began. Selective Service officials refused to bust the sitters-in, fearing to incite the city. Easter Sunday sunrise services were held at churches across Philadelphia. One sermon was entitled "He is risen, so is the war toll."

Baltimore activists planned four days of death watches at draft boards and held antimilitary balls for area high school students.

In Rochester, organizers were working around the issue of taxes, and planned to occupy local welfare offices.

Leafleting went on in Little Rock, Arkansas, and a rally in support of the Presidio 27 was scheduled for April 5.

April Action stressed demonstrations in cities new to the anti-war movement, including Akron, Ohio, Denver, Des Moines, Iowa, Honolulu, St. Louis, Louisville and Memphis.

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