

SPECIAL BRANCH

10th day of September 195

Special Report

S.B. No. 7 (Fimsy)

SUBJECT

Vietnam  
Solidarity  
Campaign  
Autumn  
Offensive  
Reference to Papers  
7-168/45(2)

The climate of opinion among extreme left-wing elements in this country in relation to public political protest has undergone a radical change over the last few years. The emphasis has shifted, first from orderly, peaceful, co-operative meetings and processions to passive resistance and "sit-downs" and now to active confrontation with the authorities to attempt to force social changes and alterations of government policy. Indeed, the more vociferous spokesmen of the left are calling for the complete overthrow of parliamentary democracy and the substitution of various brands of "socialism" and "workers control". They claim that this can only be achieved by "action on the streets", and although few of them will admit publicly, or in the press, that they desire a state of anarchy, it is nevertheless tacitly accepted that such a condition is a necessary preamble to engineering a breakdown of our present system of government and achieving a revolutionary change in the society in which we live.

Between 1956 and 1963 the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament acted as a catalyst for the discontent of the British left, and this organisation was used as a platform and stalking-horse by almost all the dissident groups. The virtual cessation of nuclear bomb-testing removed the strongest plank from the C.M.D. platform, and the Committee of 100 took up the banner of protest. This latter organisation became more extreme with the passage of time, and when it founded earlier this year was almost wholly anarchistic in character.

The Vietnam war was the next issue taken up by British political extremists. Protest was sporadic first, but in June 1966 a new organisation called the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign was formed under the leadership of Ralph SCHORMAN, the notorious America agitator, and financed by Bertrand RUSSELL. The

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METROPOLITAN POLICE

S.B. No. 1 (Flimsy)

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Trotskyist influence was strong from the beginning; although anarchists and pacifists were attracted by the anti-war and anti-establishment flavour of the group they have never possessed power within it and it remains the preserve of revolutionary factions. A parallel organisation, the British Committee for Peace in Vietnam, founded in 1965, is communist-controlled and moderate in tone. 1967 saw the rise of a number of Maoist groups, notably the Friends of China led by Albert MANCHANDA, and the Maoists are active in the British Vietnam Solidarity Front and openly advocate the use of violence. The "Stop-It" Committee of expatriate Americans is also involved in protest activity over the Vietnam war; the members are split on the violence issue.

The leaders of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign belong chiefly to two Trotskyist factions - the International Socialism and International Marxist groups. Pat JORDAN, a veteran Trotskyist, is the power behind the scenes; Ed GUITON, Mike MARTIN and Ernie TATE are leading officials. Others closely involved in V.S.C. activity are Jerry OSNER of the Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation and Ed DAVOREN and Jan MIDWINTER of the Radical Students Alliance. Tariq ALI is popularly supposed to be a leading light in the V.S.C. and the student protest movement: this is not the case. His power and influence are in inverse ratio to his acknowledged flair for personal publicity and his natural gifts as a mob orator.

It is a matter of common knowledge that disorderly demonstrations took place in Grosvenor Square outside the American Embassy in October 1967 and March 1968 under V.S.C. auspices, and that there were numerous arrests and much damage to property. The pattern at both these demonstrations was remarkably similar. A meeting, followed by a march to the American Embassy, followed by disorder in the square and adjacent streets. In the second demonstration a number of aliens and students from provincial universities took part. Another anti-American demonstration in July 1968, nominally under communist auspices, was heavily infiltrated

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by V.S.C. supporters and, again, there was disorder and many arrests. At this time an announcement was made that there would be a week of activity in October 1968 under the general title of the "Autumn Offensive" culminating in a mass demonstration on the weekend of the 26th/27th October 1968.

In the past few months a number of revolutionary leaders have produced study papers on this demonstration. The theme is common: it is said that the anti-Vietnam war protest movement is merely part of the continuing struggle to bring about world-wide revolution, and that this demonstration can only be regarded as a skirmish before the larger battle. The figure of 100,000 demonstrators began to be bandied about; there was general agreement that this number of militant demonstrators would bring about a total breakdown of law and order. To this end a number of moribund V.S.C. branches were resurrected and local activity stimulated. The existing London branches are:

Earls Court

Hampstead

Kilburn

Notting Hill Gate

Fulham

Lambeth

Walthamstow

Hornsey

Highgate and Holloway

Hackney

Additionally, the following ad-hoc committees have been formed to co-ordinate local activity:

North London ad-hoc committee

North-West London ad-hoc committee

@ North-West London Action Group

West Middlesex Vietnam ad-hoc committee

Libertarian ad-hoc committee

The national headquarters of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign are at 120 Commercial Road, S.1. The organisation occupies offices on the second-floor, and the following persons are employed full-time on the premises:

Ed GUITON

Ernie TATE

Alan HARRIS

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During the early planning stages of this demonstration it was apparent that the question of the use of calculated violence as a political weapon was causing division in the ranks of V.S.C. members. The Maoists felt that violence was inevitable - and said so. The more cautious representatives of the International Socialism and International Marxist groups paid lip service to the vision of a peaceful demonstration. In the event, the Maoists did not gain any places on the National Council or the national ad-hoc committee, and are outpaced as apostles of violence by the more volatile anarchists. All the indications are that the Maoists and anarchists will disregard any sort of instructions - from Police or march leaders - and take an independent line on the day.

Our extensive enquiries into the background of this demonstration have led to our noting a number of suggested "targets" for attack by demonstrators. It is generally accepted now that Grosvenor Square and the American Embassy are not valid objectives or suitable for either occupation or assault. The reasons given are:

1. Previous "failures" at this venue.
2. Lack of room to deploy demonstrators.
3. Association in the public mind with hooliganism and wild disorder for its own sake.

The following buildings have been suggested as alternative "targets" at one time or another:

The Bank of England  
The South Vietnamese Embassy  
The Stock Exchange  
Playboy Club  
Hilton Hotel  
Ministry of Defence and Seato offices  
House of Commons  
New Scotland Yard  
Home Office  
Dow Chemicals (Wigmore Street)  
"Daily Mirror" offices  
B.B.C.  
Police communication centres  
The Russian Embassy  
The National Gallery  
Any Seato embassy or High Commission offices

It will be appreciated that many of these "targets" have been put forward by individuals, or minority groups, who lack the ability to carry out these rather grandiose proposals, but I would call particular attention to the

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Reports that arms were being sought have been diligently investigated: to date we have confirmation of this. Similarly, although there are many rumours about the preparation of molotov cocktails it has not been possible to obtain evidence - probably because these weapons are made from normally innocent articles and not assembled until required. The recent raid on the "Black Dwarf" offices showed that knowledge of the method of making molotov cocktails is widespread among the type of person likely to be involved in demonstrations.