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THE END OF THE EPOCH OF SPONTANEITY

The Background to February 24th and the Lessons to be Drawn

February 24th represented a severe defeat and a bitter blow to the anti-imperialist solidarity movement. Several factors were responsible for this: the small turnout, complete lack of leadership in the Square and outside Claridges Hotel, the aimless immobility of the demonstrators. All this meant that the initiative lay completely with the police, who were able to carve up and isolate the demonstrators into small harmless pockets, dispersing the stragglers and making sallies amongst them at will for the purpose of indiscriminate arrests and beatings-up. Why has all this happened?

To answer this an analysis is necessary, however brief, of the character and history of the anti-imperialist solidarity movement in Britain since March 17th, 1968.

March 17th was the militant demonstration which confronted the V.S.C. leadership with its Rubicon: whether to continue the deep-rooted traditions of mere liberal protest of a primarily peaceful and constitutional character; or whether to lead the movement in the direction of its transformation into a genuine militant anti-imperialist detachment of the British working people, working youth and students which would progressively challenge the state power on its ability to bring real strength and weight to bear in support of the struggles of our class brothers and allies in other lands who are confronting the common imperialist enemy with arms in hand.

The latter course would have involved energetically taking in hand the fundamental problem of all anti-imperialist solidarity movements in developed imperialist countries - how to link the broad anti-imperialist demands of the international struggle against imperialism with the particular demands and interests of the working people, in this case the British working people, who are likewise threatened, though in differing ways, by the reactionary system and policies of both British and U.S. imperialism. On the other hand, the refusal to cross this Rubicon and to begin the task of raising the whole political level and orientation of the movement to a qualitatively new stage would have led inevitably to a degeneration back to the traditions of peaceful radical protest from which the movement had only recently emerged. The massive demonstration in Grosvenor Square on March 17th, 1968 represented a preparatory flexing of the muscles of the spontaneous movement which confronted the V.S.C. leadership with these two alternatives. In practice, as is usually the case with those whose revolutionary ambition is greater than their revolutionary capacity and understanding, a compromise was chosen: that of an alliance with other organisations and political parties which act as concealed centres of capitalist, liberal ideas and practice, which talk stridently about "bloody revolution" but which adopt the smooth techniques of reform and liberal protest - chief amongst them the constitutional-reformist C.P.G.B. and Y.C.L. This alliance took shape in the ad-hoc committee type of structure, which was tried out first of all on the March 17th demonstration and then, having proved its efficacy as a demagogic instrument of ultra-democratic deception, was used to betray and divert first the

July 21st demonstration and later that of October 27th, which was so loudly proclaimed by all quarters, from the right-wing capitalist press to the effusions of the glossy new "left" neo-liberal tracts, as the "British October Revolution". It was precisely the ad-hoc committee structure which provided the kind of loose framework needed by careerist-minded reformists to seize control of a mass movement in the ranks of which they had never been tried and tested in struggle and which had never elected them to any position of trust and responsibility, through the simple device of calling meetings which were "their own" authority. Scientific revolutionaries have a term for this: ultra-democracy, which, in the nature of things, is equivalent to its opposite: dictatorship by a small minority for the purpose of stemming, holding and finally frustrating and disrupting the spontaneous upsurge of rank-and-file militancy.

The bitter lessons of defeat and decimation at the hands of the police which were driven into the heads of so many militants at the ends of police batons on February 24th were, in fact, the final culmination and bitter fruit of the lessons of October 27th and earlier. The fact that only some 400 demonstrators appeared in Grosvenor Square for the commencement of the demonstration; the fact that they waited on the Square for a whole hour without any militant activity of any kind being incepted or led by the members of the "Hot Reception for Nixon Committee" who were present and that absolutely no plan of campaign existed to lead the demonstration to Claridges and to set a realistic and realisable strategic goal for the demonstration to achieve when it reached that point - these were but some of the negative features which resulted in an indisciplined and unnerved assembly ineffectually milling about in front of the usual solid police cordon which strongly outnumbered the demonstrators. From the very beginning the initiative lay with the police. At the appropriate moment of their own choosing, they brought in fresh busloads of reinforcements, surrounded those demonstrators who were not quick enough to regroup, boxed them in in a square not more than 20 yards across and held them at their pleasure, picking off the more militant at will. Those who managed to break through were chased up South Moulton Street and Oxford Street, harried by police sallies, surrounded and trapped in the tube stations and against walls, subjected to brutalities, beaten up and arrested. Indeed a disastrous end for the epoch of pure "spontaneity" which began with such a fund of militant enthusiasm and courage on March 17th, 1968! Using the initiative they in reality held from the very beginning, the ruling class had decided that the moment had come to declare an end to the "right" to be militant, and to pass over to the tactics of open repression of the anti-imperialist solidarity movement.

The small turnout on February 24th was thus, at least in large part, the outcome of the history of the movement since its inception on March 17th, 1968. The highwater mark in that history was October 27th, from which also began its decline. That decline is manifested in the proliferation of splits and sectarian divisions within the leaderships of both V.S.C. and B.V.S.F. With the sharp instinct which the working masses always possess in smelling out the collapse of even the most opportunist and unprincipled of leaderships,

amongst which sections of both V.S.C. and B.V.S.F. must be counted, the majority of anti-imperialist militants began to withdraw their support and to fall away to await a regrouping and reorganisation of the forces. Consequently, it was only the 400 or so most advanced cadres who turned up in Grosvenor Square on the 24th. The sectarianism and opportunism which the V.S.C. and B.V.S.F. policies, methods of work and organisational structures had for so long encouraged had effectively isolated those organisations from their mass base and placed the most advanced cadres in an exposed position before the class enemy and its highly disciplined and organised police force.

The Positive and the Negative of Spontaneity

All movements which genuinely reflect the struggle of the working masses against the exploitation and oppression which the imperialist system imposes upon them must arise from those struggles themselves and must therefore possess a spontaneous base. As Karl Marx expressed it: "The emancipation of the working class can be the work of the working class alone!" In capitalist society, the inexorable law of social development is that the whole of society tends to become polarised into two great opposed classes, the working class and the capitalist class. The capitalist class is powerful because of its ownership of the means of producing wealth and its control of the apparatus that controls that wealth, the state. The working class, on the other hand, possesses in the last analysis nothing but its capacity to organise for struggle. If that struggle is one which is genuinely in the interests of the working class, it will for that very reason be to the detriment of the capitalist class, and hence will ultimately call forth the repressive action of its state power - a state power which is armed to the teeth with modern weapons from the simple police truncheon to armoured fighting vehicles, fighter and bomber aircraft and nuclear weapons. What the monopoly capitalists and their state lack, however - at least in the longer term perspectives - is the support of the mass of the working people, who have become workers precisely because of the operation of this same law of class polarisation. At the present time in Britain, 84 per cent of the population are working class and only 2 per cent are capitalists, the remaining 14 per cent being middle class. It is clear, therefore, that the middle class is a declining class, whose members, particularly the young rising generation, are being pressed down into the ranks of the working class by the inexorable tendency for more and more wealth, more and more power - including political and state power - to be concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer monopoly capitalists. This new rising generation of newly-proletarianised young people provides the source, therefore, from which the first and most politically conscious elements of the working class generally arise, who are aware of the need to struggle against monopoly capitalism and its stranglehold on the means of life and labour and who therefore are also aware of the need for militant anti-imperialist solidarity.

On the other hand, this new rising generation of young anti-imperialist militants also tends to lack experience in class struggle, particularly the experience of organisation for struggle (to the extent that they are aware of this lack, they sometimes tend to resent it!). The upsurge of spontaneous militancy amongst the newly-

proletarianised youth and students usually anticipates the growth of a similar militant consciousness amongst broad masses of the established, organised working class itself, which also suffers from the additional disadvantage that it is penetrated by all kinds of reformist, pro-capitalist organisations the very purpose of which is to disarm the workers from within and to permeate them with the ideology of capitalism. However, the fusion of militant energy emanating from the working youth, students and young working intellectuals with the long established experience and traditions of the industrial working class, even the most advanced sections of which are slower to move than are the working youth, remains the prime pre-condition for success of any broad militant movement of an anti-imperialist character. Hence the strategy of those who would lead that broad movement towards playing a decisive role in the sharpening class struggles which herald the first beginnings of the crisis of imperialism and of the revolutionary movement which that crisis ultimately calls forth must be to mobilise the maximum support around concrete issues of clear relevance to the existing national or world situation and which are of vital concern to the most advanced sections of the working class and working people. We have seen that, at the present time, those most advanced sections are precisely the newly proletarianised working youth. For that very reason, once that maximum support has been rallied and mobilised, a prime task must be to overcome as rapidly as possible the lack of experience in struggle and in organisation for struggle of the new emerging anti-imperialist forces, to combat all false theory which attempts to elevate this lack to the level of a virtue, and to use the struggle around anti-imperialist solidarity demands as a great training school to raise the level of political awareness and understanding and the quality of militant struggle of the anti-imperialist solidarity movement.

Furthermore, such a perspective would synthesise the spontaneous militancy of the newly-proletarianised young workers and students with the traditional discipline and capacity for organisation for struggle, at least on economic demands, which are the great strength of the industrial working class movement, and would thus enable the former to be utilised as a powerful influence assisting the revolutionisation of the outlook and methods of struggle of the whole broad working class, to assist it in casting off illusions about the possibility of peacefully changing "the system" and to gain confidence in the ability of the working masses to deploy their strength and power on issues which become progressively more fundamental in their scope as the objective framework of class struggle sharpens, and which therefore hit the capitalism system more and more at its foundations as the struggle develops and gains support.

It follows clearly from this that in any single militant action, such as a demonstration, the question of organisation, of carefully thought out strategy and tactics to enable the superiority in numbers to overcome the class enemy's superiority in weapons and technology, is absolutely vital. Spontaneity, i.e. the spontaneous support of large numbers of working people, is a vital, indeed a basic, factor; but, having once arisen, the spontaneous mass movement must throw up its own leadership which will become tried and tested in the course

of revolutionary practice.

At a certain stage in the development of a militant mass movement of the working class, of which the anti-imperialist solidarity movement is an integral part, a sufficient body of understanding in theory and of experience in revolutionary practice will have been accumulated for what might be described as a general staff of the working class movement to be brought into being. This general staff is normally known as a vanguard party. Its formation and development, however, is closely linked with the infusion into the most advanced sections of the mass movement of scientific theory, the generalisation of experience in class struggle. But the purpose of such a vanguard party of the working class is the long term and fundamental one of achieving victory in the socialist revolution. The purpose and aim of the broad working class movement, on the other hand - and this includes the anti-imperialist solidarity movement - will be, at any given moment, not the ultimate aim of victory in the socialist revolution, but that of winning intermediate positions in the struggle to improve the strategic terrain within which the working class engages the class enemy and fights out all its battles - and these, in the nature of things, are and can only be struggles around immediate, concrete and pressing issues. As a general rule, therefore, the more long-term and fundamental the aim (i.e. socialist revolution), the narrower the base of support at any given moment short of the onset of revolution itself, by which time the whole developing process will have led to the vast majority of the working class taking up revolutionary positions; and the more specific, concrete, urgent and short-term the aim (i.e., higher wages, better working conditions, immediate social reforms or even anti-imperialist solidarity) the broader the base of support that can be won.

We have seen, therefore, that while a mass movement around immediate demands will arise more or less spontaneously as the militant response of the working people to the oppression and injustices of imperialist society, its capacity to play a fully conscious role in the long-term historical aims of the working class depends upon the forging of close and organic links between it and the vanguard leadership which at a certain stage will be brought into being, as well as between all leadership levels and their corresponding organisations and the mass base of militant struggle. This is what is meant by the unity of the working class forces - a unity which must be from top to bottom. The result is a complex structure of organisation and leadership at every level which, if correctly built and led, fulfils the need of the working class forces to struggle on every front where imperialist reaction is attacking the working masses. Broad movements of militant struggle and protest may thus arise more or less spontaneously, but their integration into the overall strategy for the weakening, isolation and final destruction of imperialism and its state is a task of leadership armed with a scientific theory of the overall development.

We have analysed in an earlier issue how the V.S.C. leadership had its origins in the petty-bourgeois protest movement - in fact, it arose directly out of C.N.D. But it was compelled to wear a deceptive "left" mask because, unlike the days of C.N.D., it found

itself at the head of a militant anti-imperialist solidarity movement the objective class character of which was not petty-bourgeois, but working class. This was and remains so whatever may be the disparity between that objective class character and the subjective make-up of the majority of young newly-proletarianised workers and students who, at any given moment, comprise the greater part of its cadres.

Thus a contradiction arises between the originally petty-bourgeois and reformist ideas concerning the objective role, class character, perspectives of development and strategy and tactics of the anti-imperialist solidarity movement, together with the methods of work and organisation which are their reflection in practice, and the real and concrete needs of the struggle. This contradiction eventually gives rise to a division, in which one section of the leadership begins to attempt honestly to change its petty-bourgeois ideas and practice and to bring them into correspondence with the reality of sharpening class struggle in general and of the struggle for anti-imperialist solidarity in particular; and another section which, in the face of the defeats, disillusionment and widespread disruption of the unity of the rank and file to which these ideas and practice, as they were originally incepted, inevitably lead, seeks to find a solution to the crises of policy and leadership in ever more open and pronounced capitulation to petty-bourgeois, social-pacifist prejudice and backwardness, the spontaneous base of support for which will always be strong, especially in the early stages in the development of a broad, militant movement, and which must always be vigorously combated. As we shall shortly see, such a division has already occurred in the leadership of V.S.C., and is rapidly developing into an open split.

Thus the process of development envisaged by the leading elements in V.S.C. - all of whom are political figures in the narrow sense, not working class or progressive militants in the broad sense - is the very opposite to that by means of which genuine broad movements of a militant character are built, moulded and framed to fulfil a role in class struggle against imperialism and ultimately to develop into a mass base for revolution. Similarly, it is the exact opposite of the process whereby the vanguard party of the working class armed with scientific theory is built. The "theory" of building a working class vanguard party out of a broad militant movement, the base of which is spontaneous, is a petty-bourgeois theory, inimical to the objective needs of struggle of the working class which, as we have seen, possesses nothing but its capacity to organise for struggle. It was from the attempt to build and lead the movement on this misconceived basis and according to this inverted process of development that there first were spawned all the errors and betrayals which have marked the history of V.S.C. - the ultra-democratic concealment of bureaucratic control, the steamrolling through of decisions under the cover of loose ad-hoc committees, and so on.

As for the supposed "principled and revolutionary" alternative to V.S.C., the B.V.S.F., it will be noted that it possesses one fundamental feature in common with its shadow boxing partner V.S.C.; it too confuses the role of the broad movement and the vanguard and seeks to create the vanguard out of the perversion and demagogic deception of the broad base. And this was the reason why at the

height of the battle in Grosvenor Square on October 27th, this "leadership" likewise deserted the broad forces it had earlier claimed to lead but in reality had abandoned at precisely the moment when firm discipline and a plan of action were needed.

To summarise our analysis, therefore, there are three main factors in the development of the anti-imperialist solidarity movement in Britain which need to be clearly understood. These involve the relationship between a) theory and practice; these must develop progressively over a whole period, in the crucible of militant struggle around immediate and concrete demands, into revolutionary theory and practice; b) experience in struggle and the political aims and demands of the movement; these will challenge imperialism more fundamentally as experience is gained of the realities of imperialist Britain, of the irreconcilable conflict of interest between the working masses and the monopoly capitalist/imperialist owners of industry and wielders of state power; c) the political aims and demands of the anti-imperialist solidarity movement, its methods of struggle and the organisational forms to be adopted to serve those methods.

Why is Integrated and All-embracing Organisation for Struggle Absolutely Essential, and Mere Spontaneous Militancy Not Enough?

Because a broad anti-imperialist solidarity movement is a complex organism consisting not only of individual militants, but also of political groups and even parties with possibly widely differing views concerning the long-term aims and goals of the movement and differing tactical lines of attack and defence. These differences extend throughout the movement from top to bottom, from affiliated parties and organisations to individuals. Only an organisational structure can suffice which effectively embraces all these diverse tendencies and views, combines their many-sided experience and differing theoretical assessments of the situation at any given moment in a common pool and enables a united line of policy and action to be elaborated and a unified and integrated strategy and tactics for each and every phase in the struggle, for each and every demonstration, to be thrashed out. Only such a firm organisational structure can serve to ensure that the framework for overcoming sectarian conflicts and for strangling at birth all opportunist schemes for "seizing control" is created.

Organisation reflects and serves the political programme (aims and demands) of the movement, and constitutes the organism or structure within which the unity of all sections of the movement, from entire groups and parties down to individual militants, is achieved, the essential norms of discipline maintained without which no action can be successful, and the democratic election of a leadership consisting of the most developed, dedicated and incorruptible comrades ensured.

Organisation is also necessary in order to obtain the most efficient and effective co-ordination between that democratically elected leadership and the various internal levels of organisation and leadership (branches, specialised committees, etc.) right down to the rank and file. This is absolutely essential to the successful conduct of day-to-day tasks, such as recruitment, propaganda, the

holding of meetings, educational forums and other measures for maintaining and raising the quality of political understanding and the combative spirit of cadres at all levels, and for ensuring that leadership is made effective at all levels and internal democracy and discipline at all times strengthened.

Why is Firm Leadership Essential to a Militant Mass Movement and Spontaneous Autonomy a Source of Defeat and Disaster ?

Because it is only when a mass movement throws up its most developed, experienced and dedicated cadres and places them in positions of responsibility - for deciding the most suitable steps and methods to be taken in particular situations, for deciding how best to implement in those particular situations the general policy democratically determined by the mass of members, for organising special events, etc., - that the best guarantee of the correctness of those measures and actions taken, their correspondence with the demands of the objective situation, can be obtained and subjective arbitrariness, illusionist wish-fulfilment and the abuse of the aims of the movement in the interests of disruptive, sectarian groups or the emotional needs of unstable individuals avoided.

Why Do Organisation and Leadership require Clear-headed Discipline on the Part of All if they are to be made Stable and Effective ?

Because only the freely accepted discipline of militants united in achieving a common goal can ensure that all cadres are united with their leadership within the organisational structure of the movement at all its levels, as lips to teeth. Only free self-discipline can ensure that all individual members, all leading committees and all affiliated organisations act in unity, not only on general policy issues, not only in words, but also in practice, in concrete actions, in the melee of sharp and violent clashes with "capitalist authority". Discipline therefore requires the subordination of the individual to the collective, of subjective desires and interests to the objective needs and interests of the whole movement. Discipline is the instrument of integrated and all-embracing organisation and firm leadership, and serves both. Whether or not a movement, organisational level or even an individual cadre is imbued with a deep sense of both collective and individual discipline and responsibility can well determine the outcome of an action such as a militant demonstration - the successful achievement of its targets or its decimation and defeat at the hands of the well organised police force.

It does not require a very high political level to comprehend the fact that, for instance, the police force is both highly organised and firmly disciplined, and always works, whether in attack or defence, according to a clearly thought out plan of campaign. If their initiative is to be taken from them, their capacity to frustrate the fundamental rights of demonstration and assembly of the working people defeated and the comparative freedom they at present enjoy to inflict indiscriminate violence and brutalities upon demonstrators effectively neutralised, the militant movement must develop at least an equivalent

code of discipline - the difference being that the discipline of militant working people is an inherent and freely accepted attitude to work and struggle, not a punitive system imposed by force. The norms of self-discipline developed by the militant working people over many centuries of struggle serve the purpose of ensuring the best possible integration of individual or group initiative with collective responsibility. It is thus the cement which binds the entire cadre force unbreakably to the movement and its leadership.

What is a United Front Type of Organisation ?

A united front is a movement in which various political parties, groups and individuals holding differing views on the long-term aims and strategic goals of the working class movement as a whole decide to unite their forces in the pursuit of a less general and more specific and concrete (in general also shorter-term) aim which all parties, groups or individuals have agreed to be a necessary one. Such a united front to achieve a common concrete goal does not preclude the independent role, interests and aims of all affiliated parties or groups outside the united front, or their right to engage in inner-movement struggle and polemics on any issue, including questions relating to the united front itself. Indeed, such a relation of unity and struggle is essential to its development.

The political basis of the united front is the objective need of all participating sections of the working class, the working youth and students to unite in order to present to a class enemy which is becoming more and more ferocious and desperate a solid and unbreakable front of struggle. It is also the only framework within which such norms of organisation, leadership and discipline as have been outlined above can be developed and strengthened. The failure to build such a united front at times of mounting class struggle means, in practice, that sectarian differences - which may be of only slight importance to the concrete and immediate needs of the broad struggle, though of vital significance to the long-term perspectives and goals - are permitted a scope sufficient effectively to sabotage the unity of the entire movement. Clearly, the crying need of the hour, so far as the present situation in Britain is concerned, is the speedy building of a broad united front of anti-imperialist solidarity of the British working people with their class brothers in both the developed imperialist and colonial lands.

A.C.A.I.S is the nucleus of such a united front of anti-imperialist solidarity.

All Genuine Militants must Work to Strengthen the United Front Against Imperialism !

Only the united front form of organisation for struggle can now suffice to pull the movement together, establish unity and raise it to the new level of militant action needed in a situation where the ruling class is preparing its positions for a policy of repression and reactionary violence on all fronts. Indeed, one of the reasons why the opportunist VSC and BVSF leaderships have fallen away and deserted their positions is because the anti-imperialist solidarity movement now stands poised on the threshold of new intense and bitter struggles in the face of which they were inadequate to lead the movement into battle.

The facts show that both the right and the pseudo-left wings of the anti-imperialist solidarity movement, VSC and BVSF, have since October 27th, been in process of breaking up into further rival groups and factions. Within VSC, the rift between the rival contenders for the leadership and the now openly alienated and rebellious membership has widened to the point where all central authority has broken down, and the "National Executive Committee" now executes nothing but its own certificate of incompetence and helplessness. The organisational structure having virtually collapsed, the branches, in which fundamentally healthy and non-sectarian views prevail, are taking matters into their own hands and are developing local bases of solidarity with fighting Vietnam on their own initiative.

It is, however, within the pseudo-left wing of the movement, the BVSF, that the process of exposure of the opportunist leadership is yielding the most positive results. As a consequence of the unmasking in practice, before the very police cordons in Grosvenor Square on October 27th., of the corrupt leading clique of A. Manchanda, and the even more glaring manoeuvres of this disruptive centre to manipulate the BVSF framework into performing as a bogus "Marxist-Leninist" political group providing effective cover and the necessary "ideological" sanctions for the exercise of a regime of administrative terror disguised as "democratic centralism", the largest branch in BVSF, the Earl's Court Branch, has split and a majority of its members have proclaimed themselves an independent militant group. The leading cadres of this group, under the able and spirited leadership of the well-known militant A. Olacchia, have adopted the fundamentally correct policy aim of fighting for the unity of the movement on a militant, non-sectarian, united front basis, and have formed the Committee for the Unity of the Vietnam Solidarity Movement (CUVSM), which is linked with ACAIS through reciprocal affiliations. CUVSM and its enthusiastic young cadre force is now playing an important and leading role alongside ACAIS in organising a really powerful, united and carefully planned militant demonstration in solidarity with the fighting people of Vietnam on March 30th., and some 28 organisations, including political groups, student committees, VSC branches and other broad bodies have up to the present time affiliated to the March 30th. Ad Hoc Committee. A prime task of all genuine anti-imperialist militants must now be to support and strengthen both the CUVSM and the March 30th. Ad Hoc Committee to the maximum of their ability, and to work with energy and determination to make the demonstration to Grosvenor Square on March 30th. a resounding triumph for the principle of the militant, organised and disciplined demonstration of solidarity with fighting Vietnam.

As for the corrupt and demagogic clique in the leadership of BVSF, this is fast losing its base of support in the broad militant movement and is sinking into ever deeper opportunist entanglements as it struggles to save itself from isolation and exposure and the ensuing loss of even its most loyal cadres. In a frantic effort to reverse this process of decline, the Manchanda clique proclaimed the Soviet Embassy as one of the targets for the demonstration it organised on March 9th., under the slogan "Soviet social-imperialists hands off Vietnam and Czechoslovakia". This blatant attempt to woo for the

declining bases of support for the BVSF and its abortive March 9th. demonstration that section of "left"-liberal and pacifist opinion which sees a connection between these two in reality totally un-connected issues was, however, doomed to failure from the start. Only some 250 of the BVSF membership turned out on Trafalgar Square on the 9th. Not even a wavering and dispirited rendering, led by chorusmaster Manchanda himself, of that well-known marching song of the N.L.F., "The East is Red", could serve to rally the flagging spirits of the faithful! The result of the whole charade was a flop from which the leading clique around A. Manchanda - itself ridden with factional rivalries of an opportunist character - may never recover.

A further significant highpoint in the process of decline of the right-opportunist wing of the movement, VSC, was the ill-starred demonstration in Sheffield on Sunday March 2nd. On this occasion, the spontaneous militancy of the demonstrators compelled the CPGB-YCL renegades to abandon, at least temporarily, their mask of "solidarity" with fighting Vietnam and "unity" with anti-imperialist militants in Britain, and to collaborate openly with the police in the arrest of militant demonstrators. Indeed, their stewards acted quite openly as a para-military force, as had their I.S. cousins on October 27th., and were seen actively to assist the police in physically subduing arrested demonstrators and packing them into waiting black marias ! The result of this serious debacle has been the virtual collapse of the alliance between the VSC leadership and the class-collaborationist CPGB and YCL which has, since July 21st., 1968, formed the cornerstone of the opportunist leadership of the spontaneous movement. Only the now equally exposed and isolated "I.M.G." section of the V.S.C. leadership continues to maintain any kind of relations with the C.P.G.B. and Y.C.L. within that alliance, from the lofty heights of the Executive Committee from which they succeeded in ousting almost all their rivals, and over which they now reign in splendid isolation from the mass base of the movement. The consequent demoralisation of the "I.M.G." leading cadres in the Executive Committee precipitated them into abandoning almost all active work in preparation for the demonstration of March 16th., the guiding reigns of which they had seen fit to place in the hands of the C.P.G.B. and Y.C.L. majority on the "March 16th. Mobilisation Committee" - this in spite of the open revelation of the reactionary character and role of the C.P.G.B. and Y.C.L. at Sheffield only 2 weeks earlier ! The result was a turnout of only some 2000 on March 16th. to "welcome the N.L.F. Paris delegation at London Airport" - who both the V.S.C. leadership and the C.P.G.B. and Y.C.L. knew some 3 months previously would not be permitted by the Wilson Govt. to enter the country ! A catastrophic decline indeed from the halcyon days of October 27th. when the tattered and besmirched remnants of the once so confident V.S.C. - C.P.G.B. alliance are compelled to resort to an obvious confidence trick in order to scrounge together a mere 2000 demonstrators ! Clearly, the death-rattle of the once-powerful opportunist leadership of V.S.C. is now imminent.

Such has been the development of the anti-imperialist solidarity movement since the momentous date of October 27th, 1968 which marked the beginning of the end of the epoch of spontaneity, up to the disastrous evening of February 24th, 1969 which, to the accompaniment of swinging truncheons and stampeding feet, marked its burial. The movement now stands at the crossroads: either to move forward to the organised consolidation of the mass base of militant struggle won up to the present time, before it is whittled down and further decimated to the level of a small, isolated and adventurist band; to the long and difficult task of winning the most advanced sections of the organised working class movement to the cause of militant solidarity with their class brothers in other lands - but above all, and as the essential precondition for the successful achievement of the above aims and as the most immediate and urgent task, to the overcoming of sectarian and opportunist methods of struggle and false leadership, and the building in their place of a disciplined and truly militant anti-imperialist united front of the British working people.

We invite all anti-imperialist solidarity groups and organisations, all genuine militants, to affiliate to the Preparatory Committee of A.C.A.I.S. and to assist in the work of preparing for the foundation conference. Likewise, we call upon all organisations, groups and individual militants to support and to join in organising the two great demonstrations due to take place in the first half of 1969: the demonstration in solidarity with the fighting people of Vietnam to be held on March 30th: and the demonstration of international proletarian solidarity to be held on May 1st. It will be in these demonstrations that, for the first time in recent decades, the experience, negative and positive, of the militant demonstration in the conditions of a developed and repressive imperialist environment will be assessed and new methods of disciplined organisation and leadership put to the test of practice. Where the opportunist leaderships of certain organisations and groups are found to place their sectarian and disruptive aims and ambitions above the overriding need for principled unity and a united front framework of organisation and leadership, the rank and file should remove them from their leading positions and elect their own militant representatives in their place.

It is essential that these steps be adopted and the task of rooting out the long-standing opportunist and sectarian tendencies which have for many decades been so prominent and negative a feature of the British working class and progressive movement be energetically taken in hand by the militant rank and file of all groups and tendencies, if the repressive offensive which has been launched by the British imperialist state and its highly organised and disciplined police forces is to be adequately countered and prevented from continuing with success and impunity to deny the democratic right of working people to demonstrate on behalf of their fundamental class interest and in solidarity with their class brothers in other lands.

The year 1968 has seen a tremendous extension of the world arena of anti-imperialist struggle. From such widely flung sectors of the colonial and neo-colonial front as Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, the sphere of battle has rapidly spread into the developed imperialist heartlands of Western Europe and North America, beginning

with the powerful negro and student actions in the U.S., reaching its highwater mark in the great revolutionary upheaval in France - the most determined and resolute anti-imperialist offensive that Western Europe has witnessed since the German Revolution of 1918 - and finally extended the finger of its fiery arm of mass revolt to the very shores of Britain, to Northern Ireland, with the upsurge of the centuries-old struggle of the Irish working people for national independence, unity and democratic freedoms.

At such a time, when the outlines of the world anti-imperialist united front are clearly taking shape and the imperialist system is moving into irreconcilable and insoluble crisis, it is a lasting disgrace and a cause for shame that British militants should have been dispersed, hounded and beaten up by police and their emerging anti-imperialist solidarity movement move into decline at the very moment when the flames of anti-imperialist struggle are rising in country after country the world over and the chieftain of U.S. imperialism, Nixon, has been allowed no secure funkhole in which to hide in Rome, Paris and other West European cities. To remove this stain should now be the prime concern of all militants, engaging all the energy, courage and enthusiasm of which they are capable. Of all these qualities our British working class, working youth and progressive militant intellectuals possess as large a fund as those of any other country in the world. Only three factors are missing, all of them objective and not subjective in character, to enable these qualities to be harnessed and applied to the struggle:

- * integrated and all-embracing organisation;
- * firm and democratic leadership;
- * militant collective and individual discipline

- all mobilised and brought to bear against the class enemy in a powerful and determined united front of anti-imperialist solidarity.

FORWARD TO THE UNITED FRONT OF MILITANT ANTI-IMPERIALIST SOLIDARITY OF THE BRITISH WORKING PEOPLE !

 FIGHTING VIETNAM'S HEROIC
 STRUGGLE IS OURS TOO !

ALL OUT TO TRAFALGAR SQUARE

SUNDAY MARCH 30TH, 3.30 P.M.

Our target is the most desperately guarded
 and beleaguered building in Britain :

THE HIDEOUT OF THE U.S. MASS MURDERERS IN

GROSVENOR SQUARE

MARCH 30th AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR SOLIDARITY WITH VIETNAM

LETTER - PAGE

OCTOBER 27th DEMONSTRATION

Dear Comrades,

I would like to raise an important question for discussion which directly affected not only the October 27th demonstration, but also its forerunners.

On this point, perhaps it would be better to start by referring to the fact that, with the disgrace and decline of the pacifist movement typified by C.N.D., there has been a healthy rejection by the mass movement of the idealist illusion of talking "peace" to the rapacious and insatiable war machines of imperialism. But it seems to me that, for all their negative political content, the pacifist bodies which organised these demonstrations had one positive quality: their ability to organise a disciplined demonstration and to win their following for carrying through an agreed programme of activities from start to finish. The fact that this degree of organisation was obtained at the expense of political militancy should not prevent us from profiting from the experience. Each new and more advanced stage in the development of the movement must learn from both the mistakes and the achievements of the previous stage.

The sort of organisation I am referring to is not unusual or in itself revolutionary - but it has to be clearly described as it is totally lacking from the present movements, even though they have correct militant aims. Thus we seem to have flown from one extreme to the other. Time and time again in the recent months I and many others have been nauseated at the sight of the more half-baked variety of new liberal, who is still a very potent force in the movement, shouting down even the most elementary proposals for discipline, co-ordination and organisation of our forces with the cry "this is a threat to democracy". It was these same defenders of ultra-democracy who turned up on October 27th fully prepared to carry through a disciplined and highly organised plan to assist the police in cordoning off the Grosvenor Square demonstrators. As always, the call for the sanctity of the individual is a ruse to steer the movement into the arms of the class enemy and its state forces.

Is it so unreasonable to propose that, in the same way as the class enemy and its agents organise their forces to prevent militant demonstrations, that the militant progressive forces should similarly organise themselves on the basis of a battle strategy - in fact, to aim even higher than this: to actually outmanoeuvre the divisive and diversionary schemes of the state forces? Is this not what the organisational methods of struggle of the working class are all about?

October 27th was disorganised. A huge mass of demonstrators proved unable to break at any time through a cordon of police six or so ranks deep. Why? Because no centralised plan existed

to mobilise, disperse, re-mobilise and re-group the demonstrators according to a strategy that had a chance of achieving its objective and flexible enough to have given leadership at every stage of the struggle to demonstrate in front of the U.S. Embassy. Despite the great courage and determination shown, those struggles were purely spontaneous and what actually happened was that, at all crucial moments when a breach in the cordon appeared possible, the retreats of one section of the demonstrators were cancelling out the charges of another, and the van of the advancing ranks came up against the rear of the retreating ones. The tactics of the police - i.e., of pushing down the front ranks - worked every time.

It must also be said, however, that considerable improvements have been adopted quite spontaneously by the rank and file which prove that the need to organise actions in a disciplined manner had, in practice and perhaps in spite of the anarchist principles of many, been recognised and had become a natural part of the revolutionary behaviour of the mass of demonstrators. The small number of arrests was not so much the result of police "tolerance"; it was mainly the outcome of the principle, adhered to almost without exception in Grosvenor Square, that the police should be physically prevented from dragging any victims from out of the crowd, the solid ranks of demonstrators making difficult any frame-up charges and victimisation of individuals. But having taken this purely defensive measure, the question of offensive tactics - surely the main question? - is still left open. I am sure that the answer to that question is that the demonstration must be deployed as an army is deployed: to create diversions, to concentrate for charges, to use defensive methods against mounted police, and so on. Surely all this is in line with the most fundamental principles of organisation of the oppressed class, for that class is numerically overwhelmingly superior to the forces of reaction. It can be held down and defeated by a minority only when it does not organise. Lenin did not say for nothing that the most potent weapon the working people possess is their capacity to organise for struggle, without which they are powerless. Our task is to mobilise, organise and lead that army.

D.J.N.,
Clapton E.5.

Dear Comrades,

How frustrated the press must have been after their massive hate campaign prior to October 27th - the reports of arson, looting and bloodshed which they predicted would take place. In fact, the only evidence of student violence - provoked by "foreign scum", of course! - was one photograph of a policeman being kicked into oblivion. A picture they all had to share and pay quite a lot for, no doubt!

Having been one of the many medical assistants at the L.S.E., I think I could have given a far better account of the

violence which took place. About 30 victims of police brutality were being treated at our first-aid centre, half of them young girls, and two were taken to hospital.

In spite of the denials, casualties were covered in real blood and not red paint, a fact which the authorities reluctantly had to concede later. Further fictions were that only 30,000 people were supposed to have participated in the demonstration when both the Council for Civil Liberties and counters at Hyde Park said the figure was far nearer 100,000; and that the cost to be borne by the good peace-loving citizen would be a good half-million.

A lot of people must have felt as sick as I did of the whole sordid corrupt system of mass communication, but we must not allow it to distort the real importance and success of the demonstration. It has once again shown the Establishment that we will never condone oppression and aggression, and that the plight of the Vietnamese people does not go unheeded by the working class of the western world. Therefore, in spite of the great division within the ranks of demonstrators whether to go to Grosvenor Square or betray the cause and go to Hyde Park, the demonstration was not just a public spectacle but yet another good rehearsal for the real campaign.

D.M.
London S.W.7.

GREETINGS FROM I.L.P. COMRADES

Dear Comrades,

At a time when the heroic people of Vietnam are dealing death blows to U.S. imperialism, the formation of the A.C.A.I.S. is most welcome.

Proletarian internationalism is something the British Socialist Movement has neglected for decades. Now we must go forward and build a mass movement of anti-imperialist solidarity. Best wishes - we are with you all the way.

Independent Labour Party,
Woolwich Branch.

STOP PRESS: AN IMPORTANT DEMONSTRATION

Dear Comrades,

The local branch of the IWA has called for a demonstration against racialism in Wolverhampton on April 27th. This is supported locally by the members of the Socialist Unity Movement who, following disruption of the original committee, have accepted responsibility for co-ordination.

The purpose of the march will be to demonstrate solidarity between black and white revolutionaries of the extra-parliamentary left against racialism, fascism and all attacks on the working class as a whole in the spheres of education,

15.
employment, housing and civil liberties. An attack on the black workers is an attack on all workers, and a means to divide the unity of the working class against the present attacks on their living standards and rights. Slogans have not been defined, but should broadly follow the pattern suggested here, though crude anti-Powellism should be avoided where possible.

The march will assemble at the car park near the Ring Road, Birmingham Road junction, and will set off at 2.00 p.m. It will pass the Royal Hospital (dependent upon immigrant labour), transport depot (ban on turbans and beards), the local Express and Star offices (monopoly local paper and Powellite propaganda sheet), to the Whitmore Reans ghetto area and the Tory Offices in Tettenhall Road. The march will finish with a rally at the Town Hall where a meeting will be held with national speakers representing the black and white revolutionary left.

It is intended that this march should be **NATIONALLY SUPPORTED**. Since the Socialist Unity Movement is very small, financially insolvent and has suffered from disruptive tactics of the CP, time and finance problems mean that we rely very heavily on the fraternal solidarity of revolutionary organisations. Without you we will fail and this will be a victory for the forces of fascism, racialism and C.P. style revisionism. We feel, however, that we can rely on your support.

Would you please form local ad hoc committees to organise support for April 27th. If you are a national organisation, would you please notify all branches as soon as possible, since we have not the means to do so, and get them to organise local support.

The CP disruption took the form of sending out a circular in the name of the Ad Hoc Committee and using the name and address of our convenor (Sarwan Singh, 545 Wolverhampton Rd., Willenhall), calling for a 'picnic' of some description in the merry month of May - after the local elections, and with the support of religious groups and the local whites in the power structure whose aim is to 'integrate' (i.e., whityfy, murder) the immigrant communities. This coincides with a consistent policy of the local C.P. to seek to use the immigrants and their discontent as voting fodder (1,000 votes will carry any ward in a local election).

Defeat all fascists, racialists, scabs and uncle toms!
Support the Wolverhampton Mobilisation, April 27th !

Address all correspondence either to Sarwan Singh (address in text above) or to April 27th Ad Hoc Committee, address below.

Yours fraternally,
11, Lyndhurst Rd.,
Wolverhampton, Staffs. R.M. Bashforth

EDITORS NOTE: Surely terms like "whites" are racist ! Nevertheless, because of its correct theme of unity, ACAIS supports this demonstration.

THE VICTORY AND THE BETRAYAL
OF OCTOBER
- A RETROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENT

Some five months have passed since Britain's "Great October Revolution". It is now vitally important to assess the experience gained in carrying through this crucial demonstration and to draw the conclusions, so rich in both theoretical and practical lessons, which will enable the nucleus of principled anti-imperialist militants which has emerged from the turmoil of struggle and betrayal to orientate itself on a correct political basis in the future. This is necessary in order to advance the cause of anti-imperialist solidarity in Britain, as our contribution to the task of forging unity between the workers and peasants of the colonial lands and the working people of the developed imperialist countries. It is this unity which is the indispensable foundation for the growth of revolutionary mass movements in the future which will be powerful enough to deal imperialism its death-blow.

THE INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF OCTOBER

The first aspect which our analysis must take into account is the international background to the October demonstration - for a massive and at least partially successful demonstration it was, and not a "revolution", as the playboy "leaders" of Hyde Park, attempting to conceal their close alliance with the ruling class, would have us believe.

The main content of the epoch in which we live is world-wide struggle against imperialism. Workers and peasants the length and breadth of the three continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America are rising up in wave after wave, weakening imperialism with a host of new victories and restricting its sphere of operations, whittling away its resources and hitting it in its most vulnerable spot: the sources of its super-profits, the means wherewith the imperialists seek to maintain the sham stability of their crisis-ridden system and to hold back anti-imperialist struggle in "their own" metropolitan countries. These world-wide anti-imperialist struggles are changing the face of the world and altering its strategic terrain in the favour of the revolutionary perspectives of the world's workers and peasants.

For the workers, students and militant youth of Britain and the world, 1968 was a year of growing revolutionary upheavals stretching in a chain from Berlin and Paris through to Chicago and Mexico City, to break out finally near our shores in the growing mass movement for national independence and democratic rights of our brothers in Northern Ireland. The significance of this chain of struggle lies in the fact that it represents the first beginnings of a bridge uniting the long-standing and developed anti-imperialist struggles of the working people of the colonial lands with the still infant anti-imperialist movements in the developed countries - a significance of

immense strategic importance for the world anti-imperialist united front and for its coming victory. The vital task for anti-imperialist militants in Britain, therefore, was to have made of the October 27th demonstration a durable span of that bridge extending that united front into the longest-established imperialist power with the most developed reformist institutions: Britain. It is in this light that the immense proportions of the betrayal organised by the VSC-YCL leadership must be judged.

THE ASSESSMENT OF THE DEMONSTRATION

As far as that section of the October 27th demonstration which was under the control of the VSC-YCL leaders was concerned, the results fully confirmed the correctness of the analysis put forward by A.C.A.I.S. at the time. The march through Whitehall rapidly degenerated into a dispirited, passive affair, utterly devoid of militant internationalist content. As the demonstration passed the Houses of Parliament, it moved in complete silence, and this mood of dejection steadily gained ground during the long targetless trek up Victoria Street and Park Lane to Hyde Park. The numerous apolitical skirmishes and provocations staged by various anarchist elements were powerless to relieve this mood of aimlessness - indeed, they aggravated it. The consequence was that many hundreds broke away from the demonstration at various points and made their way to Grosvenor Square, there to swell the ranks of those engaged in the struggle to break the heavy police cordon and to exercise their democratic right to demonstrate in front of the U.S. Embassy.

The New Siamese Twins

Clearly, those responsible for the major betrayal of October were the new-style "labour lieutenants of capital" who openly fulfilled a role of collaboration with the capitalist state, assisting that state to continue wearing its mask of "stability" and "democracy" at a time when its imperialist allies are cringing beneath the welter of attacks launched by the working people - attacks which have so potently succeeded in revealing the gaping sores at the heart of that system. Such are the magnificent stands taken by the working people and working youth of France, the U.S.A., Mexico, Germany Northern Ireland and other centres of resistance in the past few months. The objective role of the VSC-YCL leaders was to produce, as far as London's October demonstration was concerned, the one shamefaced capitulation which would have broken this world front of anti-imperialist solidarity.

But a betrayal of an equally serious nature also took place, forming a complement to that of the open betrayal from the right. Leftist elements in the leadership of the so-called "Britain-Vietnam Solidarity Front" whilst paying lip-service to the correct principled aim of a demonstration against the main enemy of the Vietnamese, British and world's working peoples, U.S. imperialism, revealed themselves tactically as equally dangerous as the rightist deviation and equally capable of abusing the mass movement for their sectarian and opportunist aims as the liberal groups associated with VSC against which they hurled so many vitriolic insults. Indeed, the experience of October 27th has revealed that these two opposite poles of betrayal represent Siamese twins with the same objective role of spreading disillusionment, disrupting unity and weakening the overall anti-imperialist forces. Counterposed to the undemocratic manoeuvring of the VSC-YCL alliance in the leadership of the Ad Hoc Committee in the preliminary period of preparation was the splittist action of the Manchanda-ites, who staged a paper coup d'etat to "take over" the Ad Hoc Committee, the fury of their purely verbal denunciations being matched only by the impotence and utterly disruptive

18. and sterile character of the strategic and tactical line they finally adopted. Against the open sell-out of the VSC-YCL leaders in insisting undemocratically on the march being diverted from Grosvenor Square, the culmination of which was the degeneration of "International Socialism" into undisguised para-military police stooges volunteering to "police" the demonstration and to cordon off Trafalgar Square, were offered the Manchanda-ite policies of seeking to "infiltrate" the demonstration and to "persuade" it to break off at Trafalgar Square in the direction of the U.S. Embassy. Thus the much vaunted and loudly trumpeted adherence to principle in words merely served to cover up deeds which allowed the rightist renegades to maintain their authority and control, placing the genuine militants in the strangled position of seeking to keep their political independence within the straightjacket of a false discipline imposed by a leadership of betrayal which had already sold out but which still retained the necessary authority to hamper and defeat their initiative. So it came about that the Grosvenor Square demonstrators, on the insistence of the Manchanda-ites, were scattered throughout the length of the march in four separate contingents and experienced the greatest difficulty in breaking off at Trafalgar Square, this strategy having played into the hands of the I.S. police stooges who were able to cut off the militants and prevent the massive show of opposition to U.S. imperialism which would have taken place under correct leadership. And thus it happened that Mr. Manchanda, who had loudly blazoned forth to the world through T.V. and press his "unswervable", "undefeatable" determination to march to Grosvenor Square, was, together with his entire B.V.S.F. contingent, hoist on his own petard and prevented forcibly from breaking through to Grosvenor Square at the appointed place.

The final exposure of the Manchanda-ite B.V.S.F., however, took place in Grosvenor Square itself. Having noisily proclaimed themselves to be super-revolutionaries bent on occupying Grosvenor Square, the leftist adventurism of the Manchanda-ite leadership quickly degenerated into its opposite, outright capitulation, when faced with the stern test of reality. At the very moment when thousands of anti-imperialist militants were exerting all their efforts to break the four-rank thick police cordon protecting the Embassy, and after the demonstrators had been present in the square for only three-quarters of an hour, Manchanda and other leading lights of the B.V.S.F. appealed to them through megaphones that "Our objective has been achieved - we must now disperse quietly". This call to capitulation took place at precisely the moment when the militant demonstrators began to confront the police in defence of their right to demonstrate in front of the U.S. Embassy - and it represents the final proof that the Manchanda-ite leftist diversion fulfils the same disruptive and traitorous aims as those of their right twin brother, the VSC-YCL leadership.

The Proposals of the ACAIS

Throughout the course of the preparations for October, the Provisional Committee of ACAIS fought for the principle of a demonstration in front of the main lair in Britain of the U.S. imperialists and opposed and exposed every manoeuvre of the VSC-YCL leaders to trample this principled aim in the mud. But once that alliance of betrayal had openly proclaimed its aim of avoiding and shielding the U.S. Embassy, ACAIS advocated and fought for the only correct course to take in such a situation: that of uniting all those who genuinely wished to strike blows against U.S. imperialism in a separate demonstration which would completely dissociate itself from the now openly renegade leadership of the Ad Hoc Committee and organise on an independent basis to

neutralise the betrayal, to transform the betrayal into a victory and to rain blows on the edifice of U.S. imperialism in Britain as an act of elementary internationalist solidarity with the fighting people of Vietnam. These proposals, which alone could have ensured that a clear lead was given to the many thousands of demonstrators who recognised, at one level of political understanding or another, the imperative need to demonstrate in front of the U.S. Embassy and that a truly massive confrontation would take place in Grosvenor Square, were rejected by the dominant Manchanda-ite faction in the October 27th Committee for Solidarity with Vietnam. As a result, only a small proportion of the U.S. Embassy demonstrators were able to make the break in an orderly manner to Grosvenor Square - among them the contingent and banners of ACAIS - and an unrepresentative picture was given of the real strength of the militant forces involved. The strategy proposed by ACAIS, had it been adopted, would have ensured that the entire emerging movement would have been infused with a new clarity and sureness of purpose just at a time when those qualities were most needed - in a situation, that is, in which the broad movement was polarising as a result of the growing exposure of the rightist enemy and the clearest possible lead needed to be given to weld a powerful united front of anti-imperialist solidarity with a strong and principled leadership which is so urgently needed in Britain.

.....

If October 27th witnessed a double betrayal, it also, thanks to the nucleus of principled internationalists who rallied to the support of a militant demonstration in Grosvenor Square, achieved a double victory: that of exposing and isolating the complex array of open and concealed enemies of anti-imperialist solidarity, as well as the direct one of attaining a powerful and determined militant demonstration. This double victory went a long way to cancelling out the advantage derived by the ruling class from the servile capitulation of the VSC leadership. Both aspects of this victory are equally important, for both help to forge the unity of the emerging anti-imperialist militants. The task now is to intensify our efforts and to develop our work in every sphere, in order to build ACAIS into a powerful leading body of the emerging anti-imperialist solidarity movement.

The main action now needed to consolidate our position, which will contribute towards laying the basis for a stable, militant movement of genuine anti-imperialist solidarity actively supporting the valiant struggles of the heroic national liberation fighters in the three continents, forging the unity of the working classes of the imperialist countries with the peasantry and oppressed classes of the colonial lands and building a massive front of solidarity between black and white workers in the imperialist countries themselves as an impenetrable barrier to the reactionary schemes of imperialism to divide and rule the working people on the basis of race, must inevitably be the involvement of the organised working class in the ranks of the anti-imperialist movement in order to replace what has hitherto been a predominantly petty-bourgeois leadership. From the moment when such a solid working class base for anti-imperialist solidarity is achieved, the predominant petty-bourgeois prejudices against organisation, discipline and sustained long-term and short-term struggle to confront imperialism with a rising wave of mass actions on every front will disappear and give place to still more determined forms of militant struggle and a correspondingly higher form of organisation in which the leading role is played by the working class, working youth and militant students.

Anti-imperialist solidarity is a class question which reflects the objective interests of the majority of the world's working people who belong to that revolutionary alliance of classes: the working class and the poor peasantry. But this mighty base must reflect in its leadership the policies, aims and organising capacity of the working class forces. It must cease to be the domain of petty-bourgeois charlatans who play the game of factional politics for their own ends.

Two events of the very greatest importance now stand before the emerging movement of anti-imperialist solidarity in Britain in the first half of 1969: the militant rally and demonstration in solidarity with the fighting people of Vietnam to be held at Trafalgar Square on Sunday March 30th; and the demonstration of international proletarian solidarity to be held on the historic day of labour, May First. Let all those who came together to wrest October 27th from the brink of complete betrayal, all who have since developed further their militant spirit and combative understanding on the basis of this experience, now raise their fighting unity to even greater heights in making these two events the most determined, resolute and united expressions of fighting proletarian internationalism that Britain has seen in many decades! In successfully completing these tasks, our new rising force of courageous and determined militants will not only have struck two telling blows against world imperialism, its chief bastion U.S. imperialism and our own imperialist oppressor, the mangy British imperialist lion, but will simultaneously have reared two pillars of inestimable importance for the united front of anti-imperialist solidarity, the foundations of which are steadily being built in Britain.

MAY DAY 1969

We reprint below the official Letter of Invitation issued by the Provisional Committee for a Militant May First to all working class, anti-imperialist and progressive organisations.

.....

Dear Friend and Brother,

On May 1st, 1889, the International Working Men's Association issued its historic call for massive demonstrations in all capital cities of Europe in support of the international struggle for the eight-hour day. One year later, on May 1st 1890, that call was answered by the proletarian masses of Britain with a massive demonstration in Hyde Park which has been variously estimated at between two hundred thousand and five hundred thousand strong. Since then, and up to recent times, May 1st has been recognised as the international festival of labour, on which day the working masses of every land demonstrate their world-wide unity and solidarity in the historic struggle for their emancipation from all exploitation and oppression.

Conversely, May Day was understood by the capitalist exploiters and oppressors the world over as the main barometer measuring

the degree of unity and solidarity of the international working class movement, the chief event the revolutionary portent of which caused them, in the classic words of Marx and Engels, to tremble "at the spectre of communism" which was "haunting Europe".

Today, that historic aim of the founders of the international working class movement has become the main content of our epoch, the greatest lever for social progress that mankind has ever known. This is taking place in a general world context in which modern monopoly capitalism is sinking into ever greater depths of barbarism in every sphere, seeking to defend itself by means of aggressive wars unprecedented for their mass cruelty and savagery, by encouraging cultural and moral depravity without equal in past social formations, by subjecting hundreds of millions in every continent, in every

land, to the most inhuman forms of suffering and degradation, by seeking to convert every social class handed down from the past into its paid hirelings, traitors and butchers of the working masses. It has been estimated that no less than 1,400 million have suffered loss of life, health and means of independent subsistence as a direct consequence of imperialism's need to subjugate the world in the interests of a handful of parasitic finance capitalists and industrial barons.

Imperialism is a system in which a mere 2 per cent, the monopoly owners of industry, banking and trade in the developed countries, directly exploit and oppress some 70 per cent of the world's population. This world system of imperialism amasses, at the one pole, untold wealth in the form of senseless, effete luxuries and its accompanying moral and cultural decadence, and at the other pole a growing mass of social misery - poverty, hunger, disease, bloodshed - for the mass of the working people. The maimed and slaughtered of two world wars and countless colonial wars of aggression, a state of continual crisis for which the working people in both the colonial and the developed countries have to bear the burden in the form of rising exploitation and falling living standards, the destruction of national independence and the obliteration of national and popular cultures - these are but a part of the colossal price the mass of humanity must pay ever and again for the maintenance of the dying imperialist system.

At the present historic juncture in the development of the international working class movement, the overall perspective which is opening up in the 120 years old struggle of the working masses for their emancipation is one in which the general crisis of capitalism is intensifying at a rapid rate, generating insoluble contradictions for the imperialist exploiters and oppressors and creating favourable objective conditions for securing decisive advances in the struggle against world imperialism. Indeed, this struggle is now beginning to open up on a world-wide front, as millions upon millions of colonial toilers take up arms to secure their independence from imperialism.

At the same time, the imperialist crisis is beginning to revolutionise the outlook of growing sections of the working masses in the developed imperialist heartlands themselves, thus also creating the favourable objective conditions for forging the unity in struggle of these two key sectors of the world anti-imperialist forces.

Within this context of a growing world revolutionary situation, an especial importance attaches to the building of unity between the revolutionary workers and peasants of the colonial lands and the most advanced and class-conscious sections of the working masses in the imperialist countries themselves.

Thus May Day, the international festival of labour, acquires a new political significance as a day of militant demon-

strations emphasising the need to weld this unity into an unbreakable world alliance of proletarian and oppressed classes, the precursor of a future massive world anti-imperialist united front of overwhelming weight and power which will crush and sweep away the parasitic imperialist system for ever.

The fact that, in recent years, the concealed enemies of proletarian internationalism have sought to debase the significance of May Day to that of a mere peaceful pageant restricted solely to constitutional demands acceptable to the imperialist ruling class and has thus become completely dominated by the political parties of working class betrayal, makes it an imperative duty of all principled upholders of anti-imperialist solidarity, all true fighters for socialism and the fundamental interests of the working class in Britain and the world, to wrest this hegemony over May Day out of the hands of the "labour lieutenants of capital" old and new, and to restore it to its former status as the day on which the working masses of the world stand together in unity to raise their mighty fist in defiance of the rule of capital and to declare their fundamental and ultimate revolutionary aim of replacing that despotic rule by the historically destined democratic rule of the working people, and of forging their international unity to achieve these great aims which have become the mainspring of development in the history of the modern world.

The undersigned, representatives of militant organisations which have come together to form a Provisional Committee, therefore extend to your Organisation a warm and fraternal invitation to participate in the establishment of an ACTION COMMITTEE FOR A MILITANT MAY FIRST.

In addition to its significance as a militant action promoting the international solidarity of the world's working classes and working people, such a demonstration would exert a powerful influence advancing the struggle of the working masses of crisis-ridden imperialist Britain against wage-freeze, falling living standards, rent increases, anti-working class and trade union legislation and other reactionary measures being introduced with the aim of weakening the organisations of struggle of the working class and to erect a strengthened corporate framework maintaining the rule of state monopoly capitalism.

The terms of reference of this Committee will be, provisionally, to mobilise the widest possible support amongst wide sections of the working class and working people of Britain, for a militant demonstration of solidarity with our class brothers in both the developed countries of western Europe and North America and in the colonial and semi-colonial lands of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and to reach principled decisions concerning the political slogans, route, target and on-the-route activities of the demonstration, according to accepted norms of disciplined and democratic procedure. It is further proposed that the composition of the Organising Committee should be on a clearly determined affiliate basis.

We request you to advise us if this invitation has met with the approval of your Organisation, whereupon we will advise you further of the time, date and place of the first meeting.

Yours fraternally,

D. Chaplin,
Secretary, Provisional Committee
c/o 58, Empress Avenue, Ilford,
Essex,
.....

(List of affiliated organisations available on request from the Secretary).

DISCUSSION DOCUMENTS FOR A.C.A.I.S. FOUNDING CONFERENCE

DRAFT CONSTITUTION AND RULES

(For discussion throughout the movement and further elaboration by the Preparatory Committee, the final draft to be submitted to the founding Conference of the A.C.A.I.S.) .

....

1. NAME

The name of the organisation shall be the ACTION COUNCIL FOR ANTI-IMPERIALIST SOLIDARITY (A.C.A.I.S.)

2. AIMS

The aims of the Organisation shall be:

a. to disseminate amongst all sections of the working class and working people awareness of the fact that the imperialist system, which is based on the wealth extracted from the labour of millions of exploited working people in both the colonial-type lands and the metropolitan countries, is inherently opposed to the interests of the British working people and is the prime cause of world and localised wars of aggression and of the unspeakable evils of rising exploitation, deprivation of human rights and liberties, starvation and disease which imperialism inflicts on the working peoples of all lands;

b. recognising the common interests of working people the world over, to further the development of this awareness into such concrete actions on the part of the British working people, in solidarity with their class brothers in other lands who are struggling for democratic rights and national independence, as will render them practical assistance and so contribute effectively to the final liberation of these oppressed people from the brutal, reactionary and historically obsolete imperialist system;

c. to combat all divisive manoeuvres by which the imperialists strive to perpetuate their system by undermining the national

and international solidarity of the working people, e.g., chauvinism and racialism.

3. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. The Annual General Meeting.

The highest authority of the A.C.A.I.S. shall be the Annual General Meeting.

Each local Action Council for Anti-Imperialist Solidarity and each affiliated organisation shall have the right to participate in the A.G.M. on the basis of one voting delegate for each such council or affiliated organisation.

B. The Executive Committee.

The A.G.M. shall elect an Executive Committee, which shall be responsible for the implementation of the policy and activities of the organisation between each A.G.M. The E.C. shall be elected on the basis of the allocation of 50% of the seats to individual members and 50% to representatives of local councils and affiliated organisations.

The Executive Committee, at its first meeting following its election, shall appoint a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and such other officers as it may consider desirable from among its members.

C. The Working Commissions.

The E.C. shall appoint a number of Working Commissions (the number to be decided from time to time by the E.C.) which shall be responsible for the development of the work of the Council and the implementation of its policy in particular spheres of social life, e.g., the trade union movement, the youth and students' movement, the Vietnam solidarity movement, the emigre national liberation movements in Britain, etc.

Each Working Commission shall render a regular report of its activities to the E.C.

4. CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP.

Membership of the A.C.A.I.S. shall be of two types: a) individual membership and b) affiliated membership.

Any individual or organisation is eligible for membership who/which satisfies the E.C. that he/she/it a) accepts the aims and constitution of the A.C.A.I.S.; b) works actively for the promotion of these aims in the broad working class movement or in society.

5. MEMBERSHIP DUES.

Each individual member shall be responsible for paying Membership Dues of 10/- per year to the Treasurer. Each local Action Council and each affiliated organisation shall be responsible for paying Membership Dues of £2. each year to the Treasurer.

6. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP.

Any individual member, local Action Council or affiliated organisation more than three months in arrears in the payment

of Membership Dues shall be regarded as no longer a member of the Council.

The Executive Committee may terminate at any time the membership of any individual member, local Action Council or affiliated organisation who/which, in the opinion of the E.C., is acting contrary to the aims or interests of the A.C.A.I.S.

PROGRAMME OF IMMEDIATE ACTIVITIES

1) The necessary preparatory measures to convene the Founding Conference of the Action Council for Anti-Imperialist Solidarity should be put into immediate effect. The measures should include:

A. The regular production of a Bulletin in which the programme of work and activity of the A.C.A.I.S. is progressively elaborated and the organisational structure filled in stage by stage on the basis of the draft already submitted and of the proposals which will emanate from the rank-and-file. These should be published finally as the draft documents of the Founding Conference.

B. Measures to establish as soon as possible branches of the A.C.A.I.S. in industry, the mass movement and the localities, these to act as the base units of the militant anti-imperialist movement which is to be built. Through these a broad campaign should be incepted to involve the organised working class and progressive movement in anti-imperialist solidarity activities and in the preparations for the founding Conference.

2) To ensure that the task of building a militant anti-imperialist solidarity movement is carried forward and developed as speedily as possible, the A.C.A.I.S. should put into immediate effect the following programme:

A. All necessary measures should be taken to establish broad committees, constituted on a democratic affiliated basis, comprising the representatives of all organisations adhering to the principled internationalist line of solidarity with the world's peoples who are struggling for liberation from imperialism and recognising world imperialism as the main enemy of the working people of the world. The aims of these committees would be to organise all possible support, including that of mass demonstrations on particular occasions, for solidarity with the peoples of particular countries where an anti-imperialist struggle is being waged.

B. One of these broad committees should put out, as soon as possible, a call for a mass demonstration on May First, the day of international solidarity of the world's working people.

C. To maintain the pressure against British and world imperialism, and as a measure to keep the fighting spirit of the emerging militant forces in continuous combative trim, one of these Committees should also organise regular monthly demonstrations on a smaller scale aimed at suitable political,

industrial and other targets in the localities. Such smaller demonstrations would assist in developing and tempering the experience and fighting spirit of the emerging militant forces and would act as training schools in the elaboration and refinement of the strategy and tactics of the militant demonstration in the conditions of a developed urban environment.

3) The Preparatory Committee should take in hand as speedily as possible the preparation and production of all necessary propaganda material, such as posters, leaflets, wall newspapers, etc. required to begin the complex task of inculcating the principle of militant anti-imperialist solidarity amongst the broad working masses.

DIARY OF EVENTS

Film Shows at the Troubadour Coffee House, 265 Old Brompton Road, S.W.5 (nr. Earls Court tube station). Organised by Vietnam Solidarity Film Society:

INSIDE NORTH VIETNAM by Felix Greene - Friday 28th March, 6.30 p.m.
Saturday 29th March, 5.00 pm
and 7.30 p.m.
Monday 31st March, 1.00 a.m.

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MARCH 30th AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR SOLIDARITY WITH VIETNAM:

EVE OF DEMO SOCIAL

Metropolitan Public House, 95 Farringdon Road, E.C.1.

SATURDAY 29TH MARCH

7.00 p.m.

WHEN YOU HAVE READ THIS BULLETIN, PLEASE PASS IT ON TO A FRIEND.

SPREAD THE WORD ...



MAY DAY 1969

Propaganda material,
and details of activities
and meetings are available
on request from: D Chaplin
c/o 58, Empress Avenue,
Ilford...

Details of A. C.A.I.S.
meetings and activities
available on request
from M. Scott, c/o
76, Redcliffe Gardens
London S.W.10.