

?? Some questions Concerning the Peace Corps ??

Last week many demonstrations were held across the world protesting American foreign policy and our Vietnam policy in particular. The United States is more and more often being compared to Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. Given these circumstances it is important that every prospective Peace Corps Volunteer ask and have answered the following questions about the function that the Peace Corps serves in overall U.S. policy. The motives which lead young Americans to volunteer for the Peace Corps are noble, and it does no good if their motives are subverted by an essentially harmful institution.

1) The United States is presently engaged in counter insurgency operations in Vietnam, Thailand and several countries in Latin America. Besides, the U.S. is the chief supporter of dozens of right wing governments in the Third World. Does the Peace Corps function as the sugar coating for an essentially reactionary foreign policy? Is the Peace Corps therefore merely used to confuse the people of the U.S. and the world into thinking that the U.S. is benevolent?

2) All Peace Corps volunteers submit reports covering their field operations. Are these field reports generally used by American political and military officers to plan counter-insurgency operations as they were used in the Dominican Republic?

3) In every nation in the world the U.S. maintains a country team which includes the top political, military, and intelligence officers stationed in the country. The head Peace Corps official is on this team. What is the role of these Peace Corps officials on the country team? Do they help plan counter-insurgency operations?

4) In many countries that accept Peace Corps volunteers the local military engages in what are called "civic action programs," much like the pacification programs in Vietnam. To what extent are Peace Corps volunteers participating in military civic action programs?

5) Several political scientists theorize that the most effective way to maintain stability among an aroused populace is to divert the people's attention from national issues to local issues. Are Peace Corps Projects designed to focus people's attention on superficial local problems when reforms and change on the national level is what is needed?

We don't know the answers to all these questions, but considering the behavior of the U.S. in the world, we are not optimistic about their answers. However, everyone thinking of joining the Peace Corps should find out since good intentions do not necessarily lead to good results.