

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014

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TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND ANTIWAR DIRECTORS

Dear Comrades,

At a recent meeting of the NPAC Coordinating Committee with representatives of the SMC, the plans for February conventions of the two organizations were evaluated in light of the signing of the January 27 Vietnam accords. It was decided that in lieu of the original plans an expanded joint steering committee of the two organizations would be held February 24, in Washington, D.C. It was felt that given the new situation there could be no immediate perspective of calling for mass action in the spring. Therefore there would be no meaningful focus for national conventions.

The purpose of the expanded steering committee will be to bring together key antiwar activists to discuss the meaning of the accords for the antiwar movement and ways in which NPAC and SMC can continue to bring to the attention of the American people the continued involvement of the U.S. in Southeast Asia.

NPAC and SMC have put out mailings urging their local affiliates to distribute material dealing with continued U.S. involvement, and to be especially attuned to opportunities to get media coverage. The media has shown a general interest in the reaction of the antiwar movement to the cease-fire. In addition we can assume that there will be developments such as the continued bombing of Laos, that the antiwar movement will want to speak to.

When it appeared as if the accords would be signed in October, NPAC and SMC maintained the political perspective that they are organizations for the purpose of mobilizing masses of people to protest the war in street actions. They realized that their main job was to maintain a presence in what limited ways were possible, and at the same time be ready for a sudden shift in the situation that would provide the basis for renewed mass action. Staffs and office expenses were cut in line with the limitations on what the organizations could do at that time. When there was an objective shift in the situation with the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong, NPAC and SMC were able to respond rapidly and gather together the necessary resources to mount highly successful demonstrations on January 20.

The signing of the accords make all the more necessary that the YSA and SWP continue their propagandist campaign in defense of the Vietnamese revolution. Since NPAC and SMC exist as action coalitions for "OUT NOW," they are by nature restricted from presenting a full analysis of the Vietnam situation beyond pointing out that the U.S. is still involved and the Vietnamese have not yet won their right to self-determination. The Trotskyist movement is in a position to give a full Marxist analysis and draw the lessons of this latest stage in the Vietnamese revolution. Sales of the press and organization of forums and meetings are key to this. Special attention should be paid to trying to set up debates with the Stalinists. As the enclosed report will indicate, there is much to be gained from this.

Comradely,

*Wendy Reissner*  
Wendy Reissner  
SWP Antiwar Director

Edited Transcript of Antiwar Report to the Political Committee  
Meeting, January 26, by Wendy Reissner

During the building of the January 20 antiwar demonstration we went through an important political battle with the Communist Party and scored some victories. In addition we learned a good deal about the CP.

The Peoples Coalition for Peace and Justice (PCPJ) at this point is almost entirely composed of CPers. Many of the forces that were around the PCPJ at one time, such as various pacifist groups, religious groups, and some of the ultralefts, have regrouped around the Indochina Peace Campaign (IPC). The CP has had difficulty in relating to the IPC. This group is run and financed by Jane Fonda and Tom Hayden, who have taken a critical stance toward the role of the Soviet Union in relation to Vietnam.

When the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC) first decided to call the January 20 demonstration it immediately approached PCPJ for joint sponsorship. NPAC proposed that given the disagreements in the movement over slogans, the basis of unity should be to march to end the war. NPAC would be free to build the demonstration under its slogan of "Out Now" and PCPJ would be free to build under its slogan of "Sign the Treaty." The different points of view could be expressed from the platform of the rally and through signs and banners on the day of the demonstration.

Initially PCPJ refused to discuss co-sponsorship. NPAC then went ahead and announced plans for January 20, leaving the door open for joint sponsorship at any time. Given the wide response to the call for January 20, PCPJ felt forced to co-sponsor the demonstration on the basis NPAC proposed. Negotiating teams from NPAC and PCPJ met from then on to plan the details of the action. Most of the negotiators for the PCPJ were CPers and YWLLers. They made clear from the beginning that they were unhappy that "Sign the Treaty" was not the official slogan of the demonstration.

The CP faced a number of problems going into the January 20 demonstration. They have had the difficult job of trying to defend the actions of the Soviet Union in face of a growing awareness that the Soviet bureaucracy has betrayed the Vietnamese. The frenzy of their defense was expressed in a Daily World editorial on January 6, 1973:

"A condition for massing millions for peace actions is to guard the movement against Nixonite ideological assault -- a kind of chemical-bacteriological warfare to corrupt the minds of peace-loving people....

"One strain of Nixonite CBW is Trotskyite anti-Sovietism. It crops up in the oddest places but is none the less noxious for that.

"The Wall Street Journal said... 'peaceful overtures to Russia... have cut into Hanoi's... support' That is Trotskyite Nixonism.

"Mobilization of maximum effort for January 20, for the

local end-Nixon's-war demonstrations, clearly requires a continuing struggle against Nixon's ideological CBW weapons -- including Trotskyism."

As a cover-up for Moscow's betrayal of Vietnam, the CP was compelled to wage a campaign that the only principled demand for the antiwar movement should be "Sign the Treaty." If the movement could be convinced that the treaty represented the victory of the Vietnamese struggle for national liberation, it would take the Kremlin off the hook. They have tried to create an atmosphere in the movement that anyone who criticizes the role of Moscow, or opposes the conditions imposed by imperialism on the Vietnamese, is an enemy of the Vietnamese and pro-Nixon.

At the same time, in terms of American politics the CP felt forced to relate to what was obviously going to be a big demonstration with or without them. They have been through a certain negative experience in trying to ignore NPAC-called demonstrations in the past. The PCPJ co-sponsorship of the demonstration put them in the position of having to explain to their ranks why they were joining forces with the "enemies of the Vietnamese," to build a mass demonstration. (See enclosed Hallinan article.)

As plans for the demonstration proceeded, the CP was placed in an even more difficult position. It began to look as if the accords would be signed shortly before the action. Brezhnev even gave Nixon an inaugural gift by stating that the accords might be signed before January 20. We can imagine that the CP felt out on a limb in relation to Moscow at this point. Here the deal that they have been touting as a great victory for the Vietnamese was about to be consummated and they were in the thick of organizing a joint demonstration with forces that included the Trotskyists and others who supported the "Out Now" demand.

As the demonstration approached, the press began to ask the organizers if it would still go forward if the accords were signed. NPAC had a ready answer to this question. PCPJ was put in an embarrassing position. They had to explain that if the accords were signed it was a victory and at the same time say that the demonstration would go on regardless. In order to explain why the demonstration would occur, they had to point to how the U.S. would still be involved in Southeast Asia, using many of the same arguments NPAC makes. This contradicted the position that the signing of the treaty would represent a victory for the Vietnamese struggle.

Against this background of the political difficulties facing the CP, we began to notice some ominous signs that they were planning to disrupt the demonstration in some way. They heavily concentrated forces into marshalling. When negotiations over speakers for the rally opened up they came in with a list that excluded any "Out Now" speakers other than NPAC, and said that the list was "non-negotiable." Then they threatened the NPAC speaker. Gil Green of the CP said, "NPAC, which is in reality the SWP, has a position that attacks the Vietnamese as being betrayers. That was the meaning of the November 18 antiwar

demonstrations. What NPAC was doing was attacking the Vietnamese." He then threatened, "If this continues, and if it happens on the platform on the 20th, all hell will break loose."

He made it clear that in his mind criticisms of the Soviet betrayal were "attacks on the Vietnamese." He pointed to Militant articles that described the role of the Soviet Union.

There were other signs. In New York, the Parade Committee refused to organize joint marshalling training with NPAC. They held a well-publicized meeting to train their own marshalls. At the meeting, Parade Committee members said that one of the main problems facing their marshalls would be "Trot marshalls armed with steel pipes and brass knuckles." They organized role-playing sessions on how to handle the "Trot marshalls." This, of course, was an attempt to portray NPAC marshalls as the enemy.

After these incidents, NPAC launched a campaign in the movement to politically expose the physical threats and exclusionary attitude of PCPJ and the CP. Various movement figures and forces in and around PCPJ were informed of these incidents. It was explained that the logic of PCPJ's unwillingness to negotiate implied that the speakers list would be settled by force on the day of the demonstration. The campaign was successful in getting many people to call PCPJ and put pressure on them. PCPJ finally agreed to a formula whereby they would choose half the speakers and NPAC would choose half.

This, however, did not end the threats. The day before the demonstration there was a meeting to decide on the order of speakers. One of the PCPJ representatives came to the meeting with an ice-pick, which he played with throughout the entire meeting. At the end of the session after agreement had been reached, he got up and announced he was a member of the November 4th Coalition. He stated that the November 4th Coalition "intends to prevent anyone from speaking who would attack the Vietnamese."

NPAC protested these threats to the PCPJ leadership and insisted that it disassociate itself from what its representative had threatened. Sid Peck's response was that NPAC, not PCPJ, had the responsibility to prevent incidents at the rally. He said, "You should warn your people not to make provocative speeches. For example, the SWP, which is on the NPAC speakers list, attacks the Vietnamese as betrayers. If the SWP does this on the platform, just speaking as a sociologist, I can tell you there will be trouble."

After this meeting, one of the pacifists who has played a leading role in PCPJ was upset enough to come over to the NPAC office and say that if there were any attempts to exclude NPAC speakers at the rally he would personally intervene. This was just one of the signs that the campaign to politically expose the CP was affecting the PCPJ milieu. In the meantime, NPAC prepared the marshalling of the stage with extreme care.

NPAC and PCPJ had agreed to joint marshalling of the demonstration. It soon became clear on the day of the demonstration that the CP had backed off plans to directly disrupt the rally.

The political campaign in the movement combined with the superiority of the NPAC marshalling operation had paid off. The CP marshalls tended to look to the NPAC marshalls for guidance and cooperated in heading off a PL-SDS attempt to break up the rally. However, when the November 4th Coalition tried to disrupt the rally, all the CP marshalls disappeared. The CP had obviously made a deal with the November 4th Coalition to the effect that if they wanted to try something, the CP would at least get out of the way. In the post-demonstration issues of the Daily World, the CP attacks the November 4th Coalition for attempting to disrupt the rally in order to cover their own traces.

We did get a taste of what the CP would have liked to do on a large scale if they had felt able. The VVAW organized a separate rally and march which later joined the mass rally. It was organized under the slogan "Sign the Treaty." A number of demonstrators showed up with "Out Now" placards, which were removed by CP marshalls. According to Daily World reports, CP marshalls also stopped individuals from selling Vanguard Newsletter on the trains coming into Washington. They included selling of this newspaper as part of the "disruptions" that occurred around January 20.

In the course of working with the CP around the demonstration, it became clear that they are having difficulties in their ranks and milieu over the role of the Soviet Union in relation to Vietnam. Objective events in Vietnam as well as the strength of the "Out Now" wing of the antiwar movement and our propaganda have been affecting them.

We noted that whenever there was a break in negotiations between NPAC and PCPJ for the purpose of caucusing, they would divide up into different warring caucuses. It was reported to us that they actually came to throwing chairs at each other over the question of what to do about the speakers list.

Our comrades who worked in the joint marshalling center and marshalled around the stage on January 20, did an excellent job of fraternizing with the CPers who were involved in marshalling. Comrades were able to get into political discussions that helped influence some of their people and enlightened us as to some of the discussions now going on inside the CP. We learned that there is a good deal of corridor debate going on in the CP over the role of the Soviet Union. CPers are questioning why Nixon was invited to Moscow in face of the mining of the Vietnamese harbors. They are also questioning the lack of aid provided to the Vietnamese by Moscow. In addition, there is a debate occurring over the CP's electoral policy. CPers reported confusion and bad feelings between the YWLL (which worked on the Hall-Tyner campaign) and some of the older CPers (who worked for Democratic Party candidates).

The fact that the CP considered disrupting the rally is in itself an indication of the internal difficulties they are facing. They have been forced to whip their people up into identifying NPAC and the SWP as agents of Nixon, in order to stave off criticisms in their own ranks which are similar to criticisms that the SWP raises.

A lesson to be drawn from this brief experience in working with the CP is that we have been having an effect on them and can continue to affect them to the extent we are attuned to seeking out opportunities to get close to their ranks and engage them in political discussion and debate.

The timeliness and size of the January 20 demonstrations around the country and the fact that they came off in an orderly way, marked them as a real success. NPAC and the SMC also achieved success in stamping the demonstrations with an "Out Now" character, through their signs, banners and literature. "Out Now" speakers and chants got the best response from the crowds.