

6 Vietnam Veterans on TV Accuse U.S. of a Betrayal

By DOUGLAS ROBINSON

Six veterans of the Vietnam war, in a frank, free-wheeling television discussion last night, accused the United States Government of having betrayed them and agreed that the Southeast Asia conflict was a racial war.

The discussion, taped for broadcast on WNEW-TV from 11 P.M. to 1 A.M., also covered such topics as the use of drugs by combat troops, the black market in Vietnam, the dislike of Americans by South Vietnamese, and the apathy toward veterans by the American public.

David Susskind, the host for the two-hour discussion, said in a telephone interview that the six men had been selected from among a larger group of veterans, not because of their views, but because they appeared to be men "who would not freeze before the lights and cameras."

He said he had received "no cooperation" from the Army. "They said it was impossible to talk to returning soldiers at the separation centers," Mr. Susskind added. "So my staff of three went to veterans' hospitals and their places until we found some guys willing to talk."

Agree on South Vietnamese

"They all agreed that the South Vietnamese Army could not hack it and that the North Vietnamese were filled with an almost evangelical fervor," he continued.

"In 13 years in this business, I can't ever remember a show that racked me up so," Mr. Susskind said.

During the discussion, one of the veterans, Robert O. Muller of Great Neck, L. I., a former Marine Corps lieutenant who was wounded and is paralyzed from the chest down, said that although when he joined the Marines he was "gung-ho," he discovered in Vietnam "that our reasons for being there were totally false."

"I'm not bitter because I got shot through the chest," Mr. Muller said. "Like I said, I enlisted. I went over there and it was all my doing. And I knew what the statistics were in the casualty rates, and especially with infantry officers."

"But what got me bugged, and why I'm bitter, is the fact that I did put, naively, so much faith in my government. To find out that I was betrayed by my government."

He disputed contentions that Americans were fighting for Vietnamese self-determination, saying that "what we're doing now is telling them, 'you will be dead before you will be red, period.'"

Skeptical of Reasons

The five other veterans agreed that they were skeptical of the reasons given by the Government for being in the war. They also agreed that South Vietnamese troops were not good combat soldiers and would lose the war when the Americans withdrew.

On the subject of the black market and the sale of narcotics, all agreed with Jerry Coner of New York City, who served two tours in Vietnam, that both marijuana and hard drugs were



WAR SCORED BY VETERANS: Bradford Britt, left, 21-year-old from Hartford, Conn., was one of six former soldiers in South Vietnam conflict who appeared on David Susskind TV show last night. The former Army draftee lost both legs in a mine explosion.

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"And the Vietnamese Government . . . they are totally aware of what's going on," Mr. Coner said. "It's money in the politician's pocket in Vietnam." In discussing the racial aspect of the war, Mr. Muller contended — and the others agreed — that even in training in the United States it becomes a war of "Americans versus Orientals."

"When you're going through your practices and you're training stateside, and it's bayonet drill, and the code of bayonet kill, and you're hitting Luke every-time you stick your bay-

onet in. These are the names you use."

The other veterans in the discussion were Bradford Britt of Hartford, Conn., who lost both legs in a land-mine explosion; Charles Knight of New York, who was captured briefly but managed to escape; Stephen McDonough of Dorchester, Mass., who enlisted in the Army just before being drafted; and Steven Uzzi of Lindenhurst, L.I., who was discharged from the Army last August.