

**Many Wear Gas Masks** *F Post 9.6.69*

# Protestors At Fort Detrick

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Thirty-five to 40 demonstrators with the Mid-Atlantic Committee on Fort Detrick stood in front of the Army bio-chemical testing base yesterday between noon and 1 p.m., some of them wearing gas masks while others carried signs protesting the research conducted in Frederick.

The group, predominantly adult, with only eight or nine students among them, were vastly outnumbered by the amount of spectators, newsmen, and police who had come to watch the activities. The number of newsmen numbered between 25 and 30, the spectators numbered about the same, and the eight or nine police, including at least five plain-clothesmen, rounded out the crowd.

The demonstrators arrived at Detrick around 11:45 a.m., after having met at the Howard Johnson's Restaurant on Jefferson Street. They came mostly from around the Washington area and Takoma Park, Bethesda, Potomac, Silver Spring, and (the

closest to Frederick) from Middletown.

They had been alerted to the demonstration within the last two weeks, either "by way of the grapevine" or through the use of fliers.

The gas masks were supplied by the sponsoring organization, which had bought 10 to 15 of them and distributed them among the protestors. Signs were homemade, some of the messages including: "The Black Plague - 1969; "CBW Center, Frederick, Md., Merchants of Death;" and a large green and black sign which said "Fort Detrick - Gateway to a Silent World."

The only local resident at the demonstration was Mrs. Helen Alexander of Frederick who was dressed in black pants, a black shirt, black boots, and a black gas mask to illustrate her thoughts on the "black death."

When police chief, Major Charles V. Main was questioned concerning registration for a parade permit, he responded that the county had no permit laws and that no such item was necessary for the demonstrators. He

added, however, "We don't have any permits. . . We've known about it for some time."

The demonstrators seemed to be concerned about the research done at the Fort for two separate reasons. The first and most widely expressed was that the use of such weapons is "immoral" on any grounds. The second opinion expressed was a disapproval of the secrecy which accompanies such research, and an alleged lack of care in initiating such research, endangering the lives of residents of surrounding towns.

Others expressed concern about the recent Edgewood and Oslow, Germany incidents concerning bio-chemical research and storing facilities.

The first to arrive there were a group of three college-age students, two boys and a girl. The young lady was the daughter of an employee of NASA. The young gentleman was a professed draft evader. They were joined within five minutes by their comrades at the Fort.

The exchange at the Fort was not one-sided. The demonstra-

tors saw to that. Discussions were started by the protestors with members of the community and several of the employees at Detrick, most of them calm exchanges of views on the effects of the research being conducted at the installation.

Attempted talks with the MP's at the base (and there was a double guard both at the front and side entrances) were discouraged by the police and MP's themselves who were concerned with protecting the security of the front gate and asked the demonstrators to "step away" from the guard post.

A request to use the phone in the guard booth to contact some official at the gate was denied one demonstrator, who was told that if she wished such an "audience" she would have to go through the proper channels.

The two moustachioed employees of Fort Detrick with whom the demonstrators spoke expressed the view that the security at the base was better than in many other bases around

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**FORT DETRICK PROTEST** - A 10 year - old boy from Middletown hands out fliers in protest Tuesday as the Mid-Atlantic Committee on Ft. Detrick demonstrated against the biological research at the Fort. Thirty to 40 protestors demonstrated here.-(Photo by Charles Warfield)

# PROTESTORS

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the country and that CBW is a necessary evil for the United States if it wishes to protect itself in the modern world.

At one point during the hour, several demonstrators became distressed that the MP's had taken the names of several Detrick employees who had accepted some of the group's literature. These people feared for the security of the recipients of the literature and reported it to several of the bystanding citizens at the gathering.

One older gentleman, representing Veterans for Peace in Maryland from Washington, upon questioning regarding a sign he carried which read, "Support our boys; Bring them home," said, "Many veterans for peace oppose this terrible, illegal, immoral war. . . Veterans for Peace has a very active group in Baltimore. . . and we'd like to organize a group in Frederick." He continued, "We (the U. S.) have more amputees coming back from Vietnam than from World War II and the Korean War put together."

One of the Detrick employees, wearing sandals and straddling a bicycle, defended the events at Detrick by saying that "the best offense is a good defense." He also commented on the masks being worn: "What are you wearing gas masks for? They're useless. . . I think this is a nice, fun thing you guys are doing, but as far as being realistic, it's not. . . We can't afford any more Pearl Harbors."

A young demonstrator, about seven years old, was asked what he was doing at Detrick. "I'm protesting. . . I'm protesting. . . I'm protesting. . . I'm protesting against GAS."

Other comments made by the demonstrators were:

"One of the things we're really concerned about is that they're not telling you what they're doing. . . It would be bad enough if you knew because it's

really scary, thinking that we're developing bubonic plague and things like that to kill people with. But they're not really telling people what they're doing."

"We saw the Mayor of Frederick on television saying, 'I don't know what they're doing over there, but if our boys need it. . . Let's have it. Our boys are getting it.'"

"I think they ought to be honest about what they're doing if this is a democracy. Obviously if they're afraid to tell us, it's because they're doing something insidious."

Some of the onlookers were also asked their opinions regarding the demonstration and the furor over CBW. One gentleman said that if the research being conducted at the base is indeed being worked as charged, he did support the protesters. Another onlooker said that he agreed with the demonstrators' feelings on CBW, but he did not agree with the way that the people were demonstrating their feelings. Most of those interviewed stated that they were there out of curiosity. They also agreed on the fact that most of the sign-carriers seemed to be well-behaved.

Other comments heard shouted from cars:

"Lock 'em up!"

"Better put a flag over those signs."

One other young gentleman stated that he thought "It's great. Creating a great traffic jam."

A local youth said that he was not participating in the demonstration because: "I really don't participate very much in demonstrations. They usually end up violent and I'm against violence."

Tomorrow, the demonstrators plan to meet at the White House at noon and march from there to the Capitol Building steps, "presenting the demands to the elected representatives of the country and to the people. We think that decisions are gonna be made at Congress and in the White House about this program. . . but they are not now being made by the people."