

FORUM

FOR MARXIST - LENINIST STRUGGLE

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SINCE THE 28th CONGRESS - PROMISES AND RESULTS

It is over two years since I attended the Party's 28th National Congress as a Branch delegate, and now that the 29th Congress is in sight, it is appropriate and useful that a review should be made of what was said then, in terms of aims and policy, and what has actually emerged in two years by way of results. Delegates to the 29th Congress will find this article helpful in providing facts and points of concentration for the exposure of revisionism, on the Congress floor itself. The wholesale abandonment of Marxism-Leninism by the Party leadership has had the inevitable result of rendering the Party as a whole completely incapable of giving any practical leadership in the development of revolutionary struggle, and has caused a veritable crisis (albeit partially hidden at present) in the Party itself.

Anti-Imperialist struggle and peaceful co-existence

In his report (Britain's Future), Gollan spoke of our Labour movement's special responsibility "to give support to the liberation struggle of the peoples of Asia, Africa and the Caribbean". In no case has this been done, but let us be content with just two examples. First, the Congo. When, last autumn, U.S. imperialism actively aided by British and Belgian imperialism, dropped paratroopers on Leopoldville in an attempt to halt the successful advance of the Liberation army, there was a great outcry all over the world. The Daily Worker joined in to the extent of condemning imperialism for threatening world peace, but not once did an editorial or the E.C.

come out with a clear statement in support of the liberation struggle. Still less did they call for action in solidarity with the Congolese people in their struggle, or explain that the cause of world peace would be furthered by the success of this armed struggle. The correct idea of waging a blow-for-blow struggle against imperialism, chiefly U.S. imperialism was deliberately suppressed, because it did not fit in with the revisionist line on peaceful co-existence.

Secondly Vietnam. The essence of the Party's attitude has been paralytic fear of a general war, and the main content of its activity has therefore been to shout 'peace, peace, peace', and so tail along behind the general, spontaneous concern felt by millions of British people. Building solidarity against imperialism, the brilliant successes of the Vietnamese Liberation Front, the impotence of the 'mighty' U.S. to impose its will, the pathetic plight of U.S. personnel in Vietnam - all these have been deliberately underplayed or ignored. How else can the following facts be assessed:

(1) On 27th April, the N. Vietnamese trade unions appealed to the workers of the world to black all U.S. ships directly or indirectly involved in supplies to Vietnam. The Party has made no attempt at all to respond to this revolutionary demand which would lift the protest movement in Britain to a new level.

(2) On 'Vietnam Sunday' (28th March) the Party demonstration in London raised only 1,000 people, whereas the Indian Workers' Association on the same day rallied 3,000 to march 8 miles demanding the release of political prisoners in India.

(3) The official banners in Party May Day demonstrations in London and elsewhere confined themselves to the question of peace. Solidarity slogans were not allowed, as being sectarian.

(4) Motorcade protests have become much in favour - a form of protest that conveniently evades the necessity of rallying masses of people.

(5) Compare these headlines on 25th May: HEAVY CASUALTIES IN VIETCONG ATTACKS: RAILWAY BRIDGES BLOW UP (Daily Telegraph) and U.S. KEEPS UP RAIDS ON NORTH (Daily Worker). Curiously enough it is the Telegraph which is emphasising successful revolutionary violence, and the Daily Worker is emphasising imperialist violence.

It must be stated that the development of a protest and solidarity movement in Britain is intimately bound up with analysis and ex-

planation of current developments in the struggle. The Party instead of doing this, confines itself to stale and uninteresting repetitions. Latest example is in yesterday's Daily Worker editorial (Saturday, 19 June,) which says, "Whether Mr. Wilson's mission takes off or not, and if so whether it will help the cause of peace, is another matter." What the Party should do is to denounce Wilson's 'peace' mission as a manoeuvre to deceive the masses, and call upon others to join in these denunciations.

Nuclear Weapons and Peace

At the 28th Congress Gollan pledged our support for the struggle "for the renunciation of nuclear weapons" by Britain. Shortly afterwards came (July '63) the hoax of the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty but certainly not the renunciation of nuclear weapons by Britain or any other country. The unreality of the campaign for unilateral nuclear disarmament is shown by the fact that after a number of years it has fizzled out, and even the C.N.D. has turned its attention to Vietnam. Nor has the Test Ban Treaty done anything to strengthen peace. How will Gollan assess these developments at the 29th Congress? Will he applaud China's nuclear explosions? Will he draw the conclusion that to fight for peace today inevitably means opposing U.S. imperialism and actively supporting all those struggling against imperialism, particularly in the storm centres of national liberation wars? Will he point out that a final defeat for the U.S. in Vietnam will materially assist the liberation movements in Malaya and North Borneo, and by weakening world imperialism, will strengthen peace?

National and Local Elections

Gollan laid the greatest possible stress on electoral success. Referring to parliamentary candidates as "our political standard-bearers", he said,

"It is the duty of this Congress to charge the new E.C. with the task of making our election campaign priority number one. We must make the biggest electoral impact we have ever made. Nothing less can satisfy us".

Gollan's argument was that a group of Communist M.P.'s was essential in order to force a Labour Government (after it was

elected) "to break with bi-partisan policies", adding that "the main weakness in Parliament is that there are no Communist M.P.'s." In his reply to discussion, Gollan said he would give his right hand to have two or three Communist M.P.'s, thus showing clearly that electoral struggle took precedence over everything else.

Nothing was said of course about the revolutionary role of electoral struggle, that it is one form of struggle which can and must be utilised alongside many others for particular purposes chiefly as a means of exposing to the masses the true nature of bourgeois parliamentary democracy (=bourgeois dictatorship) from within. Gollan's conception of electoral struggle, as everyone knows, is quite different. He sees the Labour government as the instrument for operating a policy in the interests of the people and towards socialism, once it has broken with bi-partisan policies - and "a necessary guarantee of this would be a group of Communist M.P.'s" But how has this revisionist line worked out in practice? What successes can be chalked up? Or will Gollan be offering up his right hand for nothing?

A previous article in Forum showed that in last October's General Election the Party actually lost overall support. What is even more significant is that our 46,532 votes among 36 candidates amounted to only 3.3% of the poll in areas contested (less than 0.3% of the total poll). In constituencies where the Party has been relatively strong, e.g. West Fife, Rhondda East, Glasgow, the votes were down, some severely so. And Annie Powell (Rhondda East) has now even lost her local council seat (May 1965). It was in the Rhondda that Harry Pollitt, in 1945, was nearly elected with a vote of about 15,000.

What emerges only too clearly is that the Party's electoral impact is nil, a mere joke. And this must be said at National Congress in November. Furthermore, there is no prospect whatsoever of a single Communist M.P. in the foreseeable future, unless we are to pin our faith on some turn of events which will blow us a favourable wind. But the waiting game has no place in revolutionary politics. This too must be said at Congress.

At the 28th Congress Gollan said, "Without winning through to the local councils, we will never make Parliament". Turning then to local elections, we find much the same picture. In 1962 we had 500 candidates, this year 300, and yet the Party leadership's criterion

of progress has been the number of candidates put in the field. Votes too have shown anything but an encouraging prospect, when for example among the better results this May we read that 12 Communist candidates in Leeds polled 1,741 - an average of 145. Only the 'best' results were printed in the Daily Worker (15 May). Those not even mentioned were so abysmal, that the comrades concerned must be feeling completely disheartened and disillusioned. Overall figures do not appear to have been published, but they almost certainly add up to a considerable loss of support. As far as seats are concerned, in England and Wales there was one gain and one loss, in Scotland two gains.

How about Daily Worker support and publicity? An article by Annie Powell, one by Reuben Falber, and three short news items were all that appeared before the election date (13 May). In none of these was there a mention of anti-imperialist struggle, not even Vietnam or Dominica. And yet, immediately after the election, a Party statement explaining Labour losses said:

"The Labour Party was not returned to support enthusiastically the U.S. attack on the people of North and South Vietnam or its brutal invasion of the Dominican Republic."

We are in fact saying that the Labour Party's results are affected by its attitude on international questions, and at the same time we play down liberation struggles in our own campaigns. Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

At the 29th Congress there must be a sharp demand that the leadership analyses its utter failure to make any electoral impact since the last Congress, either nationally or locally. One thing is sure: to gain the support of the people, we must start by learning from the people what concrete demands to raise, rather than presenting a neatly contrived policy which fails to strike any chord.

The Labour Movement

In 1946 the Labour Party changed its constitution to make Communist Party affiliation impossible. This ended the long series of attempts (right from 1920) by the Party to get inside the broad Labour Party with the aim of transforming it from within. Instead of making a complete reappraisal of attitudes towards the Labour Party, the Party simply took a new tack. First to get the bans and proscriptions removed so that it could once again apply for affiliation, and second

to get a broad working alliance between communist and the 'Left' in the Labour movement in order to defeat the Right wing which was in control of the L.P. machine. The C.P. was seen as a catalyst to help speed the victory. Therefore the Party must grow in numbers to be more effective.

At the 1959 Congress Gollan said, "The Labour Party is a political coalition of Right and Left forces, those who support capitalism and those who are against it. Whatever the temporary situation at this or that moment this struggle is bound to go on until militant policies prevail in the Labour movement". And, "It is these Left and progressive forces, which, in the last analysis, are responsible for the destiny of the British Labour movement." At the 1961 Congress, Gollan said, "The Communist Party pledges an all-out effort to campaign and work for the Left progressive victory this year." At the 1963 Congress, Gollan said, "The political advance of the British working class and the struggle for socialism in our country are bound up with the transformation of the position in the Labour Movement" (= victory by the Left over the Right in the L.P. and T.U.s).

Superficially this idea of a life-and-death struggle within the Labour Party between Left and Right ending in the inevitable victory of the Left, sounds dialectical: the Right and Left are supposedly in contradiction. This is a naive misrepresentation. The real contradiction here is between monopoly capitalist ideology and working class ideology arising from the corruptive effects of imperialism on the British working class. It is a contradiction among the people and will be fought out among the people as a whole, not just within the Labour Party. Since the Labour Party as an organisation has now completely sold out to monopoly capitalism, a struggle must be waged against it, led by a Marxist-Leninist party. As the struggle develops, the various 'Left' (= class-conscious) elements now in the Labour party will almost certainly leave it or be expelled, rather than succeed in winning control over it. To see the problem this way is to grasp the significance of the independent role of the Communist Party. To see it Gollan's way is to bow down before the 'mighty' colossus of the Labour Party, and to regard the destiny of the working class as dependent on this extremely reactionary organisation. It reduces the role of the Communist Party to subservience.

Wages and the Labour Government

The Party leadership's failure to understand this contradiction is shown by the following example. At the 28th Congress Gollan said, "There must be an all-out struggle in every union and industry to end the wage freeze once and for all... As a result of pressure Maudling is now talking about wage restraint at 3%. We will have none of it." Brave words. But what has the Party done to organise an effective campaign to oppose George Brown's incomes policy, which does precisely what Maudling had in mind, and which was overwhelmingly accepted by the T. U. C. ? The answer is practically nothing. In fact the Party has actually helped George Brown through its failure to explain that a Labour Government could be confidently expected to operate monopoly capitalist policies, that a Labour government can even be successful where a Tory government would meet stiff opposition. The desperate efforts made by the Party leadership to obscure the fact that the Labour government is in practice a monopoly capitalist government, has certainly helped to confuse the working class as to the real nature of the incomes policy.

The Daily Worker

The 28th Congress revealed the sorry position that the Daily Worker sales were on the decline (William Wainwright), that many Party members were not even readers (Annie Powell), that membership of the P. P. P. S. was down (E. C. Report). At a P. P. P. S. meeting just after Congress a more serious situation was disclosed (the information having been withheld at Congress), namely that sales in Britain had dropped by 1900 since the 1961 Congress, only to be offset by an increase of 2000 in overseas sales (i. e. bulk sales to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe).

As usual Gollan refused to question the political content of the paper but lamely complained that "there has not been the level of effort to extend the circulation". He called for an all-out circulation campaign, the first step in which was to be a drive for 5000 new daily readers. But the circulation has in fact continued its downward trend. Exact figures are not published, but the seriousness of the situation can be judged from the personal appeal from John Gollan (14 May '65) for a "big new Daily Worker circulation campaign", combined with the admission that sales were dropping. Gollan of course blames rising costs, but the truth is that the paper has become dull, insipid,

and repetitious. Instead of giving us up-to-date, political class analysis of events, it has kept up a stale chant of slogans like "A general election now", "the drift to the Right", "preventing a Tory comeback", "rallying the Left in the Labour Party". The only way to re-invigorate the paper is to give it political edge, so that the class-conscious workers find it interesting and helpful as a guide to revolutionary action. Definitely not by gimmicky circulation-boosting techniques.

The Party.

As is well-known the membership of the C.P. has fluctuated in the whole of the post-war period, without developing any consistent trend. At the 25th Congress (1957) it was 27,000 then it dropped to 24,900, and picked up to 26,750 by the 26th Congress (1959). At the 27th Congress (1961) membership was up to about 29,000, and then came Party-building year which pushed the figure to 34,350 by the 28th Congress. The much-publicized aim of 50,000 was blazoned in a big banner across St. Pancras Town Hall. Then came a further fluctuation in the news that the 1965 re-registration is 1,000 down.

It is abundantly clear that the Party leadership has failed completely in its aim of building a mass party; every device imaginable has been used to lure people into taking out a Party card; the political duties of members, set out in the Party rules, are never mentioned. But what is much worse is that the very aim of the mass Party is in conflict with the Marxist-Leninist conception of a disciplined, democratic-centralist organisation, steeled in practice and able to give theoretical leadership. Such a Party must have a mass line, which will win mass support, but can never have the aim of mass recruitment.

Even when new members are made there is no serious attempt to give them political education - as long as they pay Dues and re-register, this satisfies the leadership. Jack Cohen, shortly after becoming head of the Education Department, wrote (Oct. 1962): "We lack anything like a system of Party education, catering for the varying needs of our membership". He regarded the theoretical weakness of recent recruits as constituting "a real problem and a great weakness". Every honest comrade recognises that nothing has been done since this pronouncement to change the position. In

the majority of Branches up and down the country there is no political education at all. And where it does take place, the method is formal and static, with theory reduced to the question of learning a set of formulae, unrelated to answering specific questions. A recent example of this is the Party syllabus on the State, where Lenin's "Lecture on the State" is recommended reading, but not "State and Revolution". The point is, that the first work, written in 1921, was a general account of social progress and did not stress transition from one form of society to another. Whereas "State and Revolution" was written in 1917 when the question of transition to socialism was a burning issue, and therefore how it was to be accomplished was the practical question. It is also the practical question for us in Britain now.

At the last Congress Gollan said we must "stress the importance of the factories, that there "has been a modest advance", but that "we have not done nearly enough". Just how serious he was about doing anything more can be judged from the fact that there was no mention of the need to get a change, anywhere in the Draft Political Resolution submitted to Congress. In fact only 15% of Party membership is organised in factory Branches. Harry Pollitt's slogan "a party rooted in the factories" has been thrown on the scrapheap, and even where factory Branches do exist they have a second class status. "The biggest weakness in our factory work is that in the main it has a narrow, economic nature. The Party does not appear before the workers as an organised, all-round political force; but more typically as a group of workshop militants". Sam Aaronovitch wrote this in the pre-Congress discussion. Well said, Comrade Aaronovitch, but what has the leadership done to overcome this grave weakness? Not much it seems, when we find one District Congress after another since then, reaffirming the formula that factory work = the economic struggle, and electoral work = the political struggle.

But whether the Branch be factory or locality, there is a general state of apathy that is enough to dispirit even the staunchest comrades. Let us challenge the E.C. to give details of Branches that do not even meet once a month (some not twice a year), that carry out no political activity at all. Before the last Congress an official attempt was made to do something about this deplorable state, by the publication of a new journal "Party Life". Two or three issues appeared,

and then we heard no more.

This article cannot and has not attempted to give a blue-print for the future. It is simply an honest effort to show that the logical and inevitable result of revisionism is a creeping paralysis, which has beset our Party, and made it incapable of giving any kind of leadership in the development of revolutionary struggle in Britain. It can now hardly even maintain its organisation and finances. Despite all this the Political Committee resulting from the 28th Congress is exactly the same as the one emerging from the 27th Congress, with the addition of Sid Foster. Is there room for such complacency? Most certainly not. **IT IS TIME THESE GUILTY MEN WERE REMOVED.**

Gollan's speech at the Congress, "Britain's Future", was a static description of certain superficial features of the situation, without any attempt to trace the development of various struggles in the period since the 1961 Congress, or to assess what progress had been made by the movement as a whole, or what setbacks had been suffered. Therefore as a guide to future action it was utterly useless.

We are confident that delegates to the 29th Congress will raise some of these questions most sharply, and call upon the present Executive Committee, headed by John Gollan, to admit their mistakes and resign.

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LETTER FROM A WEST COUNTRY READER.

We must clear up quickly the tactical steps necessary to achieve the agreed strategic aim — the Marxist-Leninist Party.

There are good arguments in favour of the proposition that the C.P.G.B. cannot be transformed, but there are equally good arguments in favour of the proposition that there is a possibility of sufficient active C.P.G.B. members repudiating the present leadership and aligning the Party with other genuine Marxist-Leninist parties.

The situation has changed dramatically, within the past year

and there is much drastic re-thinking going on by many Party members. To fail to recognise this, to fail to plan tactics accordingly, would be the greatest dis-service to Marxism-Leninism. The smear campaign, the suppression of facts and the under-hand tactics of calling on Party loyalty and trust to get away with these manoeuvres, have lead to a sense of shame by many C. P. G. B. members; and a feeling of resentment against those "cadres" who consciously lent themselves to such falsifications. World developments have so thoroughly confirmed the truth of what we anti-revisionists have consistently said, that there is now no possible excuse for any C. P. G. B. members continuing to trust John Gollan or to continue to accept present policies and programme.

Lots of us know the difficulties we had in arriving at the truth of the struggles which were going on in the international Communist Movement. Most rank and file members made no efforts to look anywhere apart from the Party press, because they had that kind of loyalty on which the "leaders" relied. Many local comrades tried to discover the truth but were told lies or half-truths by "higher" officials. The Political Committee must take ultimate blame for the deception of the Party — and who knows, perhaps even in the P. C. there is a group deceiving others to keep their mouths shut in the "interests of the Party". Are we to write off the Party as a whole, conceding victory to the Revisionists, or will we realise that the coming Party Congress could see a signal victory for the Marxists-Leninists? To my mind, anyone who thinks the latter possibility virtually impossible, is showing a lack of faith in the intelligence of rank and file members. Such an attitude would be entirely inexcusable.

The main tactics of all anti-revisionists should be to work in unity to obtain a positive outcome, one way or another, at Congress.

"Vanguard," "Forum" and any other groupings outside the Party should publish articles and letters vis-a-vis Congress in a comradely way, not only among themselves, but toward the rank and file of the C. P. G. B. To take any other attitude, would be utterly negative, defeatist and non-Marxist.

Even if Gollan and Co., gained the day at Congress, the united Marxist-Leninist stand would be bound to have a big effect (even if not successful in its entirety) and our tactics in that event, would

have to be thrashed out in the light of all that had occurred and which it would be futile to predict just now.

I think that every branch where members have been expelled or have resigned could pass resolutions demanding the re-instatement of such members, as this is necessary for an honest-review of past mistakes. We must face facts and hope that all anti-revisionists will act in such a manner as to make our ideals a practical reality.

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THE COURTAULDS STRIKE AT PRESTON

About a month ago began a strike at one of the Courtauld Yarn Mills in the north of England, involving mainly workers from India and Pakistan and some from the West Indies and Africa. About 400-500 workers of one section of Courtauld, Preston, members of T. and G. W. U. were out on an unofficial strike for some three weeks resisting the introduction of new machinery which would have involved them minding $1\frac{1}{2}$ machines instead of the former one machine and getting an extra ten shillings bonus (about 1.5% increase) per week while increasing productivity by 300%. The men resisted the monopolists' demands and refused to agree to the speed up when the Union representatives put the case to them in late April, and were given an assurance that nothing had been definitely decided. Despite their firm disagreement the local leaders of the T. and G. W. U. agreed to the terms put forward by the management and the new schedule was put into operation on May 23. The men came out on strike the following day. They had not been consulted and they could not work $1\frac{1}{2}$ machines. The very first comment of the Vice-Chairman of the Preston Branch of the Union was that the dispute was "racialist". Since then, what little publicity was given to the dispute, deliberately obscured the fundamental class issues while playing up the different pigmentation of the men out on strike. This was deemed a "coloured" strike because 95% of the workers in the department affected happened to be from the semi-colonial part of the world.

There are some workers from the poorer countries of Europe -

Italy etc - but their contracts (a pointer to Common Market plans) prohibit industrial action. The British workers in that department all do supervisory work and therefore are not affected by the new agreement. Why are most of the workers in the nylon tyre cord department "coloured"? Because the conditions of work are frightful — overpowering heat, humidity, polluted air. Only now is the Union-Management axis talking of improving conditions. Only those who know at first hand the meaning of British imperialism and the stark exploitation, unemployment and poverty of Britain's colonies (or semi-colonies) are willing to do this kind of work.

It was a "coloured" strike in another sense :- the great mass of white workers in this factory employing some 2,000 persons did not support their colonial brothers in defense of class solidarity and their own interests. They have not realised that the super-exploitation ahead of all workers in countries where imperialism is on the decline is beginning first to be felt by the coloured or other workers who do the jobs at the lowest rung of the industrial ladder. The American negroes in the U.S.A. and the West Indian and Asian workers in Britain are those who are feeling the first lashes of the whip that the monopolies will use against the entire working class as contradictions sharpen and British imperialism is up against the wall.

That is why it was tragic that not merely did the great bulk of the Preston T. and G.W.U. fail to support their brothers out on strike but also that few militant workers in other factories came forward to show their solidarity and give the maximum help to the Action Committee formed by the strikers at Preston. There was help forthcoming, and inevitably it was welcomed, from those who are ready to exploit other men's miseries for their own ends, as well as those who are confused about the precise form the anti-imperialist struggle should take in a metropolitan country.

That there were demands for "coloured" unions can be understood in the context of downright betrayal of "coloured" workers by the existing union structure. There is not only the general capitulationist line being taken by union after union so that they are betraying the interests of the workers but there is the special barrier as a result of imperialist rule that divides the British workers from those who come from existing and former British colonies. First of all there

is the age-old prejudice which can be readily exploited by employers and their middle-men to create fear and division. Then, there are the manifold mistakes due to reformism, and now revisionism, which prevent the underlying issues of the class struggle in a declining capitalist country from being recognised.

One of the commonest of these mistakes is to make a sacred cow of the existing trade union structure so that if criticism is ever to be made it is only confined to the "leadership" as if the rest of the machinery is terribly militant and ready to overthrow the capitalists. The extent to which the very trade unions developed in this country help British imperialism should be recognised by Marxists. Related to this is the legacy of imperialism which shows itself in paternalism. Support for the "coloured" workers tends to mean going to them and teaching them the blessings of British trade unionism. When will British militants who really believe in Marxism realise that they have much to learn from these "coloured" men and women and by learning how to work together they can forge a strong front to fight the common class struggle?

The role of the C. P. in this struggle is lamentable. Opportunistic to the last the Daily Worker was not willing to touch this, at first swallowing the red-herring of "black racialism". When it did begin to comment, it was to highlight the marginal and less important details such as the proposed hunger-strike by the Action Committee. There was no understanding of the monopolist strategy and no warning to the British working class that what is happening to "coloured workers" in Preston is merely the harbinger of what will happen to "white" workers elsewhere.

But what worries me most is the conspicuous absence of the anti-revisionists. Not only were there none on the scene — are there none at all in Preston? — but when the various groupings of Trotskyites began to appear ready with their help, no local or external anti-revisionist militants turned up to assist. It is no use reading Peking Review and shouting slogans about the major enemy if the manifestations of imperialist exploitation in one's very land are not recognised, or if there is no appreciation of which section of the working class constitutes the most militant and potentially revolutionary in Britain today. The excessive parochialism which bedevils

the British progressive movement blinds anti-revisionists to the urgency of alliance with the "coloured" proletariat in Britain today. They must recognise that these men and women, although they may not know the niceties of parliamentary procedure and trade union ritual, are ready to stake all to overthrow the system which has enslaved them for the last 300 years.



HOW TO SUPPORT THE STRUGGLE OF THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE

Last month's leading article "Revisionism helps U.S. imperialism in Vietnam", made an excellent all-round analysis, and at the same time highlighted the key aspects of the situation, namely the abject terror of the revisionists in the face of imperialist nuclear blackmail, their failure to understand that U.S. imperialism has adopted the tactics of 'special bushfire warfare' rather than all-out nuclear war, and their pig-headed refusal to recognise that the people of Vietnam are winning despite technical inferiority because the masses of the people are more important than any weapons.

But then the article goes on to deal with what we must do here in Britain. It says that the next step is direct action, like refusing to load ships, while at the same time it implies that poster parades, etc. are not really of much use.

Direct action would indeed be a great step forward, and if any comrades can think of any practical steps which would bring this about, they must immediately set about the task. But I personally do not see how to do it, and I don't get much help from the article, beyond exhortation. Can anyone point to any specific places where Britain is in the direct line of supply between U.S. imperialism and Vietnam? Are we in any way directly contributing to supplying U.S. war forces in Vietnam? This is the kind of information we need so that we can pass from exhortation to the practical organisation of direct action. As it stands the advice given in the article is Leftist.

since it puts forward unrealisable aims in the sense that it gives no clue about how we are to get from here to there.

It seems to me that we have to start from where we are now, so that we can show how effective campaigns can be developed right now, with the object of leading as soon as possible to direct action. Is it not true that at the moment the main repercussions of the Vietnamese struggle in Britain are taking the form of spontaneous, largely non-political, disgust and horror at what Yankee imperialism is doing — napalm bombing, wholesale murder of the civilian population, poison gas, undeclared war on northern Vietnam? And this disgust is at present mainly evident among various strata of the population, not specially among the organisations of the labour movement. Whether or not any militancy over Vietnam is developing among rank-and-file industrial workers, it is difficult to say. Any comrades who are closely in touch should come forward and tell us how things stand.

But for many of us at present, the immediate way forward is to set in motion local Vietnam Committees which will give expression to the mood of anger that is gripping more and more people. In this way both the bourgeois pacifists and those who are ready to take an anti-imperialist stand, can be organised together. In my locality — where a Vietnam Committee is already functioning — we have found a general and very wide understanding that the U.S. has no business to be in Vietnam and must get out. The South Vietnamese are, after all, fighting simply for national independence, which is guaranteed by the Geneva international agreements.

Help in forming such committees is available from the British Council for Peace in Vietnam, 374 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1. Our experience which may be of help to others has been :

- (1) To form the committee on the basis of an initial campaign of local action (signature campaigns, public meeting, poster parade), with representation of organisations and individual membership.
- (2) To adopt a two-point programme: (i) Struggle for the implementation of the Geneva agreements; and (ii) Demand that the Labour Government disassociate itself from U.S. policy.
- (3) To make special efforts to involve labour movement organisations and militant workers, e.g. by offering speakers to trade union branches, factory leafleting.

(4) South Vietnamese film and public meeting, to be followed by a further, much larger, demonstration.

The struggle in Vietnam will surely be fought out to a victorious conclusion and will thereby contribute to world peace. But there is still some way to go, and there is no more urgent task for Marxist-Leninists in Britain than to develop in the months ahead the broadest possible movement of solidarity with the people of Vietnam (and of Dominica) against U.S. imperialism. The movement will be many-sided and must certainly include forms of direct action.

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COMMENT ON THE ABOVE

The article in the May issue, "Revisionism Helps U.S. Imperialism in Vietnam" is criticised on the grounds that (a) it is said to imply "that poster parades, etc., are not really of much use" (b) it is wrong to cause a direct action now and (c) it does not state how comrades can set about developing such direct action. In this connection, the question is raised as to whether this country is "in any way directly contributing to supplying U.S. Imperialism and Vietnam"?

Nobody would deny that poster parades etc., have a useful role to play in developing the broad anti-U.S. Imperialist struggle. The original article, in fact, characterised the present stage of the struggle as the stage of "rallying our forces". Poster parades, petitions, marches, all draw the attention of the widest sections of people to the issues involved and help to bring more people into action. But Marxists can never treat this form of action as an end in itself.

We must begin to work out a proper long term strategy in the struggle against Anglo-U.S. imperialism, and as the writer of the criticism himself agrees this "must certainly include forms of direct action". His criticism in fact boils down to the question of timing.

But what is really at stake is the nature of Marxist-Leninist leadership (a) in the movement against U.S. imperialism and (b) in the class struggle as expressed through industrial action.

The comrade gave some valuable advice in his account of the formation of a local British peace in Vietnam Committee. Marxists welcome the formation of such local organisations on a very broad basis. But in such local broad committees we must put forward our independent viewpoint. In so doing we differentiate ourselves from the revisionists who submerge themselves in the broad movement, never attempt to develop people's understanding to a higher level and thus completely abandon any question of giving a lead and of enabling the people to see the issues really clearly.

But such broad organisations, by their very nature, are limited in scope. Marxists-Leninists must make every effort at this stage in every contact with industrial workers to explore the possibility of industrial action in any form whatsoever whether it be token action or action directed at the actual physical/economic/military resources of Anglo-U.S. imperialism. Of course, an article in Forum cannot tell how to set about the task. As things are we may see the next level of struggle but industrial workers know if it can be reached on a mass scale now and how to set about achieving it.

But apart from the implicit "tailism" of the comrade's views on tactics, he seems to have missed the point entirely on the degree of involvement of this country in aggression in S.E. Asia. It is not simply a question of lines of communication via Britain to S.E. Asia, although it is pretty certain that all sorts of strategic material pass through this country that ultimately ends up in Vietnam and benefits the U.S.

It is well known that Wilson's policy is the result of a very crude deal with the Johnson administration. If Wilson backs up Johnson in Vietnam the U.S. will back Britain in "Malaysia". Britain has been involved for a very long time in training South Vietnamese puppet troops for jungle warfare in

"Malaysia". Australian troops are already in South Vietnam. New Zealand troops are ready to go. If the Wilson Government has its way it will not be long before British troops are also in South Vietnam as they have been in Arabia, Malaya and Guyana for many years.

British imperialism is not simply a sympathetic onlooker in this war. It is a direct accomplice and participant. If we recognise, as we must, the necessity for the working class in imperialist countries to act with the maximum solidarity with National Liberation Forces engaged in direct struggle with imperialism, U.S. or British, then the struggle against U.S. aggression in Vietnam is immediately seen as direct class issue confronting the working class in Britain.

Nor are we premature in calling for direct action now. It is already clear from the response of the miners and others to the June 30th lobby and the protests coming from the Trade Union movement at this very time that there are many workers ready to go further than petitions, resolutions and marches.

It is of the very essence of Marxist leadership to be able to see just that much farther ahead than the immediate stage of the struggle but not so far as to be isolated from the mood of the masses. Already in Japan, Indonesia and Australia, where the trade unions are under Marxist-Leninist leadership, workers have taken strike action. In Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, strikers protested against a judgement which stated that dockers who stopped work on such issues as Vietnam, were unfit to work and liable to prosecution for conspiracy.

It is revisionist to argue that we are too weak here to attempt this. It is not a question of weakness, it is a question of roots among the working class, correct perspective and a sense of the mood of the working class itself.

We have the absolute obligation to go as far as we can

to do everything within our power to arouse as many workers as far as they are prepared to go at this very moment.

Moreover, struggle of this character at this time strengthens resistance against any attempts to involve this country more deeply with the U.S.

If the workers can be brought to fight now against the Wilson/Johnson alliance they will be that much more entrenched against any attempts to drive this country into further imperialist adventures and to put its workers into conscript uniforms.

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THE U.S. - "COMMONWEALTH" PEACE FRAUD ON
VIETNAM

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The "Commonwealth" proposal for a "peace mission" on Vietnam announced at the "British Commonwealth" Conference in London this month (June) is a bare-faced fraud. It is a fraud on the people of Vietnam. It is a fraud on the peoples of the so-called "British Commonwealth". It is a fraudulent and cruel exploitation of the sincere desire of the peoples of the world for peace.

WHAT THE FRAUD CONSISTS OF - One need only look at some of the ingredients of this proposal to see the enormity of the swindle. First of all, the proposal calls for the "utmost restraint in military operations as a step towards the total ceasefire which the mission hopes will be established at the earliest possible opportunity". "Utmost restraint" on whose part? "Utmost restraint" on the part of the South Vietnam people who are fighting for their lives, their hearth and home against the most powerful and vicious imperialist set-up that has invaded South Vietnam with 75,000 troops who do not scruple to use anything from missiles to poison gas to murder men, women and children? Or is the injunction to exercise "utmost restraint" directed at North Vietnam (D.R.V.) which has been most blatantly subjected to aerial bombardment by the U.S. invaders because it has the courage to exercise its sacred right to repel the invaders? Whichever it is, one thing is certain: the call to exercise "utmost restraint in military operations" is not addressed to, and is not meant to be addressed to the arch-criminal and invader - the U.S. imperialists - or to its indentured gun-carrying slaves - the Wilson Government of Britain, the Menzies Government of Australia or the Holyoake Government of New Zealand.

In fact, in the very midst of the feverish preparations for the call to exercise "utmost restraint", the U.S. marauders intensified their bombing of North Vietnam and sent their ground forces into "direct combat" in South Vietnam. Australian troops and other satellite units were assigned to more active assault roles, while the British Government, chief hired draughtsman of the "peace mission" scheme and the "utmost restraint" hoax, ardently reassured its U.S. boss in Washington of unflinching support and increased the British-operated facilities in Malaya for the training of U.S. puppet troops.

No special insight is needed to see that the magniloquent call for "utmost restraint in military operations" is intended: 1. To deceive and disarm the Vietnamese people and sabotage their heroic and victorious struggle against the U.S. marauders and their lackeys; 2. To deceive, confuse, divert and ultimately to destroy the magnificent solidarity action that has developed throughout the world in support of the Vietnamese people; 3. To provide a smokescreen for the intensified aggressive activities of the U.S. imperialists and their accomplices.

In military terms, the effect of this fake call for "utmost restraint" would be to lure the other side out of its cover by waving a white flag and to open fire from behind this false symbol of "ceasefire".

All told, it is a despicable and a cruel trick.

WHY THE "PEACE MISSION" - The idea of this "peace mission" related to, and forms part of the earlier peace hoax and "unconditional discussions" formulated by U.S. President Johnson. That effort met with swift death and discredited the Johnson administration irreparably. Now comes a variation of the same theme - thinly disguised with "British Commonwealth" orchestration. What is the motive behind this?

It will be recalled that Johnson uttered his raucous imitation of the peace dove's cooing when the U.S. aerial bombardment of North Vietnam failed to bring the Vietnamese patriots to their knees. On the contrary, they grew stronger with each counter-attack.

The U.S. imperialists then threatened to unleash a "Korea-type" war - without "reservations" as to weapons. This failed even more, and was met by all-round counter-attacks from the South Vietnam National Liberation forces and by scorching fire from the anti-aircraft units and other defence forces of North Vietnam. The Wilson Government then stepped in to send Patrick Gordon Walker to knock at the doors of Hanoi, Peking and Phnom Penh on a salesman's trip peddling the U.S. - made olive branch. The Gordon Walker trip was an ignominious failure; and the second stage of the imperialists' peace hoax scheme ended in shambles.

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In their desperation the U.S. aggressors increased the number of their own and their satellites' troops in South Vietnam. They also began a naval blockade of the seas contiguous to North Vietnam. They even announced that U.S. forces would ignore any border limitation. Coupled with these aggressive moves and postures, threats against China were uttered by not a few U.S. official spokesmen. All the U.S. imperialists and their satellites got for their pains was a series of even heavier defeats at the hands of the South Vietnam Liberation fighters and from the heroic defenders of North Vietnam (D. R. V.). Internationally, the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys lost more adherents, while the international solidarity action in support of the people of Vietnam surged to new heights. Inside the U.S.A. itself, the protest movement against the Johnson administration's aggressive policy and the general doubts about the sanity of the U.S. rulers began to spread. In Britain, principal footstool of U.S. imperialists in the current line-up, the Wilson administration began to face a degree of opposition and pressure from within and without the ruling (Labour) party that is unprecedented in post-war Britain. While the imperialists glibly talked of unleashing a "Korea-type" war, they found that they neither had the "Korea-type" conditions nor "Korea-type" allies which their predecessors possessed. And seeing that their predecessors suffered one of the biggest defeats in their history, despite the vaunted advantages, the present-day Yankee "crusaders" began to view their position with alarm.

It was at this juncture that orders were given for the next trick to be brought out of the imperialists' sleeve. This was the so-called "17-nation non-aligned" "peace" plan centring around Belgrade. Both the U.S. and the British go-betweens worked hard with the Tito clique in an effort to rally sufficient "neutralist" support for a "peace formula" to be presented to "Hanoi and Peking".

This ill-fated plan was exposed prematurely, and deservedly ended up in the scrap-heap.

WHY THE "COMMONWEALTH" - Since both openly U.S.-British "peace" approaches met with rebuff, and the "neutralist" approach was exposed, nothing remained but to try the last available point of entry into the citadel. This point of entry is the Afro-Asian line-up. And since Britain still possesses working links with a number of Afro-Asian countries, what better plan then for the "father-figure" of the "Commonwealth" - Britain - to do the touting!

There is firm evidence that the White House had at least a share of this part of the planning, and certainly more than a fair share of the manipulations behind the scenes. The timing for the launching of the plan was also quite cunningly chosen. The statutory meeting of the "Commonwealth" Prime Ministers' Conference provided the necessary camouflage. The scheduled Second Afro-Asian Conference (in Algiers) would be used - through the agency of certain Afro-Asian "Commonwealth" contacts - as the sounding-board and even rallying point for the idea of an "Afro-Asian" solution ("Commonwealth" style) to the Vietnam question. The idea had a certain, though superficial appeal for muddled sentimentalists. It had more than a magnetic pull for the modern revisionists. It had the ardent blessings of the worst crooks on both sides of the Atlantic. Mr. Harold Wilson worked like a beaver to ensure its success.

Not unnaturally, "Mr. Wilson's first concern was to avoid a repetition of the Gordon Walker fiasco". (Observer, London, 20 June 1965). According to this paper, "Private line had to be put out to Moscow as well as Washington to see whether a mission could succeed, For Washington there was always the private telephone to the White House and no need for more than personal soundings. For the Russians the approach had to be more discreet and less direct".

Mr. Wilson had another bit of tidying up to do before launching the scheme; namely, to hand round the masks of "Afro-Asian neutrality" among certain protagonists of the scheme - especially those with important roles to play in the Afro-Asian Conference. The Sunday Times (London 20 June) describes the features and functions of these masks thus: "For the 13 Afro-Asian members of the Commonwealth who will be represented in Algiers the public face they must show there will be crucial in determining both their private and public attitudes here. "None of them can afford to appear in the vigorously 'non-aligned' company of Algiers as kept men of Britain and the Western Powers; and whatever private sympathy they may have for Mr. Wilson's domestic political difficulties or his white man's burden in Rhodesia, they must, for the public record, be seen to be in the van of neutralism and anti-colonialism if their words are to carry any weight."

Fake anti-colonialism, suitably attired in the garb of Afro-Asian "neutralism" was, therefore, the essence of the "Commonwealth peace mission" scheme, and the maintenance of this posture, especially at the Afro-Asian Conference, was essential for the success of the conspiracy.

FAILURE OF THE SCHEME - The elaborate plot, however, exploded like a rotten egg before it was hatched. In his anxiety to marshal uniform support for the plot among the Afro-Asian members of the "Commonwealth", Mr. Wilson held back certain details from them. Like a none-too-honest conjuror with an eye to the main chance, Mr. Wilson showed them a large, empty wallet; and while their eyes were duly riveted thereon, swiftly picked their pockets. The outcome of this trickery was a commotion among the "Commonwealth" Prime Ministers. Where previously there was "general agreement" on the scheme, reservations began to appear. One delegation even announced its withdrawal from the scheme, and even those who said they supported the main proposal demanded to know more details before playing the dangerously suicidal and ludicrous role of the worlds gendarme "peace" missionaries.

Rightly, both China and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam have ridiculed the mission and swatted it down like a mangy fly. What could the authors of the scheme **expect**? The very idea of addressing the proposal to China and the D.R.V. was, in the first place, an insult to them. It was a blatant attempt (and not a very intelligent one at that) to trap China and the D.R.V. into the position of the guilty.

THE ONLY SOLUTION - No one in his right mind would have conceived such a downright dishonest and hideous scheme. No one with any decency would have supported it - details or no details. And certainly, no one with any sense of justice will shed a tear for its early demise. Good riddance to it and anything else that may be served up from time to time from the devil's kitchen!

The lesson, however, should not be missed. The imperialists will persist in coupling physical brutality with conspiracy, intensification of war with simulations of peace -- all the time, until their final doom. Let no one be taken in by occasional changes of stage-hands either. History has shown that the imperialists never give up trying to disrupt the unity of the anti-imperialist forces from without and from within. Just as they nurture and use the modern revisionists to disrupt the Socialist Camp from within, so they are trying to disrupt the citadels of anti-imperialism all the time.

The best safeguard against such tactics is to stand firm on principle and oppose imperialism to the very end - whatever the threats. Only when one's political attitude is adjusted and developed along these lines can one successfully detect and destroy every trickery-

new or old - which the imperialists try out.

It is for this reason that genuine anti-imperialists and seekers of peace consciously and staunchly support the March 22nd statement of the S. Vietnam National Front for Liberation and the 4-point demand of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as the only solution to the Vietnam question.

Rather than dissipate their energies seeking false cures, those who genuinely desire to contribute towards the final and fruitful solution of the problem should intensify their efforts to rally support for the following:-

"1. Recognition of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people which are independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. In strict conformity with the Geneva Agreements, the U.S. Government must withdraw its troops, military personnel and weapons, ammunition and war materials of all kinds from South Vietnam, dismantle the U.S. military bases there, abolish its military alliance with the South Vietnam administration and at the same time stop its policy of intervention and aggression in South Vietnam. The U.S. Government must stop all its acts of war against North Vietnam and put a definite end to all acts of encroachment upon the territory and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

"2. Pending the realisation of the peaceful reunification of Vietnam, while Vietnam is still temporarily divided in two, the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam must be strictly respected: the two zones must refrain from joining any military alliance with foreign countries, there must be no foreign military bases, troops or military personnel in their respective territories.

"3. The affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves in accordance with the programme of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation without any foreign intervention.

"4. The realisation of the peaceful reunification of Vietnam must be settled by the people in the two zones without foreign intervention".

(From the "Appeal of the Vietnam National Assembly to the National Assemblies of all countries of the world". April 10, 1965).

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