

THE DESERTERS

JORDAN

The deserters or those who want to leave the army are nearly always stationed in Germany. Generally, they have already heard this story. Some of them have heard of it through leaflets distributed (and which is still being done) in Germany, others from the articles of the news papers on deserters. If they decide to desert and are stationed in the Northern Germany, they generally run towards the frontier with Holland, with a discharge card in order and a bit of a money.

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ERWIN

My name is Erwin. I will not say my register number for obvious reasons.

Just like Buster, I cannot give any indication on how I deserted. But some motives for which I have done it are of capital importance. One of them in particular; which I realized is: Vietnam. To go down there is all a waist of time. I never wanted to go and shoot against the Northern Vietnamese, risking my own life or making another man loose his: life has always got a value, I think. This is the only reason for which I went away.

Since I left the army, I have become more radical, I have learned a lot reading and reflecting.

I think that the United States are fighting a useless war, and therefore cannot win. They do not win materially, and moreover, loose their prestige in front of the world's public opinion. The only way to get out of this, according to me, is to finish it all up as soon as possible; and to arrive at this, something must be done, everyone must fight also in the internal front line.

The Americans have to be convinced that non matter how imposing are the means they can make use ^{of} they ^{can} never win the war in Vietnam.

It is the population of the United States that will have to da something to stop this war, and this is what is going on today.

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BUSTER

My name is Buster. I will not say my register number; I was a corporal before I left. I left the army to protest ^{against} the situation in Vietnam. I received a leaflet which helped me to take the decision for desertion. This is why myself and four other boys deserted. As we had no money, during our travel, we ate the army's food. At last we arrived at the frontier where we separated ourselves, and I remained with a friend. We were helped by a Dutchman who made it possible for us to cross the frontier, and at last we came in contact with the proves, who helped us by giving us a lodging for one month, after which we were moved to another part of Europe.

I have had enough time and the possibility to improve my Education on Vietnam. Now I have understood that the Americans are really at fault. In 1954 they casted a band on the eyes of everyone, not only in America but also in the other countries, and now they have put up this war because it is convenient for America, which means that they want to control an undeveloped country. The situation in Vietnam is terrible, all of you can naturally read about it on the newspapers, and everyone can be aware that it has got to its lowest point. The people of Vietnam are very courageous, they are fighting a courageous war and are determined to win it. As you all can see, in the last three or four years, America has been deeply involved in this war, but a population who hasn't got a just reason to fight can never win and this is why the Americans are losing this war.

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A negro deserter

I have a moral duty towards myself and towards my future sons, to go against the American activities in Vietnam. As you can see from my shadow, I am a negro, a true American. I say this because I hold it as a very important question. According to me, the same type of criminal actions which the Americans put into action against the Yellows of Vietnam can be directed against the negro people of America, as soon as the war in Vietnam finishes. The action which I am conducting now has the scope of convincing the people in the army that the action of America is abominable, immoral, aggressive, in other words it is terrible.

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WALTER

I am a Dutch communist, member of the socialist youth. We are against the war, particularly against that taking place in Vietnam and the American crimes in Vietnam. Our organization does much to support the people of Vietnam. The American deserters are different one from the other. There are those who desert because they don't agree with the war in Vietnam, and those who do it just for fear.

I have spoken to some of these boys and I have realized the divergence between our ideas. One of them was neither a communist, nor a socialist of the left. All the same, it was with him that I spoke because we had the occasion to be together for 24 hours. We have talked about our families, and I told him that I was born in a little village. He was originally from a locality with only 24 inhabitants, with only one policeman and a post office. The bar acted as the post office. It looked strange to me to speak with an American boy from a place like that, of his family to find out that we were alike in certain things.

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(Interview)

TINEKEN

We started ~~zen~~ the December of last year, but now, there exist in East Europe a chain of personage, a group very....one can say, a movement that helps the Americans in the army stationed in Europe to desert. There are some action men and groups who travel from one country to the other, who maintain their contact through letters and phone calls. The contact...It is an organization that works when there are deserters. Our movement began by distributing leaflets, for example here in Amsterdam at the station. Many American soldiers stationed in Germany arrive at the station on the week-end, they come here to spend there week-end. We distribute leaflets that talk about the war in Vietnam and about the possibility which the American soldiers have of protesting against this war. The last possibility, the more serious one, the more important one is to desert. We have said that we want to help all the soldiers who will desert. It will not be very easy for them to do it; in Holland or in any other country, they cannot depend on our help.

Our action have had a certain success. A lot of articles have appeared on the international newspapers; and all this publicity have forced the United States Ministry of Defence, Mac Namara, to hold a conference on this desertion story. We are sure, we have testimonies and proofs, that the same Vietnamese are very interested and approve totally of our action. It is certain that it effectively and really contributes to the worlds resistance towards the American aggression in Vietnam. Now, most of the people who distribute the leaflets are either proves or elements of the socialist youth. They distribute them in prostitute or pleasure places. There is a number of prostitutes who help us to distribute the leaflets in certain cafes...or when they meet

.....TINEKEN continues

the soldiers in the small roads of the red quarters which is not very far away from the station.

Another aspect of this action is that different types of groups cooperate in it, for example, quakers, catholics, gesuit fathers, socialists, communists; are all working for this scope. In practice, this action presents two aspects: the humanitarian one, that of helping these boys, and another aspect, the political one, which is a type of anti American guerilla war in Eastern Europe.

WOMAN

For the moment, all the American deserters who stop here later go towards France or Sweden, because it is not possible to give them a political refuge here. We discuss with them; we find them a lodging and some money, and help them to cross the frontier in an opportune time.