

REPORT ON THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST COALITION MEETING
ALLENSPARK, COLORADO AUGUST 27-30, 1971

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Three days in the light air and clear vistas of Colorado. Three days of meetings, learning, arguing, strategizing, breathing. The result - the decision and the beginning of plans to form a new organization of groups working primarily in the areas of research, liberation support and anti-imperialist structure organizing to be entitled the North American Anti-Imperialist Coalition. As this liason was one of the major aims of the conference, as called mainly by National Committee of Returned Volunteers, it must be concluded that the meetings fulfilled their function.

The overall conference, involving approximately 150 people and 40 organizations, delved into a number of relevant themes related to theories and actions vis-a-vis imperialism and revolution. The plenary sessions and the small group meetings touched only superficially on these issues, more time being spent on exchange of information and mutual planning among regional groupings (Africa, Latin America, IndoChina, etc.) or task related gatherings (research, support). Yet in spite of the cursory nature of the discussion, and the fact that it was at times dominated by several personalities including Eqbal Ahmed, the only "formal" speaker at the conference, and Don Barnett, of the LSM Information Center, the following themes, ideas, dialectics, admonitions emerged:

1. The interconnectedness of the imperial system (variously referred to as the imperialist countries/city/metropole and the "third world"/countryside) means that the struggles against that system are also connected. Forms of these struggles will depend upon careful analysis (including class analysis) of the power structures and the means of production especially related to changes in these structures and systems. Thus the concept of "only the revolution at home as a vehicle to bring down the system" was described as obsolete, while the counter concept of the "third world" revolution as the key to breaking the system of imperialism was tempered by a call to examine more carefully the complexities of the system. (The importance of the "countryside" revolutions was stressed however as to immediate challenge to imperial system). A look to the changes in the U.S. forms of capitalism, moving to the era of consumption, the depersonalization of the system, was made. The necessity to work in a way to show the interconnections of the system was recognized, although debate on the precise forms (support work for national liberation movements; research; womens' organizing; student work) was constant.

2. Need for analysis of the political context within one's own situation to develop understanding of constituency and action was stressed in terms of the theoretical understanding of the revolutionary potential of groups (i.e. lack of revolutionary group or movement in the U.S. vs. evidence of revolution existing in the "third world"). Suggested attention to new constituencies by Eqbal Ahmed including prisoners, union members, community college students; to people more involved in actually breaking the machinery of the system such as G.I.s by Don Barnett. Suggested research and action forms touched on the areas of civil disobedience; resistance going beyond ritual; research which shows institutions as dysfunctional, unworkable, therefore oppressive and illegitimate; actions which demythologize institutions; actions which show alienation related to political structures; actions which delve into one's own political and cultural traditions; actions which mean groups survive, unify and action; actions which show common enemies.

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3. Warnings about the vicarious nature of support work related to the "third world" (although argument /debate about analysis of nature of here/there dichotomy with Barnett stressing that aiding enemies of imperial system is not vicarious but direct). Warnings about liberation philanthropy, moral acts without political analysis, therapeutic but not revolutionary acts. Warnings about repression here, need to test forms of actions, long-term understandings and patience.

The tenor of the small group discussions going beyond the debate atmosphere of the plenaries was that of a real desire on the part of individuals to make more connections between their "third world" work, research or support activities, and at home realities. The issues related to the nature of imperialism, including the roles assigned by sex in the capitalist society (there were statements from gay and womens' liberation groups), were thus important, albeit controversial, as input to understanding probing for a coalition. The conference lacked enough time for a real interplay on theoretical and practical issues, and failed to not only deal with the continuing Viet Nam situation (the title of the conference "Beyond Vietnam" indicated the problem from the onset), but also to really get into the question of widening the anti-imperialist perspective to the rest of the movement and to new people. Much was left unsaid, evidence not only of what was continually described as the movement's lack of theory or eschatology, but because there was a built-in desire for flexibility, for lack of dogmatism in analysis and action.

From the groups attending the conference (there was a regrettable and noticeable absence of third world peoples although perhaps this will be remedied in the final format of the coalition), there emerged a desire to form a coalition, mainly in the area of communications but moving through the process of a Steering Committee to more joint actions, strategies and projects. Membership in the North American Anti-Imperialist Coalition is open to groups attending or invited to the Conference for \$25.00/year (SAC and CRM money would be appreciated as soon as possible), while individuals can receive the NAAIC newsletter for \$6/year. A regional system (West, Mid-west, East, Canada) with 2 members from each region on the Steering Committee and a proviso that if any area of the world (Africa, L.A., etc.) is not represented that someone be appointed. The office of the coalition will be connected with the Chicago Collective (mainly CRV people) at 340 West Oakdale. A newsletter, with 1/2 page per group for information on their actions and research, will be circulated (not edited) by the staff. Many different models of a group were discussed before these general decisions were made. More information will be forthcoming from Chicago at the end of September.

In addition to general sessions, Africa oriented groups and people met three times to discuss mutual plans and their relationship to the coalition. There was a lot of interest in general at the conference in Africa work and campaigns such as Gulf. Discussion on research was more minimal, and there was an evident lack of literature hunger at this conference (most people also had no money). Discussion among Africa groups centered on the major areas of corporate actions, support group work, and information, dissemination and content. The LSM contingent as the one which most of us had never met made important contributions to the discussions.

1. Corporate: Discussion of joint information on the Standard (Esso) boycott with Gulf information; interest of Mid-East groups in oil also. Discussion on value of hitting corporate as symbol or for real effect; discussion of importance of limiting actions to just exposes and liberation support acts (not demands to

to companies, negotiations etc. Leave that to churches). LSM action on Gulf has included pickets at service stations, educational work for dealers, guerilla theater in schools, gas-in idea. Gulf Boycott also pickets, plans for credit card turn-ins. Discussion of importance of Banking, Finance Capital and Southern Africa.

2. Support to Liberation Movements. Much discussion of political basis for relating to a movement, how and why. It was suggested that the CONCP movements would prefer one organization relating to all three movements. The concepts of not-idolizing movements or leaders; of self-criticism and critiques of movements, of understanding a revolutionary movement vs. one of national liberation, etc. (On the Angolan situation it was suggested that a bibliography (admitting bias inherent in compiler) be drawn up for new people trying to sort through movements; Madison Area Committee may work on paper on MPLA/UNITA.) Trips to Africa were discussed as important but only if a clear objective of how to advance movement there and here in terms of new information or territory seen. The importance of dealing with structures of movements (vs. individuals) was mentioned.

Campaigns of aid should not compete or overlap. Project Transitors of CFM might buy cheap wholesale radios through Hong Kong and should contact Barnetts. LSM collects drugs through a "detail man" who once worked for United Church of Canada as drug buyer. He goes to doctors' offices every 6 months and gets samples which are sent to MPLA (some by air, some sea). LSM will send out a detailed outline of how to send materials to Africa. It now has a food campaign going with coupons. Great need for anti-biotics and anti-malarial pills. The Africa Fund requests to the "Walk for Development" group mentioned. Clothing campaigns were discussed including the wisdom of not having a mid-west group spend alot of money on transport vs. coastal groups. The political importance of clothes was stressed given the need of the movement to have goods related to peoples' needs in villages based on the barter system. Ironed clothes are not necessary, but clean ones, and white clothes dyed green. Sneakers useful, especially check gyms at high schools and colleges at the end of the year or store close-outs.

3. Information: The lack of coordination was noted (LSM West Coast is working on Dow Chemical/Herbicide research as is NY). Present material, including Angola Comite's FACTS AND REPORTS, should be used more widely. Duplication should be cut down. LSM interviews important primary material.

Several joint actions by Africa groups was decided upon related to a possible 100 or so people from the different areas. Possible joint projects in addition to a circular newsletter were:

1. Joint research on Herbicides as related to military aspects, affect on liberation movements, U.S. linkages. (New York/Oakland LSM).
2. Joint FRELIMO or other days.
3. Joint project for fund-raising. In particular the buying of a print shop (press, photographic equipment) was discussed as a way to tie in with MPLA and send a person with press to demonstrate use, a person's whose value here would be greatly enhanced upon his return from Africa. Don Barnett to draw up ideas.
4. Circular letter. LSM Oakland person due in NY soon.

Other ideas: LSM has 12 minute film on MPLA which costs \$75. Perhaps Oakland branch can work on a lower priced print. Alcan/Reynolds Aluminum campaigns important in Canadian context. Possible clothing drives, joint leaflets. Possible printing jobs by LSM Information Center (send interviews).

5 August, 1971

Dear Comrades,

We are now making the final preparations for the anti-imperialist conference to be held near Denver from 27 August to 31 August. From the responses so far, it looks like we will have between 75 and 100 people at the conference. The groups who are planning to send representatives are the Africa Research Group, Brain Mistrust, Chicago Area Group on Latin America, Friends of Haiti, Liberation News Service, Liberation Support Movement, Middle East Research Information Project, North America Congress on Latin America, National Action Research on the Military Industrial Complex, Radical Information Project in Denver, Madison Area Committee on Southern Africa, Third World Cinema, Committee for Solidarity with National Liberation Movements in Los Angeles, The Fraser Group in Vancouver, and, of course, CRV.

As you see, the conference will have a good representation of groups from all over the country and could be very significant to the future development of an anti-imperialist movement in North America.

Eqbal Ahmad will be attending the conference and giving the opening address.

The Third World Cinema will bring three of their films -- Blood of the Condor (about Bolivian peoples opposition to Peace Corps volunteers involved in a sterilization program), Hour of the Furnaces (the Argentine film), and Culebra: The Beginning.

We hope you will communicate to us soon whether you plan to come. After August 20 there will be few people here in the national office. You can reach us in Denver in care of the R.I.P. collective -- phone: 303-825-7413.

Everyone who comes should bring a sleeping bag or some kind of bedding. And be prepared to help with the preparation of food, cleaning, and child care.

Also groups should bring literature to sell, films to show, etc.

VENCEREMOS,

Trudy Pax and Elaine Fuller

P.S. Directions from Denver Airport - take limosine to downtown; call no. above. Driving from east on 70 or 80S - turn north onto 25; travel to Boulder turnoff which is highway 36. Follow through Boulder and on 15 or so miles to Lyons. Turn left onto 7 and follow for about 20 miles to Allenspark. Just before Allenspark on the left will be a sign - Point 'O Pines - and the camp. Driving from west on 70-6 or 40 - turn north on 119 just past Idaho Springs. Follow 119 to Boulder; turn left onto 36 and follow above directions. Coming in on 40, take it until it joins 70-6 and follow above directions.

BEYOND VIETNAM: A CONFERENCE ON ANTI-IMPERIALIST STRATEGY AND ACTION

PROPOSED AGENDA

AUGUST 27th

AFTERNOON AND EVENING: organizational caucuses

AUGUST 28th

MORNING PLENARY SESSION: What are the prospects for a clear anti-imperialist strategy into which various types of organizations could fit?
Introduction (tentative), Eqbal Ahmad. Notes on Asia, Africa, Middle East, Latin America by participants.

AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS: I. Political strategy of Liberation Movement support.
II. Political strategy of research, publication and distribution.
III. Political strategy of anti-corporate activities

EVENING WORKSHOPS: Practical skills, space for problems growing out of the three strategies discussed in the afternoon session. Examples: stockholders meetings, fund-raising, educational demonstrations, collecting and sending out materials, dealing with the media, relationships to high schools (curriculum, special programs, etc.), guerrilla theater, etc. (N.B. These are only examples of possible workshops. They will be developed from earlier discussions by the people who are present.)

AUGUST 29th

MORNING WORKSHOPS

Latin America
Asia
Middle East
Africa

Liberation struggles in these areas

U.S. policy in these areas

AFTERNOON SESSIONS: Anti-imperialist strategies for each area. Groups should speak on their activities in the past and what they are doing now. What have been the gaps? How can a strategy be developed?

EVENING: North American regional caucuses

AUGUST 30th

- I. Are we able now to form an anti-imperialist strategy and structure?
- II. Are we now able to form a national network, organization or alliance?

(These are the broad lines of the agenda. There will be free time for caucuses, films, and fun.)