

VSC - BULLETIN - 20

END BRITISH COMPLICITY

**ADMIT THE
REPRESENTATIVES OF
THE HEROIC
VIETNAMESE
NOW!**

RECOGNISE THE N.L.F.

ROLLS ROYCE AND VIET-NAM: A CASE STUDY IN COMPLICITY

The Ling-Temco-Vought Corsair II is a single-seat light attack aircraft originally designed for the United States Navy, and designated by them as the A-7A and A-7B. It can provide close support, that is low-level bombing, strafing and napalming, for ground forces up to 600-700 miles inland from any coastline approachable by the U.S. Fleet. The first flight of the aircraft was in September 1965, deliveries to user squadrons began in October 1966, and the first squadron was deployed on U.S. aircraft carriers stationed in the Gulf of Tonkin in November 1967. For over a year, then, the Corsair has been a weapon in the American armoury used against the people of Viet-nam. In fact, the manufacturers, the LTV Aerospace Corporation, a subsidiary of Ling-Temco-Vought Incorporated of Dallas, Texas, boasts that the period from first flight to the first attack on North Viet-Nam was only 799 days. The total number of A-7As and A-7Bs produced for the Navy and Marine Corps squadrons is planned to exceed 1000 aircraft. In 1966 the U.S. Air Force also selected the Corsair, designated by them A-7D, to meet its requirements for a tactical fighter-bomber.

The Corsair's fixed armament comprises two 20 millimetre machine guns in the nose. Fuselage racks can be used to mount Sidewinder air-to-air missiles. The normal armament load is 4000 lb. with a maximum load of 15000 lb. for shorter missions. Alternative weapon loads include:

- (i) 24 250 lb. 'general purpose' bombs;
- (ii) 4 Zuni rocket pods plus 104 2.75 inch rockets;
- (iii) 4 Bullpup A missiles and two Shrike air-to-surface missiles;
- (iv) 10 712 lb. napalm stores.

LTV claim the 580 m.p.h. Corsair has achieved "a new high in carrier strike effectiveness". Its targets on an average mission might include: river traffic, lorries, railway tracks and the traffic on them, road and rail bridges, storage complexes, anti-aircraft artillery and surface-to-air missile sites.

Why should all this be of interest to people in Britain and to the Viet-nam solidarity movement here? Because the Rolls Royce Aero Engine Division at Derby has been chosen to provide its Spey-25 engine to power the USAF Corsair and future marks of the USN aircraft. At present the Navy Corsair is powered by an American Pratt and Whitney engine, the TF-30, the maximum thrust of which does not exceed 12,000 lb. A more powerful unit is needed for take-off and cruising. The power level now required could not be satisfied by any reasonable stretch of the existing engine. The Spey is rated at 14,250 lb. static thrust. In any case there have been problems with the TF-30. The Navy has refused to accept a considerable number of production A-7Bs because of blade shedding in their engines.

A more general point can be made here. The war has imposed powerful stresses on the productive capacity of U.S. industry. The demand for weapons has been so great that U.S. firms have not been able to supply all that is required. Elliott Janeway, former advisor to President Johnson, has admitted that the Vietnam war has produced such high demand for military equipment as "to generate tremendous disruptive pressures on specific bottlenecks. The most important of these bottlenecks is skilled labour." Two ways of eliminating bottlenecks in the supply of factors of production are by importing those factors - the brain drain, or by importing their products - the case with the Spey.

The military Spey is fundamentally similar in design to the civil engine but incorporates certain modifications to meet the higher duty conditions of the military rating and to suit the engine for installation in the Buccaneer S. Mark 2 strike aircraft (sold to South Africa), the Phantom II fighter for the Royal Navy and the Hawker Siddeley Nimrod. Design of the military Spey was begun in November 1960. The initial military contract covered development work and supply of prototype engines. A quantity production order worth £ 7.9 million was made by the Government in January 1962. The engine first flew in May 1963.

At the end of 1966 the U.S. Air Force concluded a contract worth \$ 227 million of which \$ 100 goes to Rolls Royce, in respect of 500 engines. In addition to its development role, Rolls Royce produces about half of the 2,600 parts of the engine in Britain and ships them to America, where they are assembled with parts made there by the Allison Division of General Motors. The first Anglo-U.S. Spey was completed at Allison's Indianapolis plant in June 1968. Major-General H.E. Goldsworthy, commander of the USAF Aeronautical Systems Division, commented: "The TF-41 (American designation of the engine) programme is one of the Air Force's shortest in terms of the time allotted from design to development and production. We see tremendous potential in the TF-41 as a workhorse engine with many future applications." The first USAF Corsair with the Spey engine flew on September 26th. In a post-flight announcement LTV stated that engine proving would be accomplished in only 20 flights. The USAF has made an initial order of 367 aircraft with delivery planned to begin in 1969.

In July 1968 the USN's Naval Air Systems Command awarded a contract to Rolls Royce's collaborators, General Motors' Allison Division, for the development of the Spey to raise its thrust to 15000 lb. The contract is worth \$ 8 million, of which Rolls Royce receive 30 per cent as principal sub-contractor. At the time the contract was announced the technical press here and in the U.S.A. recognized that if the development were successful, it would open up the way for substantial sales of the uprated engine, as it would power the Navy's latest planned version of the Corsair, the A-7E. In December it was announced that an initial production order (for 93 engines) had been made valued at \$ 35.7 million

of which Rolls will receive a substantial share. Deliveries of flight-test engines will start next March with production engine deliveries beginning in August. It is said that the production order will eventually be worth \$ 100 million (about 250 engines) of which Rolls Royce will get half.

This is the flesh and form of the technology and the contractual arrangements. Only when we penetrate to the entrails of the situation can we begin to generalize, to understand fully what is happening. In doing this we immediately discover the incestuous relation between British capitalism's complicity in the war and the role of the British government, the coupling of the siblings Capital and State.

First, Government research laboratories have played a vital part in the development of Rolls Royce engines. S.L. Bragg, chief scientist of Rolls Royce Aero Engine Division has acknowledged the importance of these laboratories in industry's research. He believes a reasonable work ratio to be roughly 3-to-1 between Rolls Royce as the only British aero-engine manufacturer and the National Gas Turbine Establishment. Their joint effort he has called a "unified national programme". Second, it was the British government in 1960 which placed the original contract for the development of the military engine, and later in 1962 the first production order. The Spey was required for our own military programme. The profits on the Spey, and this engine makes up the bulk of Rolls' sales at the moment, are divided between the company and the government. Currently the split in this joint enterprise is 3-to-1 in Rolls' favour; in the next phase it will be in the ratio 1-to-3. Third, the political support for the American invasion, reiterated again and again by both the Labour and Conservative Governments, is a fundamental and necessary condition for any sale of military equipment to the U.S.A.. Correspondingly any opposition shown to that conflict by the Government of the day would constitute an immediate and severe blow to our increasing penetration of the richest market in the world, the U.S. military programme.

Support by the State for the development and production programmes of the capitalist empires, both at the national level and at the international level, each year becomes more essential and increases in scale. This reduces the amount of private risk capital injected into development programmes, ensures the existence of a secure market on which the product is sold - particularly important when the State is itself a major buyer of technologically complex and advanced products, and maintains and strengthens the political alliances upon which sales to our major export markets depend.

At the same time the State encourages the development of industrial monoliths by take-overs and mergers, in the belief that the greater the size of a firm the higher will be its level of productivity. In this way the firm can match the productivity

of the other industrial giants it faces on the domestic and international market. As a result of their take-over of Bristol Siddeley Engines Rolls Royce now have a complete monopoly of British aero-engine manufacture. The aircraft industry provides an extreme case of these relations. The present privately owned aircraft manufacturing companies are subsidised to the extent of 70-80 per cent of their production, investment and research expenditures. The Plowden report on the industry has set out the position with clarity. "Since the Second World War it has been Government policy to encourage the development of civil aircraft in this country. Promising aircraft and aero-engines have been aided by Government finance when the manufacturers could not find all the money themselves or considered the risks too great to bear on their own. Whenever possible the Armed Forces have ordered derivatives of civil types to meet their needs for military transport." "The present situation is dominated by the increasing dependence of the industry on Government decisions in both the military and civil fields. The military programme has for many years been determined and paid for by the Government. The scope for independent initiatives on the part of industrial managements is small.

So these three relations, between British capitalism and the British State, between the British and the American States, and between British capitalism and the U.S.A. are strongly interacting and mutually reinforcing. With respect to the third relation we have here the specific nexus between holls Royce and General Motors in their licensing and joint production agreements. More generally we can point to the predominant position held by the U.S. in the British aerospace industry's export market. In the period 1958-67 two thirds of the civil output of the industry went to exports. Annual exports in the two years 1966 and 1967 averaged more than £ 200 million of which almost 30 per cent went to the United States alone.

Certainly Rolls Royce regard the American market as of the utmost importance. Their entry into it is partly based on lower costs. E.M. Eltis, director of engineering of the Aero Engine Division, says their research and development is between 2 and 2½ times cheaper than that of comparable American work. Rolls Royce chief executive Sir Denning Pearson revealed in November 1968 that the company had very nearly won multimillion pound orders to supply engines for the American F-111 swing-wing fighter.

This would have been in addition to the orders, by December 1968 totalling £ 185 million, from Lockheed Aircraft Corporation for the RB-211 engine to be installed in the Lockheed Airbus. Pearson told members of the American Chamber of Commerce in London that the groundwork for the RB-211 order had been done just after the war, when it was decided to concentrate on the United States aero engine market.

Until now I have been content to interpret the situation. The point, however, is to change it. We must turn our philosophy

to this end. Two broad courses of action will be discussed: interdiction and harassment. By interdiction is meant the prevention of these engines being used in United States military aircraft. Apart from guerrilla acts of industrial sabotage, one main course of action is open to us: that the people who work in Rolls Royce refuse to produce the military engine or any of its parts for export to America and force the cancellation of the licensing contract with the Allison Division of General Motors. Members of the Viet-nam solidarity movement in this country can, and should, immediately make contact with the workers, technicians and clerical staff of Rolls Royce to discover what possibility exists of such action on their part. If they did take such action it would be a magnificent achievement for the people of this country and the Rolls Royce workers in particular, for it would be an assertion of their power, the power of the draughtsman and the machinist's eye and hand against the foreign policy of the State. A profoundly humanist, internationalist and revolutionary gesture of solidarity.

Is such a course of action likely? In the immediate future I believe it is not. First the political understanding by most people in this country of the Second Viet-nameese War is on a very low level. As a result of the dominance of the channels of communication, press, radio and television, by the liberal-bourgeois establishment, most people think of the war as a distant conflict fought between the Communists from the North and the Americans over the ravaged body of the Viet-nameese in the South. Their war, not a British war. It is for this reason that the huge demonstration of October 1968, and those which preceded it, was composed overwhelmingly by young people, under say 30 years of age, in non-manual occupations and a very large number of them students.

A second reason for pessimism on industrial action relates to the division of labour. We have already glimpsed the institutional division of labour in this case study, extending across the boundary between public and private sector, between nation and nation. This is matched and even multiplied by the occupational division of labour, a long chain of inputs of physical and intellectual skills. Moreover, at each link in the chain the relevant task is but one of a large number of tasks comprising links in other chains. The set of interlinking chains is the new capitalist economy. (A similar diffusion of responsibility can too easily arise in the socialist countries, for production technologies are converging throughout the world; in their case, of course, there is no institutional division of private and public sector nor are there international companies). What relation is my work to the Viet-nam war if as a mathematician at a national research establishment I solve certain problems on gas flows around the blades of a compressor? What relation if as an Assistant Secretary in a government Ministry I recommend approval of developmental funding of a military engine? What relation if as a machine-worker I produce half-a-dozen pieces of that engine? Or as a salesman who sells it? An engineer who installs it? A

pilot who flies the aircraft? Even he may not see the destruction of his armaments cause.

That division of labour on which the industrial economy is founded brings with it the diffusion of responsibility; the diffusion of responsibility brings with it the rejection of responsibility; the rejection of responsibility brings with it the refusal of power, and it is precisely this which capitalist society wishes to establish. And so we have a situation in which a peasant village on the Red River Delta can be sown with a bloody seed, the fragmentation bomb, and no-one is responsible.

Finally on the issue of interdiction by industrial action, we must remember that if the workers of Rolls Royce take British foreign policy into their own hands, they would be the first to suffer. Rolls prospective exports sales would immediately fall by up to £ 150 million. In addition, the £ 185 million contract to supply the RB-211 might itself be threatened as industrial pressure groups in America, especially the aeroengine manufacturers, cried out for a punishing response from the U.S. government to this act of defiance. But the threat of a counter-response by a British refusal to purchase the Lockheed airbus might well silence this out-cry. We are reminded once again that the system is integrated, a nexus of reciprocal economic and political obligations.

The prospect of industrial action in the immediate future is not good. But we should not therefore relapse into pessimistic apathy. Historical precedent exists for such action: in 1950 French workers began a campaign of strikes and demonstrations aimed at obstructing the transport of soldiers and war materials to Indochina where the French colonialists, with large scale American aid, were attempting to subjugate the Viet-namese. Only to suffer military catastrophe in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu. Since what is being proposed here is workers control of sales policy to oppose the Government and the company's complicity in the war, such action must be set within the much broader context of workers control of the aircraft industry as a whole.

Already in the last two years shop stewards at the Bristol Siddeley Engines Division of Rolls Royce have given a lead on issues of workers control. At the plant level they believe it should take the form of workers councils made up of the present well-developed system of shop stewards and shop floor gangs. At the national level would be a board including delegates from the workers, from the Government, and from the airlines. In the study-papers on this subject the need has been expressed for an alternative national plan for the industry so that in case of disarmament the workers can have other jobs. The issue of the cancellation of the Spey contract with the USAF and USN could be dealt with precisely in preparing such plans which switch production from military to civil projects.

It is a bitter irony that British workers in companies such as Rolls Royce, Decca, Elliott Automation and the British Hovercraft Corporation have to earn their wages making weapons of war

for
tin
del
swe
at

be
wi
oti
fir
tic
whi
tic
whi
nes
Sma

of
ly
wal
gen
tio
den
whe
exar
fir
the
of s
sinc
In t
of t
supp
ty m
has
rity
issu
ting
has
power

end
major
invas
and m
in co
prote
in pa
llect
equip
Depar
for r
stran

7
for use against Asian peasants and workers. For at the same time the U.K. Government in the period 1967-70 will have taken delivery of U.S. military aircraft (66 Hercules and 170 Phantoms) swelling our short-term debts to the U.S. Export Import Bank by at least £ 370 million for repayment in 1966-76.

So the question of complicity and opposition to it can only be fully understood in the context of the location of power within the industry. Alongside this discussion must be set other forms of activity, initially taking place outside the firm, which will politicize the production process. Interdiction can begin only if it is preceded by a process of harassment which through action and analysis adds to the apparently politically neutral work of producing engine parts a new dimension, which through analysis and action creates political consciousness around a technology and the system on which it is founded. Small victories must precede big victories.

We now turn to harassment. By this we mean a whole number of disparate actions, almost all of which in themselves are merely irritant. It includes letters to the press, public meetings, wall posters, leafleting, filibusters at the company's annual general meeting, picketing, and marches. An excellent innovation at colleges and universities would be for hundreds of students to request interviews with Rolls Royce recruiting teams when they arrive seeking out 'promising young men' and cross-examining the interviewers on the company's complicity. But first we must recognize that with respect to the slogan: "End the Labour Government's complicity in the war" the tidal bore of solidarity with the NLF in this country, running fiercely since the Autumn of 1967, has proved to be entirely impotent. In this very period Rolls Royce have completed the development of the Spey for the U.S. Air Force and secured development and supply contracts for the U.S. Navy. In other ways the solidarity movement, and the Viet-nam Solidarity Campaign in particular, has achieved some remarkable victories: in demonstrating solidarity on a massive scale, in politicising young people on the issue of Viet-nam and contemporary imperialism, and in contributing to the climate of militant protest and action which surely has helped create the increasingly insistent demand for student power in this country.

However, no major victory has been won in bringing to an end Britain's involvement in the war and in particular the three major strands of complicity: political support for the American invasion, repeated constantly in speeches by the Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet; financial support through our role in constructing the international liquidity arrangements which protect the dollar against balance of payments deficits caused, in part, by U.S. policy in South-East Asia; material and intellectual support through the supply of military and quasi-military equipment, such as hovercraft and defoliants, and by the U.S. Department of Defence contracts made with British universities for research. Given the structural reasons for these three strands of complicity, the increasing political, economic and

strategic incorporation of Britain into the American sphere of power, no major victory can be won in ending our involvement unless the participant base of the Viet-nam solidarity movement is extended beyond its present boundaries into the working people of the country in all the diversity of their occupations and unless the linkages between solidarity and the political analysis and perspective of the Left is made clear. This can be done by making explicit the degree and kind of British complicity and what explains it, both to ourselves in the movement and those outside it; by immediately seeking the support of the labour movement in this country; by a process of harassment which puts its hand out to the people directly and refuses to allow the image of militant solidarity to be transmitted alone by the distorting mirrors of modern communications.

In conclusion I repeat that irrefutable evidence now exists that the Rolls Royce Spey is to power the Corsair II light attack and tactical fighter-bomber of the United States Navy and Air Force. Within a few months we shall be able to say: we make the engine which powers the plane which drops the bombs which maim the people of Viet-nam. An attempt was made to generalise from this specific case of complicity - and many, many other such cases exist. It was shown that the British government is crucially involved, in that national laboratories have carried out important research used by Rolls Royce in the design of their engines; in that a government Ministry placed the initial contracts for the development and production of the engine; and in that sales to the richest market in the world, the U.S. military programme, require government support for U.S. foreign policy. The support of the State for British capitalism increases in scale to reduce private risk capital injected into development programmes, to provide a secure market for complex technical products and to secure the political alliances on which the penetration of our major export markets depend. The three relations between the British and the American States, between the State and Capital in Britain, and between British Capital and the U.S.A. are strongly interacting and mutually reinforcing.

Two courses were examined to end this case of complicity. The first was interdiction, by the industrial action of Rolls Royce workers. This would be a great victory of the working people against the foreign policy of the State. However, it seems unlikely to happen in the immediate future. This is because of the low level of political consciousness on Viet-nam, the rejection of responsibility which the division of labour can induce, and the reduction it would entail for the real wages of the workers concerned. The second option was harassment by means of a whole series of individually irritant actions. The victories of harassment until now have been to show massive solidarity with the National Liberation Front and to help politicize a whole generation. But the solidarity movement has proved impotent in halting increasing British complicity in the war. Indeed such a victory would be inconsistent with the major

characteristic of this country's history in the past two decades, its political and economic incorporation in the American sphere of power. Major victories will only be won by extending the base of the solidarity movement into the working people and by linking the solidarity issue with a more profound analysis and perspective of action of the Left.

Stephen Merrett,
December 1968.

Sources (All 1968).

1. Times: 29th April; 7th November; 20th November; 24th December.
2. Financial Times: 27th April; 27th June; 26th July; 30th October; 22nd. November; 12th December; 17th December.
3. Aviation Week and Space Technology: 29th April; 1st July; 29th July.
4. Flight: 2nd May; 1st. August; 3rd October; 19th December.
5. Daily Telegraph: 25th July.
6. Aviation Report: 6th September.
7. Jane's All the World's Aircraft: 1967-68.
8. 'Viet-nam, United States and Britain: the facts of entanglement'
(From V.S.C. and the Stop-It Committee).
9. Alan Rooney, "The Aircraft Industry" (prepared with a study group of aircraft shop stewards) in Ken Coates (Ed.) "Can the workers run industry?"(Sphere Paperback).
10. Daily Mail: 5th December.
11. Ellen Hammer, 'Genesis of the first Indochinese war', in Marvin Gettleman (Ed.) "Viet-nam" (Penguin Special).

INVOLVING THE WORKING CLASS.

The repetition of the phrase 'we must reach the working class' by revolutionary groups, including V.S.C., has failed to put forward any strategy of how this desirable state of affairs can be brought about. We are therefore left with the reality that the strategy advocated is invocation of the workers, a magical assertion of the desirability of this state of affairs, so that if repeated often enough, it must happen.

What follows is an attempt to start a discussion about possible strategies, which may not succeed at this conjuncture (due to weakness of V.S.C., end of war, etc.) but should define the structure of possible strategies, i.e., begin theoretical understanding.

The diffusion of responsibility and thus its abdication are most manifestly shown by specialisation of labour - "I was only doing my job". The cooperation implicit in such specialisation is never collective because the aims of each are individual. The goal of the cooperative effort is never a shared goal. This is the essential contradiction of capitalism - between social production and the antagonistic relations between producers (above all between owners of capital and owners of labour power).

In modern capitalism, the increasingly technological and managerial nature of production, its domination by large and diversified corporations, the interpenetration of State and private capital, and the essential part played by educational, cultural and social commodity production (the university as knowledge factory, the mass media as an ideological commodity, the welfare state to keep the workers functioning, the need for mass consumption to use the endless and increasing products of the corporations) all this intensifies the contradiction. The traditional alienation of the worker from his product, since he plays no part in its creation, but only in an element of the final product, nor in controlling the nature of production, this extends into his private life, his human self becomes a link in the chain production-consumption in neither of which does he have choice.

Now the political consciousness of all this to the worker is checked by the nature of his entry into productive life. For he appears as a seller of labour power, not as a human being (with desires, choices, etc.) and thus he struggles with the employer not for political reasons but over wages - and this sectionally for his own factory or even section. Significantly, contemporary wage struggles have intensified this sectionalism, for a great deal of it is over productivity, bonuses, special rates, and sells conditions (ordering of work, measured day work, time rates, etc.) for cash. Further, 90% of strikes are unofficial, and thus the most militant workers are the most sectional, and the shop steward, instead of speaking for the workers, as a mouthpiece of the mass assembly, comes to negotiate on their behalf, i.e. to be a trade union official pure and simple.

bl
no
's
c

ti
sy
a
bu
cha
(c
ob.
mov

1)
of
of

2)
boa
con

3)
met
abo
in
dif

gema
orde
work
tats

4) I
tion

5) I
to u
disc

6) F
ment
with
asse
of t

In this setting, the political consciousness required for blacking work for Viet-nam is made impossible. For there can be no positive alternative, it is an idealistic and gratuitous 'strike' and further, since the work can be diverted to another country, ineffective.

But supposing it is linked with the question of why production of an aero-engine for a U.S. plane, what does it do, what system of society demands this? The implication is, what would a worker-controlled society produce and why? We then have the building of a movement of workers as the main aim, i.e., the changing of the self-image from passive (ordered) to active (controlling) and not the blacking of work, a reflection of an objective in the strategy of an external (even if socialist) movement.

Practically, the steps are:

- 1) education of the workers (and V.S.C.) in the complex relations of complicity - the relation of Rolls Royce to the whole system of imperialism (leaflets, discussions, meetings);
 - 2) harassment by workers and V.S.C. against individual directors, board meetings, head office, exposure of profits, inefficiency, control chain of command, etc.;
 - 3) elaboration by workers of concept of alternative working methods, collective discussion of production and productivity, abolition of irksome regulations, improving conditions, changes in pay structure emphasising collective demands and decreasing differentials
- Replacement of concept of management as hierarchy by management as functional - coordinating production - and not giving orders. This overcomes the problem of 'participation' where workers are co-opted into a managerial structure as 'representatives'.
- 4) Discussion of alternative products for factory - civil aviation programme, public transport, etc.
 - 5) Links between workers in different factories and industries, to universities, research departments, etc., to develop this discussion.
 - 6) Finally the blacking of work would be part of a general movement which combines action in their own interests by workers, with action in the general - anti-imperialist - interest and asserts by attacking, and not being defensive, the superiority of the human, who chooses over the machine, over technology.

The Swedish N.L.F. Groups

The movement in Sweden for support of the Vietnamese people is called the United NLF groups. It is a union of groups, from about 60 places all over Sweden, which support the NLF and work for it politically. In order to become members of the union the different groups have to support three slogans: "USA out of Vietnam," "Support the Vietnamese people on their own conditions", "Fight US Imperialism". (At the start of the movement, from 1965 to 1967, support for the third slogan was not a requirement for membership, as some of the groups were working on a humanitarian basis.) The groups were started in Stockholm in 1965, and concentrated on making people conscious of the fact that the NLF was the real representative of the Vietnamese people. They organised propaganda against the news-media, which invariably supported the presence in Vietnam of US. troops. After about a year the state run TV and radio, and the independent newspapers, started using the word NLF instead of Vietcong.

The movement grew rapidly. Many members of the Swedish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament had begun to realise that their ideas were bound to lead nowhere and joined the NLF groups. At that time no political party supported the movement, although many of its most active members were, and still are, socialists. To-day there are about 3000 members, the majority of whom take an active part in the work. In 1965 the first "Vietnam Bulletin" was mimeographed, but the following year a second-hand printing press was acquired and the bulletin now has a circulation of about 60,000. It contains articles on various aspects of the Vietnamese struggle, reports from Laos and Cambodia, and analyses of US imperialism, Black Power etc. Every Saturday the groups sell bulletins and collect money in the busiest parts of their home-towns. In the big cities this goes on every day. The main purpose, however, has always been to get in touch with people, talk to them and explain why they too ought to support the NLF. Often a great number of people group around these discussions and take part. (The movement members are easily recognised by their NLF badges with the text, "With the NLF for the people of Vietnam"). As the movement has grown stronger it has also become more militant. It has always regarded the war against the Vietnamese people as being a consequence of the capitalist system, and not as a mistake on the part of the US government. It has always pointed out that the Swedish government in many ways supports US imperialism. Swedish companies, for example, are not prevented from building roads for military use in Thailand. Furthermore, the government has given loans to support the dollar, and it is careful not to let the representatives of the US government in Sweden become aware of the deep opposition of the great majority of the Swedish people (according to the polls 80%) to the war in Vietnam.

The NLF groups have demanded the recognition of Hanoi and the freezing down of diplomatic relations with the US government. They find it absurd that the Government allows US deserters into the country, then more or less drives them out by refusing them political asylum, which is always given to refugees from East European countries. In addition, the living conditions of deserters is unbearable. When the pressures on the government became too strong it announced a Vietnam movement of its own:

The Swedish Committee for Vietnam. This organisation has no active members, but a staff that organises lotteries and hands out expensive pamphlets about the sufferings in Vietnam. It is headed by the well-known Gunnar Myrdal, who considers the war to be a "regrettable mistake." It has, due to ignorance, failed to comprehend that the members of the NLF-groups are members for reasons of solidarity and not because of sentimentality and has not, therefore, managed (which was its purpose) to split it up. This committee set up by the government has spent most of its time denouncing and condemning the actions of the NLF groups, such as the burning of the star-spangled banner and the throwing of eggs at the US ambassador to the OECD. Moreover, it most strongly opposed the march on the US embassy on the 7th anniversary of the NLF on 20th December 1967. The police had only permitted the demonstration to follow a route down dark sidestreets. This, of course, the demonstrators did not accept and they were stopped with brutality by the police. Some people were injured and twenty taken to court.

After the events in Czechoslovakia, however, a big demonstration was held outside the Soviet embassy, and the police did nothing to stop it. The progressive people in Sweden, of course, welcomed this expansion of the freedom of congregation, and permission to pass the US embassy at the 8th anniversary of the NLF on 20th December 1968 was granted. This demonstration was to be one of the biggest manifestations so far, collecting about 5000 people, marching under the slogans: USA OUT OF VIETNAM, SUPPORT THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE IN THEIR JUST STRUGGLE, FIGHT US. IMPERIALISM.

Written by five Swedish comrades visiting London.

NATIONAL COUNCIL

Meets, SATURDAY, JANUARY 18th, noon, in ROOM C, Leeds Trades Hall, Upper Fountain Street, Leeds.

FINANCE

Members attention is drawn to the banker's order forms included in this issue. Make these out soon and send them to us. VSC is desperately and continually short of money.

Branches are reminded of the financial appeal sent to them in December !

Also, any donations from affiliated organisations - the IIP., East Salford Labour Party, ANZAVW etc., have already pitched in - would be truly welcome.

Pat Jordan.

J.B.S.Haldane once said that everything has a history and, furthermore, that one could only understand things by studying their history. That comment, in my opinion, is especially applicable to VSC. The present debate about the future of VSC will be very restricted unless it takes a look at how VSC has evolved.

The first thing to note is the phenomenal growth of VSC both in numbers and influence. For a long time the problem with VSC was to get people interested enough to think that the organisation had any future. I came to London from Nottingham in January, 1966, especially to work on forming VSC. The first task was to conduct propaganda and educational work to explain the idea of solidarity. We set up a little committee called the preparatory committee for a Vietnam solidarity campaign. It was a hard slog to even get enough people together to hold proper meetings. As for our public activity I well remember one film show that Ernie Tate and I organised: we had an audience of one (if one does not count the projectionist); moreover, that one member of the audience was one Manu Manchanda !

During the 1966 general election campaign we worked like hell to organise a public meeting. The meeting had a galaxy of speakers, but after thousands of leaflets had been distributed and pounds spent on advertising there was an attendance of 80. At our founding conference, after 5 months of campaigning, we managed to assemble about 200 delegates and individual members - 78 of whom walked out to form the Britain/^{Vietnam} Solidarity Front. As for the attitude of other organisations towards us, this is best illustrated by the fact that the first time I gave out leaflets on a YCND demonstration I was physically attacked⁷. Our first demonstration was considered to be a great success when we managed to get between 800 and 1,000 to march to the Labour Party's headquarters protesting against British complicity and especially the fact that NLF spokesmen were not allowed into the country.

A recitation of these facts is not, of course, a complete history of the VSC, but all this needs to be said otherwise we shall not get the VSC future debate in correct perspective. The growth of an organisation from these modest beginnings, against all kinds of problems (the split with the BVSF, the walk out of the SLL, savage attacks from other organisations, and the ending of BRPF support,) to one which can initiate the mobilising of 100,000 people on a very militant programme is really extraordinary. There has been nothing like this in recent British politics. To compare it with the growth of the CND is misleading in the extreme: that organisation had the support of virtually the whole of the established Left from the beginning (the CP being a latecomer.)

Of course, the prime factor in this process has been the continuing

∇ This is not so dramatic as it sounds: actually a young lady YCND activist hit me around the head with her handbag because I would not stop distributing VSC leaflets. When this had no effect she burst into tears, sobbing that I had spoilt months of hard work with Christians and liberals. I felt very sorry for her. YCND as a group, of course, would condemn her behaviour.

celebration of the Vietnam war and the heroic resistance of the Vietnamese people. This is axiomatic. But this is by no means a complete explanation. In fact there are other organisations which take the solidarity line which have not registered similar success. The British Vietnam Committee is one such example. This organisation does very valuable work and has strong connections with the trade union movement. It has existed since the days when the Vietnamese were fighting the French. It distributes a very well-produced monthly bulletin. The main difference between it and the VSC lies purely in its mode of operation.

The VSC went from purely propaganda and educational work to mass mobilisations. It did this via the ad hoc type committee. It used the method of the united-front-type committee (that is, agreement to work together on a principled set of slogans but without insisting on complete programmatic agreement.) In tandem with this it sought membership and affiliations to the VSC on the full programme of the VSC which comprises two simple propositions: (1) that the character of the war in Vietnam is one of American aggression against a small country; and (2) that under these circumstances the responsibility of all socialists, progressives, etc. is to work for the victory of the national liberation forces. It did NOT demand that members or affiliates of VSC should support every twist and turn of Vietnamese diplomacy; it did NOT demand that those wishing to work within VSC commit themselves to a definite view of the class nature of North Vietnam and the NLF; and it did not insist that one could not be active in VSC unless one had a particular analysis of British society. That is the difference between VSC and those other organisations and I submit that this is the reason for its fantastic success.

It appears to me that these principles are now being questioned by some comrades. There are, it seems, three differences being posed in VSC which the coming conference will have to resolve:

- (1) whether VSC should remain a single-issue campaign or not;
- (2) whether future mobilisations will be organised on the ad hoc basis or not;
- (3) whether affiliation to VSC should continue or not.

On the first question it is hardly necessary to add anything to what Ernie Tate has written on this subject except to draw attention to a terrible warning. Those comrades who would like to see a general purpose "instant protest" organisation should consider the experience of the Committee of 100. They should consider the experience of those branches of VSC which had evolved this way. It is impossible to maintain such an organisation unless it has a clear programme and analysis of British society.

On the second point, apart from what has been written above, it needs to be said that comrades are really arguing that VSC should adopt the sectarian posture of some of the left groups by putting this forward. They are saying in effect that people and organisations should be given the alternative of accepting our programme and slogans or they cannot help to organise mobilisations with us. The experience of organisations like the SLI should be warning enough of where this takes one. The argument that we can rely appeal to the rank and file of other organisations to join in is a repetition of the Communist Party "third period" theory of the united front from below. It is not possible to by-pass existing organisations. Our policy should be that of trying to win all organisations on the left to the solidarity position.

On the third point, the proposition to end affiliation comes at the worst possible time. The huge success of October 27th should give us the possibility of winning widespread trade union support. The obvious way to do

this is to get large-scale affiliation from trade union branches, etc. This is both highly desirable and eminently possible in the post-October 27th period. Instead, the advocates of the ending of the ad hoc style of working and of affiliation to VSC would like us to tell trade unionists that the only way they can take part in VSC or its activities is by joining.

One argument which has come up is that VSC has not grown as much as it should have done during the campaign for October 27th. This is true, but it does not follow that the reason for this is the existence of ad hoc committees or affiliation. One special factor was the illness of the secretary of the VSC who had to give up the post owing to a very painful back complaint, but probably more important was the way the decision-making machinery evolved in the ad hoc committee. We should be much more decisive in future activities. Democracy does not lie in giving people scope to hear endless argument between various groups - it lies in enabling people to do the things they want to in the most effective way.

I posed three questions facing us; they really resolve themselves into one. Is the principal aim of VSC to assist the Vietnamese revolution in defeating American imperialism or is its aim that of regrouping the British left? All the differences on these three questions flow from different answers to the above question. Those who want to turn the VSC into a completely membership body which organises its own activities independently of all other organisations are, in essence, calling for VSC to become the precursor of a new party. Any attempt to get the VSC to take up other issues, especially domestic, leads along this path as well. I would not deny that there is a need for such an organisation. But it would be the wrong way to launch it, and trying to use VSC for this service would damage VSC's role in assisting the Vietnamese revolution. Let those who want such an organisation put forward a proposition for a conference to launch it, together with proposals for its programme and organisation. It is likely that a number of organisations supporting VSC would eventually support such a venture. The fundamental question before VSC is whether or not it should continue to keep support for the Vietnamese people in their struggle against US aggression as its sole aim. It is to be hoped that the coming VSC conference will come out overwhelmingly for this.

Should V.S.C. Support the March 16th London Air-port Mobilization ?

by Ernest Tate

The Paris "peace" talks drag on. Nixon has just appointed Cabot Lodge to attend, an action widely accepted as representing a toughening of his attitude. The British press and other mass media give very little attention to Vietnam (except when something dramatic happens like the assassination of the Food Minister) so people in Britain could be excused for thinking the war had slowed to a halt. However, the war still goes on: the Americans in the last month announced two new offensives, involving tens of thousands of their troops and our Vietnamese friends have drawn attention to numerous violation of the "bombing halt".

It needs saying time and time again that now is the time to intensify our efforts on behalf of the Vietnamese, rather than relaxing them, particularly in this period when the Americans appear to be restructuring their policies to achieve their ends. Yet some of those who have been most enthusiastic about national mass actions, now counsel caution for the results of a discussion about V.S.C.'s aims before adopting new plans.

But events will not wait. Plans are already well underway for what could well be one of the most dramatic and effective action in this country, a campaign against British complicity in the war which will high-light the persistent refusal by the Labour Government to allow representatives of the Vietnamese into Britain. It is proposed that March be a month of action on Vietnam, with a high-point being March 16th when there will be a mass mobilization at London Airport to welcome the Vietnamese into the country. It is envisaged that there will be a mass rally later where they will speak. For the purposes of the campaign, the March Mobilization Committee has been constituted. It represents many of the organizations who participated in the preparations for the October 27th demonstration, but there are still those who have yet to make up their minds.

The preparations for the new project, instead of being greeted with enthusiasm by the majority of the VSC working committee, were met by an uncharacteristic coldness. When a resolution moved by myself was put to the working committee which would have had the V.S.C. initiate the March action (written in line with national council policy) it was defeated by 8 - 4, the majority itself having been a minority at the previous national council. The majority proposed then a new resolution which included many of the points and line of the defeated resolution, but which omitted any mention of a date for a national action, and instead spoke of something taking place "in the spring".

Although the arguments against the proposed national action in March centered around the date, it became very clear that those who were opposed, were doing so mainly because the question of mass mobilizations with them had become something in the nature of a principle.

The objection to the date I regard as a stray man just to obscure the discussion -- when it was suggested that a better date be posed, this was rejected. Those in favour of the March action argued that the suitability of the date was based upon the needs of the Vietnamese who have appealed for national actions on or around this particular time, this being the date when American army personnel were introduced in large numbers into the war. Besides, the date suited V.S.C.'s

needs too -- there was sufficient time to prepare the action, it did not conflict with the Easter activities of C.N.D. and it was at the end of term for universities. After Easter is exam time which ties up students. To not go ahead now meant in effect to have no mass action at all, or sometime next autumn. What is not fully understood is that this policy of procrastination endangers V.S.C.'s existence -- it can possibly lose the valuable ground it has won over the past year.

It is also argued at the same time that V.S.C. should have nothing to do with ad-hoc committees and local work by V.S.C. groups is not seen in conjunction with national actions, but in opposition to them. No one could possibly be opposed to local activities and the building of V.S.C. branches, but there is sufficient evidence to prove that V.S.C. branches are stimulated by national actions. Can anyone argue that it was not October 22, March 17th and October 27th which put V.S.C. on the map?*

The arguments against the March 16th action display a tremendous blindness, both to the limitations inherent in a V.S.C. type of organization -- where it demands a minimum programmatic agreement and commitment from its members -- and to the tremendous potential V.S.C. has for building mass action to help local groups. There is also a certain political naivete. Criteria is being used to evaluate V.S.C. which should be more properly applied to a political party. In addition, they tend to see V.S.C. as an end in itself and not as a means to help end the Vietnam war. What is worse, there is an insistence that any national mobilizations will only have importance if those who come out have been first contacted and are changed by that contact! This is supreme idealist in method -- they insist that first V.S.C. has to change people's thinking about the war before we involve them in mass action. By this criteria the mass actions which have erupted throughout history have been meaningless in content! This is putting the cart before the horse -- mass actions are one way of changing consciousness. If this approach is adopted by V.S.C. it won't be long before V.S.C. degenerates into the moralistic and individual tokenism of the now defunct Committee of 100.

It would be a tragedy if a conservative working committee majority stood in the way of V.S.C.'s intervention in a very important action. Events will not stand still -- there is a crying need for such activities. V.S.C. activists around the country are asking when the next action is -- everyone senses that they are approaching an important new phase in our campaign on behalf of the Vietnamese. It is to be hoped that arguments for having a long discussion on the form and date of the national action will be seen as arguments for sitting back when the Vietnamese need our support more than ever. Already individual V.S.C. branches are supporting the campaign -- but V.S.C. branches around the country should be thinking of finding ways to help make March 16th an unforgettable event.

* It is worthwhile looking back at another smaller demonstration in which V.S.C. was involved -- the July 21st demonstration organized mainly by the Y.S.L. Without any great bother V.S.C. gave its support to the demonstration, even though the programme of the activity was not consistent with V.S.C.'s. Is it possible that October 27th was too much of a strain?

WHAT NEXT?

(This is a precis of a discussion document produced by some members of Camden VSC)

The prediction that without a sustained campaign a demonstration will fail to build VSC adequately has proved true. October 27th showed that there was a possibility of involving large numbers of people into Vietnam activity, yet the potential has not been realized. It is not too late to retrieve this situation. This can be done if the decision of the National Council (November 10) to initiate a political campaign, and the proposals of the Working Committee (Dec. 5) are implemented. The Working Committee proposed that: "VSC initiate a campaign nationally, through the local organizations of the movement, on British complicity in the war. In this campaign the exclusion of the NLF and DRV representatives is to be the focal point. We see the culmination of this campaign as a mass action, but postpone specific decisions on this action until the campaign has taken root locally. The mass action would include demands on the Government to accord full diplomatic status to the NLF, by a date to be specified later, and mass demonstrations at airports to welcome representatives, or any other action when this is felt to be appropriate."

The reason for choosing a campaign over the status of the NLF is twofold. Internally, it enables us to expose British complicity by showing that to refuse visas to the NLF whilst recognizing Saigon (and allowing them an Embassy here) is in fact taking sides. It allows us to explain who the NLF are and how they forced the U.S. to give them de facto recognition. Externally, this campaign would give diplomatic aid to the NLF at a time when the Paris negotiations have become a focal point of the struggle.

In the past, work on getting NLF representatives into the country has consisted of support for particular visa applications followed by protests at refusal. Such campaigns are based on the political concept of "free speech" and putting pressure on the Government to do something. But this is a no win strategy. Since people already understand "free speech" they learn nothing from the campaign. And since the final decision rests with the Government (grant or refuse a visa), we can not win. If visa is refused we can only start again; if granted, it is only for a specific occasion, the Government's imperialist role is still hidden and we will have nothing to complain of.

Therefore our campaign must be to establish the legitimacy of the NLF in the eyes of the British people. We are then saying the people are sovereign, not the Government. The people should feel solidarity with the NLF and thus support our actions which challenge the Government. In this case, when a particular request is made, such as for visas, it will be seen against the background of this struggle over ideas and not as a thing in itself. If successful, it will enable us to go on to other aspects of complicity.

10

Any political campaign should teach us how to organise, how to relate to the mass of the population, and how to use direct action, such as demonstrations, not as a protest or to let off steam, but as a weapon, which develops power, with clear objectives readily understood.

The most important point about a campaign is to get people to act. If we want to get other people to act we must do two things. We must carry out successful activities- this shows that we can achieve victories; and we must put ourselves in situations where we can interact with people- that is, take part in an interchange of ideas.

What are the elements of such a campaign? It would not be a real campaign unless it rested on the creative initiative of V.S.C. branches and the new people who are organised. Nevertheless it is possible to suggest some actions which, taken together, could change people; actions which can involve new people and simultaneously teach us how to involve more people.

1) A leaflet expressing support for the N.L.F. because they are fighting our common enemy- the U.S. and British ruling class. We want full recognition of the N.L.F. and D.R.V. Their spokesman should be allowed to speak to us. The Government is guilty of complicity in the war. We should try to involve other local groups and individuals in this. Follow-up leaflets could present the programme of the N.L.F., history of the war, facts on British complicity, etc.

2) Wall posters to be used in association with the leaflets- perhaps featuring Madame Binh, deputy leader of the N.L.F. Paris team.

3) Production of N.L.F. flags, posters and car stickers for display.

4) Programmes to rename streets, public buildings, etc in solidarity with the N.L.F.

5) Demands to have the true history of Vietnam taught in schools, colleges and universities. Perhaps devoting a whole day's teaching to U.S./British imperialism.

6) Public campaigning for local libraries to carry the Vietnam Courier and other relevant literature.

7) Develop blood donor sessions as a specific aid to the N.L.F. Use them politically. In London the Brent Council have refused the use of a Clinic and public hall for a session on political grounds. This is an explicit act of local complicity, exposing the power structure. It gives us an opportunity for local actions, e.g. in the council meetings or directed at local councillors.

8) Regular market stalls and/or street meetings to engage in political discussion with people. The aim should be to serve as a political centre. It will only succeed if it is maintained for several months so that it can be seen as a serious effort. This can be used in conjunction with a wall newspaper or guerilla theatre. The aim is to develop imaginative ways of creating a real dialogue.

9) Demonstrations when the campaign indicates them and carefully planned to do a specific thing e.g. at airports to block enemies or welcome friends. Actions can be regional and must definitely rise above the stage of mere massing in central London. The Japanese have had model demonstrations. Ours should be based on known forces and people only- though they may attract a welcome "penumbra"

10) A local bulletin is a good way of making contact with new people.

STATEMENT ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE OF THE LOUGHBROUGH
UNIVERSITY SOCIALIST SOCIETY. 7th November 1968

1. The mobilisation of approximately 100,000 people on October 27th was a massive political victory and a colossal vindication of those who held to the view that it is politically correct to concentrate our attention on building in Britain a movement of solidarity with the people of Vietnam. In saying that V.S.C. now faces serious problems and must make some big changes we in no way detract from the success of October. Indeed, no programme for the future of V.S.C. would be complete if it did not include the perspective of further, even larger, mobilisations.

2. Basically, the problem facing V.S.C. is that with its present organisation and structure it is unable to integrate into its ranks the mass of people who support its programme and are willing to support mass mobilisations. This means that, unless this situation is changed, much of the possible long term political gain from the October mobilisation will be lost, and the bulk of the demonstrators will drift away from the movement.

3. The present organisation of V.S.C. tends to put an artificial brake on the growth of the movement. Its role becomes confined to providing a minimal organisational structure through which existing political tendencies on the left co-operate with each other to carry through "mass mobilisations". This gives rise to a very undemocratic decision making process in which those who participate in the process fluctuate with each meeting of the National Council and are not responsible to any identifiable membership.

4. Hand in hand with the solution to the problem referred to in para.2. goes the resolution of the contradiction in V.S.C. between the number of people it can mobilise and its very weak organisation - lack of funds, small membership, small number of regularly functioning branches e.t.c.

5. We therefore believe that the future plans for V.S.C. must incorporate the following organisational changes:-

- a) A major drive to set up V.S.C. branches and to recruit into them all those who participated in the October 27th. demonstration and others who may be sympathetic to the campaign.
- b) A massive campaign of fund raising.
- c) The National Council to consist of elected members plus delegates elected by functioning V.S.C. branches and no other organisations.

6. Such changes make possible the following developments:-
- a) The establishment of the finances of V.S.C. on a much sounder basis. The advantages of this are limitless- some obvious examples would be
 - i.) the ability to produce a continuous flow of well produced propaganda and information material about Vietnam for mass distribution.
 - ii) The appointment of a National Secretary/organiser with supporting clerical staff and the fielding of a network of Regional Organisers
 - b) The running of large scale local, regional and national campaigns throughout the year thus maintaining a consistent political pressure, and a consistent pole of attraction for new layers of radical people.
 - c) The integration of the large numbers of people, newly politically enlivened by our mobilisations, into an ongoing campaign with which they can identify, and through which they can act politically in a consistent way. This could have a most profound effect on the political future of this country.

THE POSSIBILITIES THAT NOW OPEN UP TO US ARE ENORMOUS.
WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT WE TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THEM.

NEW BRANCHES NEW BRANCHES NEW BRANCHES NEW BRANCHES NEW BRANCHES NEW BRANCHES NEW

Too many VSC supporters and members remain scattered and ungrouped. As is pointed out elsewhere in this issue, five VSC members not already in a branch can come together to elect a delegate to the National Conference; these five could of course continue to meet and set up a branch. Those comrades interested in setting up new branches either for the Conference or otherwise, should contact the national office as soon as possible - we can provide names and addresses of membership in your locality or workplace.

We must build and mobilise mass support.

1.
Why
sho
its
the
be
The
str
que
eti
ext
que
the
rel
var
mus
give
Benn
sho
com
stic
coul

If,
thos
Over
peop
num
benn
beco
cour
enga
shou
wher
tors

Berge
pitat
and s
is cl
irrel
The m
might
going
encou
Rathe

Let us
on its
l.

which

DISCUSSION PAPER : The Future of the Demonstration

1. The past.

Why have we been demonstrating? Have we as the Morning Star believes been showing the British Government that the mass of the British people condemn its support of the US in Vietnam? Have we been demonstrating this fact to the NLF? Have we been showing the British people what we think they should believe or have we been demonstrating what we believe to ourselves? The purpose of the demo. is rarely fully discussed and analysed. We demonstrate our support of the NLF, but to whom? Yet we know the answer to this question is essential, for it will govern the way in which we act in preparation for and during a demo. If, on the demo., we are aiming at some section external to the demo. then the look of the demo. will be its predominant quality; if we are aiming at the individuals and groups on the demo. itself then its feel is the most important quality. The outsiders, apart from the relatively few on-the spot spectators, will learn of the demo. only via the various media. Therefore, the look, translated through photographs, TV etc. must be impressive; numbers are therefore important. Whatever figure is given, the sight of Whitehall solidly packed with people is impressive. Banners, quantity and size, will also be of importance. The actual slogans shouted will be of less importance than the number of voices heard. If communication with the public is our aim we must also take into consideration whether or not we can afford to upset them by forms of action which could lead to physical confrontations.

If, however, our aim is the development of the political consciousness of those demonstrating, then many of these considerations would be modified. Over a certain number, lying probably between 10 - 20,000, the amount of people on the march becomes largely irrelevant to the participants since numbers greater than this cannot be perceived. The number and size of banners retains some importance, but the feel is crucial. Particular slogans become as important as the volume of noise. The question of violence of course depends on the demonstrators themselves. We must assume that those who engage in it accept it as a tactic, though the views of the less committed should be considered. What is most important is what the demo. does; for whereas the public takes a vicarious interest in what occurs, the demonstrators both experience and shape the course of events.

Berger argues that demos. are essentially for the benefit of those participating, so that they may experience the power and solidarity of mass action, and so that they may rehearse revolutionary awareness. Apart from this, it is clear that demos. must be aimed at the participants or be largely irrelevant. The public will learn of the demo. mainly through the mass media. The media always distort what occurs and this negates most of that which we might wish to communicate to the public. Furthermore, our demos. are not going to change government policy. The Vietnamese people may gain some encouragement from our demos, but this can hardly be of great significance. Rather our efforts must be directed at the demonstrators themselves.

Let us therefore examine some of the effects which the October 68 demo. had on its participants:

1. The route of the march

The route was far too long (3 hours). Most of the magnificent élan which the march possessed in Fleet St. had dissipated by the end of the six

mile hike. The political targets on the route were passed before most of the marchers realised their proximity. The destination of the march had no political significance and gave no feeling of expectancy during the march nor any feeling of culmination at the end.

2. The achievement of the march

If the assembly and procession of 100,000 people was the objective of Oct. 27, then the demo. was a resounding success. If, however, the purpose was to use this number to threaten the power of the state, then the march fell short of its intention. Berger argues that mass demos. place the state authority in a dilemma:

'Either authority must abdicate and allow the crowd to do as it wishes: in which case ... the event demonstrates the weakness of authority. Or else authority must constrain and disperse the crowd with violence: in which case the undemocratic nature of such authority is publicly displayed'.

Our intention was to occupy the streets and this we did. According to Berger this should have demonstrated a weakness of authority but it did not. Although the solidarity and street occupation were excellent in themselves, they were not enough. The massive potential power of the demo. was only fractionally used and the little that was used was absorbed. Authority did not appear weak but paternalistic and indulgent. It appeared thus not only to the non-participant but, more important, to the demonstrators themselves. This shows not the weakness but the strength of the British ruling class which has learnt that the easiest way to deal with opposition is to absorb it.

3. The utilisation of what we had.

The potential power of the march, as has been previously noted, was hardly used. Another instance of this is the fact that although the head of the march had to overcome various impediments, so that the remainder might get through, the rear 90% were unaware of these problems. This serves to show the wastage involved when 100,000 people march in one train. Perhaps many of the marchers could have/better employed elsewhere.

4. Did the demo. advance the Vietnam movement?

October was an advance on March only in terms of numbers. Some would argue that the demo. was better organised than before, but perhaps the marchers only appeared better organised because no confrontation occurred. Would this organisation have withstood the test of an attack? In terms of presenting a challenge, Oct. was a retreat from March. It is worth noting that whereas 1,000 at LSE succeeded in occupying the building for several days, 100,000 managed only to occupy a few streets for a few hours.

To summarize we may say that generally:

- 1) we must decide on whether to aim the demo. externally or internally.
- 2) The impact on the participants is all important.
- 3) We must plan with this in mind

And with regard to Oct 27:

- 1) The physical objectives and conditions of the demo. deflated the spirits of the marchers.
- 2) Its achievements and challenge were severely limited by the ill-conceived political and tactical objectives.
- 3) It failed to realize a great potential.
- 4) In some important aspects it was a retreat from past achievements.

2. The Future

It is readily apparent that neither March nor October involved the majority in any direct challenge to authority. In both cases only those at the front were engaged in any direct confrontation: not many more were able to feel that they were acting in solidarity with those at the front.

Although
interve
both th
that th
effecti
ting in
Advent

Once th
by the
fully
in the
of reg
long w
would
be hel
critic

The po
they w
govt.
tions
import
instit
to be

The ma
educat
securi
medica
end sh
occup
great

Obviou
way fr
to max
lessor
challe
clearl

If we
mobili

(1)

consci
(2)
they h
(3)

the lo
must f
venue
streto

Although we must not overestimate the number who are prepared for active intervention, we can be confident that the number who are prepared to defend both themselves and their comrades is not small. What this points to is that the concentration of our numbers in one mass is not now the most effective deployment of our forces. We should consider the case for splitting into smaller detachments.

- Advantages:
- a) Our forces are deployed to greater effect
 - b) The police are forced to spread theirs over a greater area.
 - c) More individuals are given the sense of direct participation.

Once the objective of the exercise and the actual targets had been decided by the Campaign, then each group would work out its own tactics and be fully responsible for the successful completion of its objective. Although, in the future, these actions might be undertaken simultaneously in a number of regional centres, it is thought that the first action should be over a long weekend in London. Each group, possibly constituted on a regional basis, would either simultaneously or at intervals attack its target. Groups might be held in reserve to be moved to the scene of an important target at a critical stage of the action.

The police, of course, would get wind of such plans. However, the fact that they would be known to be preparing to defend the obvious targets (embassies, govt. offices, big co's., media, etc.), would begin to identify the institutions of the state which must be increasingly challenged. The political importance of such a process of identification and challenge to capitalist institutions should not be underestimated. Even if these objectives prove to be unattainable, the lengthy occupation of the surrounding streets is not.

The magnificent occupation of the LSE must be repeated in a number of educational (for the moment) institutions. LSE served to give a sense of security in its existence as a sanctuary. It also served as a base for medical and accommodation facilities. However, a single building could not and should not be used by many groups with separate tasks; several occupations would be necessary. If this were done it would represent a great advance in mobilisation (a more appropriate term than 'demonstration').

Obviously by the time we had reached this stage we would have come a long way from October 68. But this we must do or we shall be guilty of failing to maximise the enormous potential of the Vietnam movement. The clear lesson of October is that one of our main purposes must be to present such a challenge to the state that it is forced to respond in such a way as to more clearly reveal more of its nature to the maximum number of the participants.

If we accept the foregoing, then we must conclude that any successful mobilisation must embody the following:-

- (1) It must involve as many people as possible to the fullest extent commensurate with their individual needs, capabilities and political consciousness.
- (2) It must get them meaningful and tangible objectives and see that they have at their disposal a mode of action capable of realising them.
- (3) It must present a real challenge to the state. It must go beyond the level of tolerance which authority allows without counter-action. It must force authority into unmistakable opposition. It must dictate the venue and the terms of its next operation, not vice versa. It must stretch the resources of the state as far as possible, thus trying to

open up it's weak spots to our scrutiny.

(4) It must prove an advance on past mobilisations in terms of the challenge it offers (in terms of 1 and 2). It must provide the basis for further advances and must therefore, avoid its forms becoming ritualised and institutionalised.

Rick Osborn
Pete Smith.

LONDON V.S.C. CAPTURES SAIGON PROPAGANDA MEETING. By Geoffrey Crossick

An organisation calling itself 'Friends of South Vietnam', supported by Patrick Wall M.P. organised a public meeting in Kensington Town Hall on 3rd December. The meeting was clearly to be a much needed image boost for the Saigon regime. London branches of V.S.C., A.N.A.A.V.W. and a British- Italian revolutionary group formed on October 27th however had other ideas and it was thought that this meeting represented a perfect opportunity to launch the campaign against British complicity in the refusal to admit N.L.F. speakers. We decided that the presence of the Saigon regimes representatives in the South Vietnamese Embassy showed clearly that the British Government had chosen which side it supported, and that on December 3rd we would show where our support lay.

Kensington Town Hall was surrounded by police as we poured in for the meeting, reluctantly paying our shilling admission charges. When twenty past seven arrived - twenty minutes past the published start of the meeting - we had about 300 people in the hall. Other people- some supporters presumably of the organisers of the meeting others just interested people sheltering from the cold- totalled about twelve. A thunderous roar of "Victory to the N.L.F." taught us that the hall had magnificent acoustics and we used them to good effect. Then in the absence of official speakers on the platform, we decided to elect our own chairman. Geoff Richman made a speech outlining the place of the evenings activity in the fight against British complicity and for the recognition of the N.L.F. The organisers of the meeting appeared, to remove the flags from the platform and hastily retreat into a side room. The porter then announced that the meeting had been cancelled, we were now trespassing and must leave. To support him about 80 police poured in and stood around the hall. We started considerable agitation for the return of our shillings, but after about thirty minutes it was clear that people were not willing to do anything about it with 80 police around, so it was agreed by a popular vote to leave. We then chanted "Victory to the N.L.F." and surged into Kensington High Street. Everyone then felt the need to stay together and do something more, and a march to the South Vietnamese Embassy was agreed to. The police would not let us approach the Embassy itself, and as it was clear that people did not feel that anything was to be gained from a confrontation with the police on this occasion, it was proposed and generally agreed that we leave en masse. We had set ourselves a small but important target, and we had achieved it with complete success. Agents of the Saigon regime had been prevented from holding a propaganda meeting.

EXTRACTS FROM THE WORKING COMMITTEE MINUTES, December 5th

Present: Pat Jordan, Ernie Tate, Mike Martin, Trevor Croft, Ed. Guiton, Dave Slaney, Geoff and Marie Richman, Dick Hobin, R. Prince, Richard Kirkwood, Brian Douieb, Bill Turner, Janet Cantillon M. Holt, Geoff Crossick.

Apologies: Tariq Ali, Peter Ross, Barbara Wilson, M. Turner.

Chairman: Geoff Crossick

Correspondence:

Little new to report; Mike Martin reported on discussion with B. Haq of the M.C.F., in which they had expressed interest in closer co-operation.

Mike Martin reported on final meeting of Ad Hoc Committee, which requested that VSC convene a new meeting which would set up a committee to launch a new campaign to allow NLF representatives into Britain. After a long discussion the following motions were carried:

From: E. Guiton. That VSC initiate a campaign nationally, through its local organisations of the movement, on British complicity in the war. In this campaign, the exclusion of the NLF and DRV representatives is to be the focal point. We see the culmination of this campaign as a mass action, but postpone specific decisions on this action until the campaign has taken root locally. The mass action to include demands on the Government to accord full diplomatic status to the NLF, by a date to be specified later, and mass demonstrations at airports to welcome representatives, and other actions when this is felt to be the appropriate time (Carried 9-4. A motion from Ernie Tate, specifying a mass action in March was voted on first and defeated by 4-8)

From: E. Guiton. That the building of local VSC branches is an integral part of the campaign (above), and hence VSC itself must take responsibility without the politically inhibiting ad hoc form of organisation. (Carried 9-4)

A motion from Ernie Tate that an ad hoc committee be formed at VSC initiative to organise the action was defeated.

FINANCE: Situation was hardly better!

Medical Aid Fund: Agreed that signatories to the account be Pat Jordan, Marie Richman and the Secretary.

Next Bulletin: Agreed that this should be issued in January

LOCALS

SHARDLOW shop stewards have called a solidarity demonstration for March 1st in Sheffield. They will demand entry of NLF and DRV comrades to speak at their rally.

FOLKSTONE VSC branch - which regularly gets 30 or so to meetings - ran up the NLF flag on the local town hall on December 20th, 8th anniversary of the founding of the NLF.

CAMDEN VSC have produced a leaflet around the demand for admission and recognition of the fighting Vietnamese. Copies are available from Rip Bulkeley, 16 Marlborough Place, London N.W.6. Camden also run a stall at Queens Crescent, N.W.3. near Chalk Farm every Saturday, 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

NORTH WEST KENT VSC are helping to run a bookstall every Saturday in Rupert Street off Shaftesbury Avenue.

TRICONTINENTAL COMMITTEE has recently been formed to arouse political and material support for liberation movements in the semi-colonial countries. Those comrades interested in participating in this committee should contact Tricontinental Committee, 30 Fitzjohn's Ave., London N.W.3.

"MEET THE VIETNAMESE" liason committee is planning a rally on March 16th to greet a party of Vietnamese students from the liberation movement. Ring A. Harris BIS 9845 for further details.

CAMDEN VSC's "WHAT NEXT?" (See p.17) is available in extended form from Geoff Richman c/- 120 Commercial Rd. E1. London.

** * * * * *****

NATO IS DUE FOR RENEWAL THIS YEAR.....

NATO is the creation of U.S. imperialism...

NATO is the Western European bourgeoisie's defence force.... against its students and workers.....

NATO facilitated and sanctioned the colonels' coup in Greece.....

NATO aids and abets Portugal against the liberation movements Angola Mozambique, and P. Guinea....

*** * * * * *****

WHAT IS THE VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN ?

The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign is a movement committed to the victory of the Vietnamese people against the war of aggression and atrocity waged by the United States. We regard the struggle of the people of Vietnam as heroic and just. We intend to work in all ways available to us in their support. We will campaign strenuously against the British Government's complicity in the Vietnam war.

We declare complete solidarity with the National Liberation Front and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in their resistance to American imperialism.

Only the defeat of this vicious aggression, only the withdrawal of American forces, weapons and bases and the triumph of the National Liberation Front and the Democratic Republic over their oppressors will serve justice and the principle of self-determination. The promotion of these aims is the purpose of our movement.

The Vietnamese people alone have the right to determine the conditions for ending the war.

©©©©©© ©©©©©© ©©©©©© ©©©©©©

If you support the struggle of the Vietnamese people, you should join the V.S.C. Please send this form with 10/- to our office.

Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, 120, Commercial Road, London, E.1.

I support the V.S.C. and wish to become a member and enclose 10/- for one year + Please send more information about V.S.C.+

Name(block capitals, please)

Address

.....

+ Delete what is inapplicable.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE DETAILS.

DATE:- 1st and 2nd February 1969.

PLACE:- Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
Holborn
London.

MOTIONS.

Motions and proposals for V.S.C.'s future activity should reach the national office as soon as possible, ideally by January 20th. This will enable them to be circulated in time for the movement to discuss them. Address the motions to the standing orders committee at V.S.C. 120, Commercial Rd London E.1.

DELEGATES TO THE NATIONAL CONFERENCEa) Voting delegates.

i) Every V.S.C. branch is entitled to one voting delegate for every five paid-up V.S.C. members in the branch.

ii) Any 5 V.S.C. members not in a branch can come together and elect a voting delegate to represent them.

iii) Affiliated organisations are entitled to one voting delegate.

b) Delegates with speaking rights

All V.S.C. members have speaking rights at the National Conference.

c) Delegates of observer status .

Members of affiliated organisations can attend the National Conference as observers. Whether they have the right to speak is up to the conference delegates to decide.

NAMES OF DELEGATES (and requests and offers of accommodation) SHOULD REACH THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE BY JANUARY 23th IF POSSIBLE.

ACCOMMODATION.

Any London comrades who can accommodate out-of-London delegates during the conference should contact V.S.C. office 480/6739 as soon as possible. Those comrades requiring a place at the Inn should do likewise.

CRECHE

People requiring this service or in a position to help should also contact the office very quickly please.
