

VIE T N A M

SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN



OCT 22nd

March 17



DEMONSTRATE FOR FIGHTING VIETNAM !

bulletin number 12

MARCH 1968

Contents

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1) Editorial | 7) Student Strike |
| 2) March 17th Notes | 8) " " " |
| 3) Notes from the Press | 9) Press Release |
| 4) " " " " | 10) Berlin |
| 5) " " " " | 11) Glasgow Letter |
| 6) Notes on British Complicity | 12) " " " |

Editorial

As this Bulletin reaches our subscribers, we are in the last few hectic days of preparation for the March 17th Demonstration, which promises to be a most successful protest. The emergence of another issue at such a time is something to be wondered at, and for which we must thank the small army of volunteers who have besieged our office these last few weeks. It can be said without fear of contradiction that, it is only with the help of such volunteers, of militants all over the country, that we have been able to make an effective appearance on the political scene, with such small resources.

This is a good opportunity to express the appreciation felt by us all for the long and valuable service of David Robinson formerly organizer of V.S.C. who has now left England to return to New Zealand.

As most of our active supporters will know we are obliged to conduct our activities from rather cramped headquarters at 8 Toynbee Street E.1 (247 9845). The address of 22 Sarre Road N.W. 2. is the mailing address only of the March 17th Ad Hoc Committee. Our attempts to find larger permanent headquarters have not met with success so far.

The financial aspects of our difficulties cannot be emphasised too strongly. We are now entirely dependent on the good will of our members. Whatever we have achieved so far has been through the devotion of our supporters; and if we are to continue to make progress in building a mass movement of solidarity we must be prepared to make the necessary commitment in terms of both activity and finance. We will need to have substantial donations to offset the cost of organizing for March 17th which will be considerable, and we need to have a secure regular income from Bankers Orders at say £1 a month in order to allow us to engage in activities in the period ahead. Our activities it is hoped will include the student activities in April which are referred to elsewhere in the bulletin, and in May we hope to hold a National Conference of V.S.C. Meanwhile we are taking steps to strengthen the organization of V.S.C. in the interim period. All this however will not be of avail unless we have the necessary financial backing.

As I mentioned above, the signs are that the March 17th demonstration will be very successful indeed. About 90,000 stickers and over 100,000 leaflets will have been issued before the 17th. Supporting groups have been at work in many areas, and many groups which did not participate actively in the October 22nd demonstration, have come forward to support March 17th. Attendance at meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee in London has at times been in the eighties.

MARCH 17th DEMONSTRATION

Details of the March 17th demonstration are as follows:-

Assemble Trafalgar Square before 2.30p.m. Sunday 17th

The Rally itself will begin at 2.30p.m.

Speakers include:-

Tariq Ali

Reg Taylor (Walter Kiddes Shop Stewards convenor)

John Palmer

Pat Jordan

Rudi Dutschke (of the German Socialist Students)

Alain Crevine (of the French National Vietnam
Committee)

A speaker from the " Stop It" Committee and the
Black power movement.

After the rally the march to the U.S. Embassy will begin.

This is the route that has been agreed with the police:-

From Trafalgar Square north along Charing Cross Road to St Giles's Circus. We will then turn into Oxford Street march along Oxford Street to Oxford Circus. After crossing Oxford Circus the march will turn right into Holles Street go through Cavendish Square and into Wigmore Street where a protest note will be delivered to the offices of Dow Chemicals. The march will then turn into Orchard Street, cross Oxford Street and into North Audley Street, go around the north, east and south sides of Grosvenor Square then out through Upper Grosvenor Street and on to Speakers Corner.

As the march enters Grosvenor Square on the North Side a delegation will leave to hand in a protest note to the embassy; the police have asked that the delegation rejoin the march of the south side. They have also suggested that each organization supporting the march be invited to send their own delegations of up to five people to the embassy with protest notes. They would be expected to follow the procedure outlined above, and groups who wish to do this should notify us in advance. We urge all supporting organizations to do this in order to make an effective protest.

Supporting organizations are also invited to send a representative to a liaison meeting on the morning of the 17th. Details of this meeting are being circularized to supporting groups.

In addition V.S.C. will require volunteers for selling flags and literature etc..

"The colonel was despondent. If there was some way to end this war with a couple of 'baby nukes', but where to drop them?

'You know, Murray' he said, 'half of those people out there are Cong.'

'But which half, Colonel?'

'If only we knew, son, if only we knew.' "

That was part of an interview in Saigon a year ago, obtained by American journalist Murray Sayle. Its full significance became clear during the double destruction of the last few weeks in Vietnam. The destruction of the cities by U.S. and allied forces, and the destruction of the entire American political rationale for the war. What these weeks have demonstrated, above all else, is the correctness of the analysis which saw this war not as one of diplomatic blunders, but as a popular anti-imperialist struggle. And what has been absent above all from the U.S. military strategy has been an appreciation of that fact. The point was made forcefully by Sir Robert Thompson's analysis of the offensive in Sunday Times (Feb 11). This British expert in counter-revolutionary warfare recognised that "the immediate military object was not to capture (the cities) but to cause a complete dislocation of the American and South Vietnamese war effort and a breakdown of government." He argued that the battles at Loc Ninh, Dak To, and now Khe Sanh have been purely diversionary; yet to a strategist like Westmoreland, with a World War Two upbringing in warfare and an inadequate analysis of the nature of the struggle, only a confrontation between armies is real. All else-including the attack on the cities! -is diversionary.

What has occurred during the last few weeks is not merely an advance by the NLF and DRV forces in quantitative terms. It is not that they have killed enemy troops or captured enemy positions. What has happened is a qualitative change in the relationships between the two sides in the war, and the destruction of the political rationale which underlay U.S. arguments. The moral status of the Americans and the Thieu regime has collapsed; the myths of the war have been broken -for both the Vietnamese who had not yet seen through them, and for the rest of the world. It is this, above all, which the Press has revealed; often explicitly, more usually implicitly. For the information is such that conclusions are not difficult to draw. The brilliant reports from Fred Emery, published in The Times are the clearest example of this.

The most obvious factor in bringing about this qualitative change in the South was the damage inflicted on the cities and their population by U.S. and

S.Vietnamese air-strikes. As an NLF leader in Saigon told the New York Times (Feb 9), "Now look at the destruction by the adversary in the cities... All this destruction is the work of the Americans. The people are convinced of this." And observers agreed. "For... nine days the S.Vietnamese army, supported in the air by the Americans and their own air-force, have retaliated -devastating heavily populated parts of Saigon in the process." (Sunday Times Feb 11) The same source added that "the estimated 129,000 refugees in the Saigon area.. have mainly been blitzed out by S.Vietnamese Air Force skyraider strikes.. and they have been burned out by the U.S. armed helicopters." (S.T. Feb 11) In My Tho "military and civilian officials said that American bombers and artillery caused most of the damage." (Times Feb 6) Fred Emery reported from Ban Me Thuot (Times Feb 15) that "most damage occurred through the Government forces response with air strikes. The military case is that the town would have been lost but for the use of air power."

The entire U.S. - Thieu structure has been broken; that is what the offensive means. The need to protect the cities meant that the Americans have had to leave the countryside. The Saigon army has proved unwilling, generally, to fight. The pacification programme, the cruel U.S. recognition of the hearts and minds issue, has been destroyed. And the U.S. army is demoralised. The whole subject is clearly too large to be dealt with properly here. But a few extracts from the press can be reprinted to provide some of the more specific detail. The wealth of detail finally convinced Charles Douglas-Home, of the Times, that "the S.Vietnamese government would certainly collapse were it not for the presence of American forces in the country." David Bonavia (Times Feb 5) reported that "The psychological impact must have been tremendous... Pacification is back at its starting point." The first evidence came from the central Qui Nhon province. This had been completely lost. A U.S. official told Bernard Weinraub of New York Times, "We'll overcome the physical damage, no problem at all there, but the psychological effect on the people is something else... Our first job will be to rebuild what the bombs tore down. Then, I suppose, we'll go back in and repacify them again."

Nowhere among Americans is the demoralisation felt more strongly than at Khe Sanh. David Leitch (Sunday Times Feb 18) observed significantly that "the marines here are poor boys, ex-truck drivers, labourers, and, at the top end of the scale, counter-clerks." Don McCullin (Times Feb 22) compared their rawness (referring to Hue troops) with the experienced fighters he had found when reporting British counter-revolutionary wars. U.S. troops were raw, badly led, completely fatalistic, and totally demoralised. The company he was with was

nicknamed 'dying Delta'. The men exposed themselves heedlessly to fire. The attitude was 'if its got your number on it...' "And they all say they'll write to their Congressman saying they have no right to be in Vietnam, which is not what I heard two years ago." The same low-morale dominated Khe Sanh. When B-52s were not around, U.S. troops "just sit here like so many clay-pigeons, forgotten, they believe by their leaders, waiting to be sacrificed."

As a result of this offensive the NLF made gains in two directions. The first was in control over the countryside. A Front broadcast from Hanoi on Feb 18th claimed that the NLF had liberated the entire countryside in Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces; in general, "the area now controlled by the enemy has been, and is being, reduced to a number of district capitals and towns, and includes only a small part of the countryside." These were not propaganda claims; the modesty of that detailed Front broadcast, and the weight of journalistic opinion, makes them convincing. The second advance was the proof - and extension - of support for the NLF in both rural and urban areas. Martin Bernal, a leading expert on Vietnamese affairs, spoke to Varsity (Feb 17). Asked about Victor Zorza's claim that people didn't help the NLF, he replied, "People helped them certainly: the question is how much the S. Vietnamese army helped them." He referred to the complete absence of advance information about the attacks. "The simplest explanation for this is certainly acquiescence and probably a good deal of active support. You see there's no way of measuring popular feeling. People don't come into the streets and cheer when there's violence going on."

The problem for the U.S. government, is where to go from here. The Kennedy brothers, predictably, launched bitter attacks on the Saigon government and on Washington's handling of the war. Mlistair Cooke, in an article aptly headed, "Path to Peace - and to White House" (Guardian Feb 10) described Bobby K.'s speech as the most severe attack on the war by a prominent politician for over 5 years. But more troops will go. According to Louis Heren (Times Feb 24), 150,000 of them soon. Yet what will they achieve? For of 495,000 US troops in Vietnam, only 80,000 infantrymen are available for the fighting. (Times Feb 24) The 'Tac Nuke' kite has been flown, and, as Charles Douglas-Home argued in an excellent article, (Times Feb 21) this means it is seriously being considered.

Finally, something which most of the British or American press would not say. The word heroic has been overused, which is sad, for now we need it. The NLF took Saigon radio station on Jan 30th. The police guard was asked, "How could this happen when you had had warning and had reinforced the guard?" The police officer was matter of fact, "Viet Cong are not afraid to die." If any one thing has made an impact in the last few weeks it has been the incredible courage of the NLF and DRV fighters, in Saigon and Hue above all. Words like heroic do not describe it. If only in admiration, we must respond, however feebly, with our work here.

BRITISH COMPLICITY IN U.S. DEFENSE DEPARTMENT RESEARCH

From: Dave Slaney

Vietnam has proven (if proof was needed) that the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) is totally committed to the protection of American Imperialism through the suppression of wars of national liberation fought by colonial peoples struggling for their political and economic freedom. "Scientific" research plays a crucial role in determining the success or failure of U.S. "counter-insurgency" warfare, for the U.S. depends above all on its technology in combatting liberation armies. To prove this one need only try to imagine the Americans in Vietnam without their airforce, communications systems, cbus, napalm, or chemicals. As is now known, Britain is definitely involved in the production of U.S. technological weapons. British complicity does not end here, however, for she is also assisting the U.S. in the equally important task of research on new weapons.

In 1967 Britain obtained at least half-a-million pounds in direct DoD research grants and contracts. The majority of this money went to British universities. Such universities are expected to contribute from their own funds up to 50% of the cost of the research projects. It is frequently argued, however, that these research projects are of a purely theoretical nature, and are unrelated to the development of 'counter-insurgency' weapons. Yet, it is no secret that the U.S. DoD is not a philanthropic institution; it 'buys' research only when it believes that such research will result in new weapons. The research which the DoD buys in Britain is no exception to this rule. As any scientist knows, basic research is the essential pre-requisite for applied technology. Because of the war, the strain on U.S. research capacities is considerable. When British universities consent to carry out essential basic research, they free U.S. scientists to concentrate on the more direct applications of this knowledge (e.g. a formula for 'improved' napalm.) Britain's co-operation in this international division of labour greatly facilitates the U.S. military's present task of destroying Vietnam.

In addition to research purchased by the DoD, Britain does research for the National Aeronautics and Space Agency. It has recently come to light that this agency is also deeply involved in developing weapons for use in Vietnam.

We do not at present have a complete list of British universities doing DoD research. A partial list of those which have done such research within the past three years would include:

Universities of: Durham, Manchester, Oxford, Cambridge,
Surrey (Battersea) and University College,
London.

There are also reports that Trinity College, Dublin, and King's College, London, are engaged in DoD research. It is quite likely that at least several other Colleges and Universities are involved in DoD research projects. The records of each College can be checked to see if there are DoD grants and contracts at that College. Students and university people should insist that their universities refuse to carry out research which is paid for and used by the U.S. DoD. This is an issue on which it should be possible to mobilize university populations against the war.

If you do discover that this kind of research is being done in your university, I can supply you with more comprehensive information about the general nature of the DoD research program, as well as with a few specific suggestions as to how this issue might be raised in the university. Any additional information which anyone can supply on any aspect of British complicity will be extremely helpful.

TEXT OF APPEAL FROM STUDENT MOBILIZATION COMMITTEE

addressed to: Youth and student groups in Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, Australia, Canada

Re: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT STRIKE, APRIL 26, 1968

Dear Friends,

The Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam held its third national conference January 27-29. More than 900 students from high schools, colleges and universities across the United States participated, making this the largest, broadest and most representative student antiwar conference ever held here.

The major resolution passed by the conference and by the newly formed National Black Anti-War Anti-Draft Union (NBAWADU) were a call for an INTERNATIONAL STUDENT STRIKE on April 26 and support to the call by the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam for mass demonstrations on April 27, both to be focal points of ten days of antiwar activities April 20-30. The call for the strike will be issued under the title "International Student Strike Against the War in Vietnam, Racial Oppression, and the Draft."

This year promises to be one in which the war in Vietnam reaches a new intensity. The Vietnamese people have stepped up their efforts to free their country from U.S.-controlled dictatorship. The U.S. government bullheadedly pursues its policy of doing anything it can get away with to crush the Vietnamese struggle. Every escalation of the war, in turn, raises the price paid for the war by the American people and by the people of the world. More soldiers for the U.S.,

means more men torn away from family, jobs and school in the U.S., Australia, South Korea. Step-ups in the War lead to step-ups in the U.S. government's attempts to suppress the black liberation movement in the U.S. and to keep down liberation movements elsewhere in the third world.

At the same time the U.S. government's cynical claim to an American and international "consensus" on the war has been thoroughly exposed. The October 21-22 international mobilization against the war brought to the surface, for the whole world

to see, the deep and massive worldwide opposition to the war. The U.S. government is having a more and more difficult time passing off its lies about Vietnam and getting support for its war.

The Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam recognizes the crucial importance of continuing to build this international antiwar movement. The student sections of the movement have been able to play a key role in building the international solidarity which now exists among opponents of the war, and in making this visible in the mass demonstrations.

Thus we are calling for an INTERNATIONAL STUDENT STRIKE on April 26, and for international support and participation in the April 27 antiwar actions called by the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. Both the strike and the actions on April 27 will necessarily take different forms around the world, and even within each country. The key concept is coordinated international action and solidarity against the war on these days—on April 26 by students, on April 27 by all sections of the population.

We have less than three months to build these actions. It is very important that we, you, and all other student and youth groups which oppose the war begin work on the April events right away. Please let us know as soon as possible what your group feels it can do on those days. Don't hesitate to write us if you have questions about our proposals, or if you have ideas on how they can best be implemented.

If we begin work now we can build the April days into the largest, most wide spread international actions ever held against the war in Vietnam.

Venceremos,

Kipp Dawson

Phyllis Kalb

Linda Morse

for the January National Conference, Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam.

Press Release:-

Hanoi February 3rd 1968

According to "Giai Phong" radio on January 31st 1968, --
The South Vietnam National Leading Committee of the Alliance of National and Peace forces was established recently and issued an appeal, which defined the goal of the struggle of the Alliance as follows;

1/ Resolutely overthrow the Nguyen Van Thieu-Nguyen Cao Ky puppet administration and establish a regime which really represents all strata of South Vietnamese people.

2/ Resolutely fight to regain National Independence and sovereignty. The U.S. must end its unjust war and withdraw all American and satellite troops from South Vietnam.

3/ Resolutely restore peace: to build an independent democratic, peaceful and neutral South Vietnam.

4/ Negotiate with the South Vietnam National Liberation Front: so as together to materialise the above aspirations.

The appeal went on to call for the officers and men of the Army and Police force of the Saigon puppet administration to side with the people or surrender their weapons to the revolutionary forces.

The appeal said; "We call on those who have gone astray to wake up quickly! Those who show repentance and are eager to redeem their faults with meritorious deeds will enjoy the leniency of the Revolutionary forces. Those who deliberately oppose the Revolution will be severely punished.

"We call on the U.S. and satellite troops to cease all military activities and stop interfering in the internal affairs of the South Vietnamese people.

" We call on the people of the United States to side with the South Vietnam revolution for the sake of justice and humanity.

"We call on the countries friendly to the South Vietnamese people and all organisations and personalities in the in the world who sympathise with the South Vietnamese people to actively support our just acts."

South Vietnam ALLIANCE OF NATIONAL AND PEACE FORCES.

Berlin - February 17th and 18th - Two days for Vietnam.

from Mike Martin.

There were perhaps 15,000 on the demonstration in Berlin on February 18th. The West German press - hysterical in its opposition to the marchers - conceded 10,000, and the action was substantially larger than our own October 22nd Rally.

The spirit of the marchers was that of exuberance, with slogans chanted in several languages. They surged through the broad streets of Berlin, from the Kurfurstendam to the Bismarckstrasse many linking arms across the road and at the side of the march in order to guard against attack. The march concluded with a mass meeting, and those who were too far from the centre to hear the speakers, were able to watch the 'sideshows! Some demonstrators climbed onto a building site and placed N.L.F. flags at the very tops of some huge cranes. Later, a small gang of organised fascists, occupied the site and tore down some of the flags, and hurled the occasional smoke bombs at the crowd. Evidently the European comrades are more used to this type of provocation, and took it as an interesting diversion.

The press reported the rally very fully, some giving much of their front pages to photographs and headlines such as "Under the Hammer and Sickle in West Berlin"; Prior to the demonstration which the Senate had sought to ban at one stage, the extreme right-wing "National Zeitung" carried the screaming headline; "Stop the Red Bandits" and "Break Dutschkes Terror". Rudi Dutschke is a leading figure of S.D.S. (Socialist Students) - originally a breakaway from the Social Democrats, and now that the S.P.D. is in the ruling coalition S.D.S. is the main public opposition on the left in Germany and is regularly attacked in the Springer press (the German equivalent of the Daily Express).

The S.D.S. organised both the Demonstration and a huge International Conference on the previous day. Literally thousands of students and youth from many countries, milled around the Technical University, or crammed into the main auditorium until well after midnight on the Saturday. The theme of the conference was "For the Victory of the Vietnamese Revolution", and speaker after speaker analysed the situation in Vietnam in its context of a world struggle against imperialism.

As I have mentioned the West Berlin authorities were hostile to the S.D.S. to the point of considering a ban on even the conference, as well as the demonstration. In the event they appear to have recoiled at the thought of thousands of youth ignoring the ban. The ban was not actually imposed, although the talk of it must have given a boost to the extreme right. Nevertheless the local police one felt sure were standing by in strength, just in case we did head for the American Sector. Certain'y the U.S. Army helicopters circling overhead, were more than just a tourist attraction

Many of our supporters will probably be aware of the article which appeared in "Comment" concerning the anti-war movement in Britain. V.S.C. views this with dismay and regret, and we reproduce below the statement issued by our supporters in Glasgow. We do not consider that V.S.C. should become preoccupied in replying at great length to articles such as the "Comment" accusation since we feel sure our supporters will write and speak in our defence as and when they think fit:-

Glasgow Vietnam Solidarity Campaign,
156, Wilton Street, Glasgow, N.W.

To: Members of the
Communist Party in Glasgow February, 1968

Dear Comrades,

We are circulating this letter because we have been surprised and disturbed by the article in the Party discussion journal "Comment" by Betty Reid, which attacks the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign on the grounds that it is a Trotskyist sponsored organisation, that it aims to split the general protest movement over Vietnam, and that its policies of unqualified solidarity with the NLF and North Vietnam are inappropriate.

Two of the Glasgow Party members who are also in VSC are writing a reply to the article. In the meantime, in order to avoid unnecessary wrangling, in the movement of protest over Vietnam, we should like to draw your attention to certain points.

1. The VSC is a united front organisation - the sole qualification for membership is acceptance of solidarity with the NLF and agreement to work for this in Britain. While there are Trotskyists in VSC as well as Communists and non Marxists, it is in no sense a "Trotskyist Front" organisation.

2. Of course there is no evidence that VSC is trying to split and sectarianize the peace movement on Vietnam. In London by far the biggest and most effective demonstration against the U.S. was on 22nd Oct. 1967 - organised by an Ad Hoc Committee in which the VSC played a leading part. The British Council for Peace in Vietnam refused to join this committee, although many of its branches did so. In Glasgow it was the VSC who called for the big demonstration we had here last October, and convened the Ad Hoc Committee which organised it. It is true that among the various groups comprising the Ad Hoc Committee there were clashes of policy and personality at some of the meetings. Nevertheless, the demonstration was the most successful to date. Glasgow VSC would have liked to discuss the matter of the demonstration here in March, as the Vietnamese had called for demonstrations on an international scale, but the Council for Peace in Vietnam not only refused to attend, but called a committee meeting in the same building on the same night. Without combining forces, a big demonstration was not possible, so we have had to go ahead with a week of activity comprising film shows and meetings, leafletting, etc. about which you will shortly be notified. We regret the non co-operation, but it is not of our doing.

3. With regard to policy over Vietnam, the VSC stands for solidarity with the Vietnamese in their struggle for national liberation. Of course, it is correct to work in support of partial demands which lead towards this aim; but not correct to hide the fact that we interpret these demands only as steps in the direction of the aim. We feel that the basis of work together should be: what things do we agree on? This accepted, let us all work for these objectives and discuss about the others.

The problem of calling for support of proposals by U Thant and uncommitted nations is that it is the Vietnamese themselves who are rejecting them. For instance, U Thant's recent talks with the Vietnamese in Paris reached complete deadlock because the Vietnamese refused to accept the proposal that they should agree to conditions as a quid pro quo for American cessation of the bombing. In such a situation to call for support for U Thant only spreads confusion among the uncommitted here, because it is made to appear as if the Vietnamese are to blame for the lack of negotiations. In the Spanish Civil War, the British Communists and others did not go around calling for negotiations to end the fighting; that would have confused the issue hopelessly. In what sense is Vietnam different? Indeed, in Vietnam, the Americans have obviously lost the war - the necessity for understanding of the situation is therefore vital.

If you support the NLF, please join the VSC; there is no reason at all why you should not be in both VSC and BCPV. This would enable joint action on an agreed minimum programme - dissociation of the British Government from the U.S., say, in public demonstrations, while within the BCPV a principled discussion can be opened to persuade waverers that there is only one way to a stable peace in Vietnam; the withdrawal of American forces, so that the NLF can take over in the South.

Yours fraternally,
The Committee, Glasgow Vietnam Solidarity Campaign.

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TELEGRAM OF SUPPORT.

It may be of interest to our members to know that we have received a telegram of support from the large Rolls Royce factory near Glasgow. "We Rolls Royce Shop Stewards Committee Hillington fully support the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign." The Glasgow Group will be getting in touch with this Shop Stewards Committee.

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ATTENTION MARCH 17th SUPPORTERS!

It is planned to hold a meeting on Saturday Evening March 16th from 7 p.m. to 9-30 p.m..

We hope to arrange for one or two speakers and show a film of the October 22nd demonstration.

The Kingsway Hall (near Holborn Tube) has been booked.

Fuller details will be circulated to active supporters of the Ad Hoc Committee.

The meeting will finish at 9-30 sharp.
