

Peace Group Says It Was Duped Into Protest

By Paul W. Valentine

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Antiwar veterans who attempted to heckle President Nixon at a Statue of Liberty "ethnic" ceremony last fall and were howled down by hundreds of Nixon partisans, say they were tricked into the incident by accepting an anonymous package of 50 invitations to the ceremony.

The hecklers, some 20 to 30 members and supporters of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) in New York, were drowned out and some were yanked away by police.

With national television cameras recording the scene, President Nixon interrupted his prepared speech to note: "I would only hope that tonight the TV screens will not show these six (demonstrators being escorted away) instead of the thousands here."

The President raised his hands above his head as chants of support grew among the 3,000 to 5,000 school children, government officials and "ethnics" assembled on the 10-acre Liberty Island in New York Harbor.

"Four more years, four more years," hundreds in the crowd shouted.

Ray Foust, U.S. Park Service law enforcement liaison officer for Liberty Island, said police had no prior knowledge of the VVAW scheme.

Those invited to the ceremony were drawn from a master list of some 3,500 invitees assembled by the Park Service and the American Museum of Immigration, and included members of Congress, state and federal officials, ethnic organization leaders and others, according to Park Service spokesman Robert Mahoney.

"The VVAW was not on the official invitation list, I can assure you of that," he said.

He said there were no security arrangements for protecting the invitations before mailing, but he has no recollection of any being lost or stolen.

He said he knew of no White House involvement in assembling the invitation

"It was a set-up. We were taken," said one VVAW member this week recalling the incident last Sept. 26.

"They were trying to discredit the antiwar movement and the McGovern campaign," said a VVAW worker who gave her name as Coca Crystal.

This view was unanimously supported in interviews with nearly a dozen New York VVAW members and supporters.

"Whoever it was—CREEP or the White House or somebody else—they are the provocateurs of a lot of violence at demonstrations," said Joe Hirsch, coordinator for the southern New York area VVAW.

CREEP is a pejorative acronym for the Committee for the Re-election of the President, Mr. Nixon's principal campaign organization last year. Both committee and White House spokesmen denied Hirsch's suggestion.

Convicted Watergate conspirator James W. McCord Jr., former security chief for the re-election committee, has singled out the VVAW repeatedly in recent Senate testimony as a "violence-oriented" radical organization requiring surveillance.

Anti-Castro Cuban activist Pablo Fernandez has also

list, but two representatives of the President's re-election committee came to the Park Service office in New York just before the ceremony and "were preparing their own invitations."

The committee invitations were printed on blue paper, as distinct from the buff-colored invitations of the Park Service, he said, and were addressed mostly "to political clubs and what-have-you to draw a big crowd."

Re-election committee spokesman DeVan Shumway said yesterday he could find no record of committee involvement in the invitation procedures, nor could anyone still employed at the committee recollect any involvement.

Shumway described the VVAW theory of the planted invitations to discredit the antiwar movement as a "little far-fetched."

The VVAW is "very pub-

licity conscious," he said, ". . . I can't attach a great deal of significance to what the VVAW has to say today."

told The Washington Post that he and the four men arrested in the Watergate complex with McCord last June were members of a 10-man "vigilante squad" summoned from Miami to disrupt antiwar demonstrations held at the time of FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's funeral here in May, 1972.

In the Statue of Liberty incident, three VVAW members in separate interviews this week gave similar accounts of the VVAW New York office receiving the 50 unsolicited invitations to the ceremony, a formal dedication of an \$8 million American Museum of Immigration.

The official, U.S. Park Service embossed invitations came in a plain brown envelope with no return address one day before the Sept. 26 ceremony, said VVAW member Brian Mataresse, of New York. There was no note or accompanying explanation, he said.

The envelope was addressed to the VVAW office at 25 W. 26th St., in Manhattan, Mataresse said, but was additionally directed to the attention of Pat Parker, a teacher and part-time worker in the VVAW office.

"We decided to get a group together and go." re-

called Mataresse. With such short notice, he said, only about 20 were able to go. Other participants say there were about 30.

"We dressed straight and kept our signs and buttons under our coats," said Mataresse. "Some of the women carried antiwar signs folded up in their purses."

The group filtered onto the ferry boat at Battery Park in lower Manhattan for the trip to Liberty Island, passing a police check point and displaying their invitations, Mataresse said.

Once on the island, the group was engulfed by the large gathering of school and ethnic groups. The demonstrators unfurled their signs and began shouting "Stop the bombing, stop the bombing!" and other antiwar slogans.

When the heckling persisted, several demonstrators were removed by U.S. Park Police and questioned by Secret Service agents. No formal arrests were made.

Secret Service spokesman Jack Warner here acknowledged that four persons were detained for questioning and that each held an invitation. "They were questioned only as to their intentions," he said.

(Other clippings on VVAW filed Infiltrators under date of 14 Jul 72.)