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Special Report }

SUBJECT
VSC "Autumn Offensive"

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(COPY)

METROPOLITAN POLICE

SPECIAL BRANCH

3rd day of October, 196

This regular weekly report on preparations for the anti-Vietnam war demonstration of the 27th October, 1968, is in two parts; (1) new intelligence and (2) an assessment of the various groups expected to participate in the demonstration.

1. New intelligence

(a) A group of about 50 anarchists from Liverpool intend to attack the Central London Recruiting Depot, 5 Great Scotland Yard, S.W.1. while the main body of demonstrators is stationary in Whitehall. Their preliminary reconnaissance has revealed that the building is virtually empty at weekends: they do not seem to have realised that the adjacent building is a police station.

(b) [redacted]

(c) Information from Glasgow indicates that about 400 demonstrators will be coming from Scotland, of whom 160 will be from Glasgow itself. The latter contingent are being advised to wear crash helmets and urged to

M.P.-68-81271/20M w112 (2)

carry ball-bearings, fireworks, hat pins and banner poles for use as weapons.

(d) The Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation continues to emphasise the importance of Australia House as a symbol of Commonwealth complicity in the Vietnam war and is calling for militant action there. Members of the group called Australians and New Zealanders Against the Vietnam War attempted to disrupt a social event at Australia House on 27.9.68: Police had advance warning of their intentions, and about a dozen people who tried to create a disturbance were escorted from the premises. All the indications are that a further attempt will be made at this building.

(e) The National Council for Civil Liberties is asking for 50 observers prepared to report on incidents arising from the demonstration.

(f) A new VSC branch has been formed in Havering; a South-West London ad-hoc committee is in the process of being formed.

(g) Arrangements are in hand to obtain an ambulance for the removal of wounded demonstrators. The Arts Laboratory at 182 Drury Lane, W.C.2. is to be used as a first aid station.

2. Participants

V.S.C. demonstrators fall into the following broad categories:-

1. Trotskyists
2. Communists
3. Anarchists
4. Maoists
5. Students
6. Foreign elements.

1) The Trotskyist groups comprise:-

International Marxist Group (I.M.G.)

A small group numerically, but significant as an idea-producing faction. I.M.G. policies are well to the left of the Labour Party. It has a few contacts with Europe and North America but is basically home-brewed, having originated in Nottingham as the "Week" Group of Trotskyists.

Pat. JORDAN, secretary of the V.S.C. executive, and Ernie TAGE, a V.S.C. executive member, are members of I.M.G.

International Socialism (I.S.)

Formerly the Cliff Group of Trotskyists and led by Tony CLIFF (@ GLUCKSTEIN) this is primarily a "ginger" group of socialists, similar to I.M.G. but commanding considerably more support, and in general favouring less extreme forms of political action.

The I.S. have almost had the field to themselves in creating the present structure of the V.S.C. Their followers dominate the V.S.C. at every level; executive, regional ad-hoc committees and local branches. Almost every existing V.S.C. branch is an I.S. branch in another name.

V.S.C. policy, as formulated by I.S., strives to keep Communist Party influence down while trying to attract those on the left who are disillusioned with conventional politics. This permits a wide spread of political opinion within the V.S.C. and is in keeping with the tolerant attitude of I.S. leaders towards dissenters in their own ranks.

2) Communists

The Communist Party have always maintained a public policy on Vietnam through the British Council for Peace in Vietnam. This differs from V.S.C. policy in favouring peace negotiations rather than a Vietcong victory. There is therefore a dualism in the C.P. attitude towards the V.S.C. in that they do not want to be seen to co-operate too closely with Trotskyists but cannot allow Trotskyists to monopolise left-wing opinion. The Party's official attitude is ambivalent and it has not thrown its full weight behind the V.S.C. "Autumn Offensive".

The Communist Party is represented on the V.S.C. executive by Fergus NICHOLSON (C.P. student leader) and Barney DAVIES of the Young Communist League. The latter

has publicly stated that he will support the October 27th demonstration and abide by all V.S.C. executive decisions; it may be assumed that this holds good for the majority of other members of Y.C.L. The strength of the Young Communist League, given a 100% turnout, is in excess of any other group. It is also probable that despite no firm lead from the Party many individual adult communists will take part in the demonstration.

3) Anarchists

The recent Liverpool conference of the Anarchist Federation of Britain was lukewarm towards the demonstration but agreed to support it as an "exercise in revolution". This is a fair reflection of the attitude of most anarchists, both in London and the provinces. Very few banners will be carried, and several leading anarchists will stay away. However, the rank-and-file of militant anarchists will form a large contingent and engage in "revolutionary" activity. The official anarchist slogan of "Neither Washington nor Hanoi" will be forgotten for the occasion of Oct. 27th and the anarchists may be expected to form a loose liaison with the Maoists.

Also grouped with the anarchists will be the Syndicalists (Syndicalist Workers Federation), the Solidarity Group (led by Dr. Chris. PALLIS), and Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Movement (Frank FARR), the remnant of the Committee of 100, and the various Peace Action Groups which have had a history of militancy going back for some years.

4) Maoists

They are wholly in favour of the V.S.C. slogan "Victory to the N.L.F." because it suits the pro-Chinese communist line to which they are committed. They also hope to emphasise the basic anti-Americanism of the demonstration.

The Britain Vietnam Solidarity Front is the most important Maoist group, formed after an ideological break with V.S.C. It is led by Albert MANCHANDA and Henderson BROOKS, and draws support from what would otherwise be insignificant Maoist groups such as Friends of China, Joint Committee to Defeat Revisionism, Camden Communist Movement, and a number of dissidents who have left the orthodox Communist Party. There are only about 100 committed Maoists but they have contacts in various immigrant groups (such as the Indian Workers Association)

and they engage in continuous propaganda. Their numerical support on October 27th may be almost up to the level of the I.S. or Y.C.L. groups. Their influence in V.S.C. branches is not strong though they control two of London's best-attended and most active branches, namely Earls Court and Notting Hill. The South East London V.S.C. Ad Hoc Committee is also a puppet of MANCHANDA's, but it and the two branches mentioned above have been officially disowned by the V.S.C. executive.

Having fallen out with the V.S.C. executive MANCHANDA has recently formed the Oct. 27th Committee for Solidarity with Vietnam from the S.V.S.F. and other Maoist elements. The group is pressing for a militant demonstration in Grosvenor Square, and this independent action is bound to have a disruptive effect on the Official march as planned by V.S.C.

The Maoists, more than any other group, are attempting to enlist the support of personalities in the Black Power movements. In general they have not been successful, though the Maoists have acquired one or two Black Power rejects such as Ajoy GHOSE.

5) Students

The bulk of support for V.S.C. demonstrations comes from students. Those who demonstrate are usually members of college Socialist Societies, and though their political affiliations are somewhat fickle they are in the area covered by Trotskyists, anarchists and communists.

Despite pressure from minority groups the National Union of Students has continued to confine itself to domestic matters. Efforts have been made by both Communists and Trotskyists to exploit the students' discontents and to draw them into wider political activity. The communist-dominated Radical Students Alliance has been less successful in this than the Trotskyist Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation, though the latter had the advantage of coming into existence at a time of the Paris students' revolt. Both organisations have smoothed the path of V.S.C. propagandists among students, and with Tariq ALI particularly in mind, it may be said that student militancy and V.S.C. activity are provoked by the same kind of oratory. Representatives of both the R.S.A. and the R.S.S.F. are on the V.S.C. executive.

The students, however, have no disciplined relationship with V.S.C. or any other group to whom they owe

nominal allegiance, and their behaviour on demonstrations is largely spontaneous. The drama of a confrontation with Police seems to be of more interest to them than the political perspectives of the Vietnam War.

6) Foreign elements

In this group are the "Stop it" Committee and the Australians and New Zealanders Against the Vietnam War (A.N.Z.A.V.W.). The "Stop it" Committee is a group of expatriate Americans opposed to their own government's policies, particularly the military draft; it is represented on the V.S.C. executive by Dave DELANEY. The A.N.Z.A.V.W. is primarily Australian and has proved itself to be very militant over the past year. It is represented on V.S.C. committees by Richard HOBIN and Renate PRINCE.

In the category of foreign elements also fall the German, French and Belgian contingents who are usually invited by V.S.C. to take part in demonstrations. It is well known that these elements import their own ideas on how demonstrations should be conducted: it is not known at this stage how numerous they will be on October 27th though provisional bookings indicate that there may be about 600 in all.

Although the various policy-making committees of the V.S.C. are dominated by Trotskyists, supporters of other groups are likely to outnumber them by a wide margin on October 27th. The Maoists, anarchists and foreign elements, who are not represented on V.S.C. committees, have in their ranks the type of demonstrator who is most likely to use violence and to be hostile to Police. This will inevitably lead to the disparity, apparent on other V.S.C. demonstrations, between what the organisers say they intend to do and what actually happens.

The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign is an uneasy coalition of warring factions and the I.S. are aware of the "tail wagging the dog" aspect of the organisation. The more discerning of them have come to accept that Oct. 27th will be the last major demonstration by V.S.C. in its present form.

Conrad Dixon
Chief Inspector.

A/CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT.