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British Women Activists and the
Campaigns against the Vietnam War,
1965-75

Sophie Roberts

PhD

2018

British Women Activists and the
Campaigns against the Vietnam War,
1965-75

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements of the University of
Northumbria at Newcastle for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

Research undertaken in the Faculty of
Arts, Design and Social Sciences

October 2018

Abstract

This thesis makes an original contribution to the literature on anti-war protest in Britain by assessing the role of women activists in the movement against the Vietnam War. The study adds to the existing scholarship concerning British peace activism in this era, which either tends to focus on the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) or on the role of students in the protests of the 1960s. The thesis appraises the role of female activists, exploring their backgrounds, motivations and methods.

The main part of the thesis is dedicated to case studies of four women. Peggy Duff, former organising secretary of CND, embraced transnational relationships, as exemplified by her role as general secretary of the International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace. Anne Kerr, a Labour MP, pursued an anti-war agenda by parliamentary means. Amicia Young placed her status as a scientist and trade unionist at the heart of her activism whilst serving as secretary of a national organisation, the British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam (BCPV). Finally, Margaret Stanton ran a thriving local branch of the BCPV in Birmingham. Unlike CND and the more militant Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, BCPV has not attracted much historiographical attention, despite its prominent role in navigating the political terrain between the decline of CND and the rise of new protest movements.

The discussion of these women broadens our understanding of the interplay between gender and peace activism, providing an analysis of both gendered and non-gendered approaches to anti-war protest. It locates this activism within the political contexts of late 1960s and early 1970s Britain. The dissertation draws on a wide variety of sources, including organisational records, memoirs, correspondence, and personal interviews.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis has truly been a labour of love, and one which I could not have completed without the assistance and support of so many important individuals.

My supervisor Dr Daniel Laqua has been a constant source of support throughout this process. His intellect and insight have been fantastic sources of inspiration and guidance and I cannot thank him enough for his dedication to this project. His critical eye is truly exceptional. At times throughout this process, I got the feeling he would worry that I'd interpret his rigorous editing as nit-picking. This was never the case and I am truly grateful for the thoroughness with which he has always treated my work. Many thanks are also owed to Professor Sylvia Ellis, who supervised the first year of this thesis. Additionally, it was conversations with Sylvia which germinated the seeds of this project. She deserves credit for enabling a working-class girl from the 'most deprived town in Britain' to entertain the notion that she could tackle a doctorate. Dr Ruth Lewis has also offered invaluable cross-disciplinary insight into the thesis and graciously read drafts which I'm sure have often diverged with the conventions of sociology. To all three, my deepest thanks for your continued support.

Thanks also to the staff at the Modern Records Centre, Hull History Centre, J.B. Priestley Library at the University of Bradford and People's History Museum, Manchester. The professional and courteous service I've encountered at all of these wonderful institutions made the researching and ultimately, writing, of this thesis that much smoother. I am also exceptionally grateful for grants received from Northumbria University's postgraduate fund, as well as from the Royal Historical Society and the Society for the Study of Labour History, which facilitated this research.

This thesis would be much worse off without the insight from those who agreed to be interviewed or provide comments on the female activists within it. My humblest of thanks go to Jennifer Stanton, Richard Gott and Hermione Sacks, all of whom opened their homes with warmth and hospitality to speak of their remarkable relatives and friends, and made extra historical materials available to me from their

personal collections. John Gittings, Noam Chomsky, Kathleen Sheridan and Euan Duff also provided insightful statements on the tour-de-force that was Peggy Duff and the British anti-war movement more generally. Hopefully you will agree that the thesis is more colourful for these generous comments.

My family and friends have been truly gracious in suffering with me through the high and low points inherent in a project on this scale. Thanks to those of you who acted as research assistants and helped turn research trips into mini-breaks! Thank you to my wonderful parents, Andy and Jo, who instilled in me a love of reading from an early age and always taught me that I could do anything with a bit of grit and determination. They continued to feed my interest in history over the years, with books on the assassination of JFK and other topics which may have seemed rather strange material for consumption by a ten-year-old. Thanks also to my grandparents, Josie and Wal, who continued to foster my historical interests by agreeing to be interviewed when I attempted to research the family tree aged eight, and by regaling me with stories of life living in Malta in the late 1960s. Words cannot express how much I love you all.

My sisters, Stephanie and Natalie, have provided many hours of light relief throughout the course of this project and have always helped keep my feet on the ground. You'll never know how much I appreciate you both, but I'll continue to cherish your love, hilarity and general bonkers-ness. Ours is my favourite team I've ever been on. My brother-in-law Tom has always allowed me to bend his ear on the progress of this thesis and encouraged and believed in me – thanks bro, you're a true gem. Similarly, my best and oldest friend Jayne deserves credit for her unwavering belief in my capabilities, as well as her constant cheerleading and support. Only a true friend would bake cupcakes to celebrate the completion of a full first draft! Thanks for all the laughs you continue to give me – I'm hoping you will give your consent for me to ghost-write your memoirs soon.

Finally, thanks to my partner Lewis, who happily became my fiancé throughout this process. It's a cliché to say that words are never enough, but in this case, it also happens to be true. You've picked me up and buoyed me when I've needed it, and always helped me to see the bigger picture. Your support in helping me to pursue historical study has been invaluable and your belief in me has never

faltered, even at times when I've been unsure of my own capabilities. It's no exaggeration to say that I couldn't have done this without you. Don't worry, I'm not going to force you to read the full thing – you've suffered enough. Here's to the next eighty (optimistic, maybe). Thanks again.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 2 November 2016.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 78,009

Name: Sophie Roberts

Signature:

Date: 29th October 2018

List of Abbreviations

AScW	Association of Scientific Workers
BCPV	British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam
CPV	Campaign for Peace in Vietnam
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam)
EEC	European Economic Community
ICDP	International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace
MAV	Medical Aid for Vietnam
MCF	Movement for Colonial Freedom
NLF	National Liberation Front
PRG	Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam
SCV	Stockholm Conference on Vietnam
TUSC	Trade Union Sub-Committee
VSC	Vietnam Solidarity Campaign
UNA	United Nations Association
VWU	Vietnamese Women's Union
WFSW	World Federation of Scientific Workers
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WSP	Women Strike for Peace
WUL	Women's Union of Liberation

Introduction

Contextualising the British anti-war movement

In 1988, Barbara Castle – who between 1965 and 1976 held various posts within the cabinets of Prime Minister Harold Wilson – contended that she had ‘never understood the ferment of the sixties I hear so much about’.¹ Castle’s reflection highlighted a key problem with contemporary and subsequent recollections of the era. ‘The Sixties’ have been depicted as an age of great change and turmoil, with an emphasis prevalent within the historiography upon the relaxed sexual norms, cultural offerings and student activism of the period.² Although a range of major changes took place during the decade, numerous scholars have noted that an exaggerated mythology shrouds the era. Jodi Burkett has emphasised that the 1960s are a decade steeped in myth and that this myth has proved remarkably enduring.³ ‘When people think and talk about the 1960s’, Burkett writes, ‘they often think about hippies, demonstrations or riots rather than mild-mannered students in suits’.⁴ In a similar vein, Trevor Harris and Monia O’Brien Castro have contended that it is an exaggeration to suggest that the Sixties were ‘dominated by youth culture and that voyages of personal discovery were the stuff of everyday life’.⁵ Likewise, in discussing Arthur Marwick’s seminal monograph, Mark Donnelly has identified a tendency to glorify the decade. Donnelly claims that Marwick’s study is ‘overly concerned with the “trendy” Sixties’, emphasising ‘swinging’ scenes, rebellious students and psychedelic music.⁶ However, Donnelly contends, ‘the “ordinary” Sixties [...] the lives of people in suburbs, provincial towns and villages, who

¹ Quoted in Sheila Rowbotham, *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 340.

² See for example Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958-c.1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). While in *The Sixties Unplugged: A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), Gerard DeGroot notes the myth-making associated with the decade, much of his study revisits episodes associated with protest and cultural change.

³ Jodi Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain: Britishness, ‘Race’, and the Radical Left in the 1960s* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Trevor Harris and Monia O’Brien Castro, ‘Introduction’, in Trevor Harris and Monia O’Brien Castro (eds.), *Preserving the Sixties: Britain and the “Decade of Protest”* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 2.

⁶ Mark Donnelly, ‘Sixties Britain: The Cultural Politics of Historiography’, in Harris and O’Brien Castro (eds.), *Preserving the Sixties*, p. 13.

watched *Coronation Street* and liked Cliff Richard records' are largely absent from Marwick's account.⁷

Inherent in this commonly-held notion of the Sixties is the era's 'confrontational reputation'.⁸ Anti-war protest certainly plays an important role in the way that the period is being remembered. As Nick Thomas explains, 'the Vietnam War was not the first war to be perceived as morally questionable, yet it was the first to provoke protests on such a scale'.⁹ Nonetheless, in 1994 Anthony O. Edmonds noted that literature on the British anti-war movement was relatively limited in contrast to the considerable amount of scholarly attention afforded to the movement in the United States.¹⁰ This state of affairs arguably reflected a wider issue – namely the degree to which radical activism in the U.S., France, West Germany and Italy has tended to overshadow protest in Britain, especially with regard to the iconic year of 1968. More recently, however, scholars have begun to shed new light on activism in 1960s Britain.¹¹ Faced with the growing body of scholarship that questions dominant tropes connected with the 1960s, it is appropriate to reassess how one of the major activist causes of the decade – opposition to the American war in Vietnam – manifested itself in Britain.

This thesis seeks to investigate the particularities of British activism against the Vietnam War by focusing on four women who played a prominent role in anti-war campaigning. These case studies, which comprise the majority of the thesis, make a contribution to women's history by re-claiming women's agency within the British anti-war movement. Each example showcases how women contributed to and, in some cases, orchestrated anti-war activities in a variety of guises. Whilst these women often functioned as secretaries within anti-war organisations, they served vital functions in co-ordinating anti-war initiatives and producing a variety of important material.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁹ Nick Thomas, 'Challenging the Myths of the 1960s: the Case of Student Protest in Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2002), p. 291.

¹⁰ Anthony O. Edmonds, 'The Vietnam War and the British Student Left: A Study in Political Symbolism', *Vietnam Generation*, Vol. 5, No. 1-4 (March 1994). <http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Texts/Scholarly/Edmonds_Brit_Left.html> [accessed 14 August 2018].

¹¹ See e.g. Caroline Hoefferle, *British Student Activism in the Long Sixties* (London: Routledge, 2013) as well as a short overview in Holger Nehring, 'Great Britain', in Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (eds.), *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956–1977* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 125-36.

As a whole, the thesis contributes to the existing scholarly literature in three major ways. Firstly, in focussing on the women in question, it aims to underscore the diversity and importance of women's roles within the anti-war movement in Britain. Secondly, through the case studies in Part B of this study, it intends to illuminate the work of the British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam (BCPV) – a significant campaigning organisation whose activities within the existing literature tend to be overshadowed by the more radical protest currents that are frequently associated with the period. Thirdly, by focussing on the mid- to late-1960s, this work aspires to constitute a bridge between studies that have focussed on the British left in the late 1950s and early 1960s (and, in relation to peace activism, have therefore concentrated on CND), and scholarship that has examined leftist politics in Britain in connection with radical groups categorised as belonging to the New Left. As this introduction, and indeed the rest of this thesis, will illustrate, the cases under consideration here do not fit neatly into either of these categories. This work therefore highlights the cases of activists whose work was situated between different political approaches and protest currents.

Scholars have shown the multitudinous ways in which gender can affect conflict.¹² The historiography on the anti-Vietnam War movement reflects this broader pattern, with numerous studies analysing how gender impacted not only upon the conflict itself, but the campaigns against it. Marian Mollin has argued that male perspectives were privileged within the U.S. anti-war movement through its focus on draft resistance.¹³ Say Burgin has also analysed anti-war activities in the U.S using a gendered framework.¹⁴ Scholars including Jessica Frazier and Amy

¹² See e.g. Haleh Afshar and Deborah Eade (eds.), *Development, Women, and War: Feminist Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxfam, 2004); Carol Cohn (ed.), *Women & Wars* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013); Simona Sharoni, Julia Welland, Linda Steiner and Jennifer Pendersen (eds.), *Handbook on Gender and War* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016); Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: how gender shapes the war system and vice versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Inger Skjelsbaek and Dan Smith (eds.), *Gender, Peace and Conflict* (London: Sage, 2001); P.J. Conover and V. Sapiro, 'Gender, Feminist Consciousness, and War', *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Nov., 1993), pp. 1079-99 and Gordana Rabrenovic and Laura Roskos, 'Introduction: Civil Society, Feminism, and the Gendered Politics of War and Peace', *NWSA Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Summer, 2001), pp. 40-54.

¹³ Marian Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America: Egalitarianism and Protest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 156.

¹⁴ Say Burgin, 'Understanding Antiwar Activism as a Gendering Activity: A Look at the U.S.'s Anti-Vietnam War Movement', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 6 (Dec., 2012), pp. 18-31.

Swerdlow have analysed the anti-war work of U.S.-based female peace groups and accounted for the way gender tropes influenced their anti-war activities.¹⁵ Within the limited literature on anti-war protest in Britain, however, the influence of gender, and, moreover, the roles played by women, are far less prominent. This thesis therefore aims to augment the existing literature by analysing the motivations of British women for protesting against the war and considering the contexts that shaped their opposition.

Jennifer Anne Davy has highlighted the benefits of adopting a biographical approach to the study of women's anti-war activism, claiming that such accounts 'can provide the basis for understanding the system of national and international networks in which these women were active'.¹⁶ Furthermore, Davy notes that research on individual women peace activists can provide a basis for comparative analysis.¹⁷ In this thesis, several themes connect the individual case studies, thus enabling comparison. Furthermore, the case-study approach is appropriate, given the diverse nature of the British anti-war movement: each of the selected individuals constitutes a gateway into a different aspect of the British movement. Focussing on each anti-war activist in turn, the individual chapters will foreground the features and ideas that were most central to the work of each activist. This approach helps to underscore the agency of each woman activist in question. The thesis also aims to contextualise the activism of these women within the national and transnational milieu in which they operated.

The case studies in this thesis are organised into two major sections. Section A discusses two activists who worked within existing organisations – the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the Labour Party – but whose activism ventured beyond them. In this sense, Section A highlights the links which the anti-war movement had with both the Labour Party and CND. Both of these

¹⁵ See Jessica M. Frazier, 'Collaborative Efforts to End the War in Viet Nam: The Interactions of Women Strike for Peace, The Vietnamese Women's Union, and the Women's Union of Liberation, 1965-1968', *Peace & Change*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Jul., 2012), pp. 339-365; Jessica M. Frazier, *Women's Antiwar Diplomacy during the Vietnam War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) and Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

¹⁶ Jennifer Anne Davy, 'Pacifist Thought and Gender Ideology in the Political Biographies of Women Peace Activists in Germany, 1899-1970: Introduction', *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Autumn, 2001), p. 40.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

organisations proved important in terms of determining the nature and tone of the anti-war movement's rhetoric. Llew Gardner has described the segment of the British left which accepted the Labour Party as the party of reform as the 'orthodox left'.¹⁸ The case studies here thus afford us insight into the evolution of the British left, as many activists turned away from this orthodox left, favouring alternative, often more radical anti-war organisations. This radical 'fringe left' has been described by Gardner as a 'hotch-potch of self-styled Marxists, frustrated revolutionaries and inveterate malcontents'.¹⁹ Similarly, Peter Sedgwick has identified an 'independent left' which included New Left intellectuals and CND.²⁰ Sedgwick deemed the high time of this independent left from 1956 to around 1970, at which point he recognised it as having been overtaken by a 'revolutionary left', comprised of the International Socialists and International Marxist Group.²¹ In many ways, Vietnam was a key component within this development, with many activists expressing their disillusionment with the orthodox left, particularly the Labour Party, due to its handling of the conflict. Indeed, Evan Smith and Matthew Worley have attested to the significance of the Vietnam War and the establishment of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC) – a part of Sedgwick's 'revolutionary' left – in altering the composition of the far left in Britain.²² In this sense, Section A enables us to analyse the perceived inertia with which CND and the Labour Party were increasingly viewed by some activists throughout the period.

Section B is dedicated to women campaigners who were involved in one specific organisation: the BCPV, which operated both nationally and through local groups. The two chapters in Section B thus allow us to explore prominent themes connected to the anti-war work of the BCPV at both the national and local levels. The BCPV has received relatively little scholarly attention; indeed, this thesis offers the first sustained analysis of the group and its anti-war initiatives. The case studies comprising Section B thus have the twofold purpose of advancing the important roles played by the women campaigners therein, as well as re-grounding the BCPV

¹⁸ Llew Gardner, 'The Fringe Left', in Gerald Kaufman (ed.), *The Left* (London: Anthony Blond, 1966), p. 116.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Peter Sedgwick, 'Introduction: Farewell, Grosvenor Square', in David Widgery (ed.), *The Left in Britain: 1956-1968* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 35.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Evan Smith and Matthew Worley, 'Introduction: the far left in Britain from 1956', in Evan Smith and Matthew Worley (eds.), *Against the Grain: the British far left from 1956* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 6.

within the historiography of the British anti-war movement. The BCPV was a distinct organisation on the British anti-war scene due to its Communist Party links. In this respect, it also differed from contemporary New Left groups and the radical, better publicised VSC.

The first chapter within Section A concerns Anne Kerr, who served as a Labour MP from 1964 to 1970. Her case enables us to analyse the difficult position faced by left-wing MPs who were torn between supporting the long-awaited Labour government, whilst at the same time criticising that same government for its lack of action on Vietnam. Sylvia Ellis, John Dumbrell and Jonathan Colman have done pioneering work outlining the impact of the Vietnam War on the Wilson governments of this period. Such work is excellent in assessing the impact of Vietnam, particularly in economic and diplomatic terms.²³ However, the impact of Vietnam on intra-Labour dynamics has been little explored by historians. Rhiannon Vickers is one of the few scholars whose research highlights the effects of the Vietnam policy of the Wilson government (1964–70) on intra-Labour Party dynamics. She traces how the left wing of the party became profoundly disillusioned with Wilson’s leadership, and highlights the schism between Wilson and the so-called left wing of the party: the ‘many rank-and-file party members [who] saw Vietnam largely as a war of national liberation’.²⁴ Kerr’s anti-war activities were not confined to parliament, indeed, she maintained relationships with a diverse range of anti-war activists. Kerr’s activism thus affords us an insight not only into such relationships, but also into how she leveraged her position as an MP outside of parliament.

The second chapter discusses Peggy Duff, who was the first organising secretary of CND after its establishment in 1958. In 1967, however, she left the organisation to take up a post as general secretary of the International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace (ICDP). This transition signalled her increasing focus on

²³ See Jonathan A. Colman, *A ‘Special Relationship’? Harold Wilson, Lyndon B. Johnson and Anglo-American Relations ‘at the Summit’, 1964-8* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Sylvia Ellis, *Britain, America & the Vietnam War* (Westport: Praeger, 2004); John Dumbrell, ‘The Johnson Administration and the British Labour Government: Vietnam, the Pound and East of Suez’, *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Aug., 1996), pp. 211-231 and John Dumbrell and Sylvia Ellis, ‘British Involvement in Vietnam Peace Initiatives, 1966-1967: Marigolds, Sunflowers and “Kosygin Week”’, *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Jan., 2003), pp. 113-149.

²⁴ Rhiannon Vickers, ‘Harold Wilson, the British Labour Party, and the War in Vietnam’, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Spring, 2008), p. 41.

transnational peace approaches. Through her work with the ICDP, Duff worked in partnership with like-minded groups and individuals overseas. In this sense her case study enables us to understand some of the broader context in which the British movement was situated. Her example as someone who opted to supersede the British government in her efforts to find peace provides us with an understanding of the disillusionment felt by anti-war campaigners with the government. Unlike Kerr, who remained a Labour MP until she lost her seat in the election of 1970, Duff acted on this disillusionment by changing her approach to anti-war campaigning and opting to work transnationally. Her case thus affords an insight into the importance of CND as a precursor to the anti-war movement. Furthermore, as someone who left CND in order to operate at the international level, Duff's case enables us to examine the tensions present within the British left at this time. Moreover, Duff's transition from CND to the ICDP provides a case study through which to examine the backdrop of CND's diminishing monopoly on peace protest in Britain, as Vietnam increasingly replaced the atomic bomb as the most salient political issue pertaining to peace.

Dr Amicia More Young (Chapter Three) was secretary of the national BCPV. She was also a scientist, a trade union activist in the Association of Scientific Workers (AScW), and a committed communist. Her case, the first in Section B, therefore presents an example of old leftist commitment towards the Soviet Union and enables us to see how this commitment impacted upon her protests against the Vietnam War. Her academic status affords us insight into how professional elements of the movement used particular rhetoric in order to protest the war, and her trade unionism also provides a basis for a discussion of the unions' role in the anti-war scene, the distinct nature of which will be addressed later in this chapter. Her involvement with the BCPV, not only as secretary of the national organisation, but as secretary of her local branch in Marylebone, enables us to examine a little-known anti-war organisation at various levels. This is an important historiographical opportunity because the BCPV constituted one of the only organisations which was solely orchestrated around the Vietnam War.

The fourth chapter provides further analysis of the BCPV. It will analyse the case of Margaret Stanton, who was organising secretary of a localised branch of the BCPV in Birmingham. Her example showcases activism outside of the capital and reveals how activists altered their rhetoric in order to reflect this. Furthermore,

Stanton's equivocal commitment to communism also means that her case provides further opportunity to discuss the links between communism, anti-communist rhetoric and the movement against the Vietnam War.

Whilst each chapter will be structured according to the particularities of the individual case study, common themes will connect the chapters throughout. All chapters will analyse transnational connections made and utilised by the women and seek to analyse how domestically or transnationally orientated their efforts were, thus engaging with the literature on transnational peace movements outlined in the next section of this introduction

Furthermore, all chapters seek to comment upon the confluence of gender and anti-war activism, by accounting for whether the women used any gendered rhetoric within their anti-war work. This approach aims to complicate existing narratives of female anti-war protest, which often focus only on those women who adopted specifically female rhetoric within their activism. To illustrate this further, the final segment of this thesis, Section C, consists of a chapter that breaks with the case-study format in order to explore the significance of female activism within the British anti-war movement. As the chapter in Section C will illustrate, most studies of women's activism, including those exploring female anti-Vietnam War efforts, have analysed women's efforts in relation to their gender. Particularly, these studies emphasise the specifically-female rhetoric espoused by peace groups, or else the links which existed during this time between the movement for women's liberation and the anti-Vietnam War movement. This chapter evaluates both historical examples and academic studies that follow this model and, in doing so, elucidates stark differences between them and the case studies considered within Sections A and B of this thesis. In doing so, it seeks to build on the contribution made to women's history through the four case studies and make a broader contribution to the field of gender history. In this sense, the thesis aims to encourage reflection on the differing ways in which women's activism can be explored. This chapter on gender has been placed after the case studies for two reasons: first, it thus encourages the reader to reconsider the four cases and differences between them. Secondly, in chronological terms, the inclusion of discussions on women's liberation takes the chapter well into the 1970s – in contrast to the preceding sections, which are more firmly focused on the 1960s.

British peace history has certainly attracted its fair share of scholarly interest in recent years. In 2015, Holger Nehring declared British peace movement history to be ‘among the most advanced’.²⁵ The following section of this introduction will draw on examples from this literature, thus outlining the rise of the New Left in Britain, as well as the international scene of which it formed a contingent. This will provide a thorough outline of the backdrop against which the emergence of the anti-war movement in Britain was situated. However, it will also illustrate how rather few studies focus on the movement against the Vietnam War exclusively. Rather, campaigns against U.S. aggression in South-East Asia usually feature within works on the largest protest group of the period, CND. Indeed, Nehring contends that the history of British peace movements after 1945 is primarily the history of CND.²⁶ A plethora of works therefore deal with the British anti-war movement in a broader political context, works which often concern themselves with the rise of the New Left in Britain in the late 1950s to the early 1960s and beyond – a period coinciding with the establishment of CND and its dominance of the British left. The introduction will then move on to discuss the particularities of the movement in Britain, thus highlighting how the case studies comprising the thesis can offer us an insight into how the manifestation of anti-Vietnam War protest in Britain reflected specifically British concerns and themes.

The rise of the New Left, anti-war protest and its transnational context

Literature on the British New Left and its transnational links is plentiful. Within many of these works, however, anti-Vietnam activities are not the prime focus. Anti-Vietnam War activism is thus often given rather brief treatment. Notable contributions to peace history which adopt a broader perspective include works by David Cortright, Peter Brock and Nigel Young.²⁷ Brock and Young’s expansive survey encompasses various forms of pacifism from the beginning of the First World War until the early 1960s, and the attention afforded to the opposition against the Vietnam War is in a U.S. context. Cortright’s volume tracks the development of

²⁵ Holger Nehring, ‘Towards a Transnational Social History of “a peaceable Kingdom”. Peace Movements in post-1945 Britain’, *Moving the Social*, Vol. 32 (Jan., 2015), p. 21. <http://moving-the-social.ub.rub.de/index.php/Moving_the_Social/article/view/446> [accessed 1 September 2016].

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁷ David Cortright, *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Peter Brock and Nigel Young, *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999).

peace organisations and the discourse they adopted, and in doing so, gives attention to the anti-Vietnam War movement, although the focus is on the United States again. Cortright identifies three distinct tendencies within the U.S. anti-war movement: a new left which was ‘rooted in student radicalism and traditional pacifist organisations’; an old left movement which was dominated by Trotskyist groups and a liberal wing which encompassed more moderate groups.²⁸ In Britain, however, Trotskyists dominated the more radical wings of the movement: as exemplified by the prominent radical peace activist Tariq Ali, who was head of the VSC. Conversely, this thesis aims to build on current literature in order to elucidate aspects of the British movement which were, in many ways, less radical than the VSC. The organisations represented by the women activists in question here had their roots in old leftist traditions. In this sense, this thesis serves to bridge some of the gap between the old left, CND and the more radical – and often student-orientated – activism exemplified by the VSC.

Texts that examine the rise of peace activism in a more specifically British context include those by Marwick, Adam Lent, Richard Taylor and Nigel Young.²⁹ This body of work illuminates the growth of a leftist activist scene in Britain and the role of peace politics therein. Although Nigel Young highlights that ‘no one organisation ever captured or totally “represented” the Peace Movement’, most concur that the organisations that mobilised against the Vietnam conflict in the mid-to-late 1960s took inspiration from, or developed out of, pre-existing peace organisations, particularly CND.³⁰ Arthur Marwick hints at the influence of formalised peace groups such as CND, writing that whilst students and young people comprised the majority of anti-Vietnam protesters, ‘an intellectual left-wing subculture brought together the older and the younger, articulating causes which were not directly tied to university issues’.³¹ Similarly, Adam Lent writes of students ‘who had been inspired by CND’ moving on to ‘mass opposition of the Vietnam War’.³² Despite such statements, the massive nature of these works, which take

²⁸ Cortright, *Peace*, p. 157.

²⁹ See Marwick, *The Sixties*; Adam Lent, *British Social Movements Since 1945: Sex, Colour, Peace and Power* (London: Palgrave, 2001); Richard Taylor and Nigel Young (eds.), *Campaigns for Peace: British Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987).

³⁰ Nigel Young, ‘Tradition and Innovation in the British Peace Movement: Towards an Analytical Framework’, in Taylor and Young (eds.), *Campaigns for Peace*, p. 5.

³¹ Marwick, *The Sixties*, p. 633.

³² Lent, *British Social Movements Since 1945*, p. 56.

peace protest in the twentieth century, comparative cultural change in four different countries, and various social movements in Britain since 1945 as their respective subject matter, ensures that any discussion of the anti-Vietnam War movement has been confined to brevity.

In an historiographical review concerning the development of peace history in the United States, Charles F. Howlett writes that ‘since the Vietnam period one of the more innovative developments in the field has been a focus on international dimensions’.³³ This is also true of literature pertaining to the British anti-Vietnam War movement, where efforts have been undertaken to contextualise the movement transnationally. Historiographical efforts to locate the British movement have taken various forms and foci, including individual transnational actors, groups and events. These works remain fairly rare and, as this section will show, often take student activism as their focal point. Further study is therefore needed in order to illuminate the vibrant, transnational activist scene which was not student-based and in which British activists played such a central role.

The works of Holger Nehring and Martin Klimke stand out in particular for their efforts to illustrate transnational linkages between protest movements. Whilst not always exclusively focussed on Vietnam, these works provide exceptionally useful frameworks for thinking about the context in which subsequent collaborative anti-Vietnam War efforts were undertaken. In *The Other Alliance*, Klimke illustrates the links between student protest in West Germany and the United States, but deems Vietnam the issue which most deeply connected activists to one another.³⁴ Klimke also outlines the increase in international collaboration experienced by the global anti-Vietnam War movement at this time. The book is also useful in providing insight into the concerns of U.S. intelligence authorities regarding the international linkages between anti-Vietnam movements in varying countries.³⁵

Nehring’s work differs from that of Klimke in that it does *not* focus exclusively on protest activity at the student level; however, like Klimke, Nehring

³³ Charles F. Howlett, ‘Studying America’s Struggle Against War: An Historical Perspective’, *The History Teacher*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (May, 2003), p. 317.

³⁴ Martin Klimke, *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany & The United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 205-213.

does not narrow his focus to Vietnam. In *Politics of Security*, Nehring examines the evolution of political protest in West Germany and Britain in relation to the Cold War climate of both nations. Nehring attests to the plurality of the British movement in comparison to its West German counterpart, where ‘culture and politics [...] fuse[d] around one movement’.³⁶ Nehring also highlights how the shift in focus from anti-nuclear to anti-Vietnam War concerns, experienced by activists in both Britain and West Germany, fostered a shift in the relationship between the campaigns in the two countries. As opposed to the more direct relationship enjoyed by the British and West German anti-nuclear movements, the U.S. increasingly became a mutual reference point for anti-Vietnam groups in both countries. As Nehring explains, this was because

while Britain continued to be an important focus for counter-cultural developments, British and West German activists turned increasingly to the United States for inspiration. This included direct networks between activists as well as the more general inspiration activists obtained from observing the civil rights movement and the protests at universities on the other side of the Atlantic.³⁷

Politics of Security is particularly insightful in elucidating the differing political contexts in each country and accounting for the effects of such differences on the success of protest movements. The book is thus beneficial in helping to account for the evolution of the anti-Vietnam War movement in Britain. Nehring does this largely by discussing how the accelerated use of rhetoric concerning solidarity in anti-Vietnam War groups in both countries proved key to the radicalisation of the movement as a whole ‘as it replaced humanitarian arguments based on rational calculations and statistics with expressly emotional bonds with faraway victims. It converted passive care into active solidarity’.³⁸ Insightfully, Nehring also uses the comparative political contexts of the two countries in order to account for the reception of the anti-war movement therein. Using Pierre Bourdieu’s phrase, he points out that there were no ‘critical events’ in Britain like those which occurred in West Germany.³⁹ Rather, ‘the actual protest movement was smaller and, more importantly, the mass media did not consistently identify the individual protest events as part of a larger movement’.⁴⁰ He argues that Britain, unlike West Germany,

³⁶ Holger Nehring, *Politics of Security: British and West German Protest Movements and the Early Cold War, 1945-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 247.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

did not experience ‘the same kind of productive public merger of culture and politics around a single movement [...] Unlike in West Germany, most British protests in the 1960s unfolded not within a national political frame of reference, but within the remit of university-specific issues’.⁴¹

This point links to a concept which recurs in historiographical writing on transnational peace activism. This is the extent to which transnational foci and aims remained tangential to domestic concerns. This literature identifies ways in which supposedly-transnational movements were influenced by domestic factors, evidenced within the tactics and rhetoric they used. Klimke acknowledges the pervasiveness of national and even regional idiosyncrasies within transnational student protest: ‘even though anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and international solidarity were diffuse-but-shared elements of the cognitive orientation of these movements, specific national issues generally determined the characteristics of protesters’.⁴² For instance, he cites Italy and Germany as representative examples wherein, Klimke contends, activists turned their anger on their nations’ (and particularly, their parents’) fascist pasts.⁴³

Nehring has explored this in more detail, particularly in a 2005 article on British and West German anti-nuclear protest. He writes that ‘while the movements professed to be concerned with international issues and with “humanity” as a whole, they were embedded firmly in their respective political systems and their national political traditions’.⁴⁴ With this in mind, Nehring states that social movements in both Britain and West Germany sought to define their respective nations by giving them a specific, individualised function on the international stage. Nehring contends that protesters in Britain desired to establish Britain as a moral leader on the world stage within a post-colonial Commonwealth. He draws upon the rhetoric prevalent at CND’s first Aldermaston march in 1958, which saw anti-nuclear campaigners march from London to a nuclear base at Aldermaston in Berkshire. He cites activists asserting that ‘the lead has been given to the English people. Britain must take up

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 277-8.

⁴² Klimke, *The Other Alliance*, p. 5.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Holger Nehring, ‘National Internationalists: British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons, the Politics of Transnational Communications and the Social History of the Cold War, 1957-1964’, *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Nov., 2005), p. 560.

that lead in the world'.⁴⁵ Conversely, unlike their British counterparts, West German protesters had a distinctly negative attitude towards their past, leading them to address issues such as German rearmament within this context.⁴⁶ This leads Nehring to use the term 'national internationalists' to describe such transnational protesters whose transnational activism was ultimately dictated by domestic contexts.⁴⁷

Jodi Burkett has also sought to contextualise peace protest in this era within the specific context of Sixties Britain, most notably by showcasing how insecurity about Britain's imperial decline informed discourse on the type of role Britain ought to play on a post-colonial world stage. CND was particularly notable in this regard: with its focus on unilateral disarmament, it advocated a unique international role for Britain. Like Nehring, Burkett sees this role promoted by CND as one in which Britain should act as a global moral leader. She writes that this role was 'one which befitted their view of Britain as uniquely qualified to lead. It was not, however, a renewal of an earlier form of imperial or militaristic power, but one based on morality, rationality [and] independence'.⁴⁸ Burkett highlights the 'deep and growing cynicism' that characterised the period, citing the Suez Crisis and de-colonisation as mitigating factors in the left's increasing disillusionment with Wilson.⁴⁹ To many, these incidents sowed seeds of doubt about the desire and the aptitude of the British government to 'retain or regain Britain's strong, moral international position'.⁵⁰

In a context more explicitly related to anti-Vietnam protest, the influence of domestic factors has been apparent in research concerning the U.S. movement. Jessica Frazier, for instance, has highlighted that despite the transnational activism characterising many of the actions of the U.S.-based female peace group, Women Strike for Peace (WSP), the ultimate focus entailed appealing to Americans in particular in order to stop the war.⁵¹ Charles DeBenedetti has also characterised the U.S. movement as ultimately pursuing reform at home, categorising the movement

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 565.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 568.

⁴⁷ Nehring, 'National Internationalists', pp. 559-582.

⁴⁸ Jodi Burkett, 'Re-defining British morality: "Britishness" and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament 1958-68', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Jan., 2010), p. 192.

⁴⁹ Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain*, p. 30.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Frazier, 'Collaborative Efforts to End the War in Viet Nam', p. 340.

there as ‘seeking to change America so as to free Vietnam from its agony and free America from more Vietnams’.⁵²

Sylvia Ellis has bridged these aspects of scholarship. Not only has she built on Nehring’s work by analysing how domestic factors affected protest, but she has applied this analysis in a later period through her focus on the protests against the Vietnam War. By looking at how domestic questions shaped the conversations and approaches amongst left-wing anti-war activists, her analysis thus furthers our understanding of the impact of domestic factors upon the left after 1964, pertaining specifically to the Vietnam cause. Ellis points out that

the global dimension of the British anti-war movement remained tangential to its domestic focus, and, in this sense, [British activists] can be classified in Holger Nehring’s terms as “national internationalists”. The British peace movement concentrated on influencing the British government because this was the easiest way to galvanise the Labour Party, the Labour movements and members of the wider public.⁵³

Ellis develops this theme further by highlighting not only how the global aspect of the British movement remained tangential to its domestic focus, but that domestic protest in Britain differed from that of other countries due to political conditions in Britain. She reasons that student protest was not as intense in Britain as in other countries, ‘not least because Britain was an established participatory democracy’.⁵⁴ This encourages scholars of transnational connections to think carefully when assessing protests that are part of a wider global movement: not only is it quite possible that any seemingly transnational activism may actually be influenced by domestic conditions, but the domestic manifestation of this activism may indeed be dictated by particular political conditions and exigencies in the country at hand.

This thesis builds on the historiography appraised so far by considering distinct aspects of the British movement in order to clarify with an increased level of nuance how this important issue was dealt with by activists in Britain. It constitutes a

⁵² Charles DeBenedetti, ‘On the Significance of Citizen Peace Activism: America, 1961-1975’, quoted in Walter L. Hixson (ed.), *The United States and the Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), p. 43.

⁵³ Sylvia Ellis, ‘Promoting Solidarity at Home and Abroad: the Goals and Tactics of the Anti-Vietnam War Movement in Britain’, *European Review of History*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Jul., 2014), p. 571.

⁵⁴ Sylvia Ellis, “‘A Demonstration of British Good Sense?’” British Student Protest During the Vietnam War’, in Gerard J. DeGroot (ed.), *Student Protest: The Sixties and After* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998), p. 67.

study that places the anti-Vietnam War movement centre stage, thus building on previous scholarship which has studied the left more broadly during this period.⁵⁵ It also aims to expand on those studies which have studied leftist politics through the framework of CND or focused exclusively on youth and student activism.⁵⁶

The subsequent discussion of factors which impacted upon the British anti-war movement is crucial to understanding not only the rationale of the activists in this study, but what made the British movement distinct from its foreign counterparts. In this sense, the thesis aims to build on those historiographical efforts already identified, which have sought to detail the domestic specificities of protest movements in varying countries. The next section will outline three key themes that informed the anti-Vietnam War movement in Britain. In doing so, it will highlight the rationale for this thesis, one of the aims of which is to locate the activism of the four case studies within a specifically British context. The subsequent section will therefore discuss the following three aspects: the Labour government of Harold Wilson; the Anglo-American alliance and ideas around Britain's moral responsibility (including discourse around Britain's role as co-convenor of the 1954 Geneva Accords); and the notably muted nature of student protest in Britain and how this related to an evident chasm within the left. These factors all provide gateways to exploring what made the British movement against the Vietnam War distinct from those in other countries. By exploring the anti-war work of these women, then, the thesis seeks to make a fresh contribution, not only in the fields of women's history and gender history, but to the history of the British left.

⁵⁵ For studies broadly studying the British left see e.g. Marwick, *The Sixties*; Lent, *British Social Movements*, Jonathon Green, *All Dressed Up: The Sixties and the Counterculture* (London: Pimlico, 1999); Mark Donnelly, *Sixties Britain: Culture, Society and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain*.

⁵⁶ For studies which have concentrated on CND's role in the British left during this era see e.g. Richard Taylor, *Against the Bomb: the British Peace Movement, 1958-65* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Richard Taylor and Colin Pritchard, *The Protest Makers: The British Nuclear Disarmament Movement of 1958-1965, Twenty Years On* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980); Jodi Burkett, 'Re-defining British morality'; George McKay, 'Subcultural Innovations in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament', *Peace Review*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Dec., 2004), pp. 429-438; Holger Nehring, 'The British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons and the Cultures of the Cold War, 1957-64', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Jun., 2005), pp. 223-41; Mark Phythian, 'CND's Cold War', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Autumn, 2001), pp. 133-156. Studies which have examined the activism of British students during this period include David Fowler, *Youth Culture in Modern Britain, c. 1920-c.1970* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Jodi Burkett, 'The National Union of Students and transnational solidarity, 1958-1968', *European Review of History*, Vol. 21, No. 4, (Jul., 2014), pp. 539-55; Nick Thomas, 'Challenging the Myths of the 1960s'.

The particularities of the anti-war movement in Britain

The Labour context

The context of the Labour government being in power is important to understanding the British movement against the Vietnam War. The election of Harold Wilson in 1964 was hailed as a new era for British foreign and domestic policy; it was clear that many left-wing Labour MPs and party members alike had high expectations. Vickers points out that many expected that the election of Labour in 1964 would herald a new direction in British foreign policy: ‘this “socialist” foreign policy the leftists hoped, would be anti-imperialist, internationalist, and based on universal norms’.⁵⁷ Likewise, it has been pointed out that Wilson’s election manifesto and foreign policy stance meant that ‘expectations had been raised that the new government would conduct a more independent and more moral foreign policy than its predecessor’.⁵⁸ Whilst it is not the purpose here to provide an overview of British foreign policy in this period, this context proves key to understanding the criticisms levelled at the British government which featured within the rhetoric of the anti-war movement.

Vickers attests that the disillusionment felt by the left of the Labour Party stemmed largely from the government’s stance on Vietnam.⁵⁹ The annual Labour Party conference rejected Wilson’s foreign and defence policies on a number of occasions between 1966 and 1968.⁶⁰ Importantly, Vickers explains that whilst Wilson dismissed such differences as ‘an inconvenience rather than an intractable problem for the party’, this situation was indeed problematic, and imbued with additional complexity, due to the fact that the sitting government was a Labour Party government.⁶¹ She writes that

unlike the Conservative Party, the Labour Party had developed outside the existing parliamentary elite. Organisationally and traditionally, the party had encouraged participation by Labour activists. In particular, this was manifested through the power of the annual conference to make policy – what has been termed conference sovereignty.⁶²

⁵⁷ Vickers, ‘Harold Wilson’, p. 44.

⁵⁸ Ellis, ‘Promoting Solidarity at Home and Abroad’, p. 569.

⁵⁹ Rhiannon Vickers, *The Labour Party and the World, Volume 2: Labour’s Foreign Policy since 1951* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 4.

⁶⁰ See *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

This disillusionment with Wilson's government, expressed both within and outside of the Labour Party, was an important facet of anti-war debate in Britain, and was compounded by the outrage expressed about the war by Britain's trade unions. Due to the close association and history between the Labour Party and trade unions, the trade union contingent of the anti-war movement comprised an important aspect. As Jonathan Schneer has stressed, 'trade unions form the basis of the Labour Party'.⁶³ This meant that trade union criticism of the war took on added significance. Trade unions constitute an important part of Britain's anti-Vietnam War story, not merely because of their centrality to the Labour Party. They are particularly relevant to this study because, despite the loss of belief in the Labour Party's potential as a vehicle for foreign-policy change, trade unions constituted one way in which organised labour intersected and interacted with the anti-Vietnam War movement, which was not beholden to the Labour Party itself.

Ellis has noted the importance of the trade union response in voicing the views of British workers, and attested to the strength of the unions' position during this period: 'trade union membership was on the rise with 10.2 million in 1964, rising to 11.2 in 1970 [...] at least a third of Labour MPs during the Wilson years were sponsored by unions'.⁶⁴ In fact, such was the power of trade unions during this period that 'eventually, union bloc votes helped defeat the government's resolution on Vietnam at the Labour Party Conference in Scarborough in October 1967, although it took until 1971 for the TUC to issue a unanimous demand for the withdrawal of U.S. troops and warn the British government not to get involved militarily'.⁶⁵ There remains much work to be done to further tease out the complexities of this relationship. Ellis' work evidences the weight that the trade union element carried within Labour politics in this period, and therefore they are an important facet to consider when studying the anti-war movement in Britain.

The Labour context also proved important to anti-Vietnam War discourse in Britain in an ideological sense. Much anti-war criticism in Britain was based around the idea of Britain as a 'third force' which should refuse to choose sides between the two superpowers in the cold war. Schneer defines this third force concept as 'those

⁶³ Jonathan Schneer, *Labour's Conscience: The Labour Left, 1945-51* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1998), p. 134.

⁶⁴ Ellis, 'Promoting Solidarity at Home and Abroad', p. 562.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

who argued that Britain and Europe should constitute a third bloc, politically democratic like the United States, economically socialist like the Soviet Union, to balance and eventually reconcile the other two'.⁶⁶ Insightfully, Schneer also adds that this concept of Britain as a third force was 'embedded in Labour's outlook' and had roots in nineteenth century nonconformist ideology, which promoted a belief that Britain must stand for moral principles.⁶⁷

This embrace of third force ideology by some in the Labour Party reveals a natural affinity with CND, which promoted a role for Britain on the world stage as an exemplary nation, whose foreign policy was driven by morality. This aspect will be examined in greater depth in the subsequent section, but it is interesting here to note this apparent synergy in the anti-war critiques of the Labour left and many in CND. Schneer points out that 'nearly irresistible pressure was exerted upon [the Labour left] to choose sides among the two superpowers, when the cardinal element of their faith was that salvation lay in refusing to choose sides'.⁶⁸ This is particularly pertinent for understanding not only the rhetoric adopted by vast swathes of the anti-war movement in Britain, but the Labour government's policy towards U.S. actions in Vietnam too. Harold Wilson was routinely condemned by the left in his own party for sanctioning U.S. aggression in South East Asia, thus, he had to maintain a difficult political balancing act in maintaining the Anglo-U.S. 'special relationship' whilst seeming to rebuff such criticisms.

The Anglo-American alliance, the post-imperial context and Britain's moral responsibility

Despite much contestation amongst historians as to origins of the so-called 'special relationship', for Jodi Burkett, there is 'little doubt that there is a unique relationship between these two states. The history of the United States as a former British colony, which successfully waged war against the "mother country", ensures that this is so'.⁶⁹ Reflective of this, Guy Arnold has pointed out that, with the exception of Edward Heath, who took Britain into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973, every British prime minister from Churchill to Gordon Brown 'regarded the

⁶⁶ Schneer, *Labour's Conscience*, p. 49.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁶⁹ Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain*, p. 41.

special relationship as the cornerstone of British policy'.⁷⁰ However, he deems this a fallacy: 'the relationship was never more than peripheral to American interests even when they recognised its existence'.⁷¹ Other scholars have supported Arnold's contention regarding the centrality of the Anglo-American relationship to British foreign policy in this period by showing that Wilson had decided to reinvigorate the Anglo-American relationship by the time of the 1964 general election. For Wilson, 'Anglo-American relations would remain at the centre of British foreign policy'.⁷² It was anticipated that Wilson and Johnson could enjoy a more informal relationship, and that modern communications and quicker transatlantic flights would ensure that the two leaders could keep up-to-date on each other's thoughts.

Criticisms emphasising the negative influence of the U.S. on Britain during this era were multifaceted, encompassing concerns about Britain's undermined sovereignty, economic insecurity, and the physical danger posed by the closeness of U.S. and British nuclear programs. Concerns regarding the Anglo-American alliance proved the underpinning factor of many British activists' opposition to the war. Britain and its so-called 'special relationship' with the U.S. spawned a sense of loyalty which many activists viewed as a key flaw in British foreign policy. Moreover, extraneous but interlinked circumstances, such as U.S. support for the pound and British troop commitments East of Suez complicated the British government's treatment of the Vietnam question.⁷³ American aggression in Vietnam was thus viewed by many critics as symptomatic of the broader Anglo-American relationship.

Much recent historiography has lauded Wilson's dexterity in maintaining a relationship with the U.S. whilst simultaneously recognising the diminished position occupied by Britain on the world stage. This comes as part of a wider reassessment which has characterised the historiography on Wilson within the last couple of decades.⁷⁴ Chris Wrigley, for example, has spoken of the multi-faceted tactical nature of many of Wilson's foreign policy initiatives. These initiatives were aimed at

⁷⁰ Guy Arnold, *America and Britain: Was there ever a special relationship?* (London: Hurst & Company, 2014), p. 4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁷² Ellis, *Britain, America and the Vietnam War*, p. 19.

⁷³ See Dumbrell, 'The Johnson Administration and the British Labour Government', pp. 211-31.

⁷⁴ See Ellis, *Britain, America & the Vietnam War*, p. xvi.

appeasing the U.S. in the face of intense pressure from President Johnson, whose outrage at Britain's reluctance to send troops to Vietnam he expressed by stating: 'don't expect us to save you again. They can invade Sussex and we wouldn't do a damn thing about it'.⁷⁵ At the same time, such initiatives also had to portray Wilson as working for peace in Vietnam, thus alleviating anti-war critiques from within both his own party and country. Wrigley maintains that despite such duality, it is unfair to portray him as unprincipled.⁷⁶ In evidencing Wilson's shrewdness, Wrigley draws on Wilson's Commonwealth peace initiative with regards to Vietnam as an example. Wrigley claims that because the 'something being done' was, in this instance, channelled through the Commonwealth, the initiative was particularly difficult for critics to condemn outright, as it appeared to be an initiative of a "third force" (neither American nor communist) organisation.⁷⁷ For Wrigley, the Commonwealth Conference provided Wilson with 'proof' that his government was attempting a conciliatory approach towards the Vietnam issue. Such an approach was 'an increasingly desirable political asset' in the face of strong mounting criticism at home.⁷⁸ For many anti-war critics however, so-called moves for peace by Wilson, such as the Commonwealth Conference, were recognised merely as stunts to allay criticism from anti-war quarters. Despite Foreign Secretary George Brown's assertion that 'the only place for Britain in an Atlantic union would be as a 51st US state', many viewed the alliance as the root of the problems in Vietnam, and more importantly, the British government's reluctance to stand up and be counted thereon.⁷⁹

This belief was widely evidenced in contemporary left-wing peace publications, including *Sanity*, which was the monthly publication of CND, and the *New Statesman*, which openly derided Wilson as President Johnson's 'poodle' in 1965.⁸⁰ In June 1965, *Sanity* deemed Britain's 'subservience to Washington' an 'international sick joke. We are losing our friends in the non-aligned world and the socialist movement. We are throwing away the chance which a new Labour

⁷⁵ Quoted in Peter Jones, *America and the British Labour Party: the Special Relationship at Work* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), p. 150.

⁷⁶ Chris Wrigley, 'Now you see it, now you don't: Harold Wilson and Labour's foreign policy 1964-70', in R. Coopey, S. Fielding and N. Tiratsoo (eds.), *The Wilson Governments, 1964-1970* (London: Pinter, 1995), p. 133.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-6.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁸⁰ Ellis, *Britain, America and the Vietnam War*, p. 97.

government had to build-up good-will in Eastern Europe'.⁸¹ The March 1966 issue reflected similar sentiments in an article aimed at Harold Wilson which appeared under the headline: 'Do you have to be Johnson's boy?'.⁸² The article also stated that Britain ought to 'have a real "review" which critically examines the foreign policy assumptions upon which our defence policy is based', which it said meant 'taking a long cool look at the Anglo-American Alliance'.⁸³ Inherent in this, the writer contended, would be 'taking an independent line from the US on a number of major issues, including China and Vietnam'.⁸⁴

It is, of course, important to bear in mind that the focus of this study is not the British government's attitude to the Vietnam War. Nor does it seek to analyse the relationship of the U.S. and Britain with regards to the conflict. However, the issues discussed thus far – pertaining to Britain's reduced position as an influential power and the left-wing's disillusionment with Wilsonian foreign policy – illuminate the broader context in which anti-Vietnam War efforts were undertaken in Britain. Frustratingly, Wilson barely mentions anti-Vietnam activity in his accounts of his tenure as Prime Minister.⁸⁵ However, John Young has attested to the significance of Vietnam as an issue for governmental ministers in his study of the diaries of Michael Stewart, the former Foreign Secretary. Here Young points out that whilst Stewart faced a plethora of foreign policy challenges, Vietnam was the issue which prompted Stewart to keep a personal diary during 1968, and it is clear from the diaries that Vietnam proved a taxing issue both in terms of time and effort.⁸⁶ The importance of Vietnam had also been evident as early as 1965, when the Foreign Secretary's speech at the annual Labour Party conference was directed towards the issue. Moreover, the general debate following this speech was dominated by questions and remarks pertaining to Vietnam. Despite the defeat of a resolution calling on the government to dissociate with U.S. actions, Ellis illustrates that 'a large section of the conference was clearly unhappy with the government policy on Vietnam'.⁸⁷ This

⁸¹ *Sanity*, June 1965.

⁸² John Gittings, 'Do you have to be Johnson's boy?', *Sanity*, March 1966.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ In his memoirs Wilson briefly addresses anti-Vietnam War sentiment on two occasions: see Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964-1970: A Personal Record* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), pp. 445, 557.

⁸⁶ John Young (ed.), 'The Diary of Michael Stewart as British Foreign Secretary, April-May 1968', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Dec., 2005), p. 483.

⁸⁷ Ellis, *Britain, America and the Vietnam War*, p. 128.

study therefore seeks to complement such scholarship by elucidating how anti-war criticism was expressed as symptomatic of this alliance, thus teasing out how the anti-war voice in Britain was shaped by its specific political context.

The Anglo-American relationship in this period stemmed from the fact that ‘no leader, whatever rhetoric he employed, came to terms with the real changes that had occurred to acknowledge that Britain had to go down a different road to the one it had followed up to that triumph of 1945’.⁸⁸ This observation highlights how important the decline in British prestige on the world stage was in terms of fuelling a pivot towards the U.S., thus helping us to account for the Labour government’s acquiescence regarding Vietnam. Moreover, Arnold contends that the period during which discourse on Vietnam was most prevalent, the 1960s, constituted the period when ‘Britain did much of its soul searching about its position in the world’, thus heightening the significance of the Anglo-American relationship for an understanding of anti-war discourse in this era.⁸⁹

As has been outlined, existing histories of the 1960s have explored changing cultural norms. However, Burkett has recognised that such studies have given little attention to the concurrent rapid decolonisation which characterised the era.⁹⁰ By contrast, articles within left-wing publications at the time expressed displeasure with Britain’s recent colonial past and cited this history, along with its membership of numerous alliances, as harmful contributors to its foreign policy approach.⁹¹ Burkett has illustrated how CND negotiated Britain’s diminished geopolitical power within its rhetoric, or, as she terms it: ‘how to be a world leader without the one thing that made them world class – the empire’.⁹² Here, the concept of Britishness was intrinsic in CND’s outlook. Far from being characterised by collaborative efforts, CND’s conceptualisation of Britishness was one in which Britain led the way. As she explains ‘the leadership of CND believed that Britain’s international prestige was so high that if she gave up her nuclear membership other states, including the USA and the USSR, would surely follow’.⁹³ With this in mind, it is crucial to recognise that

⁸⁸ Arnold, *America and Britain*, p. 2.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain*, p. 11.

⁹¹ *Sanity*, March 1966.

⁹² Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain*, p. 13.

⁹³ Burkett, ‘Re-defining British morality’, p. 190.

concerns expressed by the left relating to the Anglo-American alliance were also informed by the context of Britain's diminishment as an imperial power and a belief that Britain's moral prestige was so high that the country did not need the Anglo-American alliance. In this way, the rhetoric and activism against the Vietnam War intersected with discourse concerning how Britain should orchestrate a new form of global leadership in its own, new, peaceful right.

In this vein, Burkett has elucidated the ways in which CND critiqued American imperial policies in Vietnam by utilising Britain's own less-than-savoury imperial past. She writes that CND's opposition was rooted in the fact that 'Britain had learned its imperial lessons [...] However, the United States was intent on setting up a new, robust and somehow worse empire'.⁹⁴ At the same time, this opposition to U.S. imperialism enabled CND to portray Britain as rehabilitated from its imperial past, thus presenting itself as 'a new, modern, moral, post-imperial leader of the progressive Commonwealth'.⁹⁵ For Burkett, morality was therefore a central facet of the British left's thought during this period, thus providing a rationale for its taking up the mantle of Vietnam. CND's concerns about the morality of the Wilson government were evident in its reaction to Britain's withdrawal from 'East of Suez' in 1968. Whilst the organisation 'applauded this change in the government posture' CND was also perturbed because these changes had not been 'the result of a confident and principled decision by Wilson's government. Instead, it had been one of the concessions of a cash-strapped government that had to devalue the pound in 1967'.⁹⁶

Crucially, CND argued that 'Britain alone had the character necessary to eschew the new nuclear world politics and take a new direction'.⁹⁷ Such discussion highlights the way in which activists viewed Britain's anti-war role as unique and distinct from that in other countries. Throughout 1965, CND continued to argue that 'it was not military might, but moral force that would give Britain real international power'.⁹⁸ Similarly, John Gittings, a CND supporter and research assistant at the

⁹⁴ Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain*, p. 60.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁹⁷ Burkett, 'Re-defining British morality', p. 192.

⁹⁸ Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain*, p. 31.

Royal Institute of International Affairs argued that ‘Britain’s international clout depended “upon the way we behave, not upon our free-falling bombs”’.⁹⁹

Former CND activist John Minnion has also framed the group’s involvement with Vietnam in moral terms: ‘in my view’, he writes

the reasons for CND’s involvement were [...] straightforward: that Britain’s most powerful ally seemed to have gone on the rampage, using a colossal and sophisticated armoury to bully a small nation; and that, depleted or not, CND was still easily the largest peace or protest organisation in the country (until 1968).¹⁰⁰

Such rhetoric was, of course, a product of genuine outrage regarding U.S. conduct in Vietnam. However, the threads of continuity which ran from CND to the anti-war movement mean that such rhetoric should also be considered as part of a broader ongoing dialogue concerning the place of morality within British foreign policy during this era. This notion of Britishness was exceptionally important, not just in CND’s campaign, but within the anti-war thought of the activists under analysis here – the immorality of the conflict featured heavily in the approach of all of these women in their protest of the war, as the subsequent chapters will illustrate. The thesis therefore aims to build on extant examples of scholarship which are currently orientated around the rhetoric of CND, by encompassing other groups, which are represented by the activists comprising case studies within this thesis. These groups were much more specifically orientated around Vietnam and therefore we can see in closer detail how discourse concerning Britain’s role as a moral beacon manifested itself within the anti-war movement in the period after CND’s pre-eminence.

CND had dominated British peace activism before Vietnam became a major foreign policy concern. However, CND’s pre-eminence amongst peace organisations was on the wane by around 1965. By the time campaigns against the Vietnam War were gathering steam, it therefore was no longer the political force that it once had been. We can, however, identify ways in which CND influenced the subsequent anti-war movement in Britain, for instance with regard to ideas about Britain’s moral leadership on the world stage. For an understanding of the British anti-war movement, it is therefore crucial to unpick these threads which wove through the tapestry of British peace activism in this period, from CND to the anti-war

⁹⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ John Minnion, ‘Anger and After: Britain’s CND and the Vietnam War’, in John Dumbrell (ed.), *Vietnam and the Antiwar Movement* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1990), pp. 166-7.

movement. In terms of personnel, most activists in this era could account for CND as having had an influence on their anti-war campaigning. Indeed, all the women under study here could locate some political roots in the nuclear group. But the group also had a distinct ideological legacy which it passed onto the anti-war movement. In this sense, this thesis is continuing scholarly lines of enquiry which have been identified by considering how the left developed into the anti-war era.

The role of Britain as a co-convener of the 1954 Geneva Accords – although not a rhetorical feature which was exclusive to CND – featured heavily within its condemnation of the war. Similar to the ideology of Britain constituting a third force, CND stressed the country's role as a co-convener at Geneva in order to advocate for the neutral, non-aligned role it should play in diffusing hostilities. *Sanity* continually stressed the belief of CND, which was echoed by many within leftist quarters, that 'the British government should [...] dissociate itself from American policy in Vietnam; it should join with the other co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954 in condemning the United States in the United Nations as the aggressor in Vietnam'.¹⁰¹ Combined with general moral outrage concerning the war, Britain's role as a co-convener at Geneva provided added justification for British activists' anti-war stance. This is something which was stressed by all the women activists within this study. By stressing this former role of Britain, activists continued to utilise rhetoric which emphasised that the role which Britain ought to play as a moral force for good was unique, and stressed that the country should leverage its unique position as a moral beacon by working to end the conflict, rather than risk becoming committed militarily through the Anglo-American alliance.

Students and insights into the British left

The primacy of CND within the historiography of the British movement, although useful in delineating the origins and influences of the anti-war movement, does, to some degree, obscure its heterogeneity. CND was undoubtedly important as a precursor to this movement, but as the 1960s progressed, Vietnam proved a source of division within the organisation: Peggy Duff cites CND's unwavering devotion to anti-nuclear concerns in the wake of an escalating conflict in Vietnam as crucial to

¹⁰¹ *Sanity*, June 1966.

her decision to leave in 1967.¹⁰² By 1966, differing political groups and factions comprised the British anti-Vietnam War movement. Debates over campaigning methods – a hangover from CND’s heyday – as well as differing attitudes towards the communist-led National Liberation Front (NLF) produced a multi-faceted and patchwork-like movement. However, the diversity of approaches and groups to anti-Vietnam War protest in Britain has not been sufficiently represented within current historiography.

Within much current literature, where the anti-war movement does not feature as a secondary aspect within studies on CND, a disproportionate amount of attention is afforded to the role of students. The influence of non-students has thus been largely obscured.¹⁰³ John Minnion has identified the VSC as the dominant organisation on the British anti-war scene by 1967.¹⁰⁴ VSC was one of the most active and overt anti-war groups during this period, and it organised two massive demonstrations at Grosvenor Square, the site of the U.S. Embassy, in London, in March and October 1968. Led by the charismatic Tariq Ali and composed predominantly of younger people, it is perhaps VSC’s overt visibility which has helped to lend credence to the student-orientated narratives of protest which are touted within historiography. For Nick Thomas, ideas around student protest have become ‘part of the media myth of the 1960s, and have informed many subsequent accounts of the decade, which have either failed to challenge these theories or have actively perpetuated them’.¹⁰⁵ This is something which is heightened by the fact that student protest reached an epoch in 1968 – coinciding with heightened anti-Vietnam War activity around the globe. However, protests in 1968 were not exclusively centred on the issue of Vietnam. This was especially true of British student protests. Furthermore, as Burkett has highlighted, ‘international student networking, co-operation and activity were well established before 1968’.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Peggy Duff, *Left, Left, Left: A Personal Account of Six Protest Campaigns 1945-65* (London: Allison & Busby, 1971), p. 207.

¹⁰³ Caroline Hoefflerle, ‘A Web of Interconnections: Student Peace Movements in Britain and the United States, 1960-1975’ in Benjamin Ziemann (ed.), *Peace Movements in Western Europe, Japan and the USA during the Cold War* (Essen: Klartext, 2007), p. 131-47.

¹⁰⁴ Minnion, ‘Anger and After’, p. 167.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas, ‘Challenging the Myths of the 1960s’, p. 281.

¹⁰⁶ Burkett, ‘The National Union of Students’, p. 540.

Moreover, a specific facet of British student protest which has been noted by scholars is the fact that it was much more muted in Britain. This suggests that student-orientated studies cannot tell us the full story about Britain's anti-Vietnam War movement. Indeed, historiography increasingly highlights that 'the anti-war movement was mainly made of loosely connected liberal and radical organisations, with student groups playing only a minor role'.¹⁰⁷ David Fowler has contrasted the differences in scale between British student protests and their continental and transatlantic counterparts. He highlights that whilst 30,000 students took part in the Paris student revolt of May 1968, a mere 300 occupied the administration building at the University of Hull a month later.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, he points out that protests in the U.S. and Paris were characterised by police involvement whilst in Britain, protests were more sedate: 'there was even an air of somnolence among British students', Fowler contends, citing one Bristol University student protest in mid-June 1968 which was advertised as a 'sleep-in'.¹⁰⁹

Scholars have emphasised that whilst 'Vietnam played a crucial part in politicising British youth', the main impetus for student activism in Britain was internal university issues.¹¹⁰ In a similar vein, Thomas has sought to demythologise student protest in 1960s Britain, and reappraise the role played by Vietnam therein. Thomas actually highlights the political apathy of much of the student body in Britain during this period. In doing so, he cites a survey carried out at the University of Warwick in June 1968, which found that only seven per cent of students were active in politics.¹¹¹ Moreover, of those students who were politically active, the vast majority were far more inclined to support traditional parliamentary parties as opposed to far-left organisations.¹¹² More recently, Burkett has highlighted that 'youth were not the only or even the main driving forces in [activist] organisations. CND, often credited as the first type of social movement or non-governmental organisation [...] was principally organised and run by middle-aged people'.¹¹³ Such scholarly examples indicate the distinctiveness of students' roles within activism and

¹⁰⁷ Michael Frey, *The International Peace Movement* in Klimke and Scharloth (eds.), *1968 in Europe*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁸ Fowler, *Youth Culture*, p. 149.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Ellis, "'A Demonstration of British Good Sense?'" , pp. 54-6.

¹¹¹ Thomas, 'Challenging the Myths of the 1960s', p. 282.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 283.

¹¹³ Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain*, pp. 13-14.

Vietnam campaigning in a British context, in comparison to the much more militant politicisation of students in the U.S. and elsewhere on the European continent. This highlights the need to examine other groups which took up the anti-war mantle, outside of the student population. This is a key concern of this thesis, which seeks not only to move beyond student activity in its focus on anti-Vietnam War activism, but also to re-claim the agency of these important women activists in doing so.

This said, it must be clarified that none of these works view student activism in Britain as altogether insignificant. Conversely, Caroline Hoefflerle emphasises that student campaigns against nuclear weapons, racism, sexism and the Vietnam War, were not only effective in raising public awareness, but had a significant impact in determining national decisions on these issues.¹¹⁴ Fowler concludes that the archival record indicates that during May and June 1968, the topic of international student activism was given considerable attention in Britain; Harold Wilson even appointed a Minister of Youth in November 1968 in the aftermath of anti-war demonstrations that year.¹¹⁵ Thomas writes that ‘by challenging the decisions of those in authority through the acts of protest, and thereby informing democratic debate and changing democratic institutions, these protests were of significance for British politics and society’.¹¹⁶ Ellis too points out that the British movement of the 1960s mobilised more students than ever before and ‘although, by and large, events in Great Britain lacked the drama and the passion of protest in the USA and in parts of continental Europe, its importance in pricking society’s conscience on such issues as Vietnam should not be underestimated’.¹¹⁷ Whilst students were certainly the most visible of all the social groups who have been ‘associated with [...] alternative society and the peace movement’, as pointed out by Dominic Sandbrook, their domination of the historiography has overshadowed the activism of other constituencies.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Hoefflerle, *British Student Activism*, p. 9.

¹¹⁵ Fowler, *Youth Culture*, pp. 147, 158. On the subject of the creation of the Minister of Youth position, Fowler adds that ‘the Minister in question, Mrs Judith Hart, was ridiculed in Parliament and beyond Westminster for being a Wilson gimmick. The problem was she was a Minister of Youth without Portfolio and neither she nor anyone else knew what her responsibilities were’. He also explains that Hart held the two posts of Minister of Youth and Paymaster General simultaneously in the 1966-70 government. So derided was the Minister of Youth position that her successor as Paymaster General, Peter Shore, refused to become Minister of Youth and the Education Department then took over responsibility for all youth-related matters.

¹¹⁶ Thomas, ‘Challenging the Myths of the 1960s’, p. 297.

¹¹⁷ Ellis, “‘A Demonstration of British Good Sense?’”, pp. 68-9.

¹¹⁸ Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties* (London: Little Brown, 2006), p. 507.

This overshadowing may be clarified through Hoefflerle's explanation on the relationship between students and the New Left in Britain. 'Contrary to the student-centred New Left in Germany and the United States', Hoefflerle writes, 'Britain's New Left had no powerful central organisation for students and little organisational presence in the universities'.¹¹⁹ Whilst Hoefflerle clarifies that student activism was not disconnected from the New Left – the student movement clearly reflected New Left ideology until the late Sixties, for example – her point about the British New Left not being student-centred goes some way to helping us to understand historiographical trends on the British anti-war movement.¹²⁰ This differing position occupied by students within the British New Left, as opposed to the student-centred New Left in the U.S. and Germany, may explain why scholarship on the anti-war movement in Britain has not really encompassed the activism represented by the four women activists in this thesis. Their activism was rooted in the traditional British left, or orchestrated around the BCPV, and therefore, by focussing on students, historiography has not tapped into other elements of the British movement.

The historiography thus reveals three critical things. Firstly, the student movement was an important facet of political activism in Britain during this period, despite its lack of spectacular and newsworthy violence compared with its continental and transatlantic counterparts. Secondly, whilst this may be true, some historians may have overstated the extent of such activism, largely through a focus on cultural tropes regarding countercultural values and behaviour. Thirdly, whilst there is no denying the significance and importance of student activism as a body of political action with which the anti-war movement intersected, Vietnam was usually not the issue of central importance to students, rather, internal university issues inspired most British student activism in this period.¹²¹ Hoefflerle also contends that student rights constituted a larger concern than Vietnam in terms of the number of students involved.¹²² Such works thus complicate our notions concerning the role of students within the rise of the New Left in Britain. This is significant because it indicates the need for us to diversify our notions of anti-Vietnam activism in Britain, which has often been portrayed as student-centric. This thesis thus aims to round out our understanding of anti-Vietnam activism undertaken by Britons at this time.

¹¹⁹ Hoefflerle, *British Student Activism*, p. 8.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Ellis, "A Demonstration of British Good Sense?", p. 56.

¹²² Hoefflerle, *British Student Activism*, p. 9.

Whilst student protest did comprise an important component of British anti-war protest, it is important to bear in mind that it was just that: a component, and not the entire picture of Britain's Vietnam movement. Ronald Fraser notes that, for many British youths, 'the student activism of CND and the New Left had been sunk by the Labour Party machine [...] to Britain's radical youth, the "traditional politics" of the Labour movement had failed and older pressure groups did not spark imaginations'.¹²³ Here Fraser identifies the emerging rift within the British left. Within the anti-war movement this rift manifested itself around a few different points. These included differing attitudes towards the NLF as well as conflicting ideas regarding the style of tactics which should be utilised within the anti-war movement.

The generational divide over protest tactics was evident in dialogue within the left concerning respectability. Unlike the more confrontational methods adopted by the VSC, many older activists, including those under consideration here, were reluctant to adopt too radical a stance. Again, it is possible to trace this attitude back to the influence of CND. As well as being orchestrated around Britain's morality, CND's identity was, according to Burkett, 'firmly based on traditional values and ideas [...] including notions of respectability'.¹²⁴ Burkett writes that

the view that the respectability of the organisation was absolutely paramount was visible in the concern voiced by the CND leadership upon the creation of the more radical [CND offshoot organisation] Committee of 100. Discussion of tactical issues was bound up with ideas regarding what was appropriate behaviour for respectable British citizens.¹²⁵

Contemporaneously, protests by activists further on the political left, particularly those which ended with violence, such as the Grosvenor Square protests of 1968, were criticised using this framework of Britishness being synonymous with respectability. David Simonelli, for instance, has highlighted that protesters were accused of 'anti-British' behaviour after these protests.¹²⁶ Despite the more subdued nature of student protest in Britain, during isolated incidents of more violent protests, as evidenced at Grosvenor Square, it was often younger left-wing activists who

¹²³ Ronald Fraser, *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1988), p. 11.

¹²⁴ Burkett, 'Re-defining British morality', p. 185.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

¹²⁶ David Simonelli, *Working Class Heroes: Rock Music and British Society in the 1960s and 1970s* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013), p. 117.

promoted a confrontational stance on the issue. Evidently, there was discord within the peace movement surrounding militant stances towards anti-war protest. In this sense the British anti-war movement affords us the opportunity to investigate the evolution of the British left during this time, and to understand some of the dialogues taking place amongst its members.

Similarly, Ellis' work has dealt with ideological fissures within the anti-war movement. For example, she has identified that, whilst solidarity was a term used often within the British anti-war movement, it meant 'different things to different protesters precisely because of their varying aims'.¹²⁷ Whilst the BCPV and much of Britain's labour element emphasised a position of solidarity with the people of Vietnam, more revolutionary groups, including the VSC, emphasised the war as a struggle for liberation. As one VSC founder, David Horowitz, reflected subsequently:

Let me make this perfectly clear: Those of us who inspired and then led the anti-war movement did not want merely to stop the killing [...] We wanted the Communists to win [...] 'Bring the troops home' was our slogan; the fall of Saigon was the result.¹²⁸

This comment highlights a key strand of discord amongst anti-war campaigners. This thesis thus serves to illustrate the variety of opinion within the British left relating to Vietnam during this time. It will evidence that some less-radical activists were often reluctant to openly support the NLF and faced criticism when they were perceived as doing so. In this sense, it advances understanding of the discourse within the British left during this time pertaining to Vietnam.

Sources

The four case studies within the thesis have been constructed utilising numerous archives. Relevant papers from the archives of CND and the ICDP, held at the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick, have been consulted. Moreover, research for this thesis has analysed the papers of individual anti-war campaigners held at the Modern Records Centre, including Bob Purdie, Jack Askins, Lawrence Daly and, of course, those of Margaret Stanton and Amicia Young, which have provided a wealth of material on the BCPV in particular. Further papers on Amicia Young – which are contained within a collection at the Hull History Centre

¹²⁷ Ellis, 'Promoting Solidarity at Home and Abroad', p. 565.

¹²⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*

and comprise part of a more extensive collection containing the papers of her husband, Commander Edgar Young – have also been accessed. The papers of Anne Kerr MP, which provided so much insight into Kerr’s activities both within and outside of the Labour Party, are also contained within the archives at the Hull History Centre. Furthermore, the thesis has benefitted from documents provided by the People’s History Museum in Manchester pertaining to Amicia Young’s links to the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). At the University of Bradford, the extensive holdings pertaining to the ICDP shed much light on Duff’s anti-war work, particularly her transatlantic contacts and her work with the Stockholm Conference on Vietnam (SCV).

The thesis has gained greatly from interviews and comments from associates and relatives of the women activists on whom the case studies are centred. Unfortunately, it proved impossible to gain insight from contacts relating to all four women activists within this study. Jennifer Stanton, daughter of Margaret, added much colour and context to her mother’s anti-war story. Likewise, the insights of Richard Gott and Hermione Sacks – both associates of Peggy Duff during her tenure with CND and the ICDP – provided great insight into Duff’s own views and the scope of her activism. Insightful comments from Duff’s associates Noam Chomsky and John Gittings were also gratefully received.

Numerous scholars who have used oral testimony have highlighted its inherently subjective nature.¹²⁹ In 1996, James Hinton wrote of the problematic nature of oral history because the process of “remembering” how we became who we are now’ involves a narrative formation through which the relative significance of events is continually reassessed in light of more recent events.¹³⁰ This thesis does not aim for an oral history as such, yet it utilises oral testimony to highlight personal dimensions that are not clear from an assessment of the archival record. Avram Taylor has noted that the use of any historical source has advantages and disadvantages: while acknowledging that ‘it would be wrong to deny that people’s

¹²⁹ See Natalie Tomlinson, *Race, Ethnicity and the Women’s Movement in England, 1968-1993* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 198; Celia Hughes, *Young Lives on the Left: Sixties Activism and the Liberation of the Self* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 10; Robert Gildea and James Mark, ‘Introduction’ in Robert Gildea, James Mark and Annette Waring (eds.), *Europe’s 1968: Voices of Revolt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹³⁰ James Hinton, ‘Middle-Class Socialism: Selfhood, Democracy and Distinction in Wartime County Durham’, *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Autumn, 2006), p. 116.

recollections can become distorted over a long period of time', he points out that historical documents are also often written after the fact.¹³¹ In this respect, both oral and written testimony involve a degree of recollection. In the context of this thesis, an awareness of such issues is particularly important as the interview testimony is merely from associates and relatives of the women in question, rather than any of the women themselves (all of whom are now deceased). Despite this, these accounts are still a significant source: they augment the rigorous archival research underpinning this thesis and they contribute to its overall perspective – one that makes this study different from 'the "panoramic" accounts' of the era which 'lost individuals in crowds of demonstrators, or that highlight the viewpoint of a small number of celebrity activists'.¹³² The use of oral history testimony within this thesis, when used with care, helps to illuminate the stories of female activists whose stories may otherwise be lost from history – particularly in the cases of Kerr, Young and Stanton.

This thesis delivers a reappraisal of the British anti-war movement by extending the scope beyond student activism whilst focussing exclusively on anti-Vietnam War activities. These female campaigners provide important case studies in terms of Britain's anti-Vietnam War scene, and in many ways their various experiences provide microcosms of broader developments within leftist political circles during this period. Their activism highlights the multiplicity of anti-war approaches in this era, many of which have been given little historiographical attention so far. Informed by the archives of these women and the organisations with which they were associated, as well as recollections of associates and personal memoirs, the thesis facilitates analysis of the British movement and the international context in which it operated. It provides important examples which enable us to assess various aspects of the anti-war milieu in Britain including its transnational links; important and hitherto largely neglected organisations at both national and local level; the role of MPs therein; its CND heritage; and its links with trade unions. The thesis also analyses the relationship between the Vietnam War and gendered rhetoric in this era. Its case studies aim to re-integrate the agency of women within the historiography of the British anti-war movement. In doing so, it also prompts a thorough discussion of the relationship between gender and activism, which is

¹³¹ Avram Taylor, *Working Class Credit and Community since 1918* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 5.

¹³² Gildea and Mark, 'Introduction', p. 10.

explored in Chapter Five. Here, the thesis contributes to gender history more broadly.

Through four case-study chapters and a fifth chapter exploring the relationship between Vietnam and gender, it aims to provide the most extensive study of British activism against the Vietnam War and the roles of women activists therein. Writing about the American movement, Simon Hall has asserted that ‘it is far from clear that the anti-war movement had any meaningful impact at all’.¹³³ This thesis does not aim to comment upon the relative successes that the various women activists under analysis here did or did not have. Rather, it seeks to offer a gateway into the specific features of the British anti-war movement, whilst concurrently contextualising the anti-war work of these women in debates surrounding gender and activism.

¹³³ Simon Hall, *Rethinking the American Anti-War Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 11.

Section A:

*Women activists between
CND, the Labour Party and
anti-war protest*

Chapter 1

Taking ‘the acid test’: Anne Kerr MP and the Vietnam War

In April 1966, CND general secretary Peggy Duff, made clear in a letter to Labour MP Anne Kerr how she regarded the position of parliamentarians in the struggle against the Vietnam War. Following on from the recent bombing of oil depots in Hanoi and Haiphong, an action viewed by many as a provocative escalation of the war, Duff wrote that ‘the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong [...] and the despatch of British troops to Vietnam must be regarded as the acid test of any Member of Parliament’s commitment to bring peace to Vietnam’.¹ From 1964, Anne Kerr had the opportunity to take this test, having been elected to the House of Commons for the constituency of Rochester and Chatham. This was the same year that the Labour Party’s election victory brought Harold Wilson to power, a triumph which the left-wing publication *Tribune* described it as ‘an historic utterance which established Labour unchallenged as the party of Britain’s destiny’.² By 1965, however, disillusionment with the Labour government was increasing amongst activists.

Rhiannon Vickers writes that it was the Vietnam issue

more than any other, that drained support for Wilson’s foreign policy from Labour Party members and members of the general public, and became part of the lexicon of the left that Wilson had betrayed the party. As soon as Labour lost the 1970 election, the party line changed to one of outright condemnation of US policy in Vietnam.³

This discord rooted from disappointment at Wilson’s failure to stand up to the U.S. on Vietnam, a factor which, as this chapter will show, complicated the anti-war position of Labour MPs such as Kerr. As the 1960s progressed, there was an ever-growing chasm within the peace movement between those members who wanted to continue to agitate for peace in Vietnam using parliamentary means, and those who became increasingly disillusioned with the Labour government and the Labour Party, and thus sought to channel their concerns using extra-parliamentary means.

¹ Peggy Duff to Anne Kerr, 29 April 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

² Quoted in Steven Fielding, ““White heat” and white collars: the evolution of “Wilsonism””, in R. Coopey, S. Fielding and N. Tiratsoo (eds.), *The Wilson Governments, 1964-1970* (London: Pinter, 1995), p. 29.

³ Rhiannon Vickers, *The Labour Party and the World, Volume 2: Labour’s Foreign Policy since 1951* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 4.

Kerr's election to parliament in 1964 did not constitute her first experience of public service or Labour Party politics. Kerr had served in the Women's Royal Naval Service during the Second World War, where she met her first husband James Doran Clark. She married Clark a month before D-Day, and their son Patrick was born a year later. The marriage lasted eight years and ended in divorce. After the war, Kerr worked as an actress, interviewer and broadcaster, and joined the actors' union Equity in 1951. Kerr's wartime experiences critically influenced her outlook on life and her consequent approach to politics, which was always coloured by a fundamental opposition to war. Kerr became a member of the Labour Party at the age of 28 and initially attempted to enter national politics by standing at Twickenham in the general election of 1959. In 1960, she married for the second time, to Russell Kerr, who himself would become an MP for Feltham in 1966.

As an MP, Kerr belonged on the far left of the Labour Party on a number of contemporary issues beyond Vietnam, including nuclear disarmament and human rights. Kerr had, in fact, been a founder member of CND and the organisation thus played an important role in informing her anti-war work. She would often speak at CND events, as was the case in September 1968, when Kerr spoke at an event organised to coincide with the Labour Party annual conference.⁴ Successful revolutionary struggles in the so-called 'Third World' combined with the ugly excesses exhibited by the U.S. in Vietnam, had served to galvanise the extra-parliamentary Left throughout Europe.⁵ In Britain, however, Vietnam served to reinforce the widening gulf between leftist anti-war protesters and those MPs on the left of the Labour Party.

In 1964, left-wing MPs had formed the Tribune group, which was conceived to push a socialist agenda. The group was founded around support for the left-wing publication *Tribune*, which itself had been created by two left-wing Labour MPs in 1937, and the publication was the main forum for the left within the Parliamentary Labour Party during this period. In *Left, Left, Left*, Peggy Duff discusses the long-standing links with the Labour Party which had been enjoyed by *Tribune* in the early

⁴ Agenda, Sunday 29 September 1968, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/140.

⁵ Geoffrey Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought: A History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p. 292. See also Robert Gildea, James Mark and Niek Pas, 'European Radicals and the "Third World"', *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2011), pp. 449-71.

1950s. She explains that *Tribune* became something of a mouthpiece for the so-called Bevanite wing of the Labour Party, a left-wing faction which opposed the leadership of Hugh Gaitskell and was particularly critical of Labour's foreign policy (and in particular, the slowness of the left in the Party to question American foreign policy).⁶ Duff's description of the war as an 'acid test' for MPs reflects the growing rift amongst the anti-war movement surrounding the integrity of Labour MPs as an anti-war faction. Many peace campaigners increasingly questioned the reliability of those Labour MPs who expressed opposition to the war; many activists wondered how these MPs could serve a government whose stance was so equivocal on the issue.

Richard Taylor has analysed the changing dynamics between CND and the Labour Party during this period, expressing that as the disarmament movement in particular developed and changed in the early 1960s, 'it became ever more difficult for the *Tribune* left, in the Labour Party and in CND, to hold together the remnants of the Labour Movement/CND link'.⁷ Vietnam was undoubtedly a central issue which strained this relationship. Duff points out that whilst the *Tribune* group of MPs numbered around fifty, their allegiance varied greatly.⁸ Moreover, she highlights that the group 'had very little support from trade union leaders'.⁹ This was something which stood the group apart from a previous group of left-wing MPs, orchestrated around Aneurin Bevan, who had been vital contacts for CND. By the end of the 1950s CND had the support of top trade union leaders, Duff explained, 'as well as rank and file support bringing unions like the AEU to their side against the virulent opposition of their leaders'.¹⁰ Duff's testimony therefore serves to underscore Taylor's contention regarding the growing distance between the extra-parliamentary left and left-wing Labour MPs during this period.

The anti-war work of an MP such as Kerr is illuminating on two interrelated fronts. Firstly, it enables us to analyse the conundrum faced by many anti-war MPs

⁶ Peggy Duff, *Left, Left, Left: A Personal Account of Six Protest Campaigns 1945-65* (London: Allison & Busby, 1971), p. 41.

⁷ Richard Taylor, *Against the Bomb: the British Peace Movement, 1958-1965* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 308-09. See also Richard Taylor, 'The Labour Party and CND: 1957 to 1984', in Richard Taylor and Nigel Young (eds.) *Campaigns for Peace: British Peace Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987).

⁸ Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, p. 42.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

who were torn between protecting the Labour government they had waited so long to see instilled in Westminster and speaking out against that same government and its support of heinous U.S. policy in Vietnam. Kerr's case study also enables us to examine the tension within the peace movement as peace activists placed increased pressure on left-wing Labour MPs to do all they could to speak out on the issue of Vietnam, irrespective of party politics. This chapter will begin with a brief analysis of the importance of the Vietnam issue for the Labour left, before turning to examine Kerr's various anti-war efforts both in and outside of parliament. It will then seek to comment upon the extent to which Kerr's activism was influenced by gendered concerns. The mixed reactions afforded to Kerr from members of the public will then be considered, before Kerr's transnational connections will be studied. The chapter thus aims to piece together the disparate aspects of Kerr's anti-war identity, whilst commenting in particular upon the contradictory effects which her status as an MP had upon her anti-war work.

The Labour Party, the Tribune Group and Kerr's anti-war work as a parliamentarian

It was around 1965 that the Vietnam War began to be a salient political issue in Britain, although anti-war protests would not reach their peak until 1967. Press coverage reflected this; only in 1967 did British press coverage of the anti-war movement develop from 'mere reportage' to 'more extensive and outspoken analysis'.¹¹ Events throughout 1965, however, signalled the increased outrage which Labour MPs in particular felt as the war escalated. On 4 March 1965, sixty backbench MPs tabled an emergency motion in Parliament.¹² This was followed on 22 March by acknowledgement from the U.S. Defence Department of the use of napalm and gas in Vietnam, causing an outcry which was heightened by the fact that the Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, was on an official visit to Washington at the time of these revelations. In September 1965, William Warbey gave up his post as Labour Whip in protest of the government's policy on Vietnam. Warbey subsequently wrote a book on the matter, in which he sought to expose the truth about the British government's role in supporting American actions in Vietnam,

¹¹ Nick Thomas, 'Protests against the Vietnam War in 1960s Britain: The Relationship between Protesters and the Press', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Sept., 2008), p. 338.

¹² Rhiannon Vickers, 'Harold Wilson, the British Labour Party, and the War in Vietnam', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Spring, 2008), p. 52.

whilst purporting to undertake independent peace initiatives.¹³ The Tribune group had also been quick to rally around the cause of Vietnam and started pressing for a debate on the issue in the House of Commons in February 1965. A report of the group makes clear that it was emboldened and enlarged by the inclusion of Members who had been elected in 1966.¹⁴

Increased concern about Vietnam was also evident more broadly, particularly at Labour Party conferences. In 1965, two resolutions condemning U.S. intervention in Vietnam had been defeated, but debate surrounding them was lengthy and heated. This changed at the conference of the following year, when a resolution brought by the Fire Brigades Union called upon the government to ‘bring all pressures on the United States of America to end the war in Vietnam’.¹⁵ This resolution was passed. The Report of the National Executive Committee at the 1967 conference showed that there had been ten Foreign Affairs debates that year, and noted that this was ‘an unusually high number which reflected important developments in a number of fields’.¹⁶ In 1968 a resolution was narrowly adopted calling on the government to ‘disassociate itself completely from the policy of the United States Government in Vietnam and to support U Thant and the overwhelming majority of the United Nations in trying to persuade the U.S.A. to end the bombing of North Vietnam, immediately, permanently and unconditionally’.¹⁷ Vickers claims that this rebuff of current foreign policy ‘not only highlighted the problems of internal party democracy but also conspicuously demonstrated the deep divisions within the party over Vietnam’.¹⁸

The complexity of the relationship between conference decisions and MPs’ stances has been explored by Vickers. At the Labour Party’s annual conferences in both 1966 and 1967, members voted to reject the government’s Vietnam policy. Highlighting insecurities about British sovereignty, the 1966 motion, which was

¹³ William Warbey, *Vietnam: The Truth* (London: The Merlin Press, 1965), pp. 9-10.

¹⁴ ‘Role of the group and its future work’, report on Tribune Group, undated, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/208.

¹⁵ ‘Composite Resolutions and Amendments and Emergency Resolution’, Annual Conference 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/138.

¹⁶ Report of the National Executive Committee to the 66th Annual Conference, 2-6 October 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/139.

¹⁷ Agenda for the 67th Annual Conference of the Labour Party, 30 September to 4 October 1968, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/140.

¹⁸ Vickers, ‘Harold Wilson’, p. 43.

passed by a small majority, stressed Britain's ability to pursue a policy independent of the U.S with regards to Vietnam.¹⁹ This action can therefore be read as part of the general soul searching which Britain was undertaking with regards to foreign policy during this period, as mentioned previously.²⁰ These actions constituted the first time that Labour government policy had been renounced at an annual conference of the party.²¹ Vickers explains the significance of this in the Labour context, stating that 'whilst nothing inherently prevented the Labour party and the Labour government from having different policies on the same issue', due to the ability of the annual conference to create policy (a fact termed as 'conference sovereignty'), 'many assumed that conference decisions were binding on a Labour government'.²²

This was an assumption which was certainly held by the Tribune group, which deemed the Wilson government's failure to carry out conference decisions immoral and unprincipled. Therefore, in the British context, charges of immorality against the government were twofold: pertaining not only to the government's reluctance to stand up to the U.S., but also to the undemocratic nature with which conference decisions pertaining to the Vietnam issue were being dealt with within the Labour Party. Vietnam therefore ran deeper than a foreign policy decision: it called into question the very fabric of the wider Labour Party's relationship to the Labour government.

Reflecting this, a 1968 Tribune group report claimed that the Wilson government had 'failed to carry out Conference decisions to break with U.S. policy over Vietnam, and on Rhodesia it has moved towards a sell-out'.²³ Kerr and her fellow MPs with similar anti-war sympathies thus had to perform something of a balancing act in order to stay true to their anti-war beliefs whilst operating within a government which was supportive of U.S. conduct. This is one facet which makes Kerr's such an interesting case study, as, despite being appalled by the policy of the Labour government on Vietnam, she still felt that it was best to stay on the inside and attempt to forge change from within. The criticism she encountered for this is

¹⁹ Sylvia Ellis, *Britain, America and the Vietnam War* (Westport: Praeger, 2004), p. 200.

²⁰ Guy Arnold, *America and Britain: Was there ever a special relationship?* (London: Hurst & Company, 2014), p. 3.

²¹ Vickers, 'Harold Wilson', p. 43.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

²³ 'Role of the group and its future work', report on Tribune Group, undated, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/208.

evident later in this chapter where some of the letters Kerr received from the public are considered. Some left-wingers felt that this party loyalty was abhorrent, as was clear in a letter from Dorking Youth CND, in which the group expressed its view that ‘it has seemed to many of us, that to most Labour MPs, the party means more than the burning children, the tortured mothers and the injustices of this war’.²⁴ Kerr’s case study thus provides a gateway through which to analyse the discourse within the British left during this period concerning how best to agitate for peace.

A Tribune group report makes it clear that the group appreciated the contemporary changes besetting the peace movement. Alluding to the aforementioned chasm within the movement, it is apparent that the group differentiated between the old, orthodox peace movement, most notably embodied by CND, and the Vietnam movement, which it viewed as distinctly more radical. Recognising the proliferation of extra-parliamentary groups comprising the British left, the Tribune group of MPs appreciated the increasing need to look beyond parliament in order to achieve not only a more favourable policy on Vietnam, but its socialist aims more generally. As one report of the group stated: ‘we should frankly recognise the limitations of seeking to achieve socialism through Parliamentary and Labour channels alone’.²⁵ To this end, the group sought to establish closer extra-parliamentary relationships, both with traditional labour groups such as trade unions, and also what it termed ‘newer’ groups, including students.²⁶ This indicates a contemporary recognition of the current shifts which were occurring within the British left during this period.

More importantly, the group reflected on what this evolution of the British left meant for MPs. As one report clarified, the CND movement was led by left-wing MPs, pacifist churchmen and other similarly-orientated individuals, with revolutionary groups having only a negligible influence within the organisation’s structure.²⁷ Mark Phythian has attested to MPs’ deep involvement in campaigns against Britain’s atomic bomb programme – he has identified MPs’ close

²⁴ Bill Walsh on behalf of Dorking Youth CND, 11 February [year not given], Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

²⁵ ‘The Left wing in parliament and the British political scene’, undated, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/208.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ ‘The Left wing in parliament and the British political scene’, undated, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/208.

associations with CND as dating back to the 1950s.²⁸ The importance of church-based opposition was noted by Peggy Duff in her memoir and has been identified subsequently by Chris Wrigley.²⁹ However, with regards to the Vietnam campaign, the Tribune group report attested that it was the ‘revolutionary groups who are in the leadership, MPs are excluded, and the whole tone and flavour of the movement has changed’.³⁰ The report acknowledged that whereas CND had been orientated towards influencing the Labour movement, the Vietnam movement had no such preoccupation.³¹ The group thus felt that it needed to ‘base our strategy not exclusively on Parliamentary action but on demonstrations and direct action too’.³² Fitting with this strategy of the Tribune group, Kerr’s anti-war activism was myriad, as she attempted to utilise connections both inside and outside of parliament in order to foster a changed governmental policy on Vietnam.

Despite the evidence pointing to growing discord within the Labour Party over Vietnam, Nick Tiratsoo has cautioned against overstating the coherence of internal left-wing revolt. He highlights that ‘opposition in the party never gained much momentum. In Parliament, the Tribune Group could call on only about 40 MPs, perhaps 10 per cent of the Parliamentary Labour Party’.³³ Whilst the Tribune group did have a special sub-committee on Vietnam, this comprised a mere four MPs (of which Kerr was one).³⁴ Harold Wilson even downplayed the centrality of Vietnam to British foreign affairs at this time in his memoir, wherein he claimed that ‘long before the major parliamentary debates in June and August 1968, Nigeria had replaced Vietnam as our major overseas preoccupation. It took up far more of my time [...] and far more moral wear and tear than any other issue’.³⁵ At the polls in March 1966, the British electorate did not seem to rank Vietnam particularly high on

²⁸ Mark Phythian, ‘CND’s Cold War’, *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Autumn 2001), p. 135.

²⁹ See Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, p. 129 and Chris Wrigley, ‘Now you see it, now you don’t: Harold Wilson and Labour’s foreign policy 1964-70’, in Coopey, Fielding and Tiratsoo (eds.), *The Wilson Governments*, p. 126.

³⁰ ‘The Left wing in parliament and the British political scene’, undated, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/208.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Nick Tiratsoo, ‘Labour and its critics: the case of the May Day Manifesto Group’, in Coopey, Fielding and Tiratsoo (eds.), *The Wilson Governments*, p. 173.

³⁴ Tribune sub-committee on Vietnam, handwritten notes, undated, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/208.

³⁵ Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964-1970: A Personal Record* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p. 558.

its list of priorities, and indeed, Labour was returned to power, increasing its majority from just 4 to an emphatically more decisive 96 seats. As Dominic Sandbrook has argued, it is questionable whether there was much concern about the conflict from the public at large: ‘although opinion polls consistently show public opposition to the Vietnam War, the movement did not really appeal to the electorate at large’.³⁶ Certainly, the mere 253 votes garnered by Richard Gott during his intervention in a by-election in Hull in January 1966 would indicate that the Vietnam issue did not have much resonance at the local level, as Gott ran purely on an anti-war platform.³⁷ However, according to Jonathan Colman, the margin of victory which returned Wilson to power in March 1966 also gave rise to an emboldened and vigorous new left within the Labour Party, which would ‘bedevil Wilson’s commitment to Washington’.³⁸ Despite this, it is by no means clear that this renewed Labour segment, vigorous though it may have been, gained any more tangible influence upon the foreign policy decisions of the government.

One activist, Philip G. Braithwaite who was active within the West Midlands Campaign for Peace in Vietnam, encapsulated the dilemma of many Labour MPs when he wrote to Kerr in 1969. He stated

I can imagine that it must be very difficult for someone holding your position on Vietnam to continue to be in the Labour Party [...] However, with the possibility of an almost neo-fascist Tory Government next October – and with an hopelessly splintered Left – we have no choice but to work for, or at least, do nothing to oppose, the continuation of a Labour Government next year.³⁹

Unlike Braithwaite, who viewed the Labour government as the lesser of two evils, and therefore understood Kerr’s position within the party, many members of the public asked Kerr why she did not simply resign if she felt so strongly against the conduct of the war in Vietnam and the British role therein. She wrote that she and her fellow MPs felt that ‘we possibly have more effect inside the P.L.P. [Parliamentary Labour Party] than ever we could outside – on a wide range of highly

³⁶ Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties* (London: Little Brown, 2006), p. 503.

³⁷ For a scholarly exploration of this by-election campaign see Sophie Roberts, ‘The campaign of the “red-bearded radical”: Richard Gott and the Hull North by-election, 1966’, *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sept., 2018), pp. 336-358.

³⁸ Jonathan Colman, *A ‘Special Relationship’? Harold Wilson, Lyndon B. Johnson and Anglo-American relations ‘at the summit’, 1964-8* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 100.

³⁹ Philip G. Braithwaite to Kerr, 22 November 1969, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/213.

important issues as well as on many larger ones, such as caring as best we may for our constituencies'.⁴⁰ This belief in the parliamentary system, despite little encouragement from the Wilson government regarding Vietnam, highlights the fractious state of the extra-parliamentary left, which was not deemed a strong enough platform from which to challenge major foreign policy decisions at this time. Thus, left-wingers like Kerr still felt that working within the parliamentary system was the best option. The Labour Peace Fellowship pondered the issue in a newsletter of 1967, asking 'are those who continue to work for peace through the Labour Party making any progress either in Parliament or outside?'.⁴¹ The article, like Kerr, ultimately opined that realistically the Labour Party constituted the only political option, and expressed admiration for MPs for having forced the recent debate in the House on Vietnam.⁴²

The article demonstrates a commitment to traditional forms of politics based around the parliamentary system – a notion which would be increasingly challenged as the decade progressed. It also advocated faith in the Labour government stating: 'we must use democracy to influence the government's policies rather than dissipate our energies trying to change the leaders [...] we have to win the battle of ideas and remember that certain members of the government are amenable to influence'.⁴³ This was something which was advocated by the Tribune group more generally, which recognised that 'the leaders of the Vietnam demonstration are learning that demonstrations in themselves are not enough. They must become involved in political action'.⁴⁴ This highlights that, despite being aware of the evolution of extra-parliamentary groups which increasingly challenged orthodox conceptualisations of the left, the Tribune group ultimately believed that traditional political action, meaning engagement with the Labour Party, was essential. Furthermore, the Tribune group clearly believed that it had a distinct role in encouraging demonstration leaders to utilise the Labour Party in order to agitate for change.

⁴⁰ Kerr to Mrs C. Delf, 1 April 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/217.

⁴¹ 'Influencing Labour – are we making any progress', *Labour Peace Fellowship* newsletter, May-June 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/139.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ 'Role of the group and its future work', report on Tribune Group, undated, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/208.

One incident highlighted how Kerr's status as an MP proved problematic amongst her fellow anti-war campaigners. A letter she received from Hetty Vorhaus of the British Liaison Committee for Women's Peace Groups in 1968 explained the awkward decision the Committee had made in choosing to send Vorhaus (rather than Kerr) on a trip to Hanoi:

the Liaison Committee has chosen me to go to Hanoi for them at the end of the month [...] I think you know I nominated you [...] The reason for the women's choice going my way (I never asked or expected it) was a very political decision [...] They think you defend the Labour Party at a time when there is no defence valid.⁴⁵

Kerr replied to this, pointing out that 'other women MPs have been put forward to the Liaison Committee, and have not been accepted [...] I was so sure they would finally take an MP. But the revolt is on!'⁴⁶

The limited influence of the Labour left, even after the election of 1966, necessitated anti-war pressure to occur outside of parliament. Kerr's role as an MP thus presented her with something of a quandary. In parliament, she was at the centre of British power, with access to the upper echelons of the government. Her position meant that she was well-connected to foreign parliamentarians and other influential figures. However, being an MP necessitated being in the public eye, and this meant that she was, in many ways, more vulnerable to criticism than other anti-war campaigners. As the next section will illustrate, despite the access afforded to Kerr as an MP, it was certainly not the case that Kerr's proximity to the British government meant that she had any more of an influential anti-war voice than other contemporary campaigners.

Like many other anti-war campaigners, Kerr contacted Prime Minister Harold Wilson directly on a number of occasions, often passing on comments she had received from constituents regarding the war. Despite her position as a representative of Wilson's party, a position which, one may expect meant that Kerr received more than a cursory reply, usually, these letters were answered with Wilson explaining that he had dealt with this matter in a recent speech and would not enter

⁴⁵ Vorhaus to Kerr, 3 May [1968], Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/213.

⁴⁶ Kerr to Vorhaus, 8 May [1968], Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/213.

into a discussion any further.⁴⁷ Despite such limited interest from the Prime Minister, Kerr was unwavering in her commitment to the traditional parliamentary system.

Kerr's faith in the parliamentary system was exhibited in the number of ways she used her position as an MP to raise her concerns about Vietnam. One of the main objectives of Kerr and her like-minded colleagues was to keep Vietnam within the dialogue of the upper echelons of the government. With this aim in mind, they consistently pushed to force a debate on Vietnam, something which they succeeded in doing in the summer of 1966.⁴⁸ In August 1967 Kerr also tabled a motion, which was signed by 67 Labour MPs, and called for the recall of Parliament should the U.S. escalate the war in Vietnam.⁴⁹

Kerr's position as an MP also enabled her to visit the U.S. Embassy numerous times in order to protest the war and meet U.S. officials – she was part of a deputation to the U.S. Embassy on 14 February 1967, where she went with a number of fellow MPs, including Sydney Silverman, Stan Orme, and her husband Russell Kerr. Kerr had already presented a petition at the U.S. Embassy following an anti-war demonstration in July 1966, and, showing her flair for the eccentric, had presented a pound of tea along with the petition in order to remind the Americans of the Boston Tea Party.⁵⁰ Conceivably, the aim here was to impress upon the U.S. that radical thought had once played an important role within the country's heritage.

In a letter to constituents in March 1965, Kerr had explained that she had been to the U.S. Embassy along with thirteen other MPs, thus highlighting how her status as an MP afforded her opportunities to access centres of power. In this letter, she had expressed the difficulty of her anti-war stance, explaining that 'I am also way out on a limb on many issues with the Whips'.⁵¹ Despite this alienation from aspects of the party, Kerr did firmly believe that she ought to stick with the

⁴⁷ See e.g. Harold Wilson to Kerr, 16 June 1965, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre U DMK/1/213; Wilson to Kerr, 16 December 1969, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre U DMK/1/218.

⁴⁸ Cornell to Kerr, 4 July 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

⁴⁹ W.G. Carey to Kerr, 19 August 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/220.

⁵⁰ Mr Singh to Kerr, 5 July 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/216.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Parliamentary Labour Party and work to influence others. ‘Action on one’s own’, she wrote, ‘tho’ satisfying momentarily, might well be seen as little more than a flamboyant gesture, and would no carry us forward in our main purpose, which is to stop the war, imperialism and the “military industrial complex” which lies aback of the whole horrible situation’.⁵² This response highlights Kerr’s independence of thought within the Party on many issues, but also underscores her commitment to the Parliamentary Labour Party once again. Clearly, Kerr believed that there was strength in numbers when it came to anti-war protest, and that action with colleagues within the Labour Party was a more desirable route than independent action outside of it.

Kerr’s use of the phrase ‘military industrial complex’ is striking here, as it alludes to a key tenet of thought which she shared with many of the women in this thesis: namely that the war was symptomatic of wider political problems, most notably the Anglo-American alliance. This phrase was coined by President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1952-61) in order to describe the alliance between the U.S. military and the country’s defence industry. For Kerr, Vietnam could not be extrapolated from the wider geopolitical problem of which it was a symptom, and she believed that it was the wider political system which enabled the war to take place, and thus needed reform. Interestingly, however, she often stopped short of advocating a position of isolation from the U.S. Rather, she showed admiration for and promoted a position of solidarity with American anti-war protesters. Her anti-war approach was thus collaborative in outlook, and, as this chapter will subsequently demonstrate, this is something which was evident through her contact with U.S. peace groups. However, Kerr and her contemporaries did express a desire to reframe the relationship with the U.S., something which can be seen in a statement approved by the Foreign Affairs Committee, on which Kerr sat. Written in December 1967, this statement advocated a pivot away from the U.S. on the issue of Vietnam specifically. The statement also condoned embracing nations which had given full support to U.N. Secretary General U Thant’s proposals for the unconditional cessation of bombing. These nations included Canada, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, France and Holland. The report continued:

such a policy would have the support of the majority of the British people and would find a resounding echo among the many Americans who are

⁵² *Ibid.*

fighting hard to change their Government's policy. These liberal Americans, who are Labour's traditional friends and partners in the United States, feel betrayed by our continued support for President Johnson's policies. The adoption by the Government of the Labour Party's expressed policy would unite us with millions of American citizens in the struggle for peace in Vietnam.⁵³

In this sense, Kerr and like-minded MPs advocated a changed conceptualisation of the relationship with the U.S by drawing on its shared history of having 'traditional friends and partners'. Inherent in this re-framing of the relationship was a commitment to those Americans who opposed the Vietnam War. By emphasising this solidarity with millions of American citizens, this conceptualisation of the Anglo-American relationship constituted a more cautious approach than simple rejection of the alliance.

Kerr also framed her opposition to the government's foreign policy more widely, notably in terms of Britain's imperial past. Expressing concerns about Britain's international reputation on the world stage more broadly during a debate on the government's policy in Rhodesia, for example, Kerr asked whether it was hypocritical that the government had not been able to put down a rebel regime in Rhodesia but continued to send arms to the Nigerian government. 'Is this not a terrible example of British hypocrisy for which, sadly, we are known throughout the world? [...] is this not a perfect example of the sad state of an ex-imperialist Government?', she questioned.⁵⁴ Whilst these questions did not pertain to Vietnam, they do provide an insight into Kerr's thought on the connections between the morality of British foreign policy, the contemporary context of Britain's imperial decline and perceptions of Britain throughout the world. Moreover, in a debate on Vietnam, Kerr sought to remind the Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, of the centrality of morality to the situation in Vietnam. 'My right hon. Friend has talked about what is realistic', she stated in a foreign affairs debate in December 1965, 'will he for a moment talk about what he really considers to be morally right?'.⁵⁵ She believed that the morally correct approach would be to 'get back to the Geneva Agreement'; thus advocating a specific diplomatic peacekeeping role for Britain on

⁵³ 'Vietnam: Statement Approved by the Foreign Affairs group of the Parliamentary Labour Party', 5 December 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/170.

⁵⁴ Hansard, 12 December 1968, vol. 775. <https://api.parliament.uk/historichansard/commons/1968/dec/12/foreign-affairs#S5CV0775P0_19681212_HOC_373> [accessed: 22 August 2018].

⁵⁵ Hansard, 20 December 1965, vol. 722. <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1965/dec/20/foreign-affairs#S5CV0722P0_19651220_HOC_327> [accessed: 23 August 2018].

the world stage.⁵⁶ In stressing the concept of morality and the Geneva Agreements, Kerr's approach shared much with contemporary peace campaigners outside of the Labour Party. Her continuous emphasis on these concepts and the war more generally within parliament appeared to be of little avail. As the next section will show, Kerr sought to cultivate a vast and varied network of anti-war campaigners in order to bolster her parliamentary efforts and place further pressure on the Wilson government.

Kerr's extra-parliamentary anti-war work

Outside of parliament, simply educating the public on the war was a key facet of Kerr's work. In a letter to a constituent, Kerr made clear her views that 'the public in general has not been given the full facts about this unspeakable war' and stated that by partaking in a forum with both pro- and anti-war speakers, she hoped to contribute to rectifying this.⁵⁷ Faced with a largely unreceptive Wilson government, the spread of information using extra-parliamentary networks constituted the majority of Kerr's anti-war activities. Sympathetic parties with whom Kerr collaborated outside of parliament included trade unions, the BCPV, CND and Medical Aid for Vietnam (MAV).

Like many anti-war campaigners, Kerr had been actively involved with CND during its establishment and this continued as she became involved in campaigning against the Vietnam War, particularly during the period from 1965 to 1967. CND showed its appreciation of Kerr's efforts. For example, a letter from Sheila Oakes of London region CND in February 1966 encouraged Kerr's attempts and wished success to the delegation to the U.S. Ambassador, which she was part of.⁵⁸ CND correspondence also reveals that the organisation encouraged MPs like Kerr to move and support a motion of no confidence in the foreign policy of the government if British troops were dispatched to Vietnam.⁵⁹ Certainly, Kerr raised her concerns in parliament regarding rumours that British troops had been sent to Vietnam.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Hansard, 20 July 1965, vol. 716. <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1965/jul/20/foreign-affairs#S5CV0716P0_19650720_HOC_296 [accessed: 22 August 2018].

⁵⁷ Kerr to N. Taylor, 16 March 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/213.

⁵⁸ Sheila Oakes to Kerr, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

⁵⁹ Duff to Kerr, 29 April 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

⁶⁰ See Hansard, 4 May 1966, vol. 727. <https://api.parliament.uk/historichansard/writtenanswers/1966/may/04/vietnam-british-servicemen#S5CV0727P0_19660504_CWA_127> [accessed: 22 August 2018].

Moreover, Kerr was even mocked in one newspaper for ‘start[ing] a mystery about “British troops in Vietnam”’.⁶¹ This report detailed that Kerr had heard reports that twelve British soldiers had been exchanged with U.S. marines in Vietnam. The report also quoted Kerr as stating she was ‘appalled to think that these reports might prove to be true’ and that, if they were, ‘I and some of my colleagues will take action in the Commons’.⁶² However, the report did not mention a vote of no confidence, and given prior evidence of her Labour Party commitment, it is not clear that Kerr would have jeopardised the existence of the Labour government at the heeding of CND. Despite this, it is clear that during this period, Kerr’s relationship with CND was more than just support in the form of her name on a list. She solicited the group for practical advice, as in 1966 when she spoke with Peggy Duff regarding how best to acquire information on British contributions to U.S. efforts in Vietnam.⁶³ In this instance Duff used her U.S. contacts to try to find out more about this on the other side of the Atlantic. However, it is clear that whilst CND constituted a useful group on the anti-war scene, as the 1960s progressed, Kerr increasingly channelled her extra-parliamentary anti-war activities through newer groups. This reflected the broader trend which saw CND increasingly relinquish its monopoly of the British left, a trend which the cause of Vietnam was crucial in instigating.

One such group, through which Kerr’s anti-war efforts were increasingly channelled was the BCPV, an organisation with which she had links at both the local and national levels. This supports Mark Phythian’s contention that ‘both the BCPV and the VSC provided more appropriate vehicles for anti-war protest’ as the 1960s progressed.⁶⁴ Kerr associated with BCPV branches located around her constituency including the Kent and Medway branches, and received congratulatory messages from local BCPV branches for her efforts to change the government’s position on Vietnam.⁶⁵ Kerr’s status as an MP also enabled her to support local events, even through non-attendance, by simply allowing her name to be listed as a supporter, as with the Harrow Committee for Peace in Vietnam, which organised a teach-in in

⁶¹ ‘Riddle as M.P. talks of “Vietnam Britons”’, undated, no publication listed, 27 April 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/216.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Duff to Kerr, 2 May 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

⁶⁴ Phythian, ‘CND’s Cold War’, p. 146.

⁶⁵ See e.g. John H. Bentley to Kerr, 11 August 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/220.

May 1967.⁶⁶ Kerr was even billed as the main attraction at one meeting organised by the Medway CPV which invited people meet Kerr at Labour Party H.Q. in Rochester, where she opened a discussion pertaining to Vietnam alongside fellow M.P. Stan Orme.⁶⁷

At the national level, Kerr was asked to speak at the 1966 BCPV National Convention to give the Collection Speech which was geared at ensuring funds for the organisation.⁶⁸ Kerr also accepted an invitation to speak at a demonstration in Hyde Park as part of National Vietnam Week (24 June – 2 July 1967).⁶⁹ BCPV minutes show that Kerr attended national council meetings when able, although naturally she had to refuse many council meetings and speaking engagements due to her demanding schedule as an MP. At a council meeting of 2 December 1965, minutes reflect that Kerr even suggested that MPs should receive special notification of anti-war events in order to combat this. One would assume this was for scheduling purposes as quite often the archival record reveals that Kerr had to deny many invitations.⁷⁰ This highlights Kerr's obvious desire to be actively and practically involved in the movement, tying into debates concerning the categorisation of membership within activist groups. Stephen Howe has raised the problem of membership in his analysis of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, explaining that whilst the organisation could count over three million members for much of its existence, a lot of these members came from the affiliation of national trade unions, 'and since some of these might not play a very active role in the Movement [...] a high proportion of this was purely paper membership'.⁷¹ Kerr's engagement with the BCPV would certainly indicate a desire to move beyond paper membership and play an active role.

⁶⁶ Kerr to Mrs E. Lumley, 10 April 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

⁶⁷ Medway Committee for Peace in Vietnam circular, 31 January 1970, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/224.

⁶⁸ Petra Sachsenberg to Kerr, 2 November 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

⁶⁹ Loren K. Clarke to Kerr, 8 May 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/220.

⁷⁰ Minutes of BCPV Council Meeting, 2 December 1965, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/218.

⁷¹ Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire 1918-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 237-8.

Kerr's active role in such organisations was evident through her multiple donations of both money and blood to Medical Aid for Vietnam (MAV), an organisation of which she became a sponsor immediately following its formation in 1965. MAV often worked closely with the BCPV. A receipt of 29 December 1972 shows that Kerr donated £1,000, prompting a personalised thank you note from the organisation's secretary Joan McMichael in which McMichael wrote 'with your generous help we have actually banked £9663.69 since Christmas'.⁷² Kerr also received letters of support from various trade unions. The Shop Stewards Committee wrote to Kerr pledging 'their full support to you and your colleagues'.⁷³ The Lochee branch of the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Feltham branch of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers were amongst other trade union groups to pledge support.⁷⁴ It is clear also that Kerr collaborated with and supported trade unions on other ventures, including when a number of trade unions published an advert in the *New York Times* on 27 January 1970 whilst Wilson was in the U.S. for talks with President Nixon. A number of MPs, including Kerr and her husband, lent their names to support the advert.⁷⁵

Gender

The previous section demonstrated Kerr's associations with CND, the BCPV, MAV and trade unions. Kerr's anti-war activism also led her to interact with female peace groups. Particularly notable in this regard was her close relationship with Amy Swerdlow, a prominent member of the U.S.-based peace group, Women Strike for Peace (WSP). Whilst, as this section will show, Kerr did use her position to highlight the suffering of Vietnamese women and children in particular, this said, she certainly did not go as far as many of her contemporaries in critiquing the Vietnam struggle using language concerning women's liberation or feminism. This is something which stood her apart from many contemporaries, as Chapter Five will show in more detail.

It is clear, however, that Kerr framed some peace issues as being of specific concern to women. In a parliamentary debate on nuclear weapons in July 1965, Kerr

⁷² Receipt of MAV donation, 29 December 1965; McMichael to Kerr, 5 January 1973, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/215.

⁷³ Vic Dougherty to Kerr, 1 February 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

⁷⁴ William Duncan to Kerr, 31 January 1966; S. Yates to Kerr, 7 Feb., 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

⁷⁵ 'British Unions and Vietnam', *New York Times*, 27 January 1970.

stressed that women throughout the world ‘and the women of Great Britain in particular’ were concerned about the existence of nuclear weapons and would appreciate it if Britain surrendered its weapons.⁷⁶ Kerr also took part in gendered initiatives pertaining to peace and Vietnam, such as during National Vietnam Week when she was part of a thirteen-hour vigil held by the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). During this, two women kept vigil at the corner of Downing Street and Whitehall. Their clothing, including a black armband and sash, was intended to emphasise mourning. Whilst her involvement in such initiatives makes clear that Kerr showed some appreciation of a specific relationship between women and peace, it is not clear that she made any overt ideological link between women and the Vietnam War.

In Britain, Kerr was very much involved with the British Liaison Committee for Women’s Peace Groups – an umbrella organisation which was aimed at fostering increased cooperation between different female peace groups. Some of the names included under the Liaison Committee’s umbrella, notably the BCPV, were orientated around peace for Vietnam. Others, however, were not exclusively focused on Vietnam, but rather on peace more broadly, including CND, the Co-Operative Women’s Guild, Voice of Women, and WILPF. Kerr subscribed to the Liaison Committee’s newsletter, *Call to Women*, but her support of the organisation was not merely ornamental. A 1966 letter from the Liaison Committee’s Margaret Curwen, attests to the practical role Kerr played in facilitating a deputation by the Committee to Chalmers Wood, who was First Secretary at the United States Embassy in Saigon. Curwen wrote

I would like to thank you for leading our deputation so well and for making the demonstration so worthwhile. We had the doubtful pleasure of tackling Mr Chalmers Wood on 9 December last, and came away very discomfited. This time, largely I feel sure, because of the confidence your presence gave to us all, we did feel we got some shrewd blows in, and Mr Wood was visibly shaken, instead of calmly indifferent.⁷⁷

Kerr also convened a meeting of British women opposed to the war in House of Commons under her chairmanship on 27 June 1967. This meeting resulted in the drafting of a letter which explained that the women had met to ‘discuss ways in

⁷⁶ Hansard, 27 July 1965, vol. 717. <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1965/jul/27/nuclear-weapons#S5CV0717P0_19650727_HOC_153> [accessed: 22 August 2018].

⁷⁷ Margaret Curwen to Kerr, 10 February 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

which women can be an increasing influence against war. In particular, we wish to support those Americans opposing the war in Vietnam'.⁷⁸ Furthermore, it specified: 'we ask the women of America to help us in achieving this necessary first step [cessation of bombing] towards a firmly based peaceful solution of the Vietnam War and the return home of their husbands, sons and sweethearts'.⁷⁹ Signatories of this letter included Kerr, Lena Jeger (the Labour MP for Holborn & St Pancras), WILPF, Catholic Women's Union, Birmingham Women for Peace, female members of the Communist Party, and the Women's Section of the Transport & General Workers Union. This letter was sent to the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition Edward Heath, Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe, Canadian Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and leader of Canada's New Democratic Party Thomas Douglas, as well as the Canadian Republican Party, President Johnson, and top officials in Australia and New Zealand. The text of the letter also appeared in numerous publications, including the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *St Louis Post Dispatch*, and the *Denver Post*.⁸⁰

The wording of this letter indicates a belief that women in particular had an important role to play in opposing the war. To this end, the meeting also highlighted Kerr's growing appreciation of the need to co-operate with women transnationally on matters pertaining to peace – women from Canada, South Africa and the U.S. were in attendance. One letter received by Kerr reflected not only an appreciation of her anti-war efforts, but also elucidated contemporary trends of increased transnational collaboration combined with increasing female equality.

I'm glad somebody from England took enough interest to let Americans know their concern and feelings, and, in your own case as a M.P. it carries more significance [...] it seems obvious that we are somehow at a stage in our various cultures and civilisations where we don't have the barriers that previously existed.⁸¹

Here Kerr's status as an MP was clearly deemed to be a positive thing, as the correspondent highlighted a belief that her Kerr's position added significance to her

⁷⁸ Letter from British women, meeting at House of Commons, 27 June 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/220.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Clipping from *San Francisco Chronicle*, 27 August 2017, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219; Clipping, *St Louis Post Dispatch*, 30 September 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/213; Clipping, *Denver Post*, 5 September 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/217.

⁸¹ Basil Zolli to Kerr, 28 August 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/220.

viewpoint. The letter included a discussion of recent trends pertaining to women, including ‘the new status and acceptance of women in positions of responsibility and training’ and ‘the new knowledge and understanding between the sexes’ and emphasised how these trends ‘have contributed to a new feeling for understanding and cooperation on an international scale’.⁸² Whilst it is clear that this correspondent made clear links between Kerr’s anti-war efforts and contemporary changes besetting women’s lives and involvement in politics, there is little within the archival record to indicate that Kerr expressed her anti-war work in terms of the concurrent rise of the women’s liberation movement, even when she collaborated with other women and female peace groups.

One of the key female peace groups which Kerr was in contact with was WSP. Kerr even visited the U.S. in the summer of 1967 as a guest of WSP and picketed the White House with the female group.⁸³ Indeed, Kerr maintained a particularly strong relationship with Amy Swerdlow, an important member of WSP, who later documented the group’s experiences in a monograph.⁸⁴ It is clear that for Swerdlow, Kerr was the main point of contact with the British the government, and as such, Kerr utilised her position as an MP in order to assist Swerdlow. One example of this was when Swerdlow asked Kerr to organise a letter of greeting from British MPs as part of one demonstration.⁸⁵ Kerr also arranged for Swerdlow to address the Foreign Affairs Group of the Parliamentary Labour Party in July 1967.⁸⁶ As Chapter Five will elucidate in more detail, the peace efforts of WSP, as the name suggests, centred on gendered initiatives. For example, Swerdlow wrote to Kerr of a demonstration in which 2,000 housewives marched on the Pentagon. This demonstration drew on strongly gendered tropes, including the plan for the women to carry colourful shopping bags stuffed with ‘Facts for Congress’.⁸⁷ A Christmas card in 1965 was signed by thousands of WSP women and sent to President Johnson. This also framed the group’s anti-war message in terms of gendered rhetoric by emphasising the women’s statuses as mothers: ‘For the sake of our sons, for the sake

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Clipping, *Washington Post*, 30 August 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/211.

⁸⁴ See Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

⁸⁵ Amy Swerdlow to Kerr, 5 April 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/220.

⁸⁶ Press release, 28 June 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/213.

⁸⁷ Swerdlow to Kerr, undated, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

of all children, Give us Peace in Vietnam this Christmas'.⁸⁸ Despite Kerr's continued contact with the group, however, she did not oppose the war using rhetoric pertaining to her femaleness.

Kerr was also in contact with Vivian Hallinan of the Jeanette Rankin Brigade, a more radical U.S.-based female peace group. Hallinan wrote to Kerr in January 1968, explaining the evolution of the group:

Since I last saw you in Chicago, I have been working hard on the Brigade [...] When we discussed the Jeannette Rankin Brigade it involved massive civil disobedience of women in Congress. Eventually a more moderate plan evolved which brought in leading churchwomen, writers, intellectuals, and women who have never been in a demonstration before. It was the broadest coalition we have ever had in the peace movement [...] We were all very lady-like, and the press and television were most sympathetic. I can't tell yet whether it was the right decision to change our plans. It depends upon whether the coalition stands together and if we are able to accomplish something meaningful in the future.⁸⁹

The connection Hallinan seemingly makes between the 'lady-like' manner of the women, and the sympathy afforded to them by the press and television is interesting as it affords an insight into how female peace protesters felt the need to present themselves in order to be respected and taken seriously. Hallinan and her contemporaries clearly recognised that respectable conduct and femininity were important components which would elicit more sympathy within the media. Whilst respectability was clearly a trait which many activists sought to portray in this era, the gendered nature inherent in this respectable demeanour identified by Hallinan is thought-provoking. Such perceptions relating to the confluence of gender and respectability were evident amongst other activists, as later chapters within this thesis will illuminate. In 1968, the Vietnam movement was becoming increasingly radicalised and this was something which was more pronounced in the U.S. than in Britain, so it is notable that Hallinan sought to discuss this notion of respectability in her letter to Kerr.

Kerr's increasing co-operation with other women in order to oppose the war was also evidenced through her attendance at a conference held in Paris in 1968. It was specifically orchestrated to bring women together who were opposed to the war in Vietnam. Kerr was one of just three women comprising the British delegation to

⁸⁸ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 133.

⁸⁹ Vivian Hallinan to Kerr, 31 January 1968, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/213.

the conference – Verdun Perl and Vera Rice were the other two. More so than Kerr, each of these women’s activism was informed by gendered approaches. Perl attended as a representative of the Women’s Liaison Committee, and Rice was the editor of their publication, *Call to Women*. Interestingly, Verdun’s status as a grandmother and Rice’s status as a mother of four were included on the list which contained biographical information on the conference attendees. Conversely, Kerr’s status as a mother was not mentioned on this list, and the document shows that Kerr made the handwritten addition of the word ‘mother’ at the end of her own biographical note, which explained that she was an MP and a member of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party Foreign Affairs Group.⁹⁰ Outlining the extent of transnational anti-war work by women, she explained at the conference that it was ‘impossible to give more than a sketchy outline of what we have done [...] both publicly and privately in Britain, and, also in other countries. I have, myself, been to the USA, Canada, India, Japan, Holland, Australia and Thailand to work for peace policies’.⁹¹ Clearly, Kerr’s parental status was important enough that she felt it ought to be listed within the biographical note shared with conference attendees. Despite this, she does not appear to have used this as a rationale within her anti-Vietnam War campaigning and made no reference to her status as a mother at the conference in Paris.

Vietnamese attendees of the conference included Madame Ha Giang, who was secretary of the Women’s Union of Vietnam and Madame Bui Thi Cam, a lawyer and Deputy of the Assembly.⁹² A letter from Hetty Vorhaus reveals that these Vietnamese women specifically asked for Kerr to be invited.⁹³ This fact is reminiscent of the aforementioned correspondence received by Kerr, which stressed the legitimacy which her position as an MP afforded her anti-war allies. It would also enforce the contention of one correspondent from Rotherham, who wrote to Kerr in December 1966 explaining that her name was ‘becoming a by-word in the Women’s Peace Movement’.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ List of attendees, Women in Paris Conference, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/225.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Hetty Vorhaus to Kerr, 11 April [1968], Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/220.

⁹³ Vorhaus to Kerr, 6 February 1968, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/220.

⁹⁴ Pleasance Holtom to Kerr, 5 December 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/220.

The Paris conference sent a letter to *The Times* following the meeting, which spoke of the good relations and admiration between the women, and also expressed appreciation of the qualities of respectability and dignity. This stated that the women were ‘impressed by the quiet dignity and fortitude of the Vietnamese women, some of whom had travelled on foot through the jungle to attend the meeting, and we were moved by their deep compassion for the American women, whose men are involved in this war which is destroying both their countries’.⁹⁵ Kerr gave a speech at the conference, in which she explained that ‘I am one of about 30 MPs who consistently attempt to persuade the Govt. to be socialist. To be socialist with regard to economic, domestic and foreign affairs matters’.⁹⁶ Despite obviously being involved and very sympathetic towards gendered groups and their approaches to anti-Vietnam War work, it is clear that Kerr used this opportunity to promote her socialist beliefs and work as part of the Tribune group. In this sense, she advocated a general overhaul of British foreign policy, of which the Vietnam conflict was just one part. Fundamentally, it was this desire to drive Labour’s foreign policy towards a more moral stance which drove her anti-war work, as opposed to her gender, although Kerr saw the benefits of collaborating with women’s peace groups, which were a large anti-war constituency, in her pursuit of this overall goal.

The archival record indicates Kerr had an interest in the place of women within the Labour Party – she unsuccessfully stood for election to the Women’s Section National Executive Committee each year between 1963 and 1966. It appears that the Labour Party was not immune to broader changes taking place within society and politics concerning women. As one circular memo of the Southern Regional Council of the Labour Party outlined, ‘members will have no doubt have read about the fundamental changes to the Women’s organisation. They mean that the Party – and not just the Women – is charged with the responsibility of maintaining an adequate women’s organisation and of paying greater attention to women electors’.⁹⁷ Moreover, it appears that Kerr was a primary link between the women of the

⁹⁵ Macpherson et al. to Editor, *The Times*, 2 May 1968, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/220.

⁹⁶ Handwritten notes for Women in Paris conference, undated, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/225.

⁹⁷ Memo, Southern Regional Council of the Labour Party, undated, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/143.

transnational anti-Vietnam War movement and British Parliament. The extent to which these tendencies influenced her ideological approach towards the Vietnam War, however, appears rather limited.

Whilst it is clear that Kerr took an interest in, and encouraged female peace actions on Vietnam, it is not clear that she implemented the types of gendered approaches adopted by WSP within her own activism. Whether this was a choice she made unconsciously, or whether her status as an MP in the male-dominated domain of politics informed this, remains unclear. When Swerdlow came to stay with Kerr en route to Stockholm prior to an international conference, Kerr lamented that she wished she could go too as she wanted ‘to start some international women’s action on Vietnam’.⁹⁸ There appears to be something of a disconnect here between the things Kerr expressed privately and the things she said more publicly – whilst she engaged with numerous gendered groups and encouraged women to meet to discuss the war, she did not express such actions in terms of being part of a women’s movement against the war specifically. Perhaps this was a product of the intense criticism she received for her anti-war activism, some of which used Kerr’s gender against her, as the next section will illustrate. It would be fair to say, then, that whilst Anne Kerr believed in the importance of a relationship between women and peace, such rhetoric did not form the main thrust of her anti-war work, unlike many of the examples which will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Public reaction

Being a figure in the public eye, Kerr met with a fair amount of backlash for her participation in anti-war activities. Many of these came in the form of letters from constituents and commentators alike. The criticism levelled at Kerr varied. Some correspondents charged her with having communist associations, whilst others expressed concern that she was neglecting her constituency duties through her anti-war efforts. Others still chided Kerr for not taking a radical stance against a Labour government whose policy towards the war was viewed by many on the left as unacceptable.

⁹⁸ Swerdlow to Kerr, undated, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/220.

Whilst it is clear that the VSC was the main group ideologically linking the Vietnam War to a socialist future in Britain, many letters Kerr received accused her of harbouring communist sympathies. This is a criticism which was often levelled at anti-Vietnam War activists whose actions were often interpreted as favouring victory to the NLF, as opposed to simply wanting peace. Even Harold Wilson eluded to this in the House of Commons in July 1965 when he stated: “it is becoming clear that some of those who shout loudest for it, both here and in other countries, are concerned not with peace in Vietnam but with victory in Vietnam”.⁹⁹ Such anti-communist critiques were evident even at a local level. A Medical Aid fundraiser in Kent was banned following allegations that the organisers, the Medway Towns Medical Aid for Vietnam Committee, held ‘Communist links at national level’.¹⁰⁰ The *Chatham Rochester & Gillingham News* reported that two Medway Towns clergymen, who had been sponsors of the Medway Towns Medical Aid for Vietnam Committee, had resigned, and quoted a Whitehall spokesman as referring to the ‘highly suspect’ aims of the national BCPV, which worked closely with MAV. This spokesman contended that the BCPV itself ‘was founded and largely controlled by the communists with the ‘avowed aim of sending drugs, bandages and equipment through the communist National Liberation Front to the North Vietnamese’.¹⁰¹ The article also noted that there was no guarantee given that such aid would not be used for Viet Cong troops fighting against U.S. and Australian forces.¹⁰² When asked for her views on this matter, Anne Kerr responded in a typically blunt fashion, pointing out that the South Vietnamese were given medical aid by the Americans and explaining: ‘I don’t care if the equipment goes to the Viet Cong troops or any man, woman or child injured in the war’.¹⁰³

Others challenged that Kerr’s critique of the war did not consider the alleged threat posed by communist China. ‘If you were sincere in your efforts to try and stop this war’, wrote one, ‘there must sometime or other come from your lips that also an

⁹⁹ Quoted in Wrigley, ‘Now you see it, now you don’t’, p. 129.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Vietnam row echo’, *Kentish Gazette*, 1 November 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/224.

¹⁰¹ ‘Show Ready – then “You can’t open”: Viet committee to protest: Mrs Kerr lashes out’, *Chatham Rochester and Gillingham News*, 11 March 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/224.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

equal blame for this war can be levied against the C[ommunist] P[arty] of China'.¹⁰⁴

Another anonymous letter was more explicit:

Doubtless it is your Communist sympathies that determine your attitude about the war in Vietnam. You must know of course that the fight has nothing to do with the reality where it is being fought. It is a defensive war against the invasion of Australia and New Zealand by China. Everyone who is not a fool sees that.¹⁰⁵

Anti-patriotism was another key trope in the anti-communist attacks Kerr received:

'your hatred of England makes you anxious to support not only Russia but China too. What do you, as a communist, care for England or English men?'.¹⁰⁶

Some of Kerr's critics actually supported the actions of the U.S. in Vietnam. Similarly, many of these correspondents felt that Britain ought to take a more active role in the conflict. One such writer used gender stereotypes to attempt to belittle Kerr's anti-war work, writing that Britain needed to 'help instead of sitting on the fence [...] you might be better employed doing something about the chaotic traffic conditions in Chatham's main street, or better still staying home and cooking your husbands [sic.] dinner'.¹⁰⁷ Another critic, a female, even felt that Kerr's actions were insulting to 'our sex'. 'You do not even know what you are talking about', this woman charged following a recent televised debate in which Kerr had appeared. She encouraged Kerr to 'try to find out what it's all about before you let Conservative MPs pull you apart on TV [...] what a twit you looked [...] you prove all men have ever said'.¹⁰⁸ This highlights a latent impact of Kerr's gender. Even though she herself did not employ gendered rhetoric in her anti-war efforts, clearly, some critics used gender stereotypes in order to admonish her for her anti-war efforts.

Other members of the public got in touch with Kerr in order to chide her for not going far enough in condemning the Wilson government's policy on Vietnam. One writer, Howard Cheney, contacted Kerr in order to express revulsion at her loyalty to Wilson, asking 'how much longer are you and your fellow members of the

¹⁰⁴ J. Breeson to Kerr, 30 November 1965, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

¹⁰⁵ Englishman to Kerr, 29 April 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ R. Winter to Kerr, 23 August 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/220.

¹⁰⁸ [illegible] to Kerr, 25 November 1969, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/213.

presumed left going to tolerate this caricature of a human being?'.¹⁰⁹ Alluding to the lack of power held by MPs, Cheney continued 'what on earth is the use of people with principles, like yourself [...] troubling to get into Parliament at all, if there is no point where you will not revolt against your own leaders' treachery and villainy'.¹¹⁰ Expressing the increased disillusion with the orthodox left which became increasingly common during this period, Cheney pleaded with Kerr to utilise her power as an MP in order to force a show down with the government over the issue of Vietnam: 'I plead with you to use it, or the left is going to be totally discredited for all our lifetimes'.¹¹¹ Cheney's letter is reminiscent of the points raised by the activist Philip Braithwaite, which were addressed previously within this chapter. Unlike Braithwaite, who shared Kerr's belief that the Labour Party constituted the most rational political means to achieving peace in Vietnam, particularly in the face of a 'hopelessly splintered left', clearly Cheney was situated within the faction of the British left which was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the Labour government's Vietnam policy.¹¹² Such was this disillusionment that some within the anti-war constituency increasingly questioned not only the policy of the Wilson government, but how MPs such as Kerr, who purported to be appalled by the war, could stomach representing the Wilson government.

Despite receiving anti-communist and pro-American letters, many correspondents supported Kerr's actions and congratulated her on her anti-war stance. One constituent refuted the criticism levelled at Kerr which suggested that she was more interested in Vietnam than her own constituents. Writing to the *Kent Evening Post* in November 1969, Mrs F. Spurr explained that she felt obliged to make her experience in dealing with Kerr public. Spurr then explained how Kerr had been of assistance in gaining disabled benefit for arthritis which had been the result of an industrial accident. She continued 'without Mrs Kerr's intervention I could have fought for years, and still got no satisfaction. Instead of people saying Mrs Kerr does nothing about individual constituent's problems, why don't they try writing to

¹⁰⁹ Howard Cheney to Kerr, 26 Nov. [year not given], Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Braithwaite to Kerr, 22 November 1969, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/213.

her at the House of Commons? I know she will do her utmost to ensure justice'.¹¹³ This letter helps give us insight into the balancing act mentioned earlier in this chapter, which MPs had to perform in order to reconcile their anti-war beliefs with their representation of the Wilson government with which so many who felt vehemently opposed to the Vietnam War, had become so disillusioned.

Transnational connections

Some of the aforementioned criticism derived from the fact that Kerr's anti-war work often took her overseas, and thus away from the constituents who were supposed to be her top priority. It is clear that during her time as an MP, transnational anti-war efforts comprised an increasingly important faction of Kerr's work, taking her to and forging contacts with people in such geographically and culturally diverse places as Australia, the Far East, the U.S., Canada, France, and North Vietnam.

In this vein, Kerr was a participant in one of the more creative protests staged by the British anti-war movement. In September 1968, the BCPV, in co-operation with the French peace movement and Vietnamese representatives, organised a 'peace boat' to leave Folkestone for Boulogne on 22 September. Delegates on the peace boat included press, members of both houses of parliament, trade unionists, Communist Party members and representatives of local Vietnam committees. As some Vietnamese peace activists had been denied visas to enter Britain, the thinking behind this venture was that if the Vietnamese could not come to Britain, British activists would go to France to meet the Vietnamese. This episode will be given further consideration in Chapter Three, which examines the activism of Amicia Young who was secretary of the BCPV at this time.

The archival record also indicates that Kerr travelled to North Vietnam, but it is difficult to ascertain when this took place. One letter from Tracy Warnes of the Watford and District CPV in December 1965 requested that Kerr would pass on a letter signed by various 'leading citizens' to journalists in Hanoi in order to publicise their peace efforts.¹¹⁴ It is clear here, then, that a planned trip was forthcoming. The

¹¹³ Mrs F. Spurr letter to *Kent Evening Post*, 13 November 1969, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/213.

¹¹⁴ Tracy Warnes to Kerr, 19 December 1965, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

Evening News reported in early January 1966, however, that Kerr's trip had been delayed, quoting her as saying that she had had to postpone the trip due to the risk of bombardment. In reality, Kerr expressed her belief that this was potentially a convenient excuse given by the Vietnamese: 'I think it more likely that they felt January was not the proper time to go in view of the present diplomatic peace moves'.¹¹⁵ In September 1966, Kerr explained in a letter to Pat Arrowsmith, a peace activist involved with the Committee of 100, that she had first been invited in December 1965, but had been asked to delay the visit. But by mid-1966, despite multiple efforts from Kerr and others to go to Vietnam, there had been no re-extension of the previous invitation.¹¹⁶ An article in *The Times* appears to clear this up somewhat. Published in August 1967, it reported that Kerr, along with her husband Russell and Gwynfor Evans (Plaid Cymru MP for Carmarthen), was one of three MPs amongst a volunteer troupe of thirty-two, who intended to visit North Vietnam 'to share with its people and the dangers of the bombing'.¹¹⁷ However, an article on the same date in the *Evening Standard* opined, 'it rather looks as though Mrs Anne Kerr's latest attempt to visit the oppressed civilians of North Vietnam will meet with the same success – or lack of it – as her previous ones'.¹¹⁸ The article also explained that Kerr had told a reporter that she would be unable to undertake any visit prior to Christmas due to the pressures posed by work, and also reported that she was presently pressing for a recall of Parliament because of the situation in Vietnam.¹¹⁹ What the archival record does show is the numerous good relationships which Kerr maintained with Vietnamese representatives of government, many of whom were in Paris from 1968 onwards after the commencement of peace talks. Kerr was clearly instrumental in helping to obtain a visa for Madame Thi Binh, who was asked by Kerr at the behest of CND to speak at CND's Easter Rally in 1969.¹²⁰ Anne and her husband Russell were also invited to an informal gathering in London in order to meet Nguyen Minh Vy, Deputy of the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), and Nguyen Van Tien, Deputy-in-Chief of

¹¹⁵ 'Woman MP's Hanoi trip is delayed', *Evening News*, 3 January 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/215.

¹¹⁶ Kerr to Pat Arrowsmith, 12 September 1966, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/219.

¹¹⁷ Clipping, *The Times*, 24 August 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/220.

¹¹⁸ Clipping, *Evening Standard*, 24 August 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/222.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Kerr to Dick Nettleton, 5 March 1969, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/87.

the Delegation of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam (DRV).¹²¹

Evidently, Kerr also visited the U.S. on numerous occasions. One of these was as part of a deputation of MPs, after Representative George Brown of California's 29th District extended an invitation to visit and discuss the dangers concerning the potential escalation of the war.¹²² The purpose of the trip was firstly to attempt to influence congressional and other opinion within the U.S. on the need to end the war as quickly as possible. Secondly, the trip was 'to tell the U.S. that the British Government support for American policies and actions in Vietnam does not carry the agreement of most of the British people'.¹²³ A press release concerning Kerr's activities in the U.S. reveals that Kerr had interviews with Senators Fulbright and Percy, as well as four other unnamed Senators. Furthermore, Kerr met Congresswoman Patsy Mink and had an interview with Margaret Chase-Smith, who was the only female Senator at the time.¹²⁴ Through her trips to the U.S. Kerr fostered some lasting professional relationships, and she continued to correspond with high-profile U.S. figures from time to time. These included Democratic Senator Eugene McCarthy, who launched an unsuccessful bid for the presidency in 1968. In the midst of his campaign, Kerr wrote a letter of support to him, explaining that she had been enormously impressed by his stance on Vietnam. She also added 'I wish you to know that not only are many Members of Parliament here wishing you well, but that thousands and more probably millions, of British people think of you daily'.¹²⁵

One of Kerr's trips to the U.S. proved a particularly traumatising experience. In August 1968, Kerr went as an observer to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, before touring around the U.S. and Canada on a route which took her to Winnipeg, Calgary, San Francisco and Victoria.¹²⁶ During this convention, anti-war

¹²¹ Sao to Mr and Mrs Kerr, 24 October 1969, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/213.

¹²² Statement 'US Trip by 6 Labour MPs', undated, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/220.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Press release concerning Kerr's activities in the U.S., dated 3 August 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/211.

¹²⁵ Kerr to Senator McCarthy, 28 March 1968, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/213.

¹²⁶ Notes: Chicago Trip Planning, 'Route After Chicago', undated, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/92.

protests descended into rioting. The television cameras, which beamed images of the violence at the convention into homes around the world, turned the Chicago episode into ‘an event of historical significance’.¹²⁷ The convention has been given much historiographical attention and has been portrayed as an important episode in U.S. history within the epochal year of 1968. Gerard DeGroot has highlighted that the television cameras and ‘omnipresent police made the demonstration into something altogether terrifying. Twelve thousand Chicago police were backed by 5,000 army troops and 6,000 members of the Illinois National Guard’.¹²⁸ Mark Kurlansky has deemed Chicago ‘one of the most seminal events in the coming age of television’.¹²⁹ Moreover, Kurlansky explains, the ‘star was not [Democratic presidential candidate] Hubert Humphrey. It was the seventeen-minute film in front of the Hilton’ – the hotel in which Anne Kerr was staying and which much of the rioting was outside.¹³⁰ Kerr was thus caught up in clashes between protesters and police. She was bruised, arrested and temporarily blinded from being sprayed with Mace, and the psychological impact of her experiences in Chicago were profound. Despite Kerr’s involvement at Chicago, which was one of the most significant sites of protest within the momentous year of 1968, as well as the documentation of Kerr’s injuries and subsequent legal proceedings within the contemporary press, the presence of a British MP at this significant event has been largely forgotten.

The assault of a British MP by heavy-handed Chicago police officers was well-covered in both British and international presses, receiving coverage from national and local newspapers in Britain, the U.S. and Canada. The *Winnipeg Free Press* reported how Kerr had been ‘mauled’ by Chicago Police, and printed images of Kerr showing that she had been badly bruised.¹³¹ *The Albertan* spoke of ‘a battered and bruised Mrs Anne Kerr [...] her face swollen, her bloodshot eyes shielded by dark glasses and her skin flaking off her chin’.¹³² Following the incident, Kerr called on Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart to make a formal protest regarding

¹²⁷ Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert and Detlef Junker, ‘Introduction, in Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert and Detlef Junker (eds.), *1968: The World Transformed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 11.

¹²⁸ Gerard J. DeGroot, *The Sixties Unplugged: A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 318.

¹²⁹ Mark Kurlansky, *1968: The Year that Rocked the World* (London: Vintage, 2005), p. 284.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ ‘U.K. MP “Mauled” by Chicago Police’, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 30 August 1968, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/212.

¹³² ‘Daley must apologise, says British MPs in city’, *The Albertan*, 3 September 1968, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/94.

her treatment at the hands of police.¹³³ In this letter she also informed Stewart that she had been told by numerous medical professionals that she would be fortunate to avoid permanent damage to the corneas of her eyes.¹³⁴

The episode continued to receive press coverage due to Kerr's decision to sue the Chicago police. Kerr said she felt that this action would be 'useful for the whole Civil Rights Movement around the world and also because I am angry at what they did to me personally'.¹³⁵ Kerr's testimony for the defence at the infamous Chicago Seven trial, during which some protesters present at Chicago were put on trial with charges of conspiracy, inciting riot and other charges relating to their anti-Vietnam War demonstrations at the DNC, also ensured that the episode remained in the public eye.¹³⁶ Kerr's story continued to appear in the news, sometimes making the front page, as with a story in the *Kent Messenger* in September 1968, which reported that Kerr demanded an apology from the U.S. Government and the Mayor of Chicago, whom she charged with responsibility for the "whole wretched situation".¹³⁷ Anne and Russell Kerr also gave an interview to Alan Slingsby of the *Manchester Independent*, which was published in October 1968 and chronicled their ordeal.¹³⁸ The case again made the headlines in December 1969, with the *Kent Evening Post*, the *Evening Standard* and *The Daily Telegraph* reporting on Kerr's antics during the Chicago Seven trial, during which Kerr had sung a rendition of the famous protest anthem, *We Shall Overcome* to illustrate to the court her actions upon being locked in a police van during her trouble in Chicago.¹³⁹

Some people used Kerr's misfortune during this incident in order to chastise her for involving herself in the affairs of other countries. One letter in the *Chatham, Rochester & Gillingham News* responded to an article concerning Kerr's trip to

¹³³ Kerr to Michael Stewart, 6 September 1968, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/93.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Kerr to Maeve Wilkins, 23 April 1970, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/87.

¹³⁶ 'Beaten by police, say British MP, 3 others at riot trial', *Chicago Sun-Times*, 10 December 1969, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/94.

¹³⁷ 'Mrs Anne Kerr wants formal apology from U.S.', *Kent Messenger*, 6 September 1968, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/94.

¹³⁸ 'Chicago – My Kinda Town', *Manchester Independent*, 15 October 1968, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/94.

¹³⁹ Clippings, *Kent Evening Post*, 10 December 1969; *Evening Standard*, 10 December 1969 and *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 December 1969, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/94.

Chicago, deeming it ‘yet another international jaunt’.¹⁴⁰ The letter continued that Kerr only had herself to blame:

When in Rome do as the Romans do, or as is the case “when in America keep quiet and do not get involved in a life you do not understand and which does not concern you” [...] The lady is fast getting the reputation as a misguided soap box orator and I believe those she represents are becoming increasingly embarrassed with it all [...] Please Mrs Kerr lets have some common sense and decorum from you. Stay at home for a change and show your election as M.P. was warranted – if you can.¹⁴¹

As she continued to embrace transnational opportunities, Kerr’s anti-war work meant that she interacted with ‘one of the most important international groups’ – the International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace (ICDP).¹⁴² After the establishment of the ICDP in 1967, Kerr was consistently invited to meetings and conferences organised by the group. Chapter Two, which focuses on the activism of Peggy Duff, will outline the elite nature of many of these conferences, so this implies that Kerr was highly-regarded activist within the British movement. Whilst Parliamentary commitments often meant that she was unable to attend these events, Kerr did go to the first World Conference on Vietnam in July 1967, and was asked prior to the conference by the secretary of the Stockholm Conference on Vietnam (SCV), Bertil Svahnstrom, to send a list of MPs who might have been sympathetic to the aims of the conference. Kerr did this, including names such as Joyce Butler, Frank Allaun, Stan Newens, and, of course, Russell Kerr.¹⁴³ In fact, Kerr was asked to attend the inaugural conference on behalf of CND, as the anti-nuclear organisation was not in a financial position to send a delegate.¹⁴⁴ Kerr continued to receive regular news updates about conferences organised by SCV into the 1970s, and whilst she was usually unable to attend these, she would sometimes instruct her secretary to send back a supportive message. This was the case in 1973 when Kerr replied: ‘I cannot be with you but send my best wishes for a useful, dynamic meeting. I shall continue to do what I can in the UK’.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Letter, ‘Stay at home Mrs Kerr’, *Chatham, Rochester & Gillingham News*, 13 September 1968, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/94.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Sylvia Ellis, ‘Promoting Solidarity at Home and Abroad: the Goals and Tactics of the Anti-Vietnam War Movement in Britain’, *European Review of History*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Jul., 2014), p. 570.

¹⁴³ Bertil Svahnstrom to Kerr, 16 May 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/228.

¹⁴⁴ Dick Nettleton to Kerr, 22 May 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/228.

¹⁴⁵ Handwritten reply written on letter from Zachrisson and Lombardi to Kerr, 2 February 1973, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/214.

International anti-war conferences will be explored in further detail in the following chapter, which analyses the activism of Peggy Duff. However, it is pertinent to highlight here how discourse pertaining to the mistrust of MPs, which was becoming increasingly prominent within the British left during this era, was evident in discussing the delegates invited to such conferences. A copy of a letter from a proposed delegate to Duff's secretary at the ICDP was sent to Anne Kerr. This letter informed the ICDP committee that the delegate had decided not to accept their invitation to the upcoming conference. This was because they did not believe that 'yet another conference can achieve much for the British Vietnam movement'.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, the letter continued, 'I find it extraordinary that you should ask people who are seriously concerned about Vietnam to join a delegation which includes a group of Labour MPs'.¹⁴⁷ The reluctance of the correspondent to become involved with a conference whose delegation included Labour MPs reinforces the notion of a split within the peace movement and increased disillusionment with the orthodox left. Of relevance here, this letter encourages us to reflect upon the uncomfortable middle ground occupied by MPs such as Kerr, who were opposed to the war, but viewed by many as hypocritical for serving a government so reluctant to confront the U.S. over its conduct in Vietnam.

Conclusion

Anne Kerr did not have the opportunity to utilise her position as an MP up to the conclusion of the Vietnam War. Rather, she was defeated and lost her seat to Conservative candidate, Peggy Fenner, in the general election of 1970. The archival record does not indicate the extent to which Vietnam featured in Kerr's campaign for re-election. Kerr's defeat was part of a broader swing towards the Conservatives which took place during this election, although Fenner's victory bettered the national swing when she captured the constituency by 5,341 votes. It is difficult to ascertain whether this reflected discontent with Kerr as a candidate herself, although, as this chapter has shown, there was certainly a thread of discourse within the local press which stressed Kerr's preoccupation with international affairs and resulting absence from the constituency. After this defeat, Kerr was continually approached by

¹⁴⁶ Martin Birnstingl to Hermione Sacks, 3 July 1967, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/1/228.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

numerous regional Labour Party groups, who persistently attempted to persuade her to run for parliament once again. Despite Kerr's initial keenness to 'get back into harness', Kerr opted not to run.¹⁴⁸ By September 1971 she had decided that her increased campaigning against Britain's entry into the Common Market warranted her full attention and she chaired the group Women Against the Common Market.¹⁴⁹

Despite her relatively short tenure as an MP, Kerr's case provides an instructive insight into the effects of the Vietnam War, not only on the internal dynamics of the Labour Party, but upon the wider relationship between left-wing Labour MPs and the British left. Her example also encourages us to take more nuanced approaches towards how female activists utilised their gender within anti-war protest. Whilst some of Kerr's transnational contacts and some of her anti-war initiatives clearly indicate that she believed that women had a special role to play in agitating for peace, gendered rhetoric did not play a central role within her anti-war critique. Rather, Kerr maintained a commitment to the traditions of the orthodox parliamentary system and believed that by working with her colleagues in the Tribune group to promote more socialist and more moral policy initiatives, an end to the war in Vietnam would surely follow. Kerr maintained her belief in the need to pursue socialism post-parliament, believing that the Labour Movement needed to 'become Socialist – not only in local government as it sometimes tries to do, but at Parliamentary level'.¹⁵⁰ This belief in socialism had always underpinned Kerr's outlook on politics. By promoting socialist domestic and foreign policy approaches as a member of the Tribune group, Kerr believed that she and her like-minded colleagues could forge a more principled future for British foreign policy. Undoubtedly, this unwavering belief informed her approach to Vietnam.

Notwithstanding criticism from various quarters, and Wilson's perceived abandonment of socialism following the 1964 election, Kerr still believed it best to campaign to end the war whilst remaining a Labour MP. In many ways this status as an MP had contradictory effects on Kerr's anti-war efforts. Whilst she was well-

¹⁴⁸ Kerr to Michael King, 27 October 1970, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/3/3.

¹⁴⁹ Kerr to D.A. Moss, 29 September 1971, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/3/3.

¹⁵⁰ Kerr to E. Thorne, 3 November 1971, Papers of Anne Patricia Kerr MP, Hull History Centre, U DMK/3/3.

connected with the upper echelons of the British government, she was evidently viewed as naïve by some for her dogged belief in channelling anti-war sentiment through governmental channels. The veteran peace campaigner, Peggy Duff, whose own anti-war activism forms the basis of the next chapter in this thesis, expressed frustration with Anne Kerr. In a letter to Noam Chomsky in 1969, Duff wrote of her frustration with MPs generally, specifying that ‘even Anne Kerr who as MPs go, is pretty good, though dumb as a coot, told me the other day that thousands of people were killed in North Vietnam. When I asked what evidence she had of that she said: “They must have been!”’.¹⁵¹ This reveals that Duff did not regard MPs generally as ‘good’ anti-war comrades, highlighting again the lack of faith many activists had in the ability, or indeed the will, of Labour MPs to hold the government to account. Certainly, Duff was not alone in this view. Indeed, disillusionment with the Labour government could be found in many quarters of the peace movement and drove many, Duff among them, to question their Labour allegiance.

Whilst examining the conceptual underpinnings of this allegiance, this chapter has illustrated that Anne Kerr obviously felt that extra-parliamentary groups comprised an important part of her anti-war activities. To this end, she sought to engage transnationally and increasingly worked with female peace groups. Whilst she was certainly involved with gendered peace efforts then, it is not clear that Anne Kerr ideologically linked female peace activism or women’s liberation to the Vietnam War in the way that other peace groups did. There was certainly no opposition to the war based on her status as a mother, for example, unlike the group with which she had so much overseas contact, Women Strike for Peace. Indeed, such groups appear to have been useful anti-war contacts, rather than influencers of Kerr’s anti-war approach, and it appears that the Tribune group and its socialist agenda proved the real ideological force underpinning her activism.

Anne Kerr died at her home in Twickenham of acute alcohol poisoning on 29 July 1973 at the age of forty-eight. She had been profoundly affected by her experiences in Chicago and was exceptionally frustrated with the slow progress of her lawsuit against the city’s authorities. A verdict of death by misadventure was recorded at her inquest. The *New York Times* reported on Kerr’s death the following

¹⁵¹ Peggy Duff to Professor Noam Chomsky, 24 November 1969, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/90.

day, describing her as ‘an outspoken former Labour member of Parliament who had carried her left-wing convictions across the Atlantic to the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago’.¹⁵² The article also highlighted Kerr’s rebellious streak, reporting that she had been ejected from the public gallery of the House of Commons the previous year for shouting ‘rubbish’ during a speech on the Common Market.¹⁵³ *The Guardian* also reported on Kerr’s experiences in Chicago and added that she had also become involved in some of the early demonstrations in Londonderry in the late Sixties.¹⁵⁴ In *Sanity*, Kerr’s untimely death was reported as a ‘blow to the peace movement’.¹⁵⁵ The obituary added that when she was in Parliament, CND did not have to “chase up” Anne Kerr. She “chased us”. She was always suggesting things that we should do, and her own participation in anything we did was always readily forthcoming’.¹⁵⁶ Fortunately, Kerr did live to see an end to U.S. involvement in Vietnam as a result of the Paris Peace Accords which were signed in January 1973. This thesis now turns to another anti-war campaigner who was also associated with the orthodox left, although in the case of Peggy Duff, the Vietnam War would prove pivotal in undermining this association.

¹⁵² No author listed, ‘Anne Kerr, 48, Dead; A Former Labour M.P.’, *New York Times*, 30 Jul., 1973, p. 30.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ No author listed, ‘Mrs Anne Kerr’, *The Guardian*, 30 July 1973, p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Obituaries: Anne Kerr’, *Sanity*, September 1973.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Chapter 2

Having ‘a wider, more global outlook’: the anti-war evolution of Peggy Duff

The historiography on Peggy Duff is limited at best, despite her major role in British peace history. The most informative source about her activist career is her own account, *Left, Left, Left*, but it does not cover Duff’s activism after about 1967. Born Margaret Doreen Eames in 1910 in London, Duff read English at Bedford College, before marrying Bill Duff, a journalist who was killed whilst covering an American air raid on the Burmese railway during the Second World War. Peggy was thus left widowed with three children under the age of ten when she herself was just thirty-four years old. In *Left, Left, Left* this formative experience is discussed as having influenced her activism in a pragmatic and practical sense: ‘with three children under ten to bring up, a job which had been a temporary war-time interlude, became a necessity. Campaigning seemed as good a way as any other of earning a living and better than most’.¹ Thus was born an exceptionally varied activist career, which focused on numerous diverse issues, including famine relief in post-war Europe and capital punishment.

Duff became involved with the politics of the orthodox left – she maintained close relations with a group of MPs which supported Aneurin Bevan and the Labour left’s publication *Tribune*, where Duff worked as business manager. Duff’s tenure at *Tribune* thus enabled her to establish links with MPs on the left of the Labour Party, most notably those associated with the Tribune group, including Anne Kerr. These associations would continue to provide important contacts as Duff’s activist career evolved, particularly as she progressed to the role of general secretary of CND. Whilst left-wing Labour MPs were naturally sympathetic towards the cause of nuclear disarmament, Duff also explained that, from a tactical perspective, CND was cultivated with Labour Party support in mind: ‘most of those who established the campaign in 1958 aimed to achieve nuclear disarmament through the Labour Party’.² Whereas Anne Kerr interacted with CND but was, first and foremost, a Labour politician, Duff was an extra-parliamentary campaigner whose activism, as this

¹ Peggy Duff, *Left, Left, Left: A Personal Account of Six Protest Campaigns 1945-65* (London: Allison & Busby, 1971), p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 184.

chapter will show, became increasingly distanced from the Labour Party. Despite this, in political outlook, Duff remained, in many ways, committed to this orthodox left – she certainly did not embrace the radical approaches which were gaining traction within the British left during this time. Her distaste for the way Vietnam was being handled within CND and the Labour Party was evident in 1967, when Duff left CND to head the International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace (ICDP). This organisation, with its ‘wider, more global outlook’ enabled her to concentrate on issues beyond the realm of nuclear weapons, and work in conjunction with a diverse combination of colleagues overseas with regards to Vietnam.³

This chapter will focus on a discrete portion of Duff’s long activist career in order to elucidate the invaluable contribution she made to the international movement against the war in Vietnam through her work with three key organisations. The first of these is CND. The second of these organisations is the ICDP, which was an international umbrella organisation that sought to increase co-ordination between peace organisations in disparate nations. It had been established in 1963 as a democratic alternative to the communist-run World Peace Council. As the decade progressed, the ICDP ‘left the nuclear issue behind as it single-mindedly devoted itself to halting the Vietnam conflict’.⁴ More broadly, Gunter Wernicke credits the ICDP with being ‘the first international attempt to establish a different kind of alliance between “old” and “new” forces in the multifaceted world movement’.⁵ By studying Duff’s involvement with the ICDP, then, this chapter will explore how Duff spanned the diffuse barriers between different elements of the left. Lawrence Wittner highlights that the ICDP had ‘hardly been established before its constituent groups declined or disappeared in the late 1960s’.⁶ In this sense, the group occupies an important position within the international anti-war movement and helps us to track the evolution of the movement in a period when many domestic groups faced a period of decline, CND in Britain among them. The third important organisation which this chapter will encompass is the Stockholm Conference on

³ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁴ Lawrence S. Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb: Volume Two: Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movements, 1954-1970* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 459.

⁵ Gunter Wernicke, ‘The Communist-Led World Peace Council and the Western Peace Movements: The Fetters of Bipolarity and some attempts to break them in the Fifties and Early Sixties’, *Peace & Change*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Jul., 1998), p. 291.

⁶ Lawrence S. Wittner, ‘The Worldwide Movement Against Nuclear Arms: Building Effective Transnational Organisation’, *Peace Research*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Nov., 1999), p. 18.

Vietnam (SCV). This organisation was set up following the inaugural World Conference on Vietnam, which took place in July 1967. The SCV was an exceptionally important offshoot of the ICDP due to its explicit focus on the Vietnam cause. The chapter will take a largely chronological approach, charting Duff's career progression throughout these organisations and her anti-war work therein. However, as Duff worked simultaneously with the ICDP and SCV, her anti-war work with both will be dealt with in conjunction. Finally, the chapter will comment upon Duff's lack of engagement with gendered rhetoric, providing some reasons for this and thus broadening our understanding of the diversity of female activists during this period.

Focussing on the period from Duff's tenure as organising secretary of CND, this chapter will show how her career transition enabled her to facilitate anti-war protest on an international scale. Sylvia Ellis has highlighted the ultimately-domestic nature of anti-Vietnam War protest in Britain, due to campaigners' collective focus on influencing the actions of the British government.⁷ This chapter seeks to engage with this debate by analysing the extent to which domestic considerations influenced Duff's predominantly transnational activism. It will document Duff's increased disillusionment with the will and the ability of the British government to change its foreign policy, thus picking up on threads of discussion in the previous chapter pertaining to the difficulties of Anne Kerr's position as an MP. This chapter will also illustrate how Duff's campaigning was ultimately guided by pragmatism, with little attention afforded to ideology and rhetoric. Duff appears to have had relatively little interaction with two of the most vociferous groups on the domestic anti-war scene in Britain, namely the British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam (BCPV) and the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC), so her activism provides a particularly useful example of a transnational approach to campaigning.

The chapter is divided into three principal sections. First, Duff's tenure as organising secretary of CND will be dealt with. In the second part, her transition to the post of general secretary of the ICDP will be analysed and lead to a detailed discussion of her transnational endeavours within both the ICDP and SCV. Finally,

⁷ Sylvia Ellis, 'Promoting Solidarity at Home and Abroad: the Goals and Tactics of the Anti-Vietnam War Movement in Britain', *European Review of History*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Jul., 2014), p. 571.

the discussion will shift to the role of gender in Duff's activism as well as her perspective on different feminist currents.

CND: 1965-7

It is not the purpose of this chapter to give another history of CND, something which has already been well-documented within the historiography.⁸ The first seven years or so of CND's activities from its inception in 1958 are, in many ways, irrelevant to the discussion here, simply because the Vietnam conflict did not intensify until around 1964-65. Vietnam did not, therefore, really enter onto the political radar of such groups as CND until around this time. Indeed, when the conflict did intensify, so too did debates within CND regarding its role and Vietnam. Nehring points out that most members of the first CND Executive already knew one another due to previous progressive causes with which they had been involved. 'Nearly all were members of what contemporary critics called "The Establishment"', Nehring explains, 'with relatively direct access to political or media power'.⁹ Furthermore, Nehring notes that CND's Executive Committee 'continued to show a remarkable cultural homogeneity from the late 1950s into the early 1960s'.¹⁰ By and large, CND's executive members were sympathetic to the Labour Party and held the belief that parliamentary channels were the route to achieving its goals. Increasingly though, throughout the course of the 1960s, New Left groups advocated alternative strategies, and did not, therefore, recognise the primacy of parliamentary negotiation. One early episode which was notable for the way in which it exposed this split over tactics within the peace movement was the formation of the Committee of 100.

⁸ See for example, Jodi Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain: Britishness, 'Race', and the Radical Left in the 1960s* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Jodi Burkett, 'Re-defining British morality: "Britishness" and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament 1958-68', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Jan., 2010), pp. 184-205; Paul Byrne, 'Nuclear Weapons and CND', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Jul., 1998), pp. 424-34; Adam Lent, *British Social Movements Since 1945: Sex, Colour, Peace and Power* (London: Palgrave, 2001); Holger Nehring, 'The British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons and the Cultures of the Cold War, 1957-64', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Jun., 2005), pp. 559-582; Holger Nehring, *Politics of Security: British and West German Protest Movements and the Early Cold War, 1945-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Frank Parkin, *Middle Class Radicalism: The Social Bases of the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968); Mark Phythian, 'CND's Cold War', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Autumn, 2001), pp. 133-156; Richard Taylor and Colin Pritchard, *The Protest Makers: The British Nuclear Disarmament Movement of 1958-1965, Twenty Years On* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980).

⁹ Nehring, 'The British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons', pp. 227-8.

¹⁰ Nehring, *Politics of Security*, p. 132.

Formed in 1960 as an offshoot of CND by the veteran pacifist and CND President, Lord Bertrand Russell, Committee members' anti-nuclear campaigning crystallised around calls for direct action campaigns. John Collins, Chairman of CND, alluded in his memoir to the divisive nature of the concept of direct action amongst the CND Executive. Collins recalls his comments to Russell on the subject of direct action, in which he stated that he shared respect for those who practised direct action, but did not have as great a sympathy towards the use of such tactics as Russell himself did.¹¹ Collins downplayed the need for direct action within CND, stating that the Executive Committee felt that the British public and political parties alike could be 'persuaded to our point of view by such methods' due to their 'commonsense and democratic ways'.¹² The Executive also released a statement during the height of such tensions within CND, which disclaimed the organisation's ability to use direct action techniques, stating that CND was 'bound by Conference decisions to use legal and democratic methods of argument, persuasion and demonstration to achieve its aims'.¹³

Observations made by Holger Nehring may help to account for the origins of this divergence of opinion on direct action, which was evident not only within CND, but amongst the broader orthodox left. 'From hindsight', Nehring writes, 'CND's executive at its foundation was closer to the associational world of Edwardian Britain than to the form of organisations that dominated the student protests of the later 1960s'.¹⁴ It is clear, then, that CND, both upon its establishment and later into the 1960s, continued to remain a much more conservative group than for example, the VSC, which was only too happy to openly promote its pro-NLF position and to utilise the militancy of its supporters in order to encourage illegal actions, such as the occupation of the American embassy.¹⁵ Collins' reluctance to embrace direct action was rooted in concerns about the adverse publicity which such tactics might yield. Peter Brock and Nigel Young frame this concern in terms of the campaign's relationship with the Labour Party, writing that: 'the leadership of CND [...] feared that direct actions, leading to adverse publicity and the branding of the movement as

¹¹ Canon L. John Collins, *Faith Under Fire* (London: Leslie Frewin, 1966), p. 320.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

¹⁴ Nehring, *Politics of Security*, p. 132.

¹⁵ Tariq Ali, *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties* (New York: Verso, 2005), pp. 200, 251.

ultra-leftist, would destroy CND's effectiveness as a political force, especially in the Labour Party'.¹⁶

Duff's exact position on these matters remains ambiguous. In her memoir, Duff recognised that many contemporary campaigners desired to 'have their cake and eat it, to remain respectable within the establishment and to challenge it too, to operate inside and outside conventional politics'.¹⁷ Such dichotomous impulses, she said, meant that the campaign was bound to fail. In terms of direct action, Duff did not enforce either side of this debate. Rather she avoided outlining her own stance on direct action within *Left, Left, Left*. But her memoir does make clear that one reason she believed that the ICDP was able to last was because it co-operated with a wide range of organisations, many of which practiced civil disobedience to a far greater extent than the CND offshoot known as the DAC (Direct Action Committee) or the Committee of 100.¹⁸

More generally, it is abundantly clear from both of their accounts that Duff and Collins clashed, particularly during Duff's final year at CND. Collins recalls that 'the younger intellectuals wanted CND to make a more vigorous intellectual approach to the problem of nuclear disarmament, and thought that the old guard was neglecting this aspect in its appeal for support'.¹⁹ As a founding and original member of the Executive Committee, one would presume Duff to be a member of this 'old guard'. However, John Gittings attests to the centrality of Duff's support of the younger constituency in CND which sought to intellectualise the difficulties of nuclear disarmament. Gittings, who was a student activist at the start of CND, worked with Duff during this period and confirmed her involvement with those segments of CND which sought to 'give anti-nuclear arguments a more political edge'.²⁰ Other colleagues have also attested to Duff's enthusiasm for engaging with young people within CND. Hermione Sacks, who was Duff's colleague at the ICDP, explained that Duff 'always wanted to support young people who were interested, she would help them in giving them information'.²¹ Tariq Ali of the VSC has even identified Duff as

¹⁶ Peter Brock and Nigel Young, *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), p. 256.

¹⁷ Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, p. 224.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Collins, *Faith Under Fire*, p. 345.

²⁰ Comments from John Gittings received via email, 12 May 2017.

²¹ Interview with Hermione Sacks, 9 May 2017.

one of the ‘radical figures active in CND’.²² This leaves Duff’s position on the concept of direct action somewhat unclear and helps to illustrate how she could be perceived as occupying a middle ground between the orthodox left and the newer, more radical left which was growing during this period.

This desire to politicise the argument surrounding nuclear protest led to the formation of a Disarmament and Strategy group within CND, which Duff helped to establish in 1964. The report of the first meeting of this group reveals its interest in the factors driving British policy; it focussed on questioning existent assumptions on which contemporary defence and foreign policy were based. The report highlighted that the group would ‘necessarily reach a different set of conclusions from those of the government and critics of the government, concerning the balance of risks in the modern world’.²³ It also stressed that it sought to initiate dialogue internally and with other interested bodies concerning a fundamental ‘re-examination of a whole range of problems’.²⁴ This suggests that as part of the Disarmament and Strategy group, Duff and other like-minded CND members advocated a much broader approach within CND, which dealt with issues which featured within the background of broader conversations regarding anti-nuclear concerns. Not only was Duff active amongst ‘the younger intellectuals’ identified by Collins, then, but her work with the Disarmament and Strategy group encouraged her to think more deeply about the root of the perceived problems posed by Britain’s foreign and defence policies. Indeed, according to Gittings, this ‘development of the political argument during the 1960s’ would prove ‘an important factor in explaining her move to ICDP’.²⁵

Despite this rather radical role within CND, Duff was certainly not radical to the point of abandon. Indeed, she remained, in many ways, a traditionalist when it came to politics, as Richard Gott, a self-professed ‘principal henchm[a]n’ of Duff’s, explained.²⁶ Gott himself stood in a by-election in Hull in January 1966 on a platform devoted to the Vietnam War.²⁷ He deemed Peggy something of a

²² Ali, *Street Fighting Years*, p. 116.

²³ Report of the First Meeting of the CND Pressure Group, January 3/4, 1964, John Gittings’ personal archive.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Comments from John Gittings received via email, 12 May 2017.

²⁶ Interview with Richard Gott, 8 June 2017.

²⁷ See Sophie Roberts, ‘The campaign of the “red-bearded radical”’: Richard Gott and the Hull North by-election, 1966’, *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sept., 2018), pp. 336-358.

traditionalist who was completely used to working through Labour channels. He continued that

CND was full of people who wanted extra-parliamentary activity and when the Committee of 100 was set up, she was very shocked because she didn't think that that was the way forward, she was very hostile to the sort of, anarchist elements within CND and of course all of us sort of, younger people were quite keen [...] sitting down in the road and all that sort of thing, which was quite anathema to Peggy who, really, she liked to have a sort of, orthodox campaign. You know, you went on marches, you raised issues but you didn't sort of, shake the tree too much. She was quite conventional in that way. But she was very radical in her views about what should be done.²⁸

Duff's work with the Disarmament and Strategy group can therefore be interpreted as indicative of her respect for intellectual analyses of politics, rather than a collaboration with younger CND members in order to advocate radical protest techniques. Duff's respect for academia is something which would become abundantly clear in her later work with the ICDP. Duff's ICDP colleague, Hermione Sacks, expressed a similar observation on Duff's traditionalism, stating that, despite her pivot away from CND, Duff still conceived of 'proper politics' as constituting moving the Labour Party.²⁹ In *Left, Left, Left*, Duff bemoaned the fact that CND had 'little hard political content even to its short-term aims', she explained that, the focus on ethics rather than politics meant that political approaches were 'distrusted and discarded by many in the movement whose interest and concern was ethically based, who saw all politics as rather nasty and dirty'.³⁰ Perhaps this can account for the fact that she showed neither overt support nor outright condemnation of direct action. Had Duff remained fully committed to the Labour Party and maintained faith in the party to bring about meaningful change, she might have been more condemnatory of direct action. Whilst Duff was deemed radical within some quarters of CND for her pushing of the Vietnam issue, she was not radical in comparison to other activists and groups which were becoming established around this time.

As well as the existing divisions within CND concerning the use of direct action, the increased exploration of the political context which had allowed the nuclear bomb to flourish, as exhibited through the work of the Disarmament and Strategy group, meant that a dialogue grew within the anti-nuclear organisation

²⁸ Interview with Richard Gott, 8 June 2017.

²⁹ Interview with Hermione Sacks, 9 May 2017.

³⁰ Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, p. 224.

concerning whether it ought to encompass other issues within its remit. As early as 1966, CND thus battled with the extent to which, as an organisation based around the protest of nuclear weapons, it should engage with wider political and foreign policy issues like Vietnam.

A discussion on Rhodesia at an Executive Committee meeting of December 1965 highlights a reluctance on the part of CND to become involved with causes which were not directly related to nuclear weapons. During this meeting, Professor Wedderburn of the Executive Committee had moved a resolution explaining that racial conflict in Rhodesia was now a threat to peace and must therefore be a concern of CND. This was agreed by the Executive Committee 'with a proviso that campaigners be urged to support activity organised by organisations more closely concerned and not themselves to organise such activity'.³¹ The proviso tagged onto Professor Wedderburn's resolution here highlights CND's reluctance to overtly support causes which were not directly related to nuclear weapons. Indeed, scholars such as Jodi Burkett have identified that when CND did begin to discuss international conflicts around 1964-5, they continued to do so in relation to nuclear weapons.³² This is something which became too problematic for Duff to endure, as she explained in *Left, Left, Left*:

I found the continuing determination of most of the campaign to stick to the issue of nuclear arms and only nuclear arms entirely illogical. For me, the war in Vietnam seemed a more immediate and urgent concern and American intervention there and elsewhere more threatening to the future of the peace of the world, in 1967, than the possibility of a nuclear war [...] Many dreadful, non-nuclear arms were being used daily in Vietnam. It seemed to me ridiculous to have to justify one's concern about this by "creating" the possibility of nuclear war there. This is why I went to the International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace. It had a wider, more global outlook and, there, peace in Vietnam was accepted as the priority.³³

The Vietnam War made the front page of CND's publication, *Sanity*, for the first time in April 1965 and *Sanity* covered a range of British activities on Vietnam prior to Duff's departure in 1967. These included the first teach-in on Vietnam at Oxford University in 1965, as well as Gott's anti-war candidacy at Hull.³⁴ Notably,

³¹ Minutes of CND Executive Committee Meeting, 4-5 December 1965, Papers of CND, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/1/1/3.

³² Burkett, 'Re-defining British morality', p. 190.

³³ Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, p. 207.

³⁴ See *Sanity*, July 1965 and January 1966, Papers of CND, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181X/4/8/1.

however, Executive Committee meeting minutes reveal that the issue of Vietnam was given little attention in CND at meetings throughout 1965-6. This is despite the prominent role played by high-ranking members of CND, including Duff and Collins, in setting up the internationally-orientated ICDP, which became very focused on Vietnam. (Collins had been elected the first sponsor of the ICDP shortly after its formation and Duff was Treasurer as well as being a member of the Executive Committee.³⁵) The conflict thus appears to have featured predominantly in the form of op-ed pieces within *Sanity*, but was not deemed central enough to the agenda of CND at this point to warrant lengthy internal discussion.

CND's transnational connections were rather weak, something which helps us further understand Duff's rationale for leaving the organisation for the ICDP. Holger Nehring notes that 'there were very few direct connections between CND and its West German counterparts [...] apart from the regular exchange of a few marchers'.³⁶ Indeed, Martin Klimke has revealed the comparative strength of connections between student protesters in West Germany and the United States.³⁷ Jodi Burkett's scholarship has similarly emphasised CND's predominantly domestic nature, most notably through her analysis of CND as steeped in, and formed around, ideas of British national identity. Burkett adds that 'CND was never very good at working with foreign [...] organisations, which they left to the European Federation for Nuclear Disarmament, and later the International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace'.³⁸

Perhaps reflective of this limited transnational outlook, *Sanity*'s framing of the Vietnam conflict remained predominantly domestically-based throughout 1965-6. *Sanity*'s pieces were continually geared towards Prime Minister Harold Wilson, appealing to him to guarantee British neutrality and use his influence to persuade Washington to stop the bombing. One article in June 1965 stated: 'Mr Wilson is mistaken if he thinks we want flamboyant anti-American speeches from him. We are

³⁵ Minutes of CND Executive Committee Meeting, 25-26 January 1964, Papers of CND, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/1/1/3.

³⁶ Holger Nehring, 'National Internationalists: British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons, the Politics of Transnational Communications and the Social History of the Cold War, 1957-1964', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Nov., 2005), p. 570

³⁷ See Martin Klimke, *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

³⁸ Burkett, 'Re-defining British morality', p. 192.

not asking him to kick his allies in the teeth. What we do expect is an independent British policy, a firm refusal to back either side'.³⁹

Naturally, *Sanity* also ran pieces discrediting the foreign policy of Johnson, but such articles usually ended with a clear appeal to the British government: '[Johnson's] policy is wicked and immoral, because it kills people with foul weapons of mass destruction' one article explained, but continued that 'Britain must choose the only genuine alternative to the Atlantic Alliance – a policy on non-alignment'.⁴⁰ So whilst there was, of course, a distinct condemnation within the pages of *Sanity* of U.S. foreign policy, CND's conceptualisation of how to solve the problem ultimately lay within the domestic sphere and was aimed particularly at securing the dissociation of the Wilson government from the actions of its U.S. ally. This domestic focus was maintained into 1968, when CND minutes showed the main emphasis of CND policy was 'to secure British dissociation from American policy',⁴¹ thus enforcing Sylvia Ellis' contention that transnational concerns within the British movement were secondary to its ultimately domestic objective.⁴² In fact, Duff appears to have been one of the main voices reporting on international connections at CND's Executive Committee meetings.⁴³ This suggests that she recognised the worth of transnational collaboration and the interconnectedness of issues relatively early in this period. It is abundantly clear that from the period of the formation of the ICDP in January 1963, up until her decision to leave CND in early 1967 that Duff continued to engage with the ICDP and its international focus. This transnational approach to peace politics became the prime focus of her activism, however she did continue to utilise pre-existing domestically-based contacts. In this sense we can analyse Duff's activism utilising Sidney Tarrow's helpful framework concerning the balance of domestic and transnational activism. Whilst Duff increasingly consulted with international groups and contacts, Duff retained and utilised her links in Britain. Tarrow has argued that domestic networks serve to both constrain and support transnational activists, highlighting that 'even as they make transnational claims, these activists draw on the

³⁹ *Sanity*, June 1965, Papers of CND, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181X/4/8/1

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Minutes of CND Executive Committee Meeting, 13-14 January 1968, Papers of CND, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/1/1/3.

⁴² Ellis, 'Promoting Solidarity at Home and Abroad', p. 571.

⁴³ See Minutes of CND Executive Committee Meeting, 25 June 1966, Papers of CND, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/1/1/3.

resources, networks, and opportunities of the societies they lives in'.⁴⁴ Such varied activism has led Tarrow to coin the term 'rooted cosmopolitans' whom he defines as 'individuals and groups who mobilise domestic and international resources and opportunities to advance claims on behalf of external actors, against external opponents, or in favour of goals they hold in common with transnational allies'.⁴⁵ According to Tarrow, this can be found in rooted cosmopolitans' 'ability to shift their activities among levels, taking advantage of the expanded nodes of opportunity of a complex international society'.⁴⁶ The concept of the rooted cosmopolitan is important when we think of Duff's counterbalancing in utilising both transnational and domestic links. As this chapter will show, whilst Duff's career trajectory reveals that she did increasingly embrace the transnational, she also continued to utilise select links in Britain.

Duff herself wrote several pieces for *Sanity* on Vietnam and one piece in particular reveals rifts within the wider peace movement surrounding the conflict as early as September 1965. 'Divisions are appearing in the peace movements about the attitude of non-aligned organisations and individuals to the war in Vietnam', Duff wrote.⁴⁷ 'Opinion ranges from "Victory to the NLF" [...] to "relentless insistence on non-alignment with either side"'.⁴⁸ For Duff, these differences concerned contradictory interpretations of the concept of non-alignment, and the article makes clear Duff's viewpoint concerning the importance of the ICDP in such debates:

Does [non-alignment] mean that in all times and all circumstances we must be equally opposed to both sides in a conflict or political confrontation? This is certainly not the definition accepted by many who were concerned with establishing our non-aligned International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace. For me, non-alignment means that we are not tied to the viewpoint of any power bloc or government.⁴⁹

This statement reveals the pragmatism which would continue to define Duff's approach to campaigning. Unlike the 'Victory to the NLF' position promoted by Tariq Ali, the VSC and other radical groups, Duff's approach to anti-war protest was notably non-ideological and she rarely engaged in ideological discussion.⁵⁰ As was

⁴⁴ Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Peggy Duff, 'We Can't Shift the Burden', *Sanity*, September 1965, Papers of CND, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181X/4/8/1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Comments from John Gittings received via email, 12 May 2017.

explored in Chapter One, the concept of Britain as a third force, unaligned to the viewpoint of any superpower, was an ideology which was very much in keeping with the thought of the Labour left. It therefore reveals Duff's ideological grounding within the orthodox left and this viewpoint regarding nonalignment was something which Duff would continue into her tenure at the ICDP, as this chapter will show.

A short piece in *Sanity* in February 1967 dealt with Duff's departure from CND wherein Olive Gibbs wrote that Duff's decision to resign from CND was a 'sad one for us. Without any hesitation I would say that no other single individual has contributed so much to CND and to the cause of nuclear disarmament generally'.⁵¹ Her colleague Canon Collins also recognised that 'to a large number of people the world over CND and Peggy Duff were inseparable' this fact, Collins ruminated 'is, perhaps, the tribute she must treasure most, and it is one she deserves'.⁵² Duff's transition from CND to the ICDP serves as an illustrative microcosm of wider debates within both CND and the wider peace movement. These debates include the extent to which single-issue campaigns ought to engage with issues beyond the realm of nuclear weapons as well as dialogues concerning the types of tactics they should adopt. Duff's tenure at the ICDP continues to constitute an interesting case of pragmatically-grounded activism during which her transnational connections flourished. At the ICDP, Duff was able to devote her efforts to what she believed to be the most important issue of the day: Vietnam.

ICDP and SCV: post-1967

The ICDP and SCV have received little historiographical attention. However, Marie Sandell's scholarship on female transnational activism in the interwar period provides a useful framework for thinking about such organisations, particularly delineating the differences between transnational and international organisations. She emphasises that '*transnational* tends to emphasise and refer to the roles of non-state actors [...] while the term *international* deals with the interaction between nation states [...] [some organisations] are more easily defined as *transnational* [...] [as they] operated above national structures using peace as [their] unifying goal'.⁵³

⁵¹ Olive Gibbs, 'We Shall Miss You Peggy', *Sanity*, February 1967, Papers of CND, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.191X/4/8/1.

⁵² Collins, *Faith Under Fire*, p. 315.

⁵³ Marie Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism: Identity and Sisterhood Between the World Wars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), p. 4.

Transnational activism, for Sandell, is thus concerned with overriding the government level. The ICDP provides a useful example of such an organisation as it sought to take ‘national peace organisations one step closer to the creation of a powerful international peace organisation that can effectively challenge the international military establishment’.⁵⁴

The scholarship of Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink provides a useful analytical tool through their focus on ‘transnational advocacy networks’. As opposed to scientifically-based organisations linked through professional ties, transnational advocacy networks are ‘distinguishable largely by the centrality of principled ideas or values in motivating their formation’.⁵⁵ Transnational anti-Vietnam War protest was also characterised by such value-centricity. Although undoubtedly there were distinct differences on how best to approach anti-war protest (both within and amongst differing organisations), numerous activists consistently focused on the immorality of the war and stressed the ethical dilemma posed by U.S. involvement. Keck and Sikkink have also discussed the value of information collection and dissemination within transnational advocacy networks. They claim that the collection, interchange and tactical use of information are at the core of transnational advocacy networks.⁵⁶

This section will analyse Duff’s activism through the ICDP and SCV in conjunction, as she worked with these organisations simultaneously. It will utilise numerous episodes from her myriad post-CND activism in order to illustrate the approaches she used to agitate against the Vietnam War. Her focus on practicality rather than ideology – an extension of the nonaligned mentality prevalent amongst the orthodox left, will be considered first. The threads of this discussion continue subsequently, when the chapter turns to examine how the ICDP utilised informational exchange as an anti-war tool. Thirdly, Duff’s links with Vietnamese peace activists will be explored and then the chapter will comment upon the relative balance between domestic and transnational considerations within Duff’s activism, thus immersing and contextualising her anti-war activism within scholarly debates

⁵⁴ ‘ICDP Consultation Sept. 11-18, 64.’, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/97.

⁵⁵ Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 30.

⁵⁶ See *Ibid.*, p. x.

concerning the fundamental domesticity of the movement in Britain. Brief consideration will then be afforded to Duff's work in the period after the 1973 Paris Peace Accords which ended U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Keck and Sikkink have highlighted that the function of transnational advocacy alliances was often to 'stimulate international alliances with nationally weak social movements'.⁵⁷ In a similar vein, Hermione Sacks identified the role played by the ICDP in bolstering individual national movements, stating that individual national groups often 'liked to be attached to an international group because they could do things that were harder for them in their own country with that international backing'.⁵⁸ The ICDP worked on numerous issues pertaining to peace in this period, but Vietnam remained the organisation's primary focus. One of the main ways the organisation orchestrated and facilitated transnational anti-war opposition was through the Stockholm Conferences on Vietnam.

It is worth pausing here to consider the origins and significance of SCV. Sweden was an important geopolitical player with regards to Vietnam – the decision by its government to formally recognise the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (the communist-led North Vietnam) in 1967 meant that the Scandinavian nation held particular symbolic value for anti-Vietnam War protesters. Laden with symbolism though this may have been, decisions pertaining to the location of international conferences such as these were also constrained by practicalities – in this case the difficulty faced by the organisers in persuading a host nation to hold a conference which may be viewed as disagreeable to the U.S. The first Stockholm Conference on Vietnam opened on 6 July 1967 and concluded three days later with a public demonstration in Stockholm. During the organisation of this conference, Duff wrote to numerous diverse and noteworthy individuals and organisations including the Japan Congress against A and H Bombs, pacifist and Labour politician Fenner Brockway, British trade unionists such as Clive Jenkins and Frank Allaun, Yale Professor Staughton Lynd, Reverend James Bevel and Martin Luther King Jr. of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, David McReynolds of War Resisters' International, and folk singer and peace campaigner Joan Baez.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Donatella della Porta and Sidney Tarrow, 'Transnational Protest and Global Activism', in Vincenzo Ruggiero and Nicola Montagna (eds.), *Social Movements: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 342.

⁵⁸ Interview with Hermione Sacks, 8 May 2017.

Duff reported in the August 1967 issue of *Sanity* that the conference was a great success, with 450 delegates and observers from 275 international and national organisations in 62 countries.⁵⁹ She wrote that ‘this diverse group of people not only came together, but found themselves so very much in agreement on both the origins of the war in Vietnam and what could be done to end it’.⁶⁰ Following on from the success of the conference, it was decided that the working committee of the original Stockholm Conference would continue to operate as an organisation devoted solely to the Vietnam War. This organisation would simply be known as the Stockholm Conference on Vietnam (SCV). For Duff the success of the conference had been enabled by the providing of delegates ‘with a number of informed and authoritative documents on the history of the war, and of Vietnam, on the war itself, on international law, on peace initiatives’ and the fact that ‘two of the most important commissions, on the coordination of activity and on material aid, were concerned with practical matters’.⁶¹ Importantly, this relates to two key strategies which would continue to characterise Duff’s approach to anti-war campaigning throughout this period. These were a concentration on practical approaches and a focus on the dissemination of information.

Practicality

Duff’s pragmatic approach towards anti-Vietnam War activism is something which has been identified by her contemporaries in the peace movement. John Gittings explained that ‘Peggy always had a very practical approach [...] But just as she hadn’t been a unilateral purist in CND, so she wasn’t a Liberation idealist when she moved on to Vietnam and other international issues’.⁶² Duff’s pragmatism could also be seen in her dealings with internal conflicts within the ICDP. This was evident in her response to consternation from some Executive Committee members regarding whether Buddhists representing a Vietnamese third force should be represented at Stockholm. The Buddhists proved a controversial group which had garnered a lot of negative attention due to the tactic of self-immolation which some Vietnamese monks had utilised in order to protest against the war. On the subject of the monks

⁵⁹ *Sanity*, August 1967, Papers of CND, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181X/4/8/1.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Comments from John Gittings received via email, 12 May 2017.

being represented in Stockholm, Duff stated in a letter to senior members of the ICDP:

Let me firstly clarify my own position for all of you who are getting this. I strongly favour the Buddhists' being in Stockholm [...] But to say that I think the Buddhists ought to be there and to say that I am prepared essentially to help break up a conference if they are not there are two extremely different things [...] I think, you see, that you are raising to the level of principle here what is really a tactical question.⁶³

As this quote shows, Duff had a knack for succinctly framing things. It also highlights her pragmatism: as much as she would have liked the Buddhists to be represented at the conference, she was ultimately realistic in her assessment that it was better for the conference to go on without the Buddhists' involvement than to not go on at all. This pragmatism is something which would continue to characterise SCV meetings and conferences as the organisation endured. Duff's correspondence reveals that she deemed the 1969 SCV conference to have had quite an impact, stating that it spurred lots of activity in Britain.⁶⁴ Duff also added that a guest present at a SCV conference had told her how impressed he was by the conference 'because only activities were discussed, and no ideology, leading Duff to gush to her friend Noam Chomsky: 'we always were a pragmatic people!'.⁶⁵ Duff was practical in the sense that the organisation continued to evolve and shift the foci of its conferences to suit the contemporary need. For example, the fifth Stockholm conference held from 28-30 March 1970, was aimed at securing increased co-ordination and unity between ICDP affiliates 'for the mobilisation of public opinion for an end to the war in Vietnam [...] This is not going to be just another conference [...] We are aiming at a broader and more important one, truly reflecting the real picture of the present stage of the international Vietnam [movement]'.⁶⁶ The organisation continued to embark upon various endeavours, including sending a boat full of supplies from Japan to the Vietnamese port of Haiphong.⁶⁷ Such endeavours, of course, necessitated extensive funds, which the ICDP lacked. Duff's correspondence reveals that the money from

⁶³ Duff to Alfred Hassler, 3 July 1967, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/16.

⁶⁴ Duff to Professor Noam Chomsky, 10 June 1969, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/90.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ 'Stockholm Conference on Vietnam' circular, 18 February 1970, Papers of Jack Askins, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.189/V/1/12/2.

⁶⁷ Duff to Chomsky, 5 September 1970, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/90.

this initiative actually came from the Swedish Committee on Vietnam, who raised 350,000 kronor in a two-month period in 1970.⁶⁸

Practicality was also evident through the academics Duff sought to work with. Conferences were often Duff's *modus operandi*, particularly during her years at the ICDP. Her correspondence reveals that she was remarkably well connected to academics across the world, particularly those in the U.S. These included Professors Staughton Lynd and Noam Chomsky. However, as Hermione Sacks explained, such relationships were not merely aimed at boosting the profile of the ICDP and its events. Rather, Duff's intellectual contacts had to have a practical mindsight too: 'I think intellectuals who only talked and didn't do anything she was very sceptical of [...] you had to do practical things, you had to join in [...] if it was just academic blah, no. You needed to be practical as well'.⁶⁹ Duff's utilisation of academic opinion on the war through the SCV conferences highlights a thread of continuity from her time with the Disarmament and Strategy group within CND, which sought to apply to the question of nuclear weapons a more rigorous political and academic expertise.

The importance of information

The very purpose of the numerous international conferences which Duff was instrumental in organising was the exchange of information amongst academics and subject specialists. Furthermore, as this chapter will show, Duff often sought to utilise the media in order to disseminate such information. Indeed, Duff herself attempted to influence public discourse on Vietnam, and, as will be illustrated in more depth later, encouraged awareness amongst academics and the wider public about issues which were not being given attention by governments and in the mainstream press, including the condition of prisoners of war, aid, and U.S. war crimes. For Keck and Sikkink, such information management on a transnational scale is key to the success of activist networks: 'influence is possible because the actors in these networks are simultaneously helping to define the issue area itself, convince target audiences that the problems thus defined are soluble, prescribe solutions, and monitor their implementation'.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Interview with Hermione Sacks, 9 May 2017.

⁷⁰ Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, p. 30.

Furthermore, for Keck and Sikkink, conditions in which precise and accurate information is scant are ideal for transnational advocacy networks to flourish. Information uncertainty was a notable characteristic of the war in Vietnam, something which was recognised by the ICDP. For example, materials from a 1972 SCV conference stated that the conflict was ‘characterised by news blackouts’.⁷¹ Moreover, Duff’s own efforts were often geared to providing correctives to false or inaccurate information in the mainstream U.S. and British presses, or at championing issues which were not featured in these presses at all.

Information was the currency in which the ICDP dealt. The collection and dissemination of reliable information was crucial to the anti-Vietnam War strategies of SCV and the ICDP. Duff’s personal correspondence often reveals impatience with the poor reportage of the war and the peace talks, particularly within the British and American presses. This led her to read French newspapers such as *Le Monde*, which she regarded as more objective (as she chided Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe, ‘if you read regularly, as we do, *Le Monde* and the American press, you get quite a different picture’.⁷²) Rather than merely protesting American actions, it is clear that the organisation believed it necessary to collect its own information, correct misinformation in circulation, and disseminate that information in a variety of ways. SCV members heard first-hand accounts in the form of speeches by Indochinese delegations, as was the case at the World Conference on Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia held in Stockholm from 28-30 November 1970. SCV circulars also reveal that delegates were expected to attend conferences prepared: one circular prior to the Paris World Assembly for the Peace and Independence of Indochinese People organised by SCV in 1972 specified that ‘all participants should be prepared with materials which could be of value’.⁷³ Indeed, the importance of information was explicitly stated during a meeting of the SCV Executive Committee in 1972, when it was stated that ‘the only way to mobilise world public opinion is to give concrete

⁷¹ Paris World Assembly for the Peace and Independence of Indochinese People, 11-13 February 1972, ‘The New aspects of the war’, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/21.

⁷² Duff to Jeremy Thorpe MP, 4 August 1969, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS. 181/16/37.

⁷³ Circular on Paris World Assembly for the Peace and Independence of Indochinese People, 11-13 February 1972, to British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam, 26 January 1972, Papers of Jack Askins, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS. 189/V/1/12/8.

information and well defined facts. This is the way the Vietnam movement has become a strong force in many countries. This is our way also in the future'.⁷⁴ Furthermore, in Duff's personal correspondence with Chomsky, her belief in the paucity of knowledge about key issues relating to the war was clear. In 1970, she discussed her aim to write a documented history relating to prisoners of war, stating that, in a recent meeting she had discovered a lack of knowledge on this subject even amongst ICDP Executive members.⁷⁵ Keck and Sikkink identify such 'issue creation and agenda setting' as one way in which transnational advocacy networks such as the ICDP manage to exert influence.⁷⁶

Duff was a media-savvy figure and recognised the desirability of media coverage for the anti-war movement. She utilised connections with media figures in order to fulfil one of her key concerns – namely the dissemination of information pertaining to the war. The well-connectedness to members of the Vietnamese peace movement, as well as contacts in Britain at Granada and other media outlets enabled her to embark on wide-scale and ambitious forms of activism, not least including the production of a film. A visit to North Vietnam with Richard Gott in 1969 provoked Duff's idea to create a film as part of Granada Television's *World in Action* series, which Duff regarded as the most progressive programme in Britain.⁷⁷ Duff believed that the film would have a genuine impact on peoples' conceptualisations of North Vietnam, highlighting once again the centrality of information dissemination at the heart of her anti-war efforts. The aim to make the film underscores Duff's central role in the creation and dissemination of information pertaining not only to the war but to perceptions of Vietnam. This was illustrated when Duff wrote to the President of the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, Dr. Pham Ngoc Thuan:

the film which was made by the Trade Union delegation, while they were in North Vietnam, though it was very scrappy and not very good, nevertheless had a considerable impact, partly because it was shown immediately after President Nixon issued his Five Points, and was sold to very many countries around the world. Two or three films, which were technically better and which give people in the West a genuine picture of

⁷⁴ 'Concluding Speech' at SCV Executive Committee meeting, Paris, 25-26 November 1972, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/21.

⁷⁵ Duff to Chomsky, 16 December 1970, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/90.

⁷⁶ Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, p. 25.

⁷⁷ Duff to The Director of the Information Office of the Pathet Lao, 30 April 1971, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/34.

life in North Vietnam would, I believe, be very important, especially during 1971.⁷⁸

Discussions on this potential film production reoccurred throughout her correspondence with North Vietnamese figures until 1974. Utilising Vietnamese contacts was key to Duff's efforts to get the film made. Reflective of Duff's resolve, the correspondence reveals efforts to make the film despite multiple setbacks for various reasons. In one instance the film was cancelled due to complaints made to the head of Granada by the American Ambassador.⁷⁹ Eventually, Granada pulled out of the project and an independent company took over its production.⁸⁰

The film project had gained renewed momentum throughout 1971, as it evolved from its original conception of a film of North Vietnam, to one encompassing life in neighbouring Cambodia and Laos as well. Again, a belief in the need to inform and educate people, as well as Duff's belief in consulting expert opinion regarding the war, was cited clearly as a rationale for the project. Duff explained to a contact in Laos that she had received letters from 'important people in the United States', including Chomsky, who had urged her that first-hand information of the situation in Laos was urgently needed in America.⁸¹ This was partly in order to educate people but also to correct misinformation given by the Nixon administration which had 'been insisting that the bombing of Laos is only of the trails and military objectives – and that only three villages have been bombed "by mistake"!'.⁸² For this reason, Duff contended that first hand evidence contradicting such statements being released by the Nixon administration would be invaluable in shaping the anti-war movement.⁸³

Duff's frustration with the continual stalling of the project was evident in her correspondence with Chomsky. In February 1972, she wrote: 'I haven't time at the moment to tell what happened to our film which got fucked up by Granada once

⁷⁸ Duff to Dr. Pham Ngoc Thuan, 19 November 1970, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/34.

⁷⁹ Duff to Dr Pham Ngoc Thuan, 27 October 1970, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/34.

⁸⁰ Duff to Dr Pham Ngoc Thuan, 19 November 1970, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/34.

⁸¹ Duff to M. Phao Pimphachanh of the Information Office of the Pathet Lao, 16 December 1971, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/34.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

again though I am happy to say that it doesn't seem to have affected my good relations with the Cultural Committee [of North Vietnam]'.⁸⁴ The film project and all its false starts came to the attention of the press, with a *New Statesman* article in the same month reporting that the *World in Action* Executive Producer, Jeremy Wallington, had decided to cancel the project as he had got 'cold feet' and refused to send the film crew which had had secured permission to access American prisoners.⁸⁵

The archival record does, however, make clear, that a film with Granada *was* made, although it does not appear to be in the vein of any previous suggestions, which were all broadly concerned with representing 'normal' life in Vietnam. As Duff explained to Chomsky in 1973, the film made actually concerned prisoners of war and enjoyed notable success within the transnational peace movement: 'I am very popular with the PRG at the moment because of my/Granada's film on prisoners', Duff wrote to Chomsky in June 1973.⁸⁶ Duff also explained that the film had been circulated amongst peace campaigners in the cities of Paris, Stockholm and Brussels before being shared in Sweden, France, Italy, Holland, West Germany and Hungary.⁸⁷ The lengthy incident of the film, with all its highs and lows, showcases the calibre of well-placed contacts which Duff was able to call upon in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Britain and the U.S. in order to push for its production. It also reinforces her focus on how crucial information dissemination was to the anti-war cause.

Duff also utilised the media in order to clarify the ideological underpinnings of the ICDP. More specifically, this was palpable in her exchanges with the Editor of *The Sunday Telegraph* in response to an article in the publication, which was entitled 'How Moscow Calls the Protest Tune'.⁸⁸ Duff and editor Brian Roberts went back and forth on this issue for a while, discussing details as to which organisations were responsible for initiating recent demonstrations and which groups had sponsored the

⁸⁴ Duff to Chomsky, 2 February 1972, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/90.

⁸⁵ 'Mission Unfulfilled', *New Statesman* clipping, 4 February 1972, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/34.

⁸⁶ Duff to Chomsky, 11 June 1973, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/90.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Duff to Editor, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 3 November 1967, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/78.

Stockholm Conference and handled its press relations. On all of these points, Roberts maintained that the conference was under influence from communists. Holger Nehring has highlighted the less virulent nature of the anti-communist climate in Britain.⁸⁹ However, this correspondence exchange between Duff and Roberts would indicate that activists still viewed associations with communist groups as potentially damaging to the reputation of the organisation with which they were involved. Indeed, Duff was at pains exonerate the ICDP of communist connections.

This exchange underscores that Duff felt it was imperative that the ICDP operate from a position nonaligned with either superpower. This facet was reminiscent of the CND approach. In *Left, Left, Left*, she outlined the role Britain ought to play in constituting an ideological third force: ‘the Bomb was a symptom and not a cause and [...] the real threat to peace lay in the hegemonies of the superpowers [...] It was this that had fed the arms race, which had obstructed national independence in Vietnam and elsewhere’.⁹⁰ Duff’s ability to supersede the bloc mentality (unlike other contemporary groups openly supporting the position of the communist-NLF) enabled her to contextualise the war in Vietnam in the broader framework of geopolitical power balances.

One of Duff’s other media-related anti-war ventures was a press conference on Cambodia, at which Noam Chomsky and Philip Noel-Baker (Labour MP for Derby South) had agreed to appear.⁹¹ Similarly to the film project, Duff and her collaborators went back and forth on this project, which was cancelled primarily due to problems regarding logistics. Tellingly, Duff wrote a handwritten message to Bertil Zachrisson, who was the Chairman of SCV, on the top of her typed letter explaining the circumstances regarding the cancellation of the conference. It read: ‘for your information. It reads rather like a Shakespearean tragedy! Love PD’.⁹² The conference was initially moved back one day in order to avoid clashing with Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev’s departure from Paris, where the press conference was

⁸⁹ Nehring, ‘The British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons’, p. 225.

⁹⁰ Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, p. 207.

⁹¹ Bertil Zachrisson to Duff, 18 June 1973, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/45.

⁹² Duff to Bertil Zachrisson, undated, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/45.

the be held, which Duff realised would severely limit the attention afforded to the press conference.⁹³ However, it was ultimately cancelled due to numerous reasons. Firstly, the change in date meant that there were no vacant places for Chomsky on the daily flight from Boston to Paris on 28 June. Secondly, Noel-Baker wrote to say that he was no longer sure that he could come and that he did not want his name used if he was unable to appear in person. When Duff was finally able to get in touch with Zachrisson, they came to the realisation that circumstances meant cancellation of the press conference was inevitable.⁹⁴ Duff's correspondence on the issue does, however, allow one to gain insight into her perceptiveness regarding the peace movement and the attention afforded to it by the press. She explained to a Cambodian contact, Dr In Sokan that 'one of the problems of getting the issue of Cambodia into the Western Press and, especially, into the American Press is that they are interested in personalities, such as Noam Chomsky, Philip Noel-Baker or Prasith Thiounn, but not in the least interested in organisations, national or international'.⁹⁵ This contention regarding the interest of the American press in personalities helps us to understand the selective approach of much of Duff's anti-war work – particularly the organisation of conferences. Through organising conferences, she was able to select important individuals, whose intellect and expertise meant that they would contribute greatly to the conference in question. Simultaneously, this approach, coupled with the hope that the high-profile attendees would be featured within the American press, also served to publicise the work of the ICDP and the anti-war cause more generally within the American press.

Duff did not limit her contacts to academics, however. In fact, one letter from the papers of the ICDP reveals that Duff had put a film maker in touch with Jane Fonda, who then produced a film which touched upon the actress's anti-war work. In the letter, Duff wrote that she was 'a bit nervous about it as I put her in touch with Jane, but it turned out very good and excellent on Vietnam and Watergate. Of course, they put it on late – 10.30 to 11.15'.⁹⁶ Indeed, Fonda was a 'great friend of

⁹³ Duff to Philip Noel-Baker, 19 June 1973, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/45.

⁹⁴ Duff to Dr. In Sokan, 29 June 1973, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/45.

⁹⁵ Duff to Dr. In Sokan, 28 June 1973, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/45.

⁹⁶ Duff to Chomsky, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/90.

Peggy's' according to Duff's CND associate Richard Gott.⁹⁷ Whilst this close friendship was relatively brief and based solely around their combined opposition to the war, it is clear that the two figures, who were prominent within their respective fields, kept in touch particularly to let one another know when they would be free to meet.⁹⁸

Links to Vietnam

It is not the case that Duff merely enjoyed eminent contacts in the West. Nor was Duff's transnational contact limited to conference settings. In her capacity as general secretary of ICDP and as part of the SCV Executive Committee, she visited Vietnam on numerous occasions. One of these visits was in late 1969 when she spent some seven weeks in Vietnam, along with her old friend and CND contact, who was now a journalist at *The Guardian*, Richard Gott. Duff's visits to Vietnam produced journalistic outputs in the form of articles for publications such as *Tribune*, but the trips also afforded Duff the opportunity to cement her strong relationships with key Vietnamese figures, many of whom she remained in close contact with upon her return to Britain. In a letter from Vu Phong of the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, Phong expressed: 'I've thought so often of our nearly two months together and the work that we did together, often under such difficult conditions'.⁹⁹ Duff's friendly relations with Vietnamese officials could also be seen in her preparations for the trip. She asked Chomsky shortly before her departure to send some signed copies of his latest book as she wanted to distribute these to her 'favourite Cambodian minister', as well as to members of the Peace and Cultural Committees.¹⁰⁰

Duff was also involved with the Vietnamese representatives present at the Paris peace talks. There are various examples of Duff referring to meetings with such representatives within her correspondence, although there is no direct record of these meetings in the form of minutes.¹⁰¹ These meetings were genuine and sincere

⁹⁷ Interview with Richard Gott, 8 June 2017.

⁹⁸ Duff to Jane Fonda and Tom Hayden, 13 July 1973; Fonda to Duff, 30 Oct. [1973], Papers of ICDP, J.B. Priestley Library, University of Bradford, Box 3, No. 3/4.

⁹⁹ Vu Phong to Duff, 21 April 1970, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/34.

¹⁰⁰ Duff to Chomsky, 25 September 1970, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/34

¹⁰¹ See e.g. Hermione Sacks to Helmut Kramer, 19 July 1968, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/3.

attempts by Duff to gain a greater understanding of Vietnamese perspectives on peace. Indeed, Duff was very keen on incorporating the input of her Vietnamese contacts into the strategy of her anti-war work. When going to the States in February 1969, for instance, Duff specifically asked Xuan Oanh, a contact in Paris who was a member of the delegation of the DRV about matters he would like raising whilst she was there.¹⁰² Members of the PRG delegation in Paris were sometimes even present at meetings of the SCV Executive Committee, revealing again SCV's desire to get the input from Indochinese colleagues regarding the best action for the peace movement to undertake.¹⁰³

National versus transnational

Ellis has recognised the important role played by Duff in facilitating transnational connections, explaining that Duff maintained a regular correspondence and even friendship with high-profile anti-war activists in the U.S.¹⁰⁴ The focus of the ICDP was rigorously international, and only five of its thirty-nine founding organisations were British groups. The origins of the organisation were similarly international in outlook: Duff's transition to the ICDP was prompted by her disillusionment with the approach of not only the British government and the Labour Party but other elements of the orthodox left towards Vietnam, most notably CND.

However, the ICDP was based in London, and it could therefore arguably be conceived as a part of the British movement. Furthermore, Duff continued to utilise contacts within the British government in order to facilitate her work with the ICDP and she explained to Professor Staughton Lynd in a letter in 1967 that she was 'still very much in the national scene when I am home'.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, British dissociation, or at the very least, condemnation of U.S. actions, remained a desirable goal, although Duff has little faith that this would happen. The work of SCV and the ICDP was also relatively domestic in the sense that it did ultimately appeal to the governmental level in order to stop the conflict. A SCV circular of 1972 enforced the belief of the organisation that 'if other governments speak out as the French and

¹⁰² Duff to Do Xuan Oanh, 13 February 1969, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/29.

¹⁰³ SCV circular, 19 April 1972, Papers of ICDP, Modern Record's Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/21.

¹⁰⁴ Ellis, 'Promoting Solidarity at Home and Abroad', p. 570.

¹⁰⁵ Duff to Professor Staughton Lynd, 19 June 1967, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/16.

Swedish already did, the U.S. administration may realise that the present war policy causes only destruction, misery and hate and that it will not lead to any solution'.¹⁰⁶ The SCV therefore explicitly urged that the actions of national peace groups should not only pressurise the U.S. to cease hostilities, but they also encouraged 'initiatives towards your own government to cause them to express themselves against the bombing and for the resumption of talks'.¹⁰⁷

One group Duff drew upon in particular were Members of Parliament. She particularly used her connections to MPs concerning the issue of the granting of visas to foreign speakers, oftentimes Vietnamese delegates based in Paris. In 1969, she wrote to Frank Allaun MP, himself an avid critic of the war, who was heavily involved with the British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam (BCPV), and appealed to him to arrange a meeting with Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart to discuss the possibility of visas for members of the DRV.¹⁰⁸ This also worked in reverse as well – in 1969 she wrote to Do Xuan Oanh in order to elicit help in gaining a visa for Richard Gott who wanted to go to Hanoi.¹⁰⁹ Duff's interactions with MPs forces us to consider the extent to which she truly superseded the level of government with regards to the stopping of the war. Certainly, she continued to utilise connections with British MPs, although these were, by and large, left-leaning in outlook. Most of these MPs had made their own anti-Vietnam War sentiments known, including Noel-Baker, the aforementioned Frank Allaun and Anne Kerr. Her continued interactions with MPs, as well as the continued urging by SCV to encourage national groups to push for the dissociation of their own governments from U.S. actions, complicates the notion of Duff's approach being completely transnational. It would suggest that Duff clearly believed, despite her lack of faith in Britain's own parliamentarians, that some form of governmental intervention was needed on Vietnam; the peace movement could not simply supersede governmental structures and hope for a cessation of the bombing. Moreover, in a practical sense, it was an extension of Duff's broader approach in which she utilised disparate parts of her varied network,

¹⁰⁶ SCV circular, 20 March 1972, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/21.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Duff to Frank Allaun MP, 17 January 1969, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/29.

¹⁰⁹ Duff to Xuan Oanh, 13 June 1969, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/33.

which consisted of many parliamentarians, domestic and foreign, as well as a host of other anti-war campaigners.

Duff's activism does make clear that she felt that a collaborative transnational approach was increasingly appropriate. She became a strong proponent of working transnationally in order to rally foreign parliamentarians to the Vietnam cause. This was indicative of her increasing faith in transnational activism as the best way to agitate for peace in Vietnam. To this end she worked on an appeal to European MPs in 1971. Writing to Frank Allaun, Duff explained that she was organising an initiative for members of different European parliaments to sign an appeal to U.S. Senators and Congressmen. This appears to have been somewhat successful in that the appeal gained 92 British names, as well as 45 Finnish, 40 Australian, and 35 Canadian signatories, prior to any attempts to canvass Western Europe and the U.S.¹¹⁰ Indeed, forms of pressure in which anti-war actors focused on pressuring their own respective governments, were deemed desirable by some of Duff's colleagues. Professor Salvador Luria from the Italian peace movement wrote to Duff in 1973 explaining that

If the prime purpose of the action you have in mind is amnesty for American deserters or exiles, then my feeling is that any action directed to the American government should come from Americans only. Any foreign intervention, unless from governments, is counterproductive. I see no use in an international group going to Washington. Foreigners can help, however, by petitioning their governments to put pressure on the American one for the stated purpose.¹¹¹

These remarks provide an interesting insight into the thought processes behind anti-war groups in differing countries. Luria's contention that activists' efforts outside of the U.S. would only be useful if they were directed towards domestic governments reinforces the belief still held by many on the left on the importance of continuing to channel protest through parliamentary channels. Duff's case thus proves interesting and, in some ways, rather anomalous here, because for all her commitment to the governmental process, as has already been elucidated, she had become thoroughly disillusioned with the prospect of change via the British government, leading her to organise on a transnational basis.

¹¹⁰ Duff to Riccardo Lombardi, 28 June 1971, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS. 181/16/15.

¹¹¹ Professor Salvador E. Luria to Duff, 25 September 1971, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/37.

Duff also continued to work with CND in a reduced capacity after her 1967 departure from the organisation. She contributed relatively frequently to *Sanity* and assisted CND practically, for example in facilitating the presence of a Vietnamese delegation at CND's annual Easter march in 1969.¹¹² Duff also spoke fondly of trade unions in Britain, particularly in relation to their anti-war efforts. She explained to Chomsky in 1970, 'we have some DRV trade Unionists here and some really top British TU Gen. Secs are going to Hanoi immediately after the TUC'.¹¹³ This comment is somewhat telling as it reveals that Duff was particularly enthusiastic about having top union representatives engaged with the Vietnam cause, rather than amassing support from higher numbers from those affiliated to British unions. This approach marks a stark point of contrast with the approach of the BCPV, as will be exhibited in Section B of this thesis.

However, by 1970, Duff expressed a lack of faith in the anti-war movement in Britain, stating: 'Britain is absolutely dreadful [...] There was a dreadful demo last Saturday, a pointless and dreary Trafalgar Sq. meeting followed by an equally pointless punch up in Grosvenor Square between the police and various Marxist sects'.¹¹⁴ Duff's statement on the dreadfulness of the British anti-war movement in 1970 was reflective of the fact that the movement generally was less energised following on from the peak of anti-war activity which Britain had witnessed, along with many other countries, in 1968. However, Duff's reflections on the movement in Britain specifically elucidate a conundrum on how best to proceed with regards to Britain and Vietnam. In an ideological sense, Duff continued to subscribe to the orthodox leftist notion of Britain as a geopolitical third force. However, in a practical vein, she increasingly despaired of the orthodox left in Britain and chose to utilise her connections there less and less.

Duff's was a product of a steady increase in disillusionment with the promise yielded in Britain for meaningful political change. In *Left, Left, Left*, Duff made clear that Labour Party support gradually drained away from CND in the early 1960s.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Minutes of CND Executive Committee Meeting, 15 February 1969, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/1/1/2.

¹¹³ Duff to Chomsky, 5 September 1970, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/90.

¹¹⁴ Duff to Chomsky, 15 May 1970, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/90.

¹¹⁵ Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, p. 196.

In the absence of the clear goal of moving the Labour Party, CND faced internal dissent over the formation of the Disarmament and Strategy group, which some absolutists saw as an ‘attempt to change the principled stand that the campaign has been taking against all nuclear policies during this past six years’.¹¹⁶ Moreover, arguments persisted about the widening of the campaign on Vietnam and the tactics which should be used. These arguments spilled over into the period when anti-war activism intensified: Duff had explained to the American academic, Staughton Lynd in a 1967 letter that she ‘moved international’ because the ‘temporary grass root movements here [in Britain] seem to have gone sour and are so splintered and divided’.¹¹⁷

Duff’s pivot away from Britain was also clear in her remarks to Chomsky when she wrote of a recent meeting in Stockholm that it was ‘not too bad though we had only one American: Susan Miller from the Coalition. It would have been better if there had been more there because they would have been encouraged to find out how much is going on outside America (though not necessarily in Britain!)’.¹¹⁸ In April 1971, Duff wrote to the editor of *Tribune* in a plea to gain British support for a show of solidarity with the U.S. peace movement. She wrote that the American peace movement had recently called for supporting actions throughout the world, but in Britain there had been ‘a notable lack of response’.¹¹⁹ This was in spite of the fact that the British government was ‘increasing moral and material support for the United States and U.S. puppet allies in Indochina’ which heightened Britons’ obligations to support U.S. demonstrations.¹²⁰

Duff even informed Chomsky in 1971 that, in her eyes, Britain’s peace movement constituted the least effective of all national movements. She explained that she despaired more of ‘the movements in Britain than in anywhere else [...] They are all ghastly’, she continued as she informed Chomsky of how she had struggled to garner support for a recent demonstration.¹²¹ Duff even explained that

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

¹¹⁷ Duff to Lynd, 19 June 1967, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/16.

¹¹⁸ Duff to Chomsky, 5 September 1970, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/90.

¹¹⁹ Duff to Editor of *Tribune*, 15 April 1971, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/78.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Duff to Chomsky, 17 May 1971, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/90.

she had had to ‘bull[y] the British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam to give at least some nominal support for a demo which was being run by one of the Trot[skyst] groups’.¹²² This disillusionment with Britain really helps us to understand Duff’s belief in the need for an effective transnational movement. She saw signs of hope within movements in Europe: ‘you must not write off the whole of Europe’, she cautioned, ‘did you know that the Danish Vietnam Committee (Members of ICDP) got 620,000 people out in a demo during a highly successful week [...] for a titchy little country like Denmark that’s not bad’.¹²³

Irrespective of the perceived decline of the movement in Britain, Duff made her belief in both the primacy of the U.S. movement as well as the interconnected nature of U.S. and Vietnamese efforts clear. She expressed her belief in a letter to Chomsky that she had never believed that the Vietnamese could ‘get the U.S. and [President of South Vietnam] Thieu out, militarily and politically entirely on their own’.¹²⁴ However, Duff clarified that she did not think that the anti-war movements in the U.S. and elsewhere could ‘get Nixon and Thieu out on their own without military and political activity in Indo China’.¹²⁵ She viewed the Vietnamese as naturally much more consistent and committed to the cause of peace, but clarified that she did not think that one element could succeed without the other.¹²⁶ This underscores how Duff’s activism had evolved by 1971. She believed that the movement in Britain was largely futile. Moreover, even in those countries where there was perhaps more of a vested interest in the cause of peace, and whose movements were more active due to this – ostensibly the U.S. and Vietnam – collaboration was crucial. Duff did not view anti-war activism in one country as sufficient to bring an end to the conflict, but rather emphasised that movements ought to co-ordinate in order to bring about the maximum pressure possible. The ICDP, and by extension, SCV, were, for Duff the crucial organisations which operated in order to facilitate this collaboration.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

Post- Peace Accords

Historiography on the continuation of peace efforts in Indochina into the period following the Paris Peace Accords is scant. SCV and the ICDP certainly continued to protest against the war into the 1970s. It is also abundantly clear that the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973 in no way deterred the peace movement from continuing to be active on the situation in Indochina. A SCV circular dated 29 January 1973 explained that it was sending a fact-finding delegation to Hanoi in mid-January and that specialists from this commission would ‘publish facts and comment on the serious situation of the political prisoners in the jails of the Saigon regime’.¹²⁷ Reflecting the organisation’s commitment to Vietnamese viewpoints, it also stated that the commission would be guided by the recommendation of Indochinese friends and their countries’ needs.¹²⁸

SCV also held conferences relating to the implementation of the peace agreements. The first of these, the International Conference for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement on Vietnam was held in Stockholm in March 1974. This conference included reports from the heads of the PRG, the DRV, a Cambodian governmental delegate and the head of the Lao Patriotic Front delegation. The conference included hearings on political prisoners, refugees and democratic liberties in South Vietnam, as well as commissions on the implementation of the Paris Agreement and on international action for reconstruction.¹²⁹

The lack of calls for protests in later SCV circulars was a notable departure from their earlier internal literature. Previous memos had always stressed the need for a concerted, co-ordinated anti-war effort but SCV increasingly utilised its select academic links and did not focus on public protest in the period following on from the Paris Peace Accords. By 1975 it appeared that the very question of SCV’s future existence was in question. Duff wrote Anita Gradin who had taken over as secretary of SCV in May 1975, asking:

how do you feel now about the Stockholm Conference? In Paris, the PRG people were very insistent that it should continue at least for a time in some

¹²⁷ SCV circular, 29 January 1973, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/23.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ International Conference for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement on Vietnam, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/22.

form. The problem, of course, would be finance [...] It will be a pity if I no longer have any excuse for coming to Stockholm!¹³⁰

Again, this makes clear how central Vietnamese input was, as Duff shared the views of the PRG delegation in Paris as to the need for SCV to continue its work. SCV appears to have found renewed impetus as 1975 progressed – Duff explained that, after having had discussions with various Vietnamese figures in Paris, she had gained a lot of ‘material which is entirely new, because none of the people who have been to Hanoi recently have met many people because most of them are down South. Really interesting stuff about the process of reunification and of their plans for the future’.¹³¹ Evidently Duff felt that there was a purpose for SCV in the post-accords period relating to the unification of Vietnam; she also added excitedly, ‘we are going to keep Stockholm alive and the next Conference is to be in Saigon!!!’.¹³² It is clear through correspondence with Gradin that discussions about this conference in Saigon continued. In particular, Duff discussed logistical difficulties and potential dates for the conference given her busy schedule.¹³³ However, it is unclear as to whether the conference actually took place; there is no archival records pertaining to a SCV conference in Saigon other than it being mentioned in the correspondence between Duff and Gradin. However, it is interesting to see that Duff conceptualised a role for SCV regarding Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, even after the U.S. had removed its troops in 1973 and the civil war between North and South Vietnam ceased in 1975. Whilst the particulars of this role were not made clear within her correspondence, the very fact that she felt that the organisation still had a role to play is indicative of the expansive nature of Duff’s broader approach to the war. Even in her CND days, Duff conceived of the war as indicative of wider problems – in *Left, Left, Left* Duff recounted her frustration that anti-nuclear campaigns emphasised nuclear weapons as a moral issue. In this sense Duff felt that ‘the simple moral issue to which most of the campaigns clung as the source of all evil was a symptom rather than a cause’.¹³⁴ She believed that there ought to be more awareness of the broader political contexts which had allowed the nuclear bomb to flourish, as Duff explained: ‘the bombs were

¹³⁰ Duff to Anita Gradin, 15 May 1975, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/18.

¹³¹ Duff to Chomsky, 15 August 1975, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/90.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Duff to Gradin, 14 April 1976, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/18.

¹³⁴ Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, p. 267.

the children of the blocs [...] the blocs were the offspring of the cold war [...] the cold war was sustained and nourished by political systems, especially in the West, but also in the East'.¹³⁵ In a similar vein, Duff viewed Vietnam as symptomatic of broader problems more generally. She ultimately believed it foolish for campaigns to

wrap themselves up in their single issues and in the purity of their pacifist concerns, ignoring the essential links between repression and arms, between imperialisms and the arms race, between liberation, revolution and peace. If so, they will no doubt survive and do good work, mounting small campaigns on single issues [...] But in my view, this is a form of escapism.¹³⁶

Evidently, Duff conceived of both the nuclear issue and the Vietnam conflict as indicative of wider geopolitical problems. Her contentions as to the interconnectedness of many political problems therefore reveal how expansive her outlook was. This sophisticated analysis tied together the threads of different social and political problems. Duff's rationale for attempting to tackle Vietnam on such a transnational and collaborative scale is therefore clearer – it is quite a logical conclusion that a problem which she believed to have such expansive and deeply rooted origins, would require massive transnational collaboration with the brightest minds worldwide.

Gender

Thus far, this chapter has examined Duff's anti-war activism through her work with CND, the ICDP and SCV. In this way, it has taken something of a chronological approach, and the thematic discussions within the treatment of each organisation has charted how Duff's approach to anti-war campaigning evolved. This section breaks from this chronological approach in order to examine how the concept of gender featured within Duff's activism. Unlike other contemporary female activists and female-orientated advocacy groups, Duff did not use her gender and status as one of the most prominent women within CND in order to forge links with other women along feminist lines, either domestically or transnationally. Indeed, in her capacity as general secretary of CND, she appears to have had notably little interaction with women's issues. This was despite the fact that, as Nehring has highlighted, there were CND women's sections in Britain which 'by linking male domination in politics with the nuclear arms race, perpetuated the traditional language of feminist

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

anti-militarism.¹³⁷ Josephine Elgin has identified a concerted effort by CND's Women's Committee to frame its criticism of nuclear weapons in emotional terms.¹³⁸ In a similar vein, Jacquetta Hawkes, who was a co-opted member of the CND Executive who campaigned extensively with her husband, J.B. Priestley on nuclear weapons, stressed at a Women Against the Bomb conference in London the genetic dangers of nuclear weapons which 'are of such special concern to women'.¹³⁹ In doing so, Hawkes sought to elicit a 'deliberate and controlled evocation of emotion'.¹⁴⁰ It is clear, then, that there was a female contingent within CND intent on using tropes associated with femininity, such as the notion of heightened emotionality, in order to advance its cause.

Despite the prevalence of such discourse within CND, and her own prominent position, Duff did not engage with such efforts. Indeed, Duff gave scant attention to CND's Women's Committee in *Left, Left, Left*. She recognised that 'it produced some very good pamphlets', and it is clear that Duff was in attendance at the first meeting of this committee on 27 June 1957.¹⁴¹ She wrote fondly of this occasion, deeming it 'beautifully planned and timed but it was also in some ways more effective because it had a quietness and a conviction which remains with me even now, thirteen years later.'¹⁴² Yet this description is as far as Duff went in describing the work of the committee and does not really differ much from other romanticised descriptions of protest meetings and marches which can be found in *Left, Left, Left*. Certainly, there was no discussion of the gendered emphasis of the event. Perhaps tellingly in this vein, Duff refers to the committee as 'they', as opposed to the 'we' one would assume she would use to describe activities with which she was closely involved: 'mostly they read: letters from a Hiroshima widow, a poem by Jacquetta [Hawkes], a series of statements by politicians and the press'.¹⁴³ Jodi Burkett points out that the rationale behind the establishment of the Women's Committee was not articulated at the time, but one of its founding members, Diana

¹³⁷ Nehring, 'The British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons', p. 233.

¹³⁸ Josephine Elgin, 'Women and Peace: from the Suffragists to the Greenham Women,' in Richard Taylor and Nigel Young (eds.), *Campaigns for Peace: British Peace Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 238.

¹³⁹ Quoted in Jill Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991), p. 190.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, p. 157.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

Collins ruminated subsequently on the reasoning for excluding men and planning a women-only meeting in 1958 – Collins supposed that the women of the CND Women’s Committee ‘perhaps feared they [men] might be tempted to mock us’.¹⁴⁴ However, as Burkett highlights, Collins did not develop this strand of thought any further.¹⁴⁵

CND constitutes an interesting case in terms of gender dynamics. As Jodi Burkett has highlighted, ‘unlike many earlier feminist-pacifist organisations, CND was decidedly mixed in its gender make up’.¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, the traditional gendered division between ‘the male face of the campaign and the female working behind the scenes’, was reversed by the end of the decade: after Bertrand Russell resigned as president of CND in 1961, and Canon Collins’ resignation in 1964, the next two chairmen of CND were women.¹⁴⁷ Olive Gibbs took over from Collins in 1964 and was, in turn, replaced by Sheila Oakes in 1967. Likewise, when Duff left in 1967 she was replaced as general secretary by Dick Nettleton. Despite this seemingly progressive situation at CND, Jill Liddington comments that ‘the popular impact of feminism and the peace-gender debate was extremely limited’ within the organisation and the dominant image of CND is therefore ‘predominantly one of angry young men’, despite the fact that feminists played such an important role in the organisation’s creation.¹⁴⁸ Subsequent to Duff’s departure, *Sanity* began to regularly feature a ‘Women’s Campaign segment’. Burkett explains that whilst ‘this feature was very short-lived [...] [it] did continue briefly into 1968 and included items that the editor evidently believed would interest CND’s women members, such as a recipe from Vietnam’.¹⁴⁹ In this sense, the women’s segment within *Sanity* arguably perpetuated traditional notions of gender roles.

Frustratingly, Duff herself made little reference to her views on gendered activism or the ‘second-wave’ feminism which was gathering momentum concurrently to much of her anti-Vietnam campaigning. Vicky Randall locates the

¹⁴⁴ Jodi Burkett, ‘Gender and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the 1960s’, in Simona Sharoni, Julia Welland, Linda Steiner and Jennifer Pendersen (eds.), *Handbook on Gender and War*, (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016), p. 427.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 421.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 425.

¹⁴⁸ Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common*, pp. 175, 189.

¹⁴⁹ Burkett ‘Gender and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament’, p. 428.

origins of the new women's movement in Britain within CND, the VSC, and among the women of International Socialists and the International Marxist Group, which arguably makes Duff's lack of acknowledgement of it all the more puzzling.¹⁵⁰

Writing an obituary of Duff upon her death in 1981, Elaine Capizzi wrote in the feminist monthly *Spare Rib* that 'Peggy had little time for the women's movement and feminism'.¹⁵¹ This statement is notable when one considers, as does Capizzi, that the political landscape in which Duff operated was 'wholly male-dominated'.¹⁵² John Gittings also wrote in an obituary of Duff that she was 'impatient of theory and sectarianism', a tendency which 'led her to a distaste for feminism'.¹⁵³ The fact that two contemporary commentators mentioned this within obituaries suggests that Duff's lack of engagement with feminism and women's liberation was sufficiently noteworthy and perhaps, therefore, unusual. Comments in the archival record of Duff's correspondence also support the notion that Duff had little patience for matters of women's liberation. She complained to Chomsky in a letter of 1975, for example, about the gendered concerns of some Americans she had encountered at a recent peace conference, stating that they 'were just like any US delegation I have met over the past 10 years. Their main political concern was to take out any reference to "men" or "mankind" from the Resolution and Appeal!'.¹⁵⁴ This highlights Duff's pragmatic nature once again, and reflects her frustration with what she perceived as fussing over minutiae, such as the precise wording of a document. In a further comment to Chomsky, when discussing an upcoming visit to Laos, Duff appeared derisive of women's liberation: 'I hope they don't come [up with] any nonsense about it being too dangerous for a woman', she wrote, 'if they do I shall actually join Women's Lib – tell Carole [Chomsky's wife] about that'.¹⁵⁵ This would suggest that it was sufficiently known that Duff was not a supporter of the movement for women's liberation, in order for this quip to be humorous and signifying that the only way that Duff would join the movement for women's liberation, would be under circumstances of duress.

¹⁵⁰ Vicky Randall, *Women and Politics: An International Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 231.

¹⁵¹ Elaine Capizzi, 'Goodbye to Peggy Duff', *Spare Rib*, Issue 107, June 1981, p. 17.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ John Gittings, 'Peggy Duff, fighter for Left causes', *The Guardian*, 18 April 1981.

¹⁵⁴ Duff to Chomsky, 15 August 1975, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/90.

¹⁵⁵ Duff to Chomsky, 16 December 1971, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.181/16/90.

The seemingly limited influence of gender upon Duff's anti-Vietnam War activism, in terms of both ideology and methodology, is curious. This is something which set Duff apart from many of her female contemporaries as Chapter Five will illustrate in more detail. In her obituary, Capizzi even went as far as to categorise Duff as 'anti-feminist'.¹⁵⁶ John Gittings stated that 'the language of women's liberation didn't figure in her discourse [...] I got the impression she did not really relate to it'.¹⁵⁷ Hermione Sacks concurred with this, explaining her belief that the reasons behind this were rooted Duff's own life experience:

I think [Duff] didn't really understand why women thought they needed [feminism] and that's partly because she didn't need it herself [...] she'd managed all her life and she'd run these organisations so what were [feminists] on about? [...] she didn't see the need, but that was because of her personal ability.¹⁵⁸

Sacks elaborated on this point, stating that Duff would not have 'expected to be given preferential treatment' because she was a woman.¹⁵⁹ She also added that Duff would not have classed women's liberation as 'real politics [...] politics was to move the Labour Party', in Duff's view.¹⁶⁰ This signifies that there were many complicated factors, personal life experience among them, which informed activists' motivations and approaches. Randall has explained the impetus for many British women's involvement in second-wave feminism, emphasising that

many younger women, especially students, were involved in radical politics, first in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, later in New Left student politics, the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, and the revitalised Marxist parties. In all these arenas, like their American sisters, they discovered both new political aptitudes and male resistance to their exercise.¹⁶¹

This comment suggests a possible generational divide between women who were just becoming involved with politics in the 1960s and older women, such as Duff, who had already had active and varied political careers. But there is more at play here than simply age. Duff had a confidence that came from the fact that she herself had not experienced sexism. As Sacks illustrated, Duff had managed all her life running successful organisations. Moreover, for Duff, the personal was not political

¹⁵⁶ Capizzi, 'Goodbye to Peggy Duff', *Spare Rib*, Issue 107, June 1981, p. 17.

¹⁵⁷ Comments from John Gittings received via email, 12 May 2017.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Hermione Sacks, 8 May 2017.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Randall, *Women and Politics*, p. 230.

– despite her disillusionment with the Labour Party, she still viewed politics as operating within the given political system. This notion, regarding the very fundamental nature of political action, was something which the women’s liberation movement would increasingly question throughout this period. For Duff, such questioning was unnecessary – she was able to advocate for those causes which she believed to be important, with no cause to consider whether or how her gender impacted upon this work.

Conclusion

The anti-war activism of Peggy Duff provides an illustrative snapshot into the broader history of the increase in transnational modes of protest, the evolution of the British left and the myriad ways in which activism diversified during this period. Duff certainly helped to frame debates on the war within the anti-war community and played an instrumental role in raising diverse issues pertaining to the war, such as the plight of political prisoners. Whilst the efforts of Duff and many of her contemporaries may have been deemed negligible in terms of actually influencing U.S. policy, the case of Duff’s anti-war activism remains useful in that it complicates existing notions of archetypal anti-Vietnam War protesters in numerous ways, giving us the opportunity to reflect on how categories of activism are defined within historiography on the British anti-war movement. Duff was neither a student, nor a communist sympathiser, nor a feminist, and, as this chapter has shown, she had a considerable talent for utilising networks and contacts at *both* domestic and transnational levels in her anti-war efforts. Duff’s case therefore encourages us to consider the body of alternative anti-war approaches which she represented – she did not occupy the traditional old left, nor did she embrace the direct action tactics of the new left which were gaining in popularity. In this sense, we may deem her anti-war approach to be fairly orthodox and non-radical. Despite this, she did break with the Labour Party due to its stance on Vietnam, meaning that she was, in this way at least, more radical, and certainly more transnationally-minded in her approach to the war than Anne Kerr. Furthermore, despite this transnational focus, Duff’s anti-war thought was informed by rhetoric concerning the unique role which Britain should play on the world stage as an ideological third force, independent from either superpower. As Richard Gott explained, ‘she wasn’t at all a soft-minded liberal worried about the bomb, she was very, very concerned about foreign policy in

general, quite intellectual'.¹⁶² This is evident in her reflections within *Left, Left, Left*, which make it clear that Duff saw CND's failure to apply a broader political analysis to those foreign policy issues outside of the context of the nuclear threat as a grave failure. She wrote that whilst the nuclear group did get involved in campaigns against Vietnam, 'they insisted on relating everything they did to the bomb [...] [including] stressing the danger of a nuclear war in Indo-China, which in my view was pretty remote'.¹⁶³

Complicating this current of Duff's anti-war thought however, was an evident increasing frustration with the movement in Britain in a practical sense. So whilst ideally Duff subscribed to the idea of Britain's particular geopolitical purpose, in reality, this was difficult to translate through action within Britain itself. Rather, Duff found an increasing need to utilise transnational contacts in order to tackle the issue of Vietnam, which she perceived to be the product of widespread problems concerning bloc mentalities and dangerous political alliances. Undoubtedly, however, practicality was the driving force behind Duff's activism. Whilst Duff clearly had a sophisticated analysis concerning the ideological underpinnings which contributed to the conflict in Vietnam, she prioritised tangible goals and approaches including the dissemination of information and facilitation between domestically-based peace organisations.

In a more concentrated vein, Duff's case provides an interesting insight into the motivations and tactics of a British woman's involvement in protesting one of the most controversial wars of the twentieth century. Duff's case also provides a useful insight into how such activists utilised transnational and national connections. Duff's activism was transnational in method and outlook. This is clear from the tactics she employed (particularly the international conferences she organised), her engagement with high-profile Vietnamese and American figures, and the clear disillusionment she felt towards the British government. However, as Richard Gott explained Duff was 'an absolute straight-forward example of left-wing Labour' and she therefore felt that any change needed to go through parliamentary channels.¹⁶⁴ The activism of Peggy Duff would appear, in many ways, to contradict assertions that the British

¹⁶² Interview with Richard Gott, 8 June 2017.

¹⁶³ Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, p. 207.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Richard Gott, 8 June 2017.

anti-war movement was fundamentally domestic, due to her disillusionment with the British government and desire to supersede it. Crucially, Duff's involvement with both the ICDP and SCV did not necessarily mean that she shunned all domestic activity. Like Tarrow's 'rooted cosmopolitans' or Nehring's 'national internationalists', Duff's transnational anti-war activism was bolstered and facilitated by the fact that she had extensive contacts in Britain to draw upon.¹⁶⁵

Furthermore, Duff provides an interesting case study as a senior female figure within CND who did not engage with debates around feminism and militarism, and did not seek to align her peace activism to her gender in any way. Duff's case should also encourage us to think about our conceptions of female anti-war protesters, and more broadly, the role that gender plays within peace activism. As has been previously discussed, and will be illustrated further in Chapter Five, women who did not overtly address their womanhood in some form have been afforded limited attention within the historiographical record. Duff can undoubtedly be included in this. Duff's lack of engagement with the rhetoric of women's liberation or lack of reference to her status as a mother throughout her anti-war protest may not necessarily be the reason that she has been largely ignored. Noam Chomsky also provides a rationale for this relative historiographical obscurity, explaining that Duff remains 'one of those heroes who is completely unknown, because she did too much'.¹⁶⁶ Chomsky said that Duff 'pretty much held the peace movement together for many years [she was] an amazing person, much unappreciated'.¹⁶⁷ This chapter has aimed to go some way to rectify the paucity of scholarly discussion on Duff's remarkable activist career, as well as complicate our notions surrounding the interplay of gender, transnational protest and the evolution of the British left with regards to Vietnam.

¹⁶⁵ See Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism*, p. 29 and Nehring, 'National Internationalists', pp. 559-582.

¹⁶⁶ Comments from Noam Chomsky received via email, 16 February 2017.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Section B:

*Women activists and the
British Campaign for Peace
in Vietnam (BCPV)*

Chapter 3

Working in ‘as united a fashion as possible’: Dr Amicia More Young and multiple levels of engagement with the British Council for Peace in Vietnam

In January 1966, Amicia More Young, who played a prominent role in numerous capacities within the BCPV, urged that the anti-Vietnam War movement in Britain ought to coalesce around the organisation in order to work in ‘as united a fashion as possible’.¹ Some three years later, in January 1969, Peggy Duff wrote to the head of SCV discussing the organisation of a potential conference relating to the conflict. Lamenting the state of the British movement following a spate of activity in 1967-8, Duff referred in the letter to the BCPV as ‘almost dead’.² However, whilst the British movement may have, in many ways, been less vibrant than its foreign counterparts, the BCPV did play a central role in organising British protest against the war in Vietnam from its establishment in 1965, as Sylvia Ellis has recognised, although it never did quite manage to monopolise the movement in Britain in the manner promoted by Young in 1966.³ Moreover, in analysing the British left more generally, some scholars have identified 1968-9 as characterised by a ‘British upturn’ due to the surge in industrial militancy and wider political radicalism which had boosted membership of left-wing organisations and general awareness of radical ideas.⁴ Whilst many records of the BCPV were destroyed during an office break-in on 7 July 1968, remaining materials more than sufficiently demonstrate the important role played by the organisation in the national movement. Notwithstanding its significance, the organisation has received little historiographical study.

Like the BCPV as a whole, many prominent members of the organisation have received scarce historiographical scholarship. Amicia More Young is one such member. Born Amicia More Melland in 1914, Amicia married her second husband, Commander Edgar Young, who was a communist fellow traveller in March 1950.

¹ Amicia More Young to Pat Jordan, 18 June 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/46.

² Letter from Peggy Duff to Bertil Svahnström, 20 January 1969, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, ICDP Papers, MSS.181/16/17.

³ Sylvia Ellis, ‘Promoting Solidarity and Home and Abroad: the Goals and Tactics of the Anti-Vietnam War Movement in Britain’, *European Review of History*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Jul., 2014), p. 562.

⁴ Chris Harman, *The Fire Last Time: 1968 and After* (London: Bookmarks, 1988), p. 226.

Amicia had a son, Simon, in February 1952. Certainly, information is much more prevalent about Young's second husband than Amicia herself – Amicia Young's papers are archived as a subsidiary file amongst Edgar's. Edgar Young travelled extensively around Eastern Europe whilst working as a freelance journalist and translator after leaving the Royal Navy. An ardent supporter of the Soviet Union dating back to the German invasion of the country in 1941, unlike many of his contemporaries, Edgar Young continued this support after the Soviet invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, in 1956 and 1968 respectively.

Crucially, Young's activism was particularly informed by her academic background. Although Young has been rarely discussed by historians, information about her scientific career can be found in her responses to a Communist Party questionnaire of 1960 – Young had joined the Communist Party in 1945. The questionnaire, whilst a flawed source in the sense that it contains only Young's answers, and not the questions to which she was responding, is an interesting insight into how her professional identity as a scientist and her political identity as a communist overlapped. The questionnaire shows her PhD was in the field of cytology – a branch of biology concerned with the structure and function of cells. Whilst it does not reveal the institution from which she obtained her PhD, it shows that she studied in the U.S., Leeds and Cambridge. She was a scientist and active trade unionist in the Association of Scientific Workers (AScW), and sat on the Publicity Committee of the AScW.⁵ In her questionnaire answers, Young wrote that she believed that her CPGB membership had been useful for her trade union work. She performed a variety of professional roles between 1936 and 1960 including working in Chile as a teacher and cytologist for the Chilean Ministry of Agriculture; within the pest infestation department of the Ministry of Food in London and as a Science Editor for Shell Petroleum, working in the oil giant's publicity department. Young believed that she was sacked from this position due to her political affiliation.⁶

Dr Amicia More Young was a key actor within the BCPV in many respects. She was a founding member of the organisation and served as secretary of its

⁵ Amicia More Young, responses to Communist Party questionnaire, October 1960, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, People's History Museum, Manchester, CP/PERS/8/3.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Marylebone branch, a role through which she pushed for increased cohesion and communication across the capital's numerous BCPV enclaves. Importantly, Young was also secretary of the national BCPV in 1968. This post within the organisation changed hands at numerous intervals between 1965 and 1970, and therefore Young fulfilled this role largely as a favour to help ensure the organisation's continued operation.⁷ Due to the break-in at the offices of the BCPV in 1968, the surviving personal papers of prominent members such as Amicia More Young are vital to the historical record. As many of Young's roles – as a trade unionist, scientist and secretary – were overlapping, this chapter will deal with each of these in turn. The chapter will begin with a brief history of the BCPV, followed by an outline of the organisation's links with the Labour Party. The BCPV's links to communism – an association which the organisation was unable to shake off throughout its history – will also be discussed here, as will Young's own relationship with communism. The chapter will then analyse Young's contribution at various levels of the BCPV in more depth. This will begin with a discussion of her status as a trade unionist and scientist, roles which underpinned Young's anti-war approach. Following on from this, Young's appointment as secretary of the national organisation will be discussed, and her contribution to the organisation in this role, analysed. Next, the chapter will focus in more detail on Young's role as secretary of the Marylebone branch of the BCPV, before seeking to comment upon Young's status as a female and discern the nature of the links between her gender and her activism. As with all women studied in this thesis, it is clear that Young's gender was not a driving force behind her activism, or even, it would appear, a cause for much consideration. Rather, in this instance, her activism was underpinned by her background as a scientist and trade unionist.

The BCPV: a brief history

From the outset, the British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam stressed its representative character as a body co-ordinating anti-Vietnam War operations in Britain. The organisation was an early participant in the British anti-war climate, and its establishment in April 1965 was a product of the steady growth in concern about the war on the part of the British left. The group's first public action – a national petition following on from a mass lobby of Parliament, in June 1965 – signalled its

⁷ Young to general secretary of AScW, 14 August 1965, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/55a.

aim at being representative, and was typical of the tactical approach of the group which would ensue. As Ellis has highlighted, by placing adverts in established left-wing publications such as *New Statesman* and *Tribune*, the BCPV's attempts to mobilise the British public 'followed traditional lobbying methods'.⁸ Despite being an ad hoc committee, the group grew quickly, holding regular meetings, establishing a bulletin, forming specialist sub-committees, and organising all manner of diverse protest types and fundraising efforts. The organisation's quick-off-the-ground action contributed to the success of their first endeavour – the BCPV collected over 100,000 signatures and mobilised more than 6,000 people to lobby their MP.⁹ The BCPV also staged a number of teach-ins throughout the summer and autumn of 1965, including at Oxford, Birmingham and Cambridge universities.¹⁰ The organisation adopted an approach to garnering members which focused on inclusivity at both the national and local levels, as will be further illustrated in the following chapter. The BCPV sought to mobilise common people to the anti-war cause, rather than concentrating on the more exclusive networks which dominated the activism of Peggy Duff and, to some extent, Anne Kerr. This egalitarian nature of the organisation is fairly striking. Unlike an organisation such as the ICDP, wherein decision-making was a top-down affair and academic opinion was of prime value, the BCPV was particularly keen to mobilise mass public opinion. Furthermore, the group sought to gain insight from the public relating to its actions, even asking for suggestions for demonstration types in some of its circulars.¹¹

Indeed, the group's collaborative nature was evident from the outset. The BCPV was established on 29 April 1965, following an invitation from the Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF) to numerous diverse organisations including trade unions, trade councils, church groups and the Co-operative society. By July 1965, around 130 local committees had been founded, and this figure rose to around 155 by October.¹² Originally known as the British Committee for Peace in

⁸ Ellis, 'Promoting Solidarity at Home and Abroad', p. 562.

⁹ Report, 'The British Council for Peace in Vietnam', by Amicia Young, undated, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/55a.

¹⁰ 'National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary', Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

¹¹ BCPV circular, 17 February 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/54.

¹² 'National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary', Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

Vietnam, the organisation would change its name in 1969, when it merged with the National Vietnam Campaign Committee to become the British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam, a move deemed an important step towards ‘unifying the movement in Britain’, by the contemporary secretary, Dick Nettleton.¹³ In order to avoid confusion, this chapter will use the organisation’s later name throughout. A 1968 report compiled by Young during her tenure as National secretary emphasised the organisation’s awareness that its Working Committee was comprised only from those individuals available at the first meeting of the organisation. It was therefore suggested that members should be required to be re-elected. However, as the report explained: ‘electing a Working Committee seemed to depend on having a Constitution, and whenever the matter of a Constitution came up at Council meetings [...] there was a very strong reaction that our job was to end the war in Vietnam, not to perpetuate ourselves in a legally binding institution’.¹⁴ The organisation therefore continued to operate on something of an ad hoc basis.

It was not long before representation within the organisation spread substantially though, including to the Women’s Liaison Committee and ‘many individuals distinguished in the academic, religious and industrial life of our country’.¹⁵ The BCPV followed the domestically-orientated approach outlined by Ellis.¹⁶ Its aims were described as being to ‘bring pressure to bear on our Government to dissociate itself from American policy in Vietnam and to help bring the war to a speedy end’.¹⁷ Barbara Haq was selected as temporary secretary. Haq was an Englishwoman formerly resident in Pakistan and married to a Pakistani Marxist politician. She had been working on the MCF’s Trade Union Committee and South-East Asia Committee for some years and as a full-time MCF officer from late 1961, and she would later play an important role in bringing together the two sides in the negotiations which ended the Sudanese civil war.¹⁸ The Working Committee’s

¹³ BCPV press release, undated, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/27.

¹⁴ ‘National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary’, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

¹⁵ Report, ‘The British Council for Peace in Vietnam’, by Amicia Young, undated, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/55a.

¹⁶ Ellis, ‘Promoting Solidarity at Home and Abroad’, p. 571.

¹⁷ Report, ‘The British Council for Peace in Vietnam’, by Amicia Young, undated, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/55a.

¹⁸ Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire 1918-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 245-6.

immediate task was to collect a list of individual and organisational sponsors. Outlining problems regarding space, finances and personnel, that would continue to plague the organisation, one report explained that initially it was hoped that the MCF would cede the BCPV some of its office space and staff, but for the best part of three years the two organisations shared the same office.¹⁹ Jack Askins, a trade unionist and Communist Party industrial organiser, who succeeded Young in the position as secretary, bemoaned running a national campaign in ‘an office as big as a telephone box’.²⁰ Haq’s position, which was initially conceived as a temporary measure, continued until she became secretary of the MCF, thus handing the role at the BCPV over to Petra Sachsenberg, another organiser from the MCF, in May 1966. The BCPV clearly recognised the debt owed by their organisation to the Movement for Colonial Freedom, which it reckoned had ‘kept the Council going’.²¹

This support and association would continue over the years. When the BCPV released a statement denouncing the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong in 1966 – an action which outraged many and intensified protest worldwide – Haq was one of the signatories. Fenner Brockway, who was the President of the BCPV, was a central figure in the MCF too – the press often referred to the MCF as his organisation.²² But the BCPV’s links to the MCF went deeper than individual support. Stephen Howe has elucidated how campaign groups focussing on issues like the Vietnam War adopted structures and approaches similar to those of the MCF, deeming the MCF something of a ‘pioneer’ and emphasising how ‘the Anti-Apartheid Movement began as a spin-off from its offices’.²³ Clearly this legacy is also applicable to the BCPV. Where the two organisations did differ, however, was in their varied abilities to harness localised support. As Howe explains, ‘the MCF’s hopes of arousing a mass anticolonial campaign rested in large part on its ability to extend its activities outside London – something previous groups with similar aims had almost wholly failed to do’.²⁴ This was supposed to happen through the establishment of parochial Area Councils. Whilst about ten of these were established in the first year, and about

¹⁹ ‘National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary’, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

²⁰ Ellis, ‘Promoting Solidarity at Home and Abroad’, p. 564.

²¹ ‘National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary’, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

²² Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, p. 244.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

a dozen more thereafter, many of these localised groups lapsed in their activity. Howe even contends that it is doubtful as to whether more than around twelve of these groups were active at the same time, and that ‘an initial plan to establish a further tier of local Councils seems to have been stillborn’.²⁵ Conversely, the BCPV enjoyed active branches around the country, thus managing to progress beyond the capital, furthering its doctrine of inclusivity in a geographical as well as political sense.

As this would suggest, whilst it always maintained and acknowledged its tether to the MCF, the BCPV grew quickly after its establishment and, in doing so, garnered diverse support. Others signatories of the 1966 statement included Verdun Perl of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and Peggy Duff who was still at CND at this point.²⁶ The organisation’s 1966 conference was sponsored by thirty-two academics; eighteen MPs; four actors and nine leading trade unions. Perhaps reflecting an awareness of the need to boost its public profile, the Council wrote to Muhammad Ali and the Beatles’ manager, Brian Epstein, asking for donations, and expressing appreciation of Ali’s stand on Vietnam.²⁷ Later still, The British People’s Declaration for Peace in Vietnam was a central tenet of the organisation’s focus. This document was drafted by the group on 11 November 1966, and launched to the press on 15 February 1967. The document became the organisation’s de facto policy statement and its circulation was encouraged widely at local, national and international levels. Whilst it underwent several re-drafts throughout the course of the BCPV’s history, it continued to advocate the cessation of U.S. bombing, self-determination in Vietnam, and withdrawal of British support for American intervention.²⁸ When the organisation merged with the National Vietnam Campaign Committee, advice on how best to use the document was circulated, advocating for ‘local and area organisations of trade unions, labour parties, United Nations Association groups, churches, etc. to endorse the declaration

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ BCPV press statement, 30 June 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/27.

²⁷ ‘Secretary’s Report on the Convention’, 11 November 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/14.

²⁸ ‘Declaration of the British Council for Peace in Vietnam’, as amended 1 July 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/15.

by signing in the space provided at the bottom of the form'.²⁹ The advice which followed highlighted the commitment of the BCPV and its approach to garnering and enhancing local support. The document advocated local bodies that had endorsed the declaration to ask their national executives and conferences to do the same. Furthermore, this document gave practical advice on how to use the Declaration locally, including getting MPs to sign; getting the support of local newspapers and use of the document in local petitions and referenda. The document also explained that 'the Declaration will be re-issued from time to time with new lists of supporting organisations'.³⁰

Furthermore, whilst the BCPV was undoubtedly domestically-orientated in that its focus was on altering the stance of the British government, the organisation engaged with transnational and international anti-war groups. The organisation affiliated to the ICDP in 1967, strengthening its links to the global anti-war community. We can infer that Duff's departure from CND to the ICDP had an influence on this action, as she had been the point of contact between CND and the BCPV since the BCPV's establishment. Prior to its affiliation to the ICDP, the BCPV received numerous congratulatory messages from various U.S.-based anti-war groups, including the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the American Friends Service Committee, and Students for a Democratic Society. By December 1965, Brockway reported in the organisation's bulletin that the BCPV was in touch with organisations from thirteen different countries.³¹ The BCPV also co-ordinated action in support of the U.S. Vietnam Day Committee, which staged demonstrations over the weekend of 15-17 October 1965.³² Despite this, the group was essentially domestically orientated. Securing the dissociation of the British government from U.S. actions remained one of, if not the, critical aim. As previous chapters have elucidated, this meant close relations with the Labour Party, and particularly those MPs who took an active stance on the Vietnam War.

²⁹ 'British People's Declaration, How to Use it', undated, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/32.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ BCPV bulletin, December 1965, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/42.

³² 'National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary', Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

The BCPV and the Labour Party

The Labour Party played a key role in the BCPV from the start, and it is clear that the organisation thought that Labour offered an opportunity to channel anti-war activities through parliament. When Labour came to power in 1964, a statement was sent to the press and signed by MPs, welcoming the new Labour government, but urging it to use its influence to work for peace in Vietnam.³³ In fact, attempting to influence MPs constituted a robust proportion of the group's work. For instance, the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong prompted a national lobby of MPs.³⁴ The organisation also continually sought a meeting with the Foreign Secretary, George Brown, in September 1966, but was assured that he knew the views of the organisation, and that there was therefore no need to meet.³⁵ Despite the group having close links with some MPs, as this section will demonstrate, replies from the Prime Minister often had the familiar ring afforded to other activist groups. Similar to the response from the Foreign Secretary, Prime Minister Wilson's replies, when he did answer, that was, merely thanked the organisation for the letter setting out its views, and directed its attention to remarks he had made in the House of Commons.³⁶

Several MPs were sponsors of the BCPV, and, perhaps expectedly, the vast majority of these belonged to the Labour Party. The group sought to utilise these connections to MPs, often by writing letters which attempted to pressure MPs to attend votes and talks in the House of Commons pertaining to Vietnam. For instance, Young wrote to Philip Noel-Baker, a Labour MP who had been a consistent anti-war voice in parliament, in April 1967 encouraging him to be present at parliament the following Friday in order to vote on a Vietnam motion moved by Norman Atkinson.³⁷ Sydney Silverman MP was on the Working Committee as a representative for the MP's Ad Hoc Committee, and 'until he became ill [...] was a regular and conscientious member of the Committee'.³⁸ Both he and Konni Zilliacus, had produced background material for the BCPV. In a letter to Konni Zilliacus,

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Prime Minister's Office to Young, 6 August 1966; 25 October 1968, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/55.

³⁷ Young to Philip Noel-Baker MP, 15 April 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/54.

³⁸ 'National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary', Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

Young's cordial relationship with the MP for Manchester Gorton was evident. 'Dear Zilly', Young wrote, using the politician's nickname,

do hope you are all right I hope to goodness that the Government will [...] take note that Labour voters are also fed up with their Vietnam and other foreign policies as well. It isn't only Labour voters either: in our Tory stronghold I have come across a number of Conservatives who [...] are sickened by the Vietnam war.³⁹

This letter persisted in attempting to persuade Zilliacus to attend anti-war events, this time a press conference for Dr Philip Harvey, which was taking place at the House of Commons the following Thursday. Harvey had recently been to North Vietnam and had a 'a mass of irrefutable data contradicting the lies put out by the Americans and repeated by us'.⁴⁰ It is clear that Zilliacus also assisted the BCPV in a more practical sense – by representing it at meetings in Brussels and Paris. This helped the group who acknowledged that they were unable to finance sending delegates to international conferences and meetings 'as often as we would have wished'.⁴¹ It is also clear that Young had good relations with Anne Kerr, and that Kerr even spoke at an event hosted by Young's Marylebone Campaign for Peace in Vietnam (CPV).⁴² The relationship Young enjoyed with many anti-war MPs appeared to have superseded the anti-war cause, and in fact, revealed established friendships based on their shared left-wing views.

This close relationship between the BCPV and some Labour Party MPs was evidently a source of tension – a tension which was evident within the anti-war movement more broadly as has already been discussed. This tension arose between those who believed that war activities needed be channelled through the Labour Party, and those who found the Labour Party's lack of reprimand of the U.S. so onerous that direct action techniques and more radical approaches were warranted. Bertrand Russell, who was ninety-two-years-old when the BCPV was established in April 1965, was, in fact, one of the leading voices criticising segments of the movement which sought to channel anti-war efforts through the Labour Party. In a report discussing the history of the organisation, which was presented at the 1968

³⁹ Young to Konni Zilliacus MP, 11 April 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/54.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ 'National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary', Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

⁴² Marylebone Committee for Peace in Vietnam flyer, 22 July 1965, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/56.

National Conference, Young alluded to the tensions caused by BCPV's engagement with Labour: 'I think we all regret that Bertrand Russell's impatience with our attempts to carry the Labour Movement with us led to the R[ussell] P[eace] F[oundation] leaving the Council'.⁴³ The Committee of 100, the CND offshoot which was committed to tactics embracing direct action, also opted to dissociate from the BCPV in November 1966. This, however, is unsurprising given that the Committee of 100 was conceived and led by Bertrand Russell. We can infer that it was his influence following the Russell Peace Foundation's break from the BCPV which instigated this action on the part of the Committee of 100.

The BCPV was in no way immune to this broader trend in the peace movement which pitched activists favouring conventional protest techniques against those who advocated a more confrontational stance. Whilst in CND, the discord had been predominantly about tactics, in the case of the BCPV, divergences were ideologically driven – as Ellis has highlighted, much of this disgruntlement came from student 'Maoists and Trotskyists who saw the war as evidence of the bankruptcy of American imperialism and by those who could generally be considered to be on the "New Left"'.⁴⁴ Indeed, these more radical activists were a key constituency in the founding of the VSC in January 1966, which was formed by members of the Trotskyist International Marxist group and partly funded by the aforementioned Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. Commitment to NLF victory was a key component of the VSC's thought and the group's antipathy towards the positions of CND and the BCPV, who dominated the anti-war milieu up to this point, was explicit. As VSC founder Tariq Ali explained, 'we felt that a solidarity movement was needed which solidarized with the people who were fighting against the Americans. And CND tended to opt for neutrality or, where it didn't opt for neutrality, it behaved as though it was trying to be respectable'.⁴⁵ Young expressed frustration with these younger groups attempting to 'cash in' on anti-war zeitgeist.⁴⁶ She noted that 'there appears to be a campaign by CND to claim that they are best equipped to carry on the campaign', and also made reference to the newly-

⁴³ 'National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary', Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

⁴⁴ Ellis, 'Promoting Solidarity at Home and Abroad', p. 564.

⁴⁵ 'Interview with Tariq Ali', in John Dumbrell (ed.), *Vietnam and the Antiwar Movement* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1990), p. 174.

⁴⁶ Young to AScW, 14 June 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/55.

established Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, expressing her dismay that the VSC's conference could count trade union elements amongst its attendees. For Young, this pointed 'to the necessity to strengthen the BCPV all we can as the organisation which has the broadest support'.⁴⁷

Analysing this ideological split within the peace movement highlights a conundrum relating to the BCPV. Many of the more radical activists who favoured groups such as the VSC were oriented around far-left ideologies – indeed, Ali's remarks above highlight the impatience many in that organisation had with groups which adopted neutral stances on the issue. Yet, despite some radical activists, predominantly student Maoists and Trotskyists, viewing the BCPV with antipathy on ideological grounds, as elucidated by Ellis above, in the more mainstream press, the BCPV was often discussed as a communist-front organisation. Whilst this may have been an extreme assessment, as the next section will show, the organisation did have strong links to communism in terms of its personnel and associations. An intriguing question therefore arises: were communist accusations against the BCPV merely a product of anti-communist views in society, views which were held even amongst left-wing segments included within the Labour and TUC leaderships?⁴⁸ Or was there something to the accusations that the organisation was sympathetic to communism? Whilst Young's own dealings with the CPGB cannot, of course, speak for the political leanings of the organisation as a whole, the next section will use her case to address some of the communist charges levelled at the BCPV.

Young, the BCPV and communism

The CPGB had a complex relationship with the anti-war movement. As anti-war protests intensified, the CPGB increasingly found that it had to negotiate its place within its ranks. Initially, the party had thrown its weight behind the BCPV, lending credence to the notion that the BCPV was communist-influenced. The political dynamics of the era changed the complexion of the far left, by throwing up 'many new leftist political formations' and 'giving a significant boost to the fortunes of small groups of revolutionaries of a Trotskyist, Guevarrist or Maoist' orientation.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, p. 263.

⁴⁹ James Eaden and David Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain Since 1920* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 143.

In Britain, this challenge was particularly evident through the growth of the VSC. From October 1967 the VSC and BCPV were in competition to such an extent that rival anti-war demonstrations were held on successive weekends in March 1968.⁵⁰ The success of the VSC in mobilising far more people exposed cracks in the relations between the CPGB and the BCPV and persuaded the Communist Party of the need to support the VSC. Still, however, the party was unable to monopolise protest and the majority of the newly radicalised, younger activists were mobilised by the revolutionary left.⁵¹ This left the position of the CPGB uncertain: ‘if in reality left electoral politics were an unassailable bastion held by Labour and the politics of protest were being led by new and radical forces, what role could the party play?’⁵² So, whilst the BCPV may have encountered criticism due to its perceived CPGB links, it appears that such criticism was not due to any unwavering institutional backing of the BCPV by the Communist Party. Rather, this may have been due to its association with other communist-dominated groups, particularly Medical Aid for Vietnam (MAV). Accusations of communist leanings also appear to have been rooted in the political persuasions of many of the BCPV’s personnel. Amicia Young was a case in point: her Communist Party membership – reinforced through her membership of the World Federation of Scientific Workers (WFSW) – helped to inform perceptions that the BCPV was a communist organisation, despite the fact that the CPGB increasingly lent its anti-war support to the BCPV’s rival organisation, the VSC.

Despite its close Labour links, the BCPV was certainly not interpreted as a Labour organisation. Rather, it was beset by accusations of communist sympathies, an association which it struggled to shake off throughout its history. ‘There has been a quite deliberate attempt to present the campaign as “playing the communists’ game”’, Young wrote of the BCPV in the aforementioned 1968 report.⁵³ Scholars who have studied the British movement against the Vietnam War contend that the aim of the movement, and the BCPV therein, was to secure British government dissociation from U.S. actions. Undoubtedly, this holds true. In the case of the BCPV, the archival record also makes clear that slogans advocating recognition of

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ ‘National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary’, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

the NLF were deemed acceptable, signifying that a departure from the organisation's supposedly impartial stance was not prohibited. A BCPV circular in February 1966, which indicated that there would be a demonstration against resumed bombing in North Vietnam, advised protesters on slogans as follows: 'slogans mainly dealing with the resumption of the bombing, the implementation of the Geneva Agreements, and the recognition of the National Liberation Front'.⁵⁴

Of course, slogans lobbying the British government to formally recognise the NLF can be conceived as part of the broader policy of influencing the British government to enact foreign policy with regards to Vietnam in a fashion more independent of the U.S. However, taken into the consideration with the many links that the BCPV had to communism outlined in this section, we can perhaps reassess the significance of the advice offered by the organisation above, and indeed, reconceptualise our notions of the complexities of the anti-war movement and the actors therein. In his memoirs, Tariq Ali deemed the BCPV a 'classic Communist Party front organisation' and derided the fact that despite its internal support of the NLF 'secretly and in whispers', they maintained a public façade of being 'simply for peace'.⁵⁵ Here we can make comparisons between Young's plight and that of Anne Kerr: she was criticised by those opposed to her actions as a communist sympathiser, but from other quarters within the peace movement, she was chided for her neutrality. It is clear that the BCPV's non-political, egalitarian approach left it open to criticism that it was not picking a side.

Despite its focus on garnering broad support, communist associations plagued the BCPV. Whilst not aimed specifically at the BCPV, Harold Wilson alluded to pro-NLF allegiances within the anti-war movement, stating 'if you scratch some of those who partake in some of these campaigns you will find not "Peace in Vietnam," but "Victory in Vietnam"'.⁵⁶ The fact that the BCPV sometimes encouraged overt support of the NLF through slogans at its campaign events was compounded by a substantial Communist Party presence within the organisation. There was a large number of Communist Party delegates at the 1966 National

⁵⁴ BCPV circular, 2 February 1966, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/2.

⁵⁵ Tariq Ali, *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties* (New York: Verso, 2005), p. 199.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Jodi Burkett, 'Re-defining British morality: "Britishness" and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament 1958-68', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Jan., 2010), p. 190.

Convention. With forty-nine delegates present, this actually meant that there were more representatives of the Communist Party than Constituency Labour Parties.⁵⁷ This encouragement of pro-NLF slogans appears to have been grounded in concerns around Vietnamese self-determination, rather than communist political leanings. Indeed, the BCPV stressed the war in Vietnam as a war based around the value of self-determination, communist or otherwise. This highlights the complexities evident within anti-war discourse at this time, and the complex state of the British left.

Links to communism were also reinforced through the relationship the BCPV had with MAV. Young herself characterised Medical Aid as a 'wider organisation for collecting money for medical relief', but specified that money collected was specifically 'for the National Liberation Front'.⁵⁸ Indeed, Dr Joan McMichael, who founded MAV in 1965, was herself a committed and prominent communist – she even had discussions on two occasions with Ho Chi Minh concerning the medical needs of North Vietnam and Britain's role in assisting these.⁵⁹ Anti-communist concerns plagued MAV at the local level, as the first chapter illustrated, when Anne Kerr became embroiled in a row over an event being staged by the Medway Town MAV branch. The archival record indicates that this relationship with Medical Aid proved problematic internally for the BCPV at the national level too. At the 1966 London and Home Counties BCPV Conference, a resolution was extended against raising money for Medical Aid, although it must be conceded that only seven individuals supported this motion. George Ward of Enfield CPV had put forward the resolution, stating that local CPVs should not raise money for Medical Aid for two key reasons. The first of these was because the BCPV needed the money itself more urgently in order to end the war in Vietnam. Crucially however, the second reason listed in Ward's resolution emphasised that 'raising money for Medical Aid is to participate in the war on one side, and consequently may alienate possible support'.⁶⁰ This statement alludes to the communist links which were continually associated

⁵⁷ 'Delegates to the National Convention [1966]', Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/14.

⁵⁸ Young to C. Williams, 2 August 1965, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/55.

⁵⁹ Dorothy Hodgkin, 'Obituary: Dr Joan McMichael-Askins, a doctor at war with war', *The Guardian*, 16 August 1989.

⁶⁰ Resolution from London and Home Counties Conference for consideration by Council, 10 October 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/14.

with the aid organisation, whose position regarding the NLF was very clear – no pretence at neutrality was attempted.

Young was a member of the CPGB from 1945. Her archival papers relating to the BCPV do not reference this political allegiance much, but more information about her career and relationship with the CPGB can be found in her responses to a Communist Party questionnaire. This questionnaire is dated October 1960, and therefore predates her involvement with the Vietnam War. But it does reveal how much her roles as scientist and communist overlapped. It shows that Young sat on the National Science Advisory Committee of the CPGB, and also alludes to difficulties which she had in getting jobs due to her political affiliation. For instance it details that in 1951 she was shortlisted as Science Correspondent for the BBC, but alludes to her not getting the job after being asked what she thought of the Soviet agronomist and biologist Trofim Lysenko at the interview.⁶¹

Of course Young's views cannot necessarily be treated as representative of the BCPV more generally, but the organisation as a whole was beset by accusations of communist links. Young herself had joined the Communist Party in 1945, and her archives reveal that she received continued correspondence from the CPGB. It appears also that Young utilised travelling with her husband in order to make links at a transnational level. In the winter of 1958, for example, she accompanied him on a trip through Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, China and Vietnam, where Amicia established contacts with Vietnamese scientists. This was also the case when Edgar and Amicia spent a month in Havana in early 1971. Although the capacity of her visit is unclear, Young definitely spoke in depth about Vietnam during her visit, utilising her 'passable Spanish'.⁶² Moreover, she attended celebrations whilst in Cuba, which commemorated the anniversary of the Cuban revolution. She noted during her trip that the Cubans knew nothing of the activities of the BCPV. Alluding to tensions within the British anti-war movement, she added that only the Bertrand Russell War tribunal had received any attention in Cuba. She also stated that this discussion led her Cuban hosts to 'include me in some very private discussions with

⁶¹ Lysenko was a controversial figure due to his closeness with the Stalinist regime, which was keen to promote members of the proletariat (of which Lysenko was one), to high positions within the fields of science, agriculture and industry.

⁶² Amicia More Young, responses to Communist Party questionnaire, October 1960, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, People's History Museum, Manchester, CP/PERS/8/3.

Latin Americans – this was partly because they saw how friendly the DRV delegates to the 8th anniversary (of their revolution) celebrations were to me'.⁶³ This is interesting for two primary reasons. Firstly, Young's account reminds us of the ongoing tensions within the British anti-war movement, and the struggles faced by domestic groups in having knowledge of their activities disseminated worldwide. Her reference to Russell's war tribunal emphasises existing tensions which had previously been exhibited by the dissociation of both the Russell Peace Foundation and the Committee of 100 from the BCPV. The quote also shows linkages in the revolutionary imagination between Cuba and Vietnam. James Mark, Nigel Townson and Polymeris Voglis have highlighted how the concept of the freedom fighter, whether in an Algerian, Egyptian or Cuban context, exerted a powerful grip on the imagination of revolutionary activists.⁶⁴ This is something which, they claim, was accentuated throughout the course of the 1960s, as 'a new form of leftist politics emerged that was not tied to the politics of communist parties and that allowed radicals to transcend the binaries of the Cold War, and what they perceived as imperialism on both sides'.⁶⁵ Whilst Amicia Young herself, with her commitment to the CPGB, perhaps does not fit this new model of radical which was emerging during this period, it is clear that her experiences in Cuba reinforce the concept of Cuba as playing an important role in the leftist imagination during this time, as activists increasingly compared the Cuban and Vietnamese situations in terms of their common struggle against U.S. imperialism.

Young also clarified that the NLF was deemed the legitimate Vietnam during her trip to Cuba, explaining that 'there was also a delegation from Vietnam-Vietnam (as I have learned to call the NLF) including a girl who herself has shot down two planes'.⁶⁶ Her colleague and correspondent from the French peace movement, Henri van Regemorter, who was a fellow scientist based at the Paris Observatory signed off a letter in May 1967 with the following: 'hoping you are in London and not with

⁶³ Young to Henri van Regemorter, 31 January 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/53.

⁶⁴ James Mark, Nigel Townson and Polymeris Voglis, 'Inspirations' in Robert Gildea, James Mark & Anette Warring (eds.), *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 92. See also Robert Gildea, James Mark and Niek Pas, 'European Radicals and the "Third World",' *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2011), pp. 449-71.

⁶⁵ Mark, Townson and Voglis, 'Inspirations', p. 92.

⁶⁶ Young to Henri van Regemorter, 31 January 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/53.

your friend Castro!’⁶⁷ Young replied to this, writing: ‘Fidel is still my friend, though I have been very frustrated I – by lack of communication with Cuba; II – inability to get anything published here’.⁶⁸ Whilst this section has elucidated Young’s connections to communism, the next section will explore how Young’s scientific profession and membership of the AScW informed her anti-war work. Young’s experiences with communism, in many ways, raise more questions than they answer. She appears to have been a committed member of the CPGB but it is clear that she was aware of and informed by contemporary revolutionary ideologies which were increasingly coalescing around the liberation movements in Cuba and Vietnam.

Young was a member of the World Federation of Scientific Workers (WFSW). This organisation was a communist Front organisation. A front organisation is defined by William Styles as ‘any organisation which feigned neutrality yet actively pursued a campaign of disinformation and propaganda in order to promote or discredit states, policies, ideologies and individuals according to the needs of Soviet strategy’.⁶⁹ The WFSW is a particularly noteworthy example of a front organisation, not least because it was founded in London and run from the U.K. Despite the waning international influence which the organisation held by the 1960s, as outlined by Styles, it appears that Young was still a member.⁷⁰ This was despite the fact that the organisation had suffered greatly due to the undermining of confidence in Soviet-style communism which was a product of several events throughout the course of the 1950s and 1960s. These included the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, as well as consistently emerging details concerning atrocities committed under Stalinist rule and the ensuing process of de-Stalinisation within the Soviet Union. In 1956, Young had travelled to China for the Executive Committee of the WFSW and in 1958 she travelled with Edgar to Vietnam, where she made contact with Vietnamese scientists whom she integrated into the WFSW.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Henri van Regemorter to Young, 8 May 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/53.

⁶⁸ Young to Regemorter, 9 May 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/53.

⁶⁹ William Styles, ‘The World Federation of Scientific Workers, a case study of a Soviet Front Organisation: 1946-1964’, *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (2018), p. 116.

⁷⁰ See *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁷¹ Amicia More Young, responses to Communist Party questionnaire, October 1960, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, People’s History Museum, Manchester, CP/PERS/8/3.

Prior to the decline of the WFSW, Young's own union, the British AScW, played a very influential role within the broader WFSW, largely because it provided a disproportionate amount of the umbrella organisation's membership in Britain, as well as a substantial portion of its legitimacy. Indeed, the WFSW had been founded at the 1946 conference of the AScW, and by the late 1950s the WFSW was 'entirely beholden to the Association [of Scientific Workers]'s political demands'.⁷² Such was the power yielded by the AScW, that the British-based trade union was able to block an affiliation between the WFSW and the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). The opposition of the AScW was predominantly based around concerns of legitimacy – the WFTU was 'widely accepted as overtly pro-Soviet', whereas the WFSW was 'supposed in theory to act apolitically in its formal association so as to maintain at least a veneer of respectability'.⁷³ Whilst the AScW's close relations with the WFSW had largely ceased to exist by the time the Vietnam War became a salient political issue in Britain, it is interesting to bear in mind the heritage evidenced here, and Young's role therein. More generally, Evan Smith and Matthew Worley have attested that a trade union presence within the CPGB was vital to the party's survival in the period of 1956 to roughly 1970.⁷⁴

Robert Gildea, James Mark and Niek Pas have attested that by the late 1960s, 'internationally, the Soviet Union seemed more committed to peaceful co-existence than to world revolution and was being displaced by communist China as the most committed anti-imperialist power prepared to support Third World revolution'.⁷⁵ Young, unlike many of her contemporaries, did not exemplify this new trend of turning to alternative examples of revolutionary politics. It appeared that she remained committed to Soviet communism. Indirectly, this clearly impacted her worldview, and her perspective on Vietnam. She was certainly anti-American, although one did not need to be communist in order to be so, as illustrated by other examples in this thesis. The direct role played by her political views upon her anti-Vietnam campaigning is less clear. Whilst it is clear she had communist contacts, and was a member of the CPGB, she opted to channel much of her activism through the BCPV, an organisation which was, at least on the surface, supposedly apolitical.

⁷² Styles, 'The World Federation of Scientific Workers', p. 125.

⁷³ See *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁷⁴ Evan Smith and Matthew Worley, 'Introduction: the far left in Britain from 1956', in Evan Smith and Matthew Worley (eds.), *Against the Grain: the British far left from 1956* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 4.

⁷⁵ Gildea, Mark & Pas, 'European Radicals', pp. 449-71.

Despite Stephen Howe's contention as to the animosity between the anti-communist labour movement and the CPGB in Britain during this time, Young appears to have reconciled these two aspects of her political identity.⁷⁶

Young as a scientist and trade unionist

Attesting to the strength of British unions during this period, Ellis contends that union voices comprised an important part of the chorus against the Vietnam War in Britain. Trade union membership was on the rise during this period, with 10.2 million trade union affiliations in 1964 rising to 11.2 million in 1970.⁷⁷ In fact, such was the power of trade unions during this period that union bloc votes contributed to the defeat of the government's resolution on Vietnam at the Labour Party Conference in Scarborough in October 1967. However, it would take until 1971 for the TUC to issue a unanimous demand for the withdrawal of U.S. troops.⁷⁸ For Ellis, an active trade union response was exceptionally important to the British anti-war movement. This was because of the fact that a Labour Government was in power. Trade unions not only enjoyed an extremely strong position within the party they had helped to create, but union subscriptions provided vital funds for the party, as at least one third of Labour MPs during Wilson's premiership were sponsored by unions.⁷⁹ Andrew Thorpe contends that 'at every level from constituency party to conference, there remained the potential for the unions to dominate Labour', in no small part due to the heavy reliance for funds by the Labour Party upon unions' coffers.⁸⁰ There remains much work to be done to further tease out the complexities of this relationship, but in the case of Young, it is clear that her role as a trade unionist was the lifeblood of her anti-war work for two reasons. The first of these is practical – it was in her capacity as a member of the AScW that Young became involved with the BCPV. Secondly, and more importantly, Young's scientific background informed her rationale for protesting against the war.

Relating to the BCPV more generally, there were numerous ways in which unions were able to lend their support. Some actively sponsored the organisation,

⁷⁶ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, p. 263.

⁷⁷ Ellis, 'Promoting Solidarity at Home and Abroad', p. 562.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Andrew Thorpe, 'The Labour Party and the Trade Unions', in John McIlroy, Nina Fishman and Alan Campbell (eds.), *The High Tide of British Trade Unionism: Trade Unions and Industrial Politics, 1964-79* (Monmouth: The Merlin Press, 2007), p. 133.

whilst others merely sent donations.⁸¹ As early as January 1966, a letter from then-secretary Barbara Haq revealed that in the previous year, the Trade Union Congress had passed a resolution calling for a settlement in Vietnam on the lines of the Geneva Conference of 1954, suggesting that unions were quite quick to take up the Vietnam cause.⁸² Such was anti-war support within the ranks of the organisation amongst trade unionists, that the BCPV established a Trade Union Sub-Committee (TUSC), which facilitated unions' support of the anti-war cause. Established following a conference of BCPV trade unionists in March 1966, the TUSC became one of the chief sub-committees within the BCPV's organisational structure, operating fairly autonomously and establishing its own agenda and foci.⁸³ The TUSC continued to meet regularly throughout 1967, however, 'with ever shrinking numbers attending'.⁸⁴ As an active trade unionist herself, Young made clear her awareness that 'active trade unionists have so many other commitments that those who attend one meeting would not be there at the next' but also recognised that this meant a lack of continuity for the BCPV's TUSC.⁸⁵ Young reported in 1968 that, despite enthusiastic starts, the student and trade union sub-committees had not sustained their momentum, partly because 'those who were drawn in had expected that task would be a short-term one and they had other causes and commitments, and partly because the single-handed BCPV secretary was loaded with too many committees'.⁸⁶ This highlights how the BCPV often struggled to maintain control of its varying parts and the structure of the organisation sometimes hindered the work it was able to do.

Despite this, the TUSC did establish its own initiative, including in November 1967, when it set up its own fund in order to help purchase an ambulance to send to the people of Vietnam. A BCPV circular concerning this read, 'in this way Trade Unionists can associate themselves with the Vietnamese in their struggle against U.S. aggression by this act of humanity, and also show our Government that

⁸¹ Young to general secretary of AScW, 14 August 1965, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/55.

⁸² BCPV circular, January 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/12.

⁸³ BCPV, National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary', Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

their support of the murder of men, women and children is not shared by ordinary people in this country'.⁸⁷ Clearly then, the TU Committee within the BCPV saw itself as somewhat distinct from the main organisation, by having its own practical and ideological agenda, whilst simultaneously acting under the remit of the BCPV. It appears that in her role, Young acted as something of a go-between for the Working Committee and the Trade Union Sub-Committee. This was evident when, in July 1966, a planned concert in aid of Vietnam was changed to a public meeting, following the bombing of oil installations at Hanoi and Haiphong. Minutes of the TUSC meeting read as follows: 'Dr Young said that the Working Committee did feel that since TU Sub-Committee did not support the concert activities, a public meeting would save the situation'.⁸⁸

As well as practical initiatives like the ambulance fund, the TUSC also had an ideological impetus that distinguished it somewhat from the broader BCPV. The conference which led to the foundation of the TUSC focused on linking the economic situation in Britain with the international agenda of the government, and, most notably, Vietnam. This was a particularly interesting line of enquiry for the TUSC. Indeed, a TUSC circular in 1967 identified itself as the 'only body which links the economic crisis at home with the military expenditure of the Government and Vietnam'.⁸⁹ However, in reality, other constituencies within the movement were increasingly viewing the war through an economic lens. The linkage of the war to Britain's economic fate was key in the ideology of anti-war groups which continued to have a growing influence in Britain – most notably the VSC. Additionally, when journalist Richard Gott stood in a by-election in Hull in January 1966, on a platform based purely around opposition to the Vietnam War, his campaign sought to highlight the economic costs of the war.⁹⁰ In particular, his campaign literature stressed how money used on the war could be better spent domestically. Since then, historians have also examined the linkages between the war and economics in another vein. Scholars such as John Dumbrell have completed particularly

⁸⁷ BCPV circular, 6 November 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/12.

⁸⁸ Minutes of BCPV Trade Union Sub-Committee Meeting, 12 July 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/12.

⁸⁹ Sachsenberg to members of Trade Union Subcommittee, 14 February 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/12.

⁹⁰ See Sophie Roberts, 'The campaign of the "red-bearded radical": Richard Gott and the Hull North by-election, 1966', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sept., 2018), p. 339-41.

illuminating work which examines the impact of Vietnam upon the Anglo-American relationship, through a political and economic lens. In particular, his work has highlighted the reliance of the British position upon U.S. to prop up the value of the pound.⁹¹

As well as facilitating continued work between the BCPV and trade unions generally through the trade union sub-committee, Young was extremely active within her own union. Female trade union affiliation increased by some 1.3 million between 1950 and 1970.⁹² However, there is very little work on the Association of Scientific Workers specifically. The historical record does not give much attention to the experiences of professional women in male-dominated trade unions. Young was the official historian for the Association of Scientific Workers, and technical editor of its journal, *Scientific Worker*. She also served as vice-chairman of her Central London AScW branch for one year, and sat on the union's publicity committee. She had also sat on the National Committee of Science for Peace from its foundation in 1952, displaying an early appreciation of the relationship between peacekeeping and science which would play so prominent a role in her anti-war work. The AScW merged with the Association of Supervisory Staffs, Executives and Technicians (ASSET) in 1968 to become the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs (ASTMS).

Indeed, Young's initial involvement with the BCPV was in her capacity as a trade unionist because she attended the establishing meeting, and later sat on the Working Committee, as a representative of the AScW. Therefore her membership was conceived around her trade unionism from the very beginning. Despite this, the AScW was not automatically supportive of the BCPV. A letter from the general secretary of the AScW to Barbara Haq on 10 May 1965 reads:

Dr. Young has made it clear to us that her acceptance of nomination [to the working committee] was dependent upon endorsement by the Executive Committee of this Association. I am afraid that that endorsement is not, at least at this stage, forthcoming.

The letter elaborated on this point, explaining that whilst the union could, of course, have had no objection to Young serving as an individual member, the writer had

⁹¹ See John Dumbrell, 'The Johnson Administration and the British Labour Government: Vietnam, the Pound and East of Suez', *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Aug., 1996), pp. 211-31.

⁹² Norbert C. Seldon, *Women in British Trade Unions 1874-1976* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978), p. 164.

been ‘asked to make it clear that, in doing so, the Association of Scientific Workers as such is not committed’.⁹³

This seeming reluctance to become involved with the BCPV perhaps echoes the reluctance of the CPGB in throwing its weight behind the BCPV. This is something which is underscored when one considers the communist influences within the union, as exemplified by its role in creating the communist front organisation in the form of the WFSW. The archival record makes clear, however, that the AScW did become involved in supporting the BCPV. In fact, Young played a central role in fostering this development. At the annual meeting of delegates from the London area of the AScW, a motion moved by the Brighton & District branch was passed demanding the withdrawal of government support for U.S. actions in Vietnam.⁹⁴ The report from this meeting also specifies that it was A.M. Young, of the Central London branch who, ‘made the final plea that the resolution be fully supported and that delegates should not stop at passing the resolution but should work for the fullest support for the British Council for Peace in Viet-nam’.⁹⁵ Ultimately, Young’s efforts in advocating for the BCPV were successful. In August 1966, the general secretary of AScW wrote to the BCPV stating that, following a resolution of the Annual Council, the Executive Committee had decided to lend official support to the organisation. Young now attended BCPV meetings as an official representative of AScW.⁹⁶ Whilst the relationship between unions and the BCPV was significant as a means for channelling unions’ anti-war sentiment, Young also believed that unions should have a strong agenda and act on Vietnam internally. ‘Most important’, she wrote in 1968, ‘is what [unions] can do in their own organisations: with [the] U[nion] [of] S[hop] D[istributive] [and] A[llied] W[orker]’s resolution at their conference last month, the South Wales Miners’ resolution last Thursday as further backing for what should be TUC policy as resolved last September we must ensure trade union pressure for the implementation of that

⁹³ [General secretary of AScW] to Haq, 10 May 1965, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/55.

⁹⁴ Association of Scientific Workers, London Area Annual Delegate Meeting, 9 April 1965, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/60.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ General secretary of AScW to Sachsenberg, 8 August 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/46.

policy'.⁹⁷ Either way, for Young, the importance of British trade unions to the anti-war movement was incontrovertible.

Whether through working with the BCPV or not, Young passionately believed that the Vietnam War was the business of trade unionists. Thus, she consistently advocated for the cause of the Vietnamese at AScW conferences. At the 1966 Annual Council of the AScW, Young addressed the delegates, stating that she wanted to 'spend my limited time dealing with the argument that such a motion is not the concern of us as trade unionists, that the Vietnam War is not something to be left to us as private citizens to worry about'.⁹⁸ She explained her reasoning; firstly by linking the trade union movement with the war through a rationale which drew largely on the concept of solidarity between British and foreign workers:

Our trade union movement has a tradition of caring what happens to our fellow workers in other countries [...] part of the reason why this terrible war is still goin[g] on is because the opposition to it in the United States [...] has not found a means of enlisting the support of American workers through their trade unions – it is still too much of a university campus opposition, an opposition of intellectuals.⁹⁹

Young thus reiterated the egalitarian ideology underpinning the approach of the BCPV and key members who, like Young, believed that academic opinion was simply not sufficient to prompt change in governmental policy towards the war. Subscribing to this brand of anti-war thought, Young was a key advocate of the important role that trade unions could and should play in the movement. This was exhibited further in her remarks to the AScW conference, when she identified why the war was of specific interest to the labour movement, stating: 'you may not think that the war is a trade union matter, but the Labour Government is the child of the trade union movement, and Wilson knows that he depends on the trade unions for his support[t]'.¹⁰⁰ Utilising a third strand of thought, Young also made the case for the war being of particular concern to the AScW, as a union of scientific personnel. She testified that members of the AScW had a right to complain about the war as 'our discoveries and developments are being used against a largely peasant population whose first view of the wonders of science has been to see their food crops

⁹⁷ 'National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary', Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

⁹⁸ 'Resolution regarding the Vietnam War for submission to Annual Council of the Association of Scientific Workers', 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/61.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

defoliated [and] their children burned to death with napalm'.¹⁰¹ It is clear then that, for Young, there was a sophisticated and interrelated set of reasons behind her belief that the war was the business of, not only trade unions more generally, but those unions organised around scientific work specifically.

The Books for Vietnam campaign gave Amicia Young further opportunity to campaign with international anti-war activists. Unlike Young's work on the TUSC, which was informed by her role within the AScW, this campaign revolved around Young's profession as a scientist. The campaign took place whilst Petra Sachsenberg was secretary of the BCPV, who asked Young to orchestrate BCPV involvement, and utilise academic networks. The Books for Vietnam campaign constitutes an interesting facet of Young's anti-Vietnam War activism for two reasons. Not only did she employ her status and contacts as a scientist, but the campaign also meant she was afforded further opportunity to act in a transnational context, and thus make contact with a variety of anti-war campaigners overseas. The campaign, initiated by the Collectif Intersyndical Universitaire of the French peace movement, was aimed at sending books to Vietnam, and was part of a growing body of action on the part of scientists. Ellen Crabtree deems the campaign as the Collective's 'most significant material undertaking'.¹⁰²

Between 1965 and 1967, U.S. bombardments destroyed over 20 universities in Vietnam.¹⁰³ The books campaign, which was launched in December 1966, therefore constituted a relatively early campaign within the transnational anti-war movement, and was approved by several European scientists as well as representatives from Vietnam. The idea for Western European academics to offer colleagues in Hanoi a collection of books was followed in June 1967 by calls for 'the Western European professors and research-workers to offer their colleagues in Hanoi a collection of books, which will consist of the major scientific and technical reference works'.¹⁰⁴ The appeal for books was therefore launched in 1966, and was followed in June 1967 by an appeal by the World Federation of Scientific Workers

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Ellen Patricia Crabtree, 'The Historical Militancy of Madeleine Reberieux, 1920-2005', (PhD thesis, Newcastle University, 2016), p. 127.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹⁰⁴ 'University Information Bulletin', no. 2, December 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/53.

for scientists to give up a day's pay to help with the Vietnam cause. Young linked these two ventures, writing to her contact Peter de Francia, who was a sponsor of the BCPV, that the money collected from the appeal could help to pay for some of the books needed.¹⁰⁵

Young was able to utilise her transnational connections with relation to the books campaign. She wrote particularly to Henri van Regemorter for this. In doing so, she appealed to him to utilise his connections to DRV and NLF representatives in Paris.¹⁰⁶ Despite these seemingly promising connections, Young's correspondence concerning both appeals by scientists seems fairly negative. In May 1967, she wrote to van Regemorter explaining that the appeal for a day's pay had not yielded a positive response: 'I am afraid that you were right to be pessimistic about the WFSW appeal – so far as this country is concerned. As well as the negative response from some auteurs, there has been little positive response. That was for money to buy apparatus [whereas the current appeal] is for just money – a day's pay'.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the record reveals Young's apparent frustration with the lack of information she was given relating to the books scheme, regarding specific volumes, branches of science and the number of copies required.¹⁰⁸

Young as secretary of the BCPV

'Let us hope that this year will see the end of the need for a British Council for Peace in Vietnam', Young wrote to Vietnamese contacts Mr Sao and Linh Qui in January 1968. She explained that as of 1 January she was secretary of the BCPV and the National Vietnam Campaign Committee (NVCC).¹⁰⁹ The NVCC drew support from other organisations which had not previously been represented by the BCPV, and the two groups now sought to collaborate with the aim of developing a campaign based on the Declaration, which continued to be developed as the organisation's de facto policy statement. She also illustrated the demands that the new role was placing

¹⁰⁵ Young to Peter de Francia, 10 June 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/53.

¹⁰⁶ Young to Henri van Regemorter, 6 June 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/53.

¹⁰⁷ Young to van Regemorter, 9 May 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/53.

¹⁰⁸ Young to van Regemorter, 6 June 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/53.

¹⁰⁹ Young to Mr Sao and Linh Qui, 6 January 1968, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/48.

upon her time, explaining that she was ‘trying to find a new secretary for the St Marylebone Committee for Peace in Vietnam so that its work in Westminster can continue; I shall certainly have no time at home for some time’, and explaining that her husband and son had ‘had to manage on their own since Christmas’.¹¹⁰

The post of secretary of the British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam was held by various individuals throughout 1966 and 1967, including Petra Sachsenberg, Loren Clarke and Janice Ogg, who had been loaned to the BCPV by Youth CND for two days per week – an arrangement which proved insufficient to the growing organisation’s needs. 1967 had marked a period of great change and growth for the BCPV. During this period the organisation increased its focus on the development of regional activity.¹¹¹ This growth in stature was reflected in the organisation’s move to larger premises in 1968, which it claimed was to ‘meet the call from all parts of the country and from almost all sections of the community for a coordinated call to end the slaughter in Vietnam’, underscored by the fact that ‘many, unconnected previously with any organisation [were] telephoning to ask what they [could] do’.¹¹² So it was that Amicia Young stepped in to be the organisation’s secretary on a full-time basis.

A letter in December 1968 alludes to tensions felt by Young regarding her role as secretary, which concluded at the end of the year. Addressing a joint BCPV/NVCC meeting, she expressed her apologies for being unable to attend a recent meeting. She explained that since taking on the role of secretary of the BCPV, she had been working 12 hours a day and 7 days a week. She also explained that she had had to ‘neglect all my other activities and as it happens one of my other organisations has particularly asked me to attend a crisis meeting tonight. As it appears I am no longer needed by the BCPV I have therefore given priority to this other request where I am needed’.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Young to James Dickens MP, 2 February 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/54.

¹¹² BCPV press release, 13 February [1968], Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/27.

¹¹³ Young to joint BCPV/NVCC meeting, 4 December 1968, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/48.

Young went on to advocate for the BCPV to have a full-time general secretary with full-time office help, even if this meant the secretary being Honorary. She added that ‘turning me into everyone’s typist and bottlewasher has not been good for the BCPV’.¹¹⁴ This is an exceptionally interesting letter for two reasons. Firstly, though the letter makes it unclear as to whether Young was being pushed out of the role at this time, it clearly alludes to some tension regarding how valued she felt that she was by the BCPV. Secondly, in the letter Young was at pains to emphasise the difference between a general secretary, who would perhaps be an honorary role, and a secretary, who would constitute the office help. This highlights a phenomenon applicable more broadly concerning roles within social movements. Quite often, women at the helm of organisations such as the BCPV were entitled ‘secretary’, alluding to the secretarial work that was inherent within the role. However, this title fails to convey the active role that many of these women had in shaping the policy, tactics and organisation of the body they led. This is something which was emphasised further by Young when she wrote that ‘the secretary should be doing a secretary’s job and can’t do everything’.¹¹⁵ It is also clear that she attempted to shape the organisation’s structure and remit, stating that the general secretary ‘should not hold a position in any other organisation if the BCPV is to develop as an organisation in its own right [...] I [also] think the BCPV needs to have its own office [...] it would be wrong to have it taken under the wing of another organisation again’.¹¹⁶ Often, this type of role which influences the structure and ideology of an organisation is something associated with the President of the said organisation, who, in many cases, was male. The letter implies the sheer workload of the organisation through Young’s advocacy of both of these roles being full-time.

The first BCPV national conference which Young attended as secretary took place in May 1968. At this conference 19 national bodies were represented by 32 delegates, and there were also 40 delegates from 28 local committees.¹¹⁷ The conference unanimously carried an emergency resolution which welcomed the commencement of talks in Paris between the U.S. and the DRV the following day,

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ British Council for Peace in Vietnam National Conference, Credentials Report, 12 May 1968, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/15.

adding that '[the conference] urges that at an early date negotiations should be extended and that direct representation of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam should be included'.¹¹⁸ At this conference, Young delivered an extensive report detailing the history of the organisation. This report is an extremely important document detailing the origins and growth of the BCPV, not least due to its survival despite the destruction of some BCPV records during an office break-in in July 1968.

Young's tenure oversaw an important event in the BCPV's history: the Peace Boat to Boulogne. This venture has also been discussed in the earlier chapter on Anne Kerr, who herself participated in the voyage. The papers of Amicia Young shed further light on the anti-war excursion. In a press release, the BCPV described the object of this venture as to 'hear the Vietnamese point of view at first hand, and to tell them we want the bombing of North Vietnam stopped immediately, permanently and unconditionally, and to dissociate ourselves completely from the policy of the U.S. Government in Vietnam'.¹¹⁹ Large segments of the press sent representatives to cover this activity, including correspondents from ITN, Reuters, *The Times*, *The Daily Mirror* and *The Daily Mail*. Documentation pertaining to the trip also makes clear that whilst hundreds of people from various trade unions paid their own way to be part of the peace trip, many organisations sent official delegations, including the Kent Miners which sent thirty-seven people.¹²⁰ Interestingly, more Communist Party branches were represented on the voyage than Labour Party branches – some 26 compared to 9.¹²¹ A number of speakers spoke to the gathering of British, French and Vietnamese peace representatives in Boulogne, including Colonel Ha Van Lau, who was Ambassador to the Paris talks for the DRV. For the French movement, Charles Fourniau, a scientist working at the French Research Centre who had spent three years in the DRV, spoke, and for the British, Clive Jenkins, joint general secretary of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs spoke.¹²²

¹¹⁸ 'Emergency Resolution on the Peace Talks', carried 12 May 1968, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/15.

¹¹⁹ BCPV press release, 1 August 1968, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/27.

¹²⁰ BCPV circular, undated, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/33.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

The speech of Ambassador Ha Van Lau was distributed amongst BCPV members following the event. Lau stated on behalf of the Vietnamese that they were ‘very happy to note that our people’s struggle for independence, freedom and peace enjoys the support of ever larger sections of the international solidarity movement’.¹²³ In a report on the meeting, DRV Deputy Ambassador for the Reunification, Nguyen Minh Vy, recorded that: ‘People say the British are reserved. But the British people whom I met on French soil, at the nearest point to Britain, from the first moment, were open-hearted, spontaneous and, if I may say, so, visibly overjoyed. Vietnam has inspired them’.¹²⁴

Whilst Young’s specific involvement is elusive, archival papers also make clear that this visit to French soil was reciprocated. On the weekend of 25-26 October 1969, 295 French people of the Pas de Calais region paid a visit to Deal in Kent. This entailed a mass meeting attended by 2,000 people, and Fenner Brockway, Stan Orme MP, Lawrence Daly of the National Union of Miners as well as representatives of both the DRV and the PRG were among the speakers.¹²⁵ Miners of the Kent Association even hosted French guests in their homes. The weekend also saw a blood donor session, an Anglo-French folk concert, attended by over 600 people, and on the Sunday Morning, Madame Linh Qui kicked-off a football match between the French and British miners.¹²⁶ Importantly, the gathered activists also passed a resolution which demanded the British government’s complete dissociation from U.S. policy in Vietnam, withdrawal of all U.S. and allied troops from Vietnam and immediate application of the essential principles of the 1954 Geneva Agreements, thus closely mirroring the calls enshrined within the BCPV’s Declaration.¹²⁷

¹²³ Copy of Speech delivered by Ambassador Ha Van Lau, ‘What the Vietnamese say’, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/33.

¹²⁴ Report by Nyugen Minh Vy, ‘British and Vietnam friendship on French soil’, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/33.

¹²⁵ ‘Report of Vietnam Weekend, Deal, October 25th/26th [1969]’, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/40.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

As secretary, Young clearly understood the importance of garnering publicity for the movement, and deemed the ‘production of attractive, informative publicity material’ a ‘basic essential to the success of our work’.¹²⁸ Like with Duff’s work with the ICDP, it is clear that a key focus of the BCPV was consciousness-raising and disseminating information concerning the struggle of the Vietnamese. Young’s 1968 report explained that whilst problems within the Commonwealth no longer engaged the consciousness of the British people,

they no longer feel that Viet-nam is none of their business. The old man who came all the way from St Andrews in the north of Scotland for the weekend vigil [...] represents the growing consciousness that what is happening in Viet-nam is a blot on the history of mankind for which no one can escape responsibility.¹²⁹

Of course, these statements come from Young who was very immersed in the anti-war community and thus there was activity going on all around her. However, echoing the frustrations felt by many anti-war campaigners concerning how their activism was treated (or neglected) by the media, Young observed that it was ‘remarkable how the national press in general succeeds in avoiding mentioning our name, even if our activities (or disturbances on the fringes of our activities!) are reported, and our letters to the Editor sometimes do not have the courtesy of an acknowledgement’.¹³⁰ In a press release dated 24 January 1968, which was likely the first during Young’s tenure as secretary, the BCPV stated that it welcomed UN secretary-General U Thant’s assessment on South-East Asia on 18 January, but regretted that ‘only his final reference to the need to respect the territorial integrity of Cambodia, a Member of the United Nations Organisation, received full coverage in the British Press’.¹³¹

A letter dated 21 January 1969 reveals Young referring to herself as ex-secretary, so it is clear that she only performed the role for one year.¹³² Despite a strengthening of relations throughout 1968, the merger between the BCPV and

¹²⁸ ‘National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary’, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

¹²⁹ Report, ‘The British Council for Peace in Vietnam’, by Amicia Young, 20 October 1965, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/55a.

¹³⁰ ‘National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary’, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

¹³¹ BCPV press release, 24 January 1968, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/27.

¹³² Young to A.H. Macdonald MP, 21 January 1969, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/49.

NVCC appears to have formally taken place in 1969. A meeting was held in April 1969, and the report from the meeting shows that Young was present at the meeting which resulted in the agreement to merge the two bodies around a common programme.¹³³ Peggy Duff and Joan McMichael of MAV were also present at this meeting. A new committee was set up and Dick Nettleton was appointed as secretary.¹³⁴ Further points for consideration were raised, including the need for greater emphasis on fund raising; more work in churches; and support from Committees in the North for an upcoming demonstration in Manchester on 14 June.¹³⁵ Proposals also showed an ongoing commitment to educating the public: ‘continued need for basic educational work (examples were given of basic misconceptions; a girl who thought it was North Vietnam who were using napalm in the South’.¹³⁶ True to form, however, the secretary role had changed hands once more by April 1970, when Florence Croasdell and Jack Askins were listed as Joint Secretaries.¹³⁷

Young as secretary of the St. Marylebone Committee for Peace in Vietnam

This chapter has primarily focussed on Young’s national role. It is worth noting here that, prior to engaging as a voice in the national debate, Young was active with the BCPV in a local capacity. In fact, she played an instrumental role in the group’s Marylebone branch. Moreover, she was a pivotal actor in establishing this branch of the BCPV, but her accession to the post of secretary of the St. Marylebone Committee for Peace in Vietnam was somewhat reluctant. In June 1966, Young wrote to Petra Sachsenberg, who had recently taken over as secretary of the national BCPV, explaining this further. She discussed the decision of Marylebone residents to take up a page in their local paper, the *Marylebone Mercury*. This action instigated the formation of the Marylebone branch. Young explained her involvement in this as follows: ‘there was a meeting at which the CND elements were determined to wind it up and leave [Vietnam] activity to the CND, and I reluctantly had to accept the nomination to be secretary to prevent this’.¹³⁸ Although this testimony does not make

¹³³ ‘Report of a discussion conference held at NUFTO Hall’, 20 April 1969, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/49.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ BCPV circular, April 1970, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/50.

¹³⁸ Young to Petra Sachsenberg, 14 June 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/54.

clear the reservations that Marylebone residents held about letting CND dominate anti-Vietnam activities in the area, it does highlight an evident tension concerning who should take up the anti-war mantle in the region, showcasing disillusionment once again with the orthodox left. Young clearly appeared to prefer scientific and trade union orientated actions.

Similar to the Birmingham branch considered in the next chapter, the Marylebone Committee for Peace in Vietnam (CPV) enjoyed a level of autonomy in terms of its actions and the tactics employed. These tactics did, however, reinforce the broader BCPV approach concerning egalitarian tactics which sought to engage broad swathes of the public on Vietnam. Marylebone CPV placed its own advertisements, for example, particularly in the *Marylebone Mercury*. The response to one advert in the local newspaper highlighted that there was an active anti-war constituency within the area. T.W. Bryan wrote to the paper that he was ‘delighted’ to see the full page advertisement, which he believed should ‘stir the conscience of all of us in this area to do something to make our voices heard’.¹³⁹ C. Williams added the hope ‘that there will be widespread support, both physical and financial, for the local Committee in its efforts to co-ordinate the opposition to the policy which is leading us along the path to World War III with its inconceivable consequences’.¹⁴⁰ An American in the area wrote expressing his delight that a local paper was highlighting the issue of the war. Frank Gersh from Philadelphia expressed that he was ‘glad to find a local paper showing the interest and responsibility due to such a problem as the Vietnam War’ and, highlighting a perceived uniqueness afforded to Britain, contended that ‘with an informed and concerned public, Britain is in a key position as regards putting a stop to the war’.¹⁴¹

Attempting to persuade MPs to raise the issue of Vietnam in parliament was another key focus of the group. One circular read:

The Vietnam resolution carried with such a large majority at the TUC was a landmark, but a great deal of work was put in to enable this victory to be won. PLEASE DO NOT ASSUME that the passing of a similar resolution at the Labour Party conference is a foregone conclusion [...] We must

¹³⁹ T.W. Bryan to Editor of *Marylebone Mercury*, 19 August 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/55.

¹⁴⁰ C. Williams to Editor of *Marylebone Mercury*, 19 August 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/55.

¹⁴¹ Frank Gersh to Editor of *Marylebone Mercury*, 19 August 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/55.

ALL – you too please – make it clear to many Labour MPs who want their government to dissociate from the American Government’s policy in Vietnam that we support them.¹⁴²

The circular went on to ask members to write a personal letter of support to Ian Mikardo MP, who had recently led the deputation of five MPs to the U.S. – the deputation of which, Anne Kerr was a part. Furthermore, the circular advocated signing an enclosed letter to the MP for Marylebone, Mr Quentin Hogg Q.C, a Conservative. It also stressed that in terms of letter-writing as a tactic, volume was key: ‘these letters can only be effective if there are enough of them. For Mr Hogg just to hear from a few active people he now knows so well will not move him’.¹⁴³ Again, this was very much in line with the overall goals of the national campaign, which saw the attempts to influence the Labour Party on a mass scale, as the ultimate objective.

Despite operating locally, the Marylebone CPV was apparently able to make connections on an international scale. Young wrote to one of her correspondents in 1967 that she was happy to have received a statement from the Soviet Peace Committee which was personally addressed to her as secretary of the St Marylebone Committee for Peace in Vietnam, adding that ‘it was nice to know we had been noticed internationally!’¹⁴⁴ Whilst the background context of Young’s relationship with the Soviet Peace Committee is unclear from the archival record, this is further evidence of the relationship between Young and the Soviet Union.

Notwithstanding this reach, Young recognised the limited impact that localised anti-war activities were having. Young wrote to Petra Sachsenberg in December 1966 expressing her view that, whilst many local Committees continued to grow and have independent initiatives and successes, ‘the Government has been able to very largely ignore such expressions of public opinion because of its lack of co-ordination [...] the pressure could be greatly increased by more initiative from the centre than has been customary in the past’.¹⁴⁵ She continued that the Marylebone

¹⁴² St Marylebone Committee for Peace in Vietnam circular, 19 September 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/55.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Young to M. Pieffort, 13 March 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/53

¹⁴⁵ Young to secretary of BCPV, 28 December 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/54.

Committee therefore called on the National Council to facilitate organisation on a national scale, by co-ordinating its speakers in such a way that would economise travelling time and expense.¹⁴⁶ Young advocated the establishment of a London Co-Ordinating Committee, which she called a ‘logical step forwards’.¹⁴⁷ She was consequently a key actor in a development which occurred throughout 1966-7, which aimed to increase communication and co-ordination between the various London-based branches of the BCPV, as well as strengthen the relationships of local outlets with their parent organisation. This Co-Ordinating Committee would be twofold in its rationale, aiming both to co-ordinate activities and pool resources.¹⁴⁸ To further this aim of increasing co-ordination, Young also successfully advocated for the launch of a bulletin, which served the London Co-Ordinating Committee of Councils for Peace in Vietnam.¹⁴⁹ The first of these expressed that its component committees envisaged the London Co-Ordinating Committee as a ‘means to discuss and learn from each other how to get the best results in our local areas, and to create wide scale, public activity’.¹⁵⁰ This again reinforces the previous contention that Young was particularly reflective concerning the organisational structures of the BCPV at the national and local levels. Again, Young’s leading role as an instigating force in shaping the continued evolution of the organisation, and in increasing its cohesion and efficiency, is evidenced.

Young, gender, nation and race

Overall, gender as a concept appears to have been of little importance within Young’s anti-war activism. Unlike anti-war contemporaries such as CND, the BCPV does not appear to have had a women’s sub-committee. Indeed, her status as a woman does not appear to have played a particularly overt role in her anti-war activism, and any engagement with gendered initiatives and correspondence from female anti-war groups, appears to have been predominantly earlier in the period. Particularly after 1966, Young’s trade union and scientific roles appear to have been the driving force behind her anti-Vietnam War campaigning.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Vietnam Newsletter*, undated, vol. 1, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/54.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Young to Sachsenberg, 28 December 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/54.

¹⁵⁰ *Vietnam Newsletter*, undated, Vol. 1, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/54.

One example of an early gendered initiative in which the BCPV partook was explained in Young's 1968 report on the organisation's history. Therein, Young explained that 'in 1965 we welcomed the delegation of American women who met women from Vietnam in Djakarta, on their way home; and have made numerous attempts to obtain visas for Vietnamese wishing to visit us'.¹⁵¹ It is clear that Young took a great interest in this event, and that she made efforts to publicise it. She wrote to a news editor from an unknown organisation on 15 July 1965 explaining that four days later, a group of American women who had been to Djakarta meeting women from North and South Vietnam would be arriving in London, en route to Washington.¹⁵² This meeting has particularly been analysed through the work of Jessica Frazier, and will be studied further in Chapter Five of this thesis.¹⁵³ Young also appeared to have intimate knowledge of the specific arrangements, including the flight number and time of arrival.¹⁵⁴ She explained that the women would be holding a press conference and urged the Editor to send a representative.¹⁵⁵ The women also were escorted by motorcade to the House of Commons, where they were met by a group of MPs.¹⁵⁶ Reflecting on the event when she became secretary, Young claimed that the meeting had proved a stimulus for Women's Co-Operative Guilds across the country, who had been at the forefront of supporting the BCPV.¹⁵⁷ It is clear that Young took a keen interest in this episode.

However, it is unclear as to how she felt about the fact that these activities were orchestrated by women – did she promote the event merely because it constituted another anti-Vietnam War action? Was she keen to enhance transnational anti-war linkages? Or did the fact that this action had been prompted by women who,

¹⁵¹ 'National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary', Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

¹⁵² Young to [News Editor], 15 July 1965, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/92.

¹⁵³ See Jessica M. Frazier, *Women's Antiwar Diplomacy during the Vietnam War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) and Jessica M. Frazier, 'Collaborative Efforts to End the War in Viet Nam: The Interactions of Women Strike for Peace, The Vietnamese Women's Union, and the Women's Union of Liberation, 1965-1968', *Peace & Change*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Jul., 2012), pp. 339-365.

¹⁵⁴ Young to [News Editor], 15 July 1965, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/92.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ 'National Conference 12 May 1968: 1965-1968 Report by secretary', Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/16.

in turn, had just had a productive anti-war meeting with Vietnamese women, play a role? The archival record makes the motivation unclear. Unlike Anne Kerr, there is no comment to suggest that Young felt women had a special, if tangential, role to play in the anti-war movement, or in peace matters generally. Nor was she overtly anti-feminist in the manner of Peggy Duff. Certainly, she makes no mention of how the women's statuses as females may have impacted the meeting, and through her own activism it appears that science and trade unionism provided far more impactful motivating factors than her gender. Despite this, Young did receive flyers and circulars from WILPF advertising various events.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, she received an advertisement from female MPs, promoting a joint effort on behalf of women's organisations to maintain a vigil outside Downing Street as part of National Vietnam Week in 1967.¹⁵⁹ But again it is unclear as to how much she engaged with the female peace group, or whether, as an active member of the anti-war milieu, she simply received literature from them. Young was also invited to a meeting of 'women's leaders' in May 1967, which Kerr was also a part of – this meeting followed on from a women's meeting with Anne Kerr which had taken place on 15 May.¹⁶⁰ It is unclear whether Young attended, but it would indicate she had some involvement with gendered activities.¹⁶¹ Similarly, Young's archive discloses a report of a women's meeting which was held during the peace boat to Boulogne excursion. Whilst this report reveals that '40-50 members of Women's Peace Movements in France and Britain gathered to meet Duong Thi Duyen secretary of the Hanoi Committee of Vietnamese Women', it does not make clear whether Young herself was in attendance.¹⁶² Similarly, simply because Young received literature from WILPF does not necessarily indicate that she engaged with the peace group, or campaigned along particularly gendered lines.

Where Young's actions appear to have been more informed by her gender is in her contact with women overseas, and, most notably, Vietnamese women. On

¹⁵⁸ WILPF circular, undated, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/56.

¹⁵⁹ National Assembly of Women flyer, 8 March 1969, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/56.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Loren K Clarke to Young, 15 May 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/47.

¹⁶² 'Report of the Women's Meeting at Boulogne on September 22nd', undated, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/33.

International Women's Day in 1967, Young sent a cable to the Women's Federation in Hanoi, as well as the Committee for Solidarity with South Vietnam in Havana.¹⁶³ This would suggest that she had a sense of female solidarity, but it does not appear that this manifested itself in her approach towards protesting the Vietnam War domestically, which, as had already been examined, predominantly took place through the BCPV, and was particularly informed by her science and trade union background. In her work, Sue Bruley portrays trade unions as male domains, suggesting Young's own predominant status within her own union, was rather anomalous. Bruley claims that, such was the decline in female trade union activity in the post-war years, by the mid-1950s, unions were, in fact, resorting to fashion shows in an attempt to attract more female members.¹⁶⁴ Sarah Boston, however, has attested to the increased prevalence of women's issues within trade unions after 1968. Boston claims that this was due to the growing mutual influence and understanding between the women's liberation movement and the demands made by women in the trade union movement.¹⁶⁵

It appears that Young's husband's name may have carried more weight than her own. Commander Edgar Young was himself an avid anti-war campaigner. His name often appeared on flyers, as was the case when he was listed as one of those supporting the platform at a rally in Trafalgar Square in November 1968.¹⁶⁶ This perhaps signals the prevalent trend which has been attested to throughout various social and political movements, concerning how women were often tasked with the secretarial and organisational work, whereas men were the more public faces of the movement.

Correspondence in which Young stressed the importance of the unity of the British anti-war movement alludes to some rather problematic views she held. The following letter reveals Young's belief in the importance of the British anti-war movement being run by British people. This was evident in correspondence with Pat Jordan of the VSC in June 1966. This correspondence occurred following an anti-

¹⁶³ Young to M. Pieffort, 13 March 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/53.

¹⁶⁴ Sue Bruley, *Women in Britain Since 1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999), p. 127.

¹⁶⁵ Sarah Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), p. 279.

¹⁶⁶ BCPV flyer, 10 November [1968], Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/56.

war meeting, which Edgar Young had attended. Young wrote to Jordan: ‘although you say that you are aware of the dangers of opportunism and sectarianism, it seemed to an outsider that the conference was a wrangle between sects [...] I am unhappy about a movement meant to be British not being able to find a British chairman’.¹⁶⁷ Whilst Young does not refer to him directly, it would appear that this statement relates to Tariq Ali becoming chairman of the VSC, who was born in Pakistan. Frustratingly, Young does not elaborate on her statement, beyond making clear her belief that it would be preferable for the British-based VSC to have a native chairman. However, it is perhaps indicative of the broader approach towards anti-war campaigning which was advocated by the BCPV. Her contention indicates that she conceived of the movement against the Vietnam War in Britain as domestically-based. Young’s viewpoint thus reflected the broader BCPV approach: that the movement in Britain ought to be about mobilising the maximum number of British people and organisations possible, in order to influence the British government to dissociate from the war. This was in particular contrast to the activism of Peggy Duff, whose approach developed to such an extent that it, in many ways, transcended governmental level, despite Duff’s Labour Party connections. Whilst Young did engage in some limited transnational anti-war co-operation, as exhibited, for example, by the books campaign, it is important to bear in mind that the books for Vietnam campaign was an initiative extraneous to the work of the BCPV and one which Young undertook in her capacity as a scientist, rather than as BCPV secretary. Young’s approach mirrored that of the BCPV in its domestically-orientated nature, which endorsed the notion that Britain had a particularly important role to play in opposing the Vietnam War, despite the lack of actual involvement by British troops. The ultimately domestic focus of the BCPV, the British People’s Declaration, as well as the group’s continual stressing of Britain’s role as a convenor of the Geneva convention, underpins this, and reinforces the contention that despite some transnational co-operation, Young believed that British anti-war groups should be represented by British people.

Perhaps this comes from the egalitarian approach of the BCPV which has already been discussed, and was reflective of a belief in the need for leadership of an anti-war group to reflect the membership of its masses. However, it is clear that

¹⁶⁷ Young to Pat Jordan, 18 June 1966, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/46.

Young was reluctant about the emergence of a new anti-war organisation. In this sense, her view was reflective of the wider CPGB, in that she was reluctant to embrace the VSC. Unlike the CPGB however, which eventually gave its support to the VSC (not that the organisation really needed it), she continued to believe that anti-Vietnam War efforts ought to be furthered through the BCPV. Drawing on the group's anti-war experience, she explained to Jordan that

as the BCPV has been in the field for over a year now, I feel personally that it is better to work in as united a fashion as possible – to cooperate with the BCPV where possible – and do what one can to improve its policy [...] and, where not, to work in one's local committee, joining with the BCPV where possible. In particular: the BCPV trade union committee needs support, not competition from another trade union committee.¹⁶⁸

This point again reinforces Young's belief in the importance of trade union activity, and particularly in channelling this through the BCPV where possible – an organisation which had a strong history of trade unionists in the secretary role, including Haq, Young herself and eventually Jack Askins of the Transport and General Workers Union. It also highlights that she believed that the BCPV ought to be the only vehicle through which anti-war sentiment ought to be channelled.

Conclusion

In an interview with John Dumbrell, Tariq Ali of the VSC expressed that 'more routine and less imaginative organisations like the British Council for Peace in Vietnam [were able] to monopolise the cause' of Vietnam.¹⁶⁹ 'But', Ali contended, the BCPV 'never organised a single big demonstration. It was mainly pressure politics, lobbying, taking Vietnamese around the country and all that'.¹⁷⁰ Despite the arguably negligible contribution of the BCPV – they never did persuade the British government to dissociate from U.S. actions – the organisation, and Young's various roles therein, provide a useful insight into the interworking of various groups in the British anti-war movement. Young's is an important case study showing us the inner-workings of the BCPV. We also get a sense of how people moved roles and worked at different levels of the same organisation, within a short period of time. A consideration of Young's anti-war activities also encourages us to appreciate the complexities inherent in people's personal politics. Her case also gives us a sense of

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ 'Interview with Tariq Ali', p. 173.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

the communist, old-left, trade union-orientated influences within the peace movement which her activism embodied.

Certainly, Young engaged with communism and gendered peace groups and initiatives. However, the archival record does not indicate that these associations had an overt influence on her anti-war campaigning. The evidence presented within this chapter does not hugely challenge the notion put forward by Peggy Duff, who remarked in 1972 that the BCPV ‘normally [wouldn’t] co-operate with anyone but the Unions, the Labour Party and the C[ommunist] P[arty]’.¹⁷¹ Whilst these did constitute a considerable body of the BCPV’s work, Young’s own scientific background, as well as her role within the AScW, were also driving forces behind her anti-war activism with which her BCPV roles intersected. Above all else, she advocated the egalitarian approach of the BCPV: promoting mass engagement with the cause of Vietnam, as well as advocating the unity of the British movement.

With her myriad roles in the BCPV – in establishing and running the Marylebone CPV; on the TUSC; through the Books for Vietnam Campaign; in pushing for the founding of the London Co-ordinating Committee and her role in the formation of the national BCPV itself – Young was clearly an exceptionally active and well-connected activist, both within the BCPV and to external contacts. Furthermore, the seniority of her position is reinforced through other initiatives in which she took part, most notably through an invitation to join with Lord Brockway as part of a deputation to meet the United Nations Secretary-General, U Thant in May 1967.¹⁷² It is therefore no surprise that Young took over from outgoing secretary Loren Clarke in the national role – a role in which she continued to use her influence to advocate for trade union involvement with the cause of Vietnam, as well as encouraging the organisation to develop its policy and hierarchical structures.

The next chapter, on Margaret Stanton, will enable us to consider in closer depth the work of the BCPV at the local level and its relationship to the national organisation, thus enabling us to become more familiar with the rationales driving

¹⁷¹ Peggy Duff to Maud Sundqvist, 15 December 1972, Papers of ICDP, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick Papers of ICDP, MSS.181/16/18.

¹⁷² Loren K. Clarke to Young, 12 May 1967, Papers of Lt. Commander Edgar Young RN (Retired) and Amicia More Young, Hull History Centre, U DYO/12/47.

British activists' involvement who were situated away from the centres of political power.

Chapter 4

Being ‘the cement that holds the bricks together’: Margaret Stanton and the Birmingham Campaign for Peace in Vietnam

Throughout her tenure as organising secretary of the Birmingham Campaign for Peace in Vietnam, Margaret Stanton was often keen to stress Birmingham’s role as Britain’s ‘second city’. This was a phrase Stanton used often in order to underscore to whomever she was addressing that there was a vibrant anti-Vietnam War movement outside of the British capital. Literature on the anti-Vietnam War movement in Britain has unfortunately not followed Stanton’s example, opting predominantly to focus on London as a hub of anti-war sentiment. Doubtless the anti-war movement was in its most concentrated form in London, as evidenced in the previous chapter. The city provided a base for anti-war protesters of variant ideological strands, and its housing of not only the British centres of power, but the U.S. Embassy, meant that protests against American conduct in London fostered an increased symbolic importance in comparison to parochial offshoots. But such offshoots did exist. Sylvia Ellis has discussed regional anti-war protest, albeit in the context of contemporary student unrest.¹ Archival records make clear that there were thriving anti-war groups across Britain, and activists who played a central role in organising protest outside of the capital.

The case of Margaret Stanton, who became the secretary of the Birmingham branch of the British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam in 1965, represents an example of such locally-based anti-war activism. Stanton once deemed herself ‘the cement that holds the bricks together’.² This apt depiction of her practical role within the Birmingham Campaign for Peace in Vietnam underscores the useful work which she undertook in her role as secretary. Her role enables us to consider several key themes – notably with regard to the gendered division of labour within activist organisations – that have been identified in previous chapters. In this way, we can build upon

¹ See Sylvia Ellis, “‘A Demonstration of British Good Sense?’” British Student Protest during the Vietnam War’, in Gerard J. DeGroot, *Student Protest: The Sixties and After* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998), pp. 54, 58-9.

² ‘Margaret Stanton at the Trade Union Congress 1996’, Autumn, 1966, Margaret Stanton’s personal archive.

earlier discussions and explore the roles played by women in the role of secretary, which often encompassed policy direction as well as general organisation.

Born in Leicester in 1918, Margaret Stanton played a role in several activist causes in and around the Birmingham area. Stanton, her husband Michael and their three children moved from Leicester to Portsmouth, before settling in Birmingham in 1963 due to Michael's career (after having trained as a teacher after the Second World War, he worked in teacher training, first in Portsmouth and then in the Education Department at Birmingham University). Margaret Stanton's activism included campaigns based around parochial issues, such as with the Tenants' Association on the council estate on which the Stanton family lived after 1947 and her efforts to have contraceptives made available in Leicester. Stanton's activism also saw her engagement with broader foreign policy issues. These included anti-apartheid campaigning which she commenced in 1963, and subsequent engagement with the issues of Rhodesia and Vietnam after 1965. She joined the Communist Party for the first time in 1939 and met her husband at a Communist Party meeting three years later. The Communist Party in Birmingham has been identified by scholars as 'the model of a more inclusive party culture, with no dominant occupational grouping or pronounced sense of social distance'.³ Despite such seeming inclusivity, throughout her life, Stanton would switch her allegiance from the Communist Party to the Labour Party. This happened firstly around 1960 following Stanton's engagement with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, whose ambitions were closely linked to the Labour Party. Stanton re-joined the Communist Party in 1972, before leaving again around 1977. Despite being of an equivocal nature, Stanton's engagement with communism provides further testimony of the CPGB links, in terms of ideology and personnel, which the BCPV continued to have. Although Stanton's relationship with communism was of a personal nature, it provides us with further evidence as to the appeal of the BCPV to British communists. Moreover, this chapter enables us to build on the previous chapter on Amicia Young, by considering such questions in a local context.

Throughout her political career, Stanton worked various jobs in a part-time capacity, including as a secretary and in an armaments factory during the Second

³ Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen and Andrew Flinn, *Communists in British Society, 1920-1991* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2007), p. 96.

World War. Stanton encouraged unionisation wherever she worked and would draw on her links with Birmingham's organised labour movement throughout all of her activist pursuits. Stanton was involved in the Tenants' Association on her council estate in Leicester, and as part of this she campaigned to have birth control clinics established in Leicester, as women had to travel to Nottingham, some thirty miles away, in order to access such services. Later, Stanton worked as a teacher of Industrial Sociology to trade unionists at a college in Birmingham, before finishing her working life working for Community Health Councils – an NHS initiative which co-ordinated and channelled users' views on the service they received. This role enabled Stanton to utilise her considerable skill as an organiser which she had honed through decades of diverse campaigning. Margaret's youngest and third child Jennifer documented the regret her mother felt upon leaving education aged sixteen, explaining that Margaret's 'older sister Winifred had stayed on and become a teacher, and Mum felt she'd somehow not done what she could have done in education'.⁴ In 1968, Stanton therefore decided to complete her A-Levels at night school, at the same time as Jennifer and continued her adult education, studying for a BSc in Sociology, which she obtained from the University of London in 1972.

This chapter has multiple aims. Firstly, Stanton's upbringing and early political engagement will be briefly discussed in order to contextualise her engagement with the anti-Vietnam War movement after 1965. This section will include a discussion of Stanton's engagement with communism as an ideology, and will reflect upon how Stanton's gender may have influenced her politics. Secondly, the chapter aims to shed light on a localised example of anti-Vietnam campaigning in Britain, and contextualise Stanton's actions in Birmingham as part of a broader, leftist activist scene within Birmingham, thus facilitating a study of parochial engagement with the Vietnam War beyond London. The chapter will then move to document the establishment of the Birmingham Campaign for Peace in Vietnam (CPV) and its links with local partners, including trade unions, West Midlands universities, CND, and local MPs. Finally, the chapter will discuss some of the activities undertaken by the Birmingham CPV, examining these activities as part of the national and transnational anti-Vietnam War movement in which the Birmingham branch operated.

⁴ Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

The Stanton family has documented Margaret's efforts. As well as maintaining many of her original letters and papers (aside from those given to the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick), Margaret also undertook some interviews with her former son-in-law and granddaughter. Helpfully, Margaret's daughter Jennifer agreed to be interviewed, providing some details which were not immediately apparent from the archival record. These included assisting with the understanding of the chronology of Margaret's life, as well as commenting on Margaret's approach to anti-war campaigning and activism more generally. These are important facets which provide a fascinating insight into Stanton's activist life, yet her opinion on such matters would not be readily discernible from the archival record. Of course, it is important that the claims made by Jennifer are treated as the recollection of somebody on behalf of someone else, and for this reason the chapter always makes it explicitly clear when her testimony is being utilised to furnish a point – it is not treated as fact. For this reason, Jennifer's testimony was used to clarify matters and bring lifeblood to the chapter by furnishing contentions indicated from the archival record with real-life examples. Used in this way, Jennifer's account not only provides colour to the story of Margaret Stanton's activist life in Birmingham, but also enables the recovery of her mother's voice within anti-war Britain, thus helping to further the 'democratising and diversifying claims' made by the practice of oral history.⁵

Margaret herself drafted an unpublished memoir, documenting not only her campaigning activities but her personal and formative experiences also, including seminal moments from her childhood and the deaths of her parents some eighteen months apart before she was twenty-years-old. 1956 also proved a seminal year for the Stanton family, when the untimely death of Margaret's sister Winifred necessitated Stanton to take in her three children. This immense personal upheaval meant that Stanton was not actively engaged with politics at this time. Clearly, however, Stanton's passionate engagement with politics would recommence, and her lifetime of activism culminated in her receipt of the Women's Gold Badge at the Trade Union Congress in 1996. During her acceptance speech at this event, Stanton reflected that campaigning had become 'a way of life – a persistent campaigner and

⁵ Robert Gildea and James Mark, 'Introduction', in Robert Gildea, James Mark & Anette Warring (eds.), *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 10.

communicator, building and holding groups together, once called “the cement that holds the bricks together” [...] for 30 years’.⁶ This chapter aims to focus on one aspect of this remarkably active life in order to reveal how the anti-war movement manifested in a parochial context and assess how such localised movements remained connected nationally and internationally. Whilst the operations of the BCPV at the local level have already been studied to some extent through the analysis of Amicia More Young’s leadership of the Marylebone CPV in Chapter Three, the consideration of Stanton’s involvement with the Birmingham CPV in this chapter affords us the opportunity to study how the organisation operated in a context geographically removed from the capital.

Stanton’s background and rationales for her activism

Born into a conservative family, Margaret Stanton’s instincts for independent thought were evident from an early age. She recalled in her unpublished memoir a vivid memory, in which, she was asked by a teacher who she loved the most. Knowing the desired answer was ‘God’ or ‘Jesus’, Stanton recalled that ‘with passionate indignation, I decided to put up my hand and say “My mother and father”’.⁷ She adds that from that time on, she chose to sit at the back of church services, paying little attention, rather exchanging ‘well pressed squares of silver paper wrappings from chocolates and sweets, and sometimes well-fingered cigarette cards’ with other dissident infants.⁸

Accusations of communist infiltration in the BCPV have been addressed in the previous chapter. Tariq Ali’s contention that the BCPV, like the World Federation of Scientific Workers (WFSW), was a ‘classic Communist Party front’ organisation has already been outlined.⁹ Incidentally, Jennifer Stanton stated that her siblings remembered their mother talking about a meeting in Birmingham where Margaret dragged Tariq Ali out by his hair due to him being disruptive.¹⁰ However it is important here to see whether and how such claims manifested themselves under

⁶ ‘Margaret Stanton at the Trade Union Congress 1996’, Autumn, 1966, Margaret Stanton’s personal archive.

⁷ Margaret Stanton, *Margaret’s Soc. History Notes* (unpublished), 27 September 2008, Margaret Stanton’s personal archive.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Tariq Ali, *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties* (New York: Verso, 2005), p. 199. See William Styles, ‘The World Federation of Scientific Workers, a case study of a Soviet Front Organisation: 1946-1964’, *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (2018), pp. 116-129.

¹⁰ Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

Stanton's role at the helm of the BCPV in Birmingham. Margaret Stanton joined the Communist Party in 1939, and stood as a Communist Party candidate in local council elections in 1945, gaining 1000 votes 'which on the whole quite pleased us'.¹¹ Stanton left the Party around 1960 and joined the Labour party. She re-joined the Communist Party in 1972, but left once again around 1977, finding the party too quarrelsome and defeatist. This ongoing association with the Communist Party highlights that Stanton never did break with communism fully – she continued to receive the communist publication the *Daily Worker* even when she was no longer a member and was able to utilise her contacts in the Communist Party during her anti-Vietnam War campaigning, despite no longer being a party member.

Jennifer Stanton suggests that this commitment to the party, like Margaret's subsequent opposition to the Vietnam War, was morally-based. Jennifer explained: 'her membership of the Communist Party [...] was based on moral grounds, and a[n] [...] idealised view of the Soviet Union [...] She and Dad had both left the Communist Party in by the sixties [...] But she was always, I think, sympathetic with the Communist Party'.¹² Unlike the VSC's open support for the NLF, which informed that group's rhetoric and discourse on the war then, Stanton's rhetoric pertaining to the war primarily engaged with humanitarian concerns, as opposed to the political ideology which she had become involved with. This was reflected in the decision of the Birmingham CPV to establish a Medical Aid organisation in Birmingham to supplement its political activities.¹³ Stanton did maintain an idealised belief that society would be better run along communist lines, but in terms of Vietnam specifically, the main impetus was the moral question of the self-determination of nations, and the rights of people to govern themselves based on whichever political ideology they chose.¹⁴ Had Stanton viewed the war as an opportunity for communist expansion, one may expect to see more promotion of the NLF, however, the majority of Stanton's efforts appear to have been geared towards securing dissociation by the British government from U.S. actions. These concerns are reflective of the approach of Amicia Young examined in Chapter Three.

¹¹ Margaret Stanton, *Margaret's Soc. History Notes* (unpublished), 27 September 2008, Margaret Stanton's personal archive.

¹² Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

¹³ Margaret Stanton to Dr McMichael, 14 June 1967, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/3.

¹⁴ Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

Interestingly, Stanton's remaining papers give little attention to her interactions with the Communist Party, despite the fact that she left and re-joined the party twice. Jennifer Stanton explained that it was difficult to discern how being in the Communist Party had affected Margaret's campaigning life as it was a subject she avoided speaking about, and noticed upon depositing her mother's archival papers that Margaret had kept hardly anything pertaining to the Communist Party. She elaborated that

I think, when she was in the Communist Party it was very difficult, for example, at work when it was found out that she was in the Communist Party, I think she may even have lost one of her jobs when she was very young [...] It was something that, normally you had to keep fairly hidden, because it was very much frowned upon by the Establishment, and so I think she got into a habit of [...] being fairly secretive about it.¹⁵

Stuart Hall, the prominent activist and intellectual who worked for a long period at Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, attested to the anti-communism faced by the Left during this period.

In this period the Left in general was shaken by hard-running moral panics identifying fellow-travellers, spies and "reds" in high places, in a bid to expose those who were subversives [...] In Britain the reflexes may have been more gentlemanly than in the US, but the ruthlessness with which dissidents, or supposed dissidents, were singled out was serious.¹⁶

Stanton's campaign for election as a local councillor is given some attention in her memoir, and alludes to this theme of communism as being viewed as rather controversial. Stanton reflected that 'we were probably rash, in our Election campaign, to allow the unofficially rented house where I lived to be decorated by a huge banner on this main road and bus route [...] The landlords, not based in Leicester itself, did not banish myself and my family from the house until after the elections were over [...] But I did have notice of eviction not long afterwards'.¹⁷ Like Duff then, Stanton's anti-war stance shows a morally-motivated opposition to the war. These moral concerns clearly informed her engagement with the BCPV specifically, but the organisation's poorly-hidden tolerance towards communism may have constituted another attractive factor which drew Stanton to the organisation.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Stuart Hall, *Familiar Stranger* (London: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 233.

¹⁷ Margaret Stanton, *Margaret's Soc. History Notes* (unpublished), 27 September 2008, Margaret Stanton's personal archive.

Gender

It is clear that Stanton enjoyed cordial relations with female peace groups through her anti-war work. In the early days of the Birmingham CPV, Stanton corresponded with the Birmingham branch of WILPF in order to gain information about contacts within the council who would be sympathetic to the anti-war cause. A member the Birmingham branch of WILPF assured Stanton that ‘these Councillors should be firm references for support if you arrange a public meeting’.¹⁸ An understanding of such relationships can help us understand how gender can play a more tangential role within female peace activism than has otherwise been accounted for within historiography.

It is clear that Stanton and the Birmingham chapter often recognised female peace activism as separate to general peace activism, as highlighted in a circular which proposed special attention to women’s anti-war protests and youth demonstrations.¹⁹ Also representative of this special status held by women was the suggestion that ‘women walk together near the head of the procession, if possible wearing black or black sashes’ during a march in Birmingham in March 1968.²⁰ Jennifer Stanton explained her mother’s affinity with women’s group thus:

I don’t think it was opportunistic, I think it was feeling that women have a particular, a kind of role [...] not just because women are side-lined a lot and so they need to kind of put themselves forward [...] but that women often have a slightly different attitude because they’ve had the role of bringing people into the world and looking after them and they don’t want to see them blown to bits, they’re much more conscious of that perhaps.²¹

Jennifer Stanton also explained that her mother ‘was very much aware of being a woman in a society where women were not in an equal position, but she wasn’t primarily [...] or even overtly a feminist’.²² She also identified a possible link between Stanton’s views on women in society and her leftist political leanings, stating that she thought her mother ‘felt that you needed to build socialism and then

¹⁸ Walmsley to Stanton, 3 November 1966, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/2.

¹⁹ Birmingham Council for Peace in Vietnam circular, 21 July 1967, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/5.

²⁰ Stanton to Secretaries of Birmingham Anti-Vietnam Groups, 29 February 1968, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/7.

²¹ Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

²² *Ibid.*

women would become equal automatically'.²³ There were, of course, feminist groups in operation in Britain prior to this period, some of which Stanton had interactions with, including WILPF and the Women's Co-Operative Guild, so, as her daughter pointed out 'she could have been doing that sort of thing and got into feminism, but she didn't, so, I have to think her main orientation was towards socialism and social justice and anti-war priorities'.²⁴ In her memoir Margaret Stanton reflected that around 1947, whilst pregnant, she was 'still managing some political work, with the tendency now towards more work with women'.²⁵ Yet this does not appear to have influenced her anti-Vietnam work. This reveals a similarity with Anne Kerr who also clearly expressed an appreciation of a relationship between women and peace activism, but prided socialism as her primary aim. Like Stanton, Kerr felt that a socialist society generally would be more moral, thus alleviating the symptoms which had allowed contemporary phenomena such as nuclear weapons and the Vietnam War to flourish.

Stanton's experiences as a woman in the largely male-dominated domain of politics may have influenced her, but it appears that this happened more so later in life. As her daughter explained, Stanton developed an appreciation as she went through her myriad organisational roles, noticing that women always played the role of doing the behind-the-scenes work in organisations and that men often took the role of the chairman, spokesman or figurehead. The development of thought along these lines was part of Margaret's rationale for setting up the Network of Oxford Women for Justice and Peace in later in her life. This was the first time that Margaret had helped to organise a specifically women-only grouping.²⁶

However, Jennifer clarified: 'I wouldn't say [the concept of gender] was active in the way she was working on the Vietnam campaign'.²⁷ Certainly, some aspects of her activism may be interpreted by some as part of a feminist agenda. Stanton's campaign to make contraceptives more freely available locally stands out particularly in this regard, and, of course, the issue was gender-specific. However,

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Margaret Stanton, *Margaret's Soc. History Notes* (unpublished), 27 September 2008, Margaret Stanton's personal archive.

²⁶ Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Margaret's daughter described her mother's motivations in campaigning on this issue as purely practically-led.²⁸ Indeed, Jennifer explained that her mother's awareness that women could play a special, gender-specific role in matters of war and peace was something which came later in her life. 'She felt that women could have an impact', Jennifer explained of her mother, elaborating on Margaret's belief that

women being very determined and calm [...] being militant isn't the way to do it, the way to do it is to be strong and peaceful and I think she felt women were particularly good at that. Partly because they tend to be less inclined to get into fisticuffs with the police, but also because of how society sees us, I suppose [...] it's using something, something that may be a bit of a stereotype, but using it to our advantage.²⁹

So whilst Stanton became involved with gendered initiatives, particularly later in life these were by no means the driving force behind her activism during the Vietnam period. Even if she did harbour this belief about a relationship between the particularities of being a woman and peace, these were certainly not expressed through her activism.

The Birmingham CPV and its local partners

Birmingham's history of radicalism, industrialism and multi-culturalism made it a hotbed for the debate of political ideas. The Bull Ring area of the city, which now boasts a shopping centre, enjoys a heritage as a radical meeting place. Stanton herself pointed out in her oral testimony with her relatives that the market place in Birmingham constituted 'quite a substantial part of the history of these movements'.³⁰ The radical heritage which the Bull Ring area occupies within the city's history has been written about by Michael Weaver, who has studied the riots in the Bull Ring area during 1839.³¹ In his *History of Birmingham*, Chris Upton also attests to the role of the Bull Ring area as a place for the people of Birmingham to assemble: 'long after the Chartist Riots, the Bull Ring was always the focus for political protest, from the frozen-out canal boatmen of 1875 to the unemployed marchers of 1972'.³² Stanton clearly appreciated the Bull Ring's heritage as a traditional point of assembly. Writing following an episode during which a policeman had behaved aggressively towards her

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Transcript of interview with Margaret Stanton by William Beinart and Rebecca Beinart, 23 August 1999, Margaret Stanton's personal archive.

³¹ Michael Weaver, 'The Birmingham Bull Ring Riots of 1839: Variations on a Theme of Class Conflict', *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (Mar., 1997), pp. 137-48.

³² Chris Upton, *A History of Birmingham* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co., 1993), p. 183.

when she had been collecting signatures for a Vietnam petition in the Bull Ring area, Stanton lamented such unjust action, explaining that what ‘I and many of my colleagues, including fellow members of the Labour Party, fear is that many of the traditional civil liberties in the old Bull Ring have been lost’.³³ Stanton continued, ‘it seems essential to safeguard the public forum and the liberties which make “freedom of speech and assembly” meaningful, especially for those who have little access to the mass communications of the press and television’.³⁴

Birmingham is known for its cultural and religious diversity. Chinese, East African and Yemeni populations immigrated to the city prior to the Second World War.³⁵ But it is the post-war immigration of people settling from the Caribbean and the Indian Sub-Continent which is the pinnacle of Birmingham’s ethnic diversity. Prior to the Second World War, Birmingham had few colonial migrants, yet by 1991, it had the largest ethnic percentage of population in the UK, some twenty per cent of the total population.³⁶ Upton has explained the city authorities’ struggle to approach the challenges posed by immigration, writing that ‘City Council policy, oscillating between the fear of racial conflict and the trust in racial harmony, moved significantly from ghettoization through integration to recognition of cultural difference as the century progressed’.³⁷ In 1959, the cramming of the city’s 35,000 immigrants into around 3,200 houses meant both that accommodation was sub-standard and integration was virtually impossible.³⁸ Elizabeth Buettner has highlighted the historical precedence of racial tensions within the city in discussing the Conservative victory in the town of Smethwick (a few miles outside of Birmingham) in the election of 1964. She writes of Malcolm X’s inclusion of Birmingham and Smethwick on his British itinerary as part of an international tour, in February 1965, explaining, ‘spending several hours in the town, he explained to reporters that he had come because “I have heard that the Blacks in Smethwick are being treated in the same way as the Negroes were treated in Alabama – like Hitler

³³ Stanton to Mr Thomas, 26 May 1967, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/6.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Upton, *A History of Birmingham*, p. 106.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

treated the Jews”³⁹ Conservative MP Enoch Powell gave his infamous ‘Rivers of Blood’ address on 20 April 1968 to the General Meeting of the West Midlands Area Conservative Political Centre, which centred on pointed criticism of immigration into Britain from the Commonwealth. Powell was ultimately sacked from his position as Shadow Defence Secretary in Edward Heath’s Shadow Cabinet following this incident, which helped to highlight Birmingham’s tempestuous race relations. Stanton herself mentioned the speech in her oral history with her relatives, explaining the ‘immense amount of anger and a tremendous amount of conflict within the Birmingham and West Midlands area’ which it caused.⁴⁰ Buettner also deems the ‘sharp rise in political activism among immigrant and other anti-racist groups and coalitions’ another consequence of the events in Smethwick in 1964.⁴¹ But there is little evidence that Margaret Stanton engaged with such activism by ethnic minorities in the region, particularly in her anti-Vietnam campaigning.

Stanton described her contribution to the embryonic anti-Vietnam campaign in Birmingham (such as it was prior to her appointment as organising secretary in 1965) as important in the sense that she was able to connect anti-war efforts with wider leftist groups in the city.

The particular contribution I was able to make [...] was that I remained actively linked to, for example, the United Nations Association, as well as one or two aspects of Trade Union activity [...] I had Labour connections, and also [was] quite friendly still with people further on the left, C[ommunist] P[arty] particularly.⁴²

It is clear that Stanton’s appointment was key in reinvigorating and consolidating a pre-existing anti-war impetus in Birmingham, as well as extending the group’s links to other sympathetic factions in the area and reflecting existing scepticism towards the actions of the U.S. Communists in particular had long viewed American foreign policy, particularly in South East Asia, through the lens of imperialism. In the early twentieth century, the CPGB increasingly viewed imperialism as an inevitable extension of capitalism, rather than a separate policy in

³⁹ Elizabeth Buettner, “‘This is Staffordshire not Alabama’: Racial Geographies of Commonwealth Immigration in Early 1960s Britain’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (2014), p. 724.

⁴⁰ Transcript of interview with Margaret Stanton by William Beinart and Rebecca Beinart, 23 August 1999, Margaret Stanton’s personal archive.

⁴¹ Buettner, “‘This is Staffordshire not Alabama’”, p. 728.

⁴² Transcript of interview with Margaret Stanton by William Beinart and Rebecca Beinart, 23 August 1999, Margaret Stanton’s personal archive.

its own right.⁴³ In a letter to Barbara Haq, Stanton explained in January 1965 that ‘we held a meeting last Thursday, 30th December, in which a Peace in Vietnam Committee was re-formed in Birmingham [...] They are mainly active members of the various peace organisations, but we aim to make a new approach to the Trade Unions, political parties etc.’⁴⁴ Ellis has identified that activism in the North East of England was delayed and lacked the militancy of protests in the capital.⁴⁵ However, this does not appear to have been the case when it came to Birmingham and the actions of the Birmingham CPV therein. Contrary to Ellis’ thesis about the delayed nature of local protest efforts, the Birmingham CPV was established rather early on – certainly before the Vietnam War became a prominent issue on the left. The VSC, in contrast, which was London-based, was not set up until 1966.

It appears that the Birmingham CPV was remarkably active. This is particularly notable when compared with other regional branches of the BCPV. Janet Upward of Wolverhampton CPV explained to Stanton in 1966 that ‘our meeting on Tuesday night was not a great success’.⁴⁶ Clear in this correspondence also was the respect afforded to Stanton due to her position within local peace organising, as the exchanges show Upward seeking advice from Stanton on how to improve the operation of the Wolverhampton CPV. Upward wrote: ‘I do appreciate this kind of practical advice [...] I feel I have such a lot to learn about this kind of business, and I don’t want the campaign in Wolverhampton to flounder because of my inexperience’.⁴⁷ These comments from Upward serve to underpin the regard with which Stanton was held. Those close to Stanton have attested to this. As Margaret’s daughter explained, the Birmingham CPV was so active ‘because Mum was so active, she was just a really good organiser, and really relentless’.⁴⁸ Stanton’s stature within the anti-Vietnam War movement in the Birmingham region was also exemplified by the speaking engagements she was asked to undertake, for example,

⁴³ See e.g. Neil Redfern, *Class or Nation: Communists, Imperialism and Two World Wars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 26, 75.

⁴⁴ Stanton to Mrs B. Haq, 2 January 1965, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/2.

⁴⁵ Ellis, “‘A Demonstration of British Good Sense?’”, p. 58.

⁴⁶ Janet Upward to Stanton, 1 December 1966, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

she spoke at a Saturday school on Vietnam, organised by the Malvern College of Further Education and School of Art, on 7 October 1967.⁴⁹

The Birmingham CPV enjoyed close links with several like-minded activist groups in the region. The national BCPV's British People's Declaration for Peace in Vietnam, which was circulated and promoted by Stanton and the Birmingham CPV, yielded signatories from broad swathes of the left in Birmingham. As well as the local Labour Party, Trades Council and Quaker groups, the declaration was signed by the Glebe Farm Women's Co-operative Guild, WILPF, Birmingham City Communist Party and Birmingham Folksingers for Freedom in Vietnam. In addition, the appeal was signed by a number of diverse and prominent individuals in the city such as Dr Patria Asher (who was particularly active within Birmingham's Medical Aid for Vietnam group), Stuart Hall, four Birmingham MPs and numerous local clergymen, including the Bishop of Birmingham.⁵⁰

Birmingham's trade union movement provided another important base which Stanton sought to involve through her prior experience as a union representative to the Birmingham Trades Council. As a city with a rich history of manufacturing tradition, Stanton was aware that Birmingham was afforded 'a very fat year book of trade union branches [...] there were just hundreds and hundreds'.⁵¹ Stanton recalled that 'we had a lot of trade union links in all this work, yes, and I remember very much Vietnam and Anti-Apartheid maintaining those links and in fact, on that big march, the Vietnam one, we had a lot of trade unionists, they sent representatives. It was tremendously well supported by the trade unions, and Trades Council too'.⁵² Stanton's daughter Jennifer spoke of her mother's desire to include broader swathes of society in her campaigning activities, explaining that despite (or perhaps because of) her own middle-class background, Margaret was aware that many of the causes she was involved with tended to be more attractive to the middle classes, however, 'she had this idea [that] international issues are also important to us here, and she

⁴⁹ Programme, Malvern College of Further Education and School of Art, Saturday School on Vietnam, Saturday 7 October 1967, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/4.

⁵⁰ British People's Declaration for Peace in Vietnam, 1969, Margaret Stanton's personal archive.

⁵¹ Transcript of interview with Margaret Stanton by William Beinart and Rebecca Beinart, 23 August 1999, Margaret Stanton's personal archive.

⁵² *Ibid.*

would try and recruit people in the trade union movement'.⁵³ This if, of course, reflective of the broader aims of the national BCPV, which sought to be as broadly inclusive as possible.

The United Nations Association (UNA) had a particularly active branch in the Bourneville area and this fostered an increased interest in Stanton in international issues. The Bourneville UNA was one of the groups Stanton was able to persuade to get involved with the Birmingham CPV's anti-Vietnam War campaign. She explained in her memoir that 'I persuaded their members – many of them Quakers and mostly women, to come out on their first ever demonstration, a march demanding the Wilson government to end its support for the American war in Vietnam'.⁵⁴ The organisation also enjoyed close links with West Midlands universities. Whilst academics constituted some of the signatories of important anti-war petitions, on a personal level, Stanton's own attitude towards academic work was fairly ambivalent, something which stemmed from Stanton's aforementioned disappointment concerning the early denouement of her own formal education.

Jennifer Stanton explained of her mother:

especially before she did her degree, she felt this outsider [...] that people looked down on you because you hadn't got a degree [...] she had a bit of a chip on her shoulder about not having got the same education [...] I think, and this is just my view that she therefore slightly undervalued academic work and academic life.⁵⁵

Indeed, such were Margaret's feelings on this issue that she felt that her husband did not have a 'proper' job because he was able to come home for lunch. (The irony of this was not lost on Margaret's daughter, who pointed out that in Leicester in Margaret's youth, people went home from factory work for lunch all the time). Thus when Margaret finally enrolled on a Sociology Degree at Aston University in 1969, she deemed it 'the most self-centred part of my life'.⁵⁶ Jennifer explained that even after completing her BSc in Sociology, Margaret believed academia to be 'kind of a great big con [...] that everyone at university was sort of lying around and doing nothing, having fun and reading books. Not doing any

⁵³ Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

⁵⁴ Margaret Stanton, *Margaret's Soc. History Notes* (unpublished), 27 September 2008, Margaret Stanton's personal archive.

⁵⁵ Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

⁵⁶ Margaret Stanton, *Margaret's Soc. History Notes* (unpublished), 27 September 2008, Margaret Stanton's personal archive.

campaigning, not benefitting mankind'.⁵⁷ This highlights some interesting comparisons with Peggy Duff. Duff clearly had a lot of respect for academics, and her anti-war approach prized contributions of academic opinion. This, evidently, was in stark contrast to Stanton's approach which sought to involve as broad swathes of society as possible, rather than utilise select academic contacts.

It is clear that Birmingham constituency MPs proved an important resource for Stanton. Municipal restructuring meant that Birmingham had either twelve or thirteen constituencies in each election throughout the period 1959-74 (see appendix one). Some of these, including Ladywood, Small Heath, Stechford and Aston were staunchly Labour. However, Stanton and the Birmingham CPV did not enjoy the support of all Labour MPs. Some, such as Julius Silverman (MP for Aston until its abolishment after 1970, after which he became MP for Birmingham Erdington), were notable for their commitment to the anti-Vietnam cause. Others, however, were not so sympathetic. Roy Hattersley, MP for Sparkbrook from 1965-97, was one such MP. Hattersley's irritation with segments of the organised Left was elucidated in his 1995 memoir, in which he wrote of his 'right-wing reputation which was based largely on my undoubted enthusiasm for European Union and undisguised irritation at the insular and sentimental posturing of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament'.⁵⁸ A letter to the secretary of the Labour Party, which gave details of a delegation to the House of Commons from Birmingham, highlighted the apparent importance of the Labour Party to the Birmingham CPV's anti-war tactics, and in doing so, raised a problem in relying on the support of MPs (in this particular instance, on none other than Hattersley himself). In this letter, Stanton explained:

[The delegation's] sixth and last encounter, however, was with Mr. Roy Hattersley and was far from friendly [...] We were delivering to the House of Commons, for forwarding to Mr. George Brown, a Vietnam petition signed by 10,650 people living all over Birmingham [...] but Mr Hattersley informed us that he was not influenced by petitions on any issue [...] He strongly conveyed the impression that he does not consider himself bound by the Party's declarations of policy nor by constituents' views, but stated categorically that on all matters he makes up his mind independently according to his conscience [...] He said he only approved [conference] decisions which concurred with his own point of view.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

⁵⁸ Roy Hattersley, *Who Goes Home?* (London: Abacus, 2003), p. 63.

⁵⁹ Stanton to secretary of the Labour Party, 3 July 1967, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/5.

This comment is particularly interesting in light of the aforementioned discussions surrounding Anne Kerr and the relationship between policy and conference decisions. The democratic nature of the Labour Party system (the notion of conference sovereignty), means that such views expressed by Hattersley were particularly problematic in the context of him being a Labour MP. Despite such opposition, Stanton had an impressive ability to bring seemingly disparate forces together, which proved to be key to the relative success of the Birmingham branch. Subsequently, she looked back upon this feat with pride. As she explained during her speech for an achievement award at the 1996 Trade Union Congress: ‘I was proud when, in Birmingham, we had an impressive march for Vietnam at the height of American bombing, when trade unions, Trades Council and shop stewards from the car factories marched alongside church leaders, Quakers, academics and political parties. Some had never marched in the street before’.⁶⁰

Activities of the Birmingham CPV

This section will examine the Birmingham CPV’s activities in three major respects. Firstly, the nature of the group’s tactics will be discussed, and Stanton’s keen sense of the need to ensure that the organisation remained respected and socially acceptable will be explored. Secondly, the Birmingham CPV’s relationship to its parent organisation will be analysed in order to help elucidate the extent of the parochial group’s autonomy. Despite being a locally-orientated group, the subject matter of the Birmingham CPV meant that it was necessary to engage with both the British government and to engage transnationally with key U.S. figures and to some extent, like-minded activists abroad. Thirdly, this section will therefore turn to examine the Birmingham CPV’s relations with MPs and the British government more widely, before examining facets of the group’s activities which were transnational in character.

Notions around respectable protest were evident in the tactics employed by the Birmingham CPV. It is also clear that Stanton was aware of her ‘non-threatening’ stature as a white, female, middle-aged peace campaigner, and the respect that this afforded her amongst Birmingham’s law enforcement:

I think perhaps seeing a middle aged person, at that time not so elderly,

⁶⁰ ‘Margaret Stanton at the Trade Union Congress 1996’, Autumn, 1966, Margaret Stanton’s personal archive.

little, what they perhaps thought was a middle-class, respectable, white lady, that since they regarded me as in charge, you see, they thought that it must be intended to be a fairly peaceful demonstration. They generally were. I mean we were trying to make a political point and I didn't think we wanted to rouse hostility in the population that saw us, we were wanting to make a political point.⁶¹

In this sense, it may be argued that the organisation adopted tactics which were conventional in many ways, refuting the use of violence and direct action adopted by some more militant, and often, student-orientated anti-war groups in Britain and abroad. This provides further evidence that the activism of these women was rooted in the orthodox left. Stanton was committed to non-violent means of peace campaigning, despite her recognition that non-violent demonstrations afforded campaigns far less press attention than those which advocated or indulged in violent means. Recounting one example of this, Jennifer Stanton explained that her mother had once telephoned a local newspaper to tell them about an upcoming demonstration in Birmingham, only to be asked 'is there likely to be some violence?'. When Margaret reassured the newspaper in question that there would not be any violence, and that she had cleared the demonstration with the police, she was told that they would not bother sending a reporter.⁶² In another example, in a letter to the Programme Director of the BBC's *24 Hours*, Stanton attempted to have attention drawn to the work of the Birmingham CPV, non-sensational though it may have been, in the wake of the more uproarious Grosvenor Square demonstrations. 'I [...] would be glad to take part in or provide information for any programme you may envisage immediately or later, arising from the inevitable inquest on today's Vietnam demonstration in London', she wrote, continuing, 'we found the press and T.V. [in Birmingham] quite uninterested in a peaceful demonstration, even though it included [a] Bishop, MPs and trade unionists, professors and housewives side by side'.⁶³ It is not clear that Stanton received any reply to her offer to publicise the work of the Birmingham CPV. So whilst it was deemed important by Stanton to remain respectable in order to be taken seriously, clearly this did not yield the desired results in terms of press attention. This highlights again the concerns of older peace activists to remain respectable, with a belief that if they digressed too far from traditional methods, they would alienate constituencies which they aimed to target.

⁶¹ Transcript of interview with Margaret Stanton by William Beinart and Rebecca Beinart, 23 August 1999, Margaret Stanton's personal archive.

⁶² Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

⁶³ Stanton to '24 Hours' Programme Director, 27 October 1968, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/5.

Such notions were not just centred on tactics, but on the ideologies expressed at anti-war events. Stanton recalled one episode in which more aggressive ideological displays caused some consternation:

the [...] pro-China group at that time [...] came along with a different set of posters and slogans, whereas we had got our broad movement together on the basis of an acceptable slogan for withdrawal of American troops, withdrawal of British support from America. They were much more sort of assertively, if not aggressively calling for support for the movement which was mainly in South Vietnam [...] And so we actually had a battle with them, a wordy battle, at the demonstration, asking them please to put their boards away because they were carrying slogans that some of the people who'd been persuaded to come would not find acceptable.⁶⁴

This point reinforces the notion of a dichotomy amongst the British left regarding not only the best tactics to employ in order to protest against the war, but also the ideological chasm which characterised the movement. In this instance, open support of the NLF was deemed controversial and alienating to some campaigners, underscoring once more that fact that the approach of the Birmingham CPV was focussed on maximum inclusivity.

Jennifer Stanton reiterated her mother's feeling that although 'London's not the centre of the world [...] a lot of people would only ever think about London and the headquarters' campaign'.⁶⁵ Margaret Stanton showcased a desire to operate somewhat independently from the national BCPV, explaining that, 'I did find always that, at least in the way I organised things, that I very often tended to organise vigorously locally and to not have very [...] close link[s] with the London organisations. I felt that we went ahead of them in some ways'.⁶⁶ This said, she added that the Birmingham group always supported the demonstrations of the national BCPV.⁶⁷ It is clear from the archival record, however, that the relationship between the BCPV and its Birmingham branch was one of broad co-operation. A circular of July 1966 reveals the value accorded to local activities, as it gave several directives to local committees, suggesting actions they could undertake. As well as attending an extended council meeting at the House of Commons on 14 July 1966, and attending a lobby of Parliament on 27 July, the national BCPV recommended

⁶⁴ Transcript of interview with Margaret Stanton by William Beinart and Rebecca Beinart, 23 August 1999, Margaret Stanton's personal archive.

⁶⁵ Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

⁶⁶ Transcript of interview with Margaret Stanton by William Beinart and Rebecca Beinart, 23 August 1999, Margaret Stanton's personal archive.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

deputations to MPs, letters to Wilson and Johnson, congratulatory letters to prominent U.S. personalities who had opposed the war, utilisation of local press and deputations to mayors and town councils.⁶⁸ As this section will show, the Birmingham branch employed the vast majority of these recommended tactics under Stanton's secretarial guidance and particularly utilised its links to the national branch in order to obtain speakers for its events and in order to gain information. Despite Stanton's feeling that the Birmingham CPV enjoyed a level of independence and was 'ahead of' the national organisation in some ways, it would appear that her organisation of the Birmingham group was largely reflective of national policy. The relationship between Birmingham and its parent organisation appears to have strengthened after the 1968 re-organisation of the BCPV, much of which was instigated at the behest of Amicia Young, as the previous chapter demonstrated. The BCPV also began producing bulletins in 1968, which increasingly facilitated the relationship between the local and national levels. This bulletin re-printed statements and resolutions by prominent organisations on Vietnam, promoted anti-war materials such as films and literature, and, crucially, contained information on upcoming anti-war events around the country.⁶⁹

One of the key tactics employed by the Birmingham CPV was petitioning. The Birmingham chapter supported the efforts of the national group in this regard, but Stanton organised the local collecting of signatures too. Here we are able to see a continuing thread between the national BCPV and the Birmingham chapter, which also used petitioning extensively. Stanton believed that petitions were useful because 'people who want to do something but can't commit themselves to too much are always anxious that at least they can put their name down to something, and they like to participate to that extent'.⁷⁰ Stanton and the Birmingham CPV's petitioning efforts enabled them to canvass broad sections of the local population, and they were able to collect some ten thousand signatures over a period of several months in 1967. The large time spent collecting signatures outside of Birmingham's Town Hall even led Stanton's fellow campaigners to joke: 'Margaret, you'll be fossilised here, like

⁶⁸ British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam circular to local committees and individual members, 6 July 1966, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/5.

⁶⁹ British Council for Peace in Vietnam Bulletin, January 1968, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/4.

⁷⁰ Transcript of interview with Margaret Stanton by William Beinart and Rebecca Beinart, 23 August 1999, Margaret Stanton's personal archive.

the statue of Queen Victoria' which stood nearby.⁷¹ Similarly, reflecting Stanton's belief in the power of letter-writing, letter campaigns to MPs, U.S. politicians, and local figures were one of the key ways in which she sought to spread anti-war feeling.⁷² The idea behind this was that people would write to their own MP plus four other people regarding stopping the war in Vietnam. Stanton actually explained to a fellow anti-war campaigner in a letter of 1966 that this tactic, which had been initiated by Quakers in Denmark, had been so impactful that it had reversed the policy of the Danish government!⁷³

Garnering mass anti-war opinion rather than arousing public spectacle was certainly more the Birmingham CPV's style. The Midlands Conference for Peace in Vietnam, which was held on 2 October 1965, was one of the organisation's first mass meetings. Its aim was 'to inform and rouse public opinion in the West Midlands, and it seems fitting that, in Britain's second city – which suffered much bombardment during the last war – we should decide to make a call for the ending of the cruel war in Vietnam'.⁷⁴ The aims of the conference were thus rooted in the local – both drawing on Birmingham's experiences during the Second World War and aiming to educate those within the local context. The conference stated that the four main forms of action that it would promote were: support of the BCPV Ballot for Peace (with the aim to collect one million signatures); affiliation to local Peace in Vietnam Committees; resolutions to the Government, national and local organisations, to MPs, the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party Executive; and letters to the press. Minutes of the first council meeting held on 23 June 1965 also reveal a varied plan for activities throughout the year, including the issuing of a press statement, a petition and general actions amongst contact organisations to raise the profile of the Campaign.⁷⁵ This Midlands Conference for Peace in Vietnam was, however, one of the only conferences organised by Stanton and the Birmingham CPV – it does not appear to have been a tactic particularly favoured by the organisation. Moreover, the conference did not actually entail much academic

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

⁷³ Stanton to Mr. Gaskin, 10 October 1966, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/1.

⁷⁴ Birmingham Council for Peace in Vietnam, circular on West Midlands Conference, undated, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/1.

⁷⁵ Stanton to Haq, 2 January 1965, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/2; Minutes of Birmingham Council for Peace in Vietnam meeting, June 1965, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/2.

involvement, a factor which was perhaps reflective of Stanton's aforementioned ambivalence towards the value of academia. Rather, it was mostly attended by MPs and figures within the local trade union movement.⁷⁶ Typically, the organisation embraced tactics which were much more egalitarian.

One such tactic encouraged was letter writing, particularly aimed at British MPs. Stanton's relationship with some of the Labour MPs representing Birmingham constituencies has been discussed previously. Often, such efforts would yield short and nonspecific replies, as can be seen from the responses Stanton received throughout a 1968 letter campaign towards Birmingham MPs, most of which assured her that they would 'bear in mind the views you expressed'.⁷⁷ Whilst the majority of the replies that Stanton received were brief and generic, Jill Knight MP (Conservative, Birmingham Edgbaston) sent a rather longer reply, stating that 'I believe there would be no point whatever in our meeting, since I am sure your time is too valuable to be wasted'.⁷⁸ Knight chided Stanton for the one-sidedness of her efforts, and appeared to reflect anti-communist sentiments similar to those received in Anne Kerr's correspondence. Knight explained that 'if such efforts as yours could be directed also at the communists instead of persistently at the Americans, one would not have so many reservations about the political allegiance you appear to embrace'.⁷⁹ The majority of Stanton's contact with MPs was with those representing Birmingham constituencies. Even during the aforementioned visit by members of the Birmingham branch to the House of Commons in 1967, it was Birmingham MPs the group met with.⁸⁰ As one would expect, there was a fair degree of synergy between the aims of the Birmingham CPV and its parent organisation, as both saw lobbying the national government as the primary way to effect change. However, the means of doing this was very much accepted by the Birmingham group as targeting local MPs. It therefore appears that whilst the main goal of the campaign was to change the attitude and actions of the central government, the short-term tactic for achieving this

⁷⁶ Report of the Midlands Conference for Peace in Vietnam, 2 October 1965, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/1.

⁷⁷ Brian Walden MP to Stanton, 14 February 1968, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/4.

⁷⁸ Jill Knight MP to Stanton, 14 February 1968, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Stanton to secretary of the Labour Party, 3 July 1967, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/5.

would be to target local MPs rather than concentrating the Birmingham group's efforts at the upper echelons of the British government.

The Birmingham CPV (like its national chapter) was inextricably linked to the British government in an ideological as well as a tactical sense. This was because the organisation's energies were directed at securing British dissociation from U.S. policy. Stanton consistently articulated this as being the overarching aim of the group's work. The idea was that if the British government spoke out against the war, the legitimacy of U.S. actions would be compromised. Stanton stressed that it was for this reason that the Birmingham CPV had opted not to support groups such as the Vietnam Ad Hoc Committee, whose programme, she explained was 'based on Solidarity slogans which we have considered imply intervention in what the Vietnamese shall do. We have regarded our task as primarily to pressurise the British Government to dissociate from American policy in Vietnam'.⁸¹ As we saw in the previous chapter on Amicia Young, then, the Birmingham branch also deemed its overall purpose as domestic in nature. Whilst other chapters within this thesis have challenged the scholarly notion that the British movement was ultimately domestic in its outlook, in the cases of Stanton and Young, and the BCPV more broadly, it is clear that the fundamental goal was to secure mass British opposition in order to influence the British government to dissociate from the U.S. This rejection of slogans emphasising solidarity with the Vietnamese exhibits a marked point of departure from more radical left-wing groups, most notably the VSC.

Despite this domestically-g geared overarching aim, Stanton's activism provides a case study for exploring the transnational possibilities and restraints posed by activism in a local context. The very nature of the subject of Stanton's protest – war waged by one foreign country in another foreign country – necessitated a certain amount of engagement with characters beyond Birmingham. As a local activist, this was, in many ways, limited, and certainly did not define her anti-war approach as it did that of Peggy Duff. However, it is clear that Stanton used her local base as a platform for transnational co-operation.

⁸¹ Stanton to '24 Hours' Programme Director, 27 October 1968, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/5.

Perhaps unsurprisingly for a local movement, the Birmingham campaign did not stress engagement with the United States' anti-war movement in the way that transnationally-based actors such as Duff did. Even Young and Kerr, whose activities were not as explicitly transnational as Duff's had more transnational connections than Stanton. This is, however, to be expected due to the locally-orientated nature of the group which Stanton worked for, and also due to the explicit aim of the Birmingham CPV to influence the actions of the British government – a focus which was, ultimately, domestic. Moreover, despite Young's work with the national BCPV, whose overarching aim was similarly domestic, Young's anti-war activism was compounded by other avenues which presented transnational opportunities. These included her membership of the WFSW and the campaign to send books to Vietnam. In fact, Duff visited a meeting of the Birmingham CPV in her capacity as general secretary of the ICDP following the successful Stockholm Conference in 1967 and here she recommended a number of activities. These included the leafletting of U.S. tourists; banning of U.S. goods; draft resisting (related to U.S. visitors); aid; activity on chemical and biological warfare and press appeals.⁸² Whilst the organisation did decide on a number of actions to take subsequently, particularly regarding the provision of aid, organising vigils and organising a teach-in, there is little evidence of a campaign targeted in a more concentrated vein upon U.S. citizens or goods, as suggested by Duff. From the BCPV's adoption of tactics based on garnering a massive quantity of anti-war support, it would appear that the volume of protests – the maximum number of events and actions, undertaken by the maximum number of people – was key. In some ways, this stands in contrast to the type of tactics employed by transnational campaigners such as Duff, whose campaigns were more selective and elitist. Crudely put, it may be argued that whilst Stanton and the BCPV focused more so on the quantity of protest, Duff focused more so on the quality and stature of those involved.

Stanton did have limited contact with anti-war campaigners overseas, however. She wrote to Italian anti-war figures such as Signor Sarti and Signor Martignetti of the Comitato Torinese Di Iniziativa 'Citta Europee per il Vietnam' in 1967, telling them 'at our meeting this week we welcomed with enthusiasm your

⁸² Birmingham Council for Peace in Vietnam – Extended Council Meeting held 28 July 1967, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/3.

suggestion that Vietnam peace movements throughout the towns and cities of Europe should be linked with each other, and communicate news of their activities'.⁸³ After informing them of an upcoming meeting at which Bishop Ambrose Reeves would be speaking about his recent visits to North Vietnam and the U.S., Stanton suggested that 'perhaps we can receive a message from Torino and from other cities in Europe to read to that public meeting on 25th April?'⁸⁴

Stanton also wrote to Senators Robert Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy, congratulating them on their anti-war stances.⁸⁵ From Robert Kennedy she even received a reply which thanked her for her support following a speech he had given in March 1967.⁸⁶ She also wrote to President Johnson on behalf of the Birmingham CPV, warning him that 'many influential organisations and individuals support the campaign for peace in Vietnam, and are constantly pressing Prime Minister Harold Wilson and his Government to dissociate from the Vietnam War policy of the United States Government'.⁸⁷ Along with colleagues from the Birmingham Trades Council, the Birmingham Labour Party, the United Nations Association, Liberals in Birmingham, and WILPF, Stanton cabled President Richard Nixon in 1972, informing him that they 'utterly deplore[d] your barbaric bombing of Vietnam many times heavier than tonnage inflicted by or against the Nazis in Europe'.⁸⁸

These episodes constitute limited examples of transnational engagement. Usually, when Stanton spoke with anti-war figures beyond the realm of Birmingham, she stressed the legitimacy of Birmingham as an anti-war hub by reinforcing it as Britain's second city. Furthermore, these exchanges, despite being with figures beyond Birmingham, frequently related to activities which were planned for the Birmingham CPV. This was the case when Stanton wrote to Peggy Duff in March 1968 regarding the upcoming meeting at which Professor Bill Davidon of a Quaker

⁸³ Stanton to Signor Sarti and Signor Martignetti, 15 March 1967, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/5.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Stanton to Senator Robert F. Kennedy, 13 March 1967, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/5; Stanton to Senator McCarthy, 21 August 1968, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/4.

⁸⁶ Senator Robert F. Kennedy to Stanton, 21 April 1967, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/3.

⁸⁷ Stanton to President Lyndon B. Johnson, 14 March 1967, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/8.

⁸⁸ Cable sent to President Richard M. Nixon, 20 December 1972, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 853/2/3/11.

university, Haverford College, Philadelphia, was to speak.⁸⁹ Whilst Davidson's visit as a U.S. anti-war figure was notable, such exchanges were firmly rooted in advancing anti-war activities in the locale of the Birmingham. Stanton's anti-war activities also involved little interaction with Vietnamese figures, something which again stands her work in contrast to that of Duff. Whilst she was invited to the Vietnamese Embassy in September 1975 for recognition of her anti-war work, (a moment her daughter described as her 'real crowning glory moment'), Margaret Stanton explained that scope for meeting international figures was limited working provincially.⁹⁰

My personal link to the embassy was going for the celebration, but in fact the Vietnamese often came over, and sometimes in the provinces we would meet them. But as I think I've said elsewhere, provincial work is usually at grass roots level, and it's only if in London, people arrange for you to have a visit that you'd have contact with the more, sort of, distinguished people.⁹¹

Here, Stanton identified the monopoly which London had as an anti-war hub. This highlights another way in which Stanton's activism was distinctly domestically-based then: whilst it may have been concerned with an issue which was notably international in character, it was primarily engaged not only with influencing the actions of the British government, but in working at grass-roots level to educate and rally British people to achieve this influence. To this end, her daughter summarised that Stanton's 'really enduring and live contacts were with the people in Birmingham'.⁹²

Conclusion

Following the Paris Peace Accords, it appears that the Birmingham CPV morphed into something of a different organisation, when the group's efforts became orientated around raising funds to build a hospital in Vietnam. This venture involved close work with MAV. Stanton's anti-war work was honoured with a celebratory reception at the Vietnamese Embassy. Her later activist career saw her increasing involvement in anti-apartheid campaigns and when she moved to Oxford in 1986 it

⁸⁹ Stanton to Peggy Duff, 19 March 1968, Papers of Margaret Stanton, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, 854/2/3/4.

⁹⁰ Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

⁹¹ Transcript of interview with Margaret Stanton by William Beinart and Rebecca Beinart, 23 August 1999, Margaret Stanton's personal archive.

⁹² Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

appears that she did become increasingly conscious of organising along gendered lines, establishing the Network of Oxford Women.

During her period of engagement with the anti-Vietnam War movement, gendered rhetoric and concerns appear to have had a tangential influence upon Stanton's outlook, but she certainly did not go as far as opposing the war on feminist or maternal grounds. It appears that she recognised there was a relationship between gender, peace protest and respectability. In this way, her activism was similar to that of Young and Kerr in that she appeared to have an appreciation of a link between femaleness and peace activism, but this was not expressed in her work explicitly. Moreover, she was not overtly anti-feminist in the same vein as Duff. However, in Stanton's case, the organisation of issue campaigns along gendered lines was something which came later through her work with the Network of Oxford Women.

Stanton's case illustrates the fruitfulness of one case study concerning activism at the local level. Her case shows the connectedness of individuals campaigning against the war, even at the provincial level. Stanton's activism was thus a mixture of local, national and even transnational engagement, all rooted in the context of Britain's second city. This chapter therefore builds upon recent scholarly trends which have examined how activism manifested in different regions.⁹³ It is noteworthy to consider the extent to which Stanton's local engagement with a transnational cause may have hindered her efforts. Certainly, British dissociation from U.S. actions was the ultimate goal, and she pursued this using the rationale of Birmingham as Britain's second city and one with a radical history. However, it is interesting to consider the extent to which locals in Birmingham, removed from the echelons of power in Westminster, may have felt that the Vietnam War had little to do with them. This was certainly evident in Hull, where one resident commented that 'Vietnam might as well be on the moon'.⁹⁴ As has already been discussed, Vietnam did not appear to have much of an impact at the local level in elections and by-

⁹³ See e.g. Ellis, "A Demonstration of British Good Sense?", pp. 54-69 which examines regional anti-war protest in Britain and Holger Nehring, 'National Internationalists: British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons, the Politics of Transnational Communications and the Social History of the Cold War, 1957-1964', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Nov., 2005), pp. 559-582 which analyses the different manifestations of anti-nuclear protest in Britain and West Germany.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Sophie Roberts, 'The campaign of the "red-bearded radical": Richard Gott and the Hull North by-election, 1966', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sept., 2018), p. 336.

elections, despite opinion polls which appeared to show concern about the conflict.⁹⁵ It is therefore particularly interesting to consider the reasons for Stanton's involvement with the BCPV – an involvement which may have stemmed partially from the communist tolerance within the organisation which was discussed within the previous chapters. In this sense, this chapter has exhibited a level of synergy between the actions of the national BCPV and the Birmingham branch, despite Stanton's own feelings that her anti-war actions were relatively independent and autonomous – a feeling which she underscored using the rhetoric of Birmingham as Britain's 'second city'.

This section has provided a thorough scholarly exploration of the operations of the BCPV at the national and local levels. The case studies therein have reinforced the notion that gender played a limited role within the activism of these women. The next section will showcase how many women sought to connect their gender with their anti-war work, thus providing a context through which we can appreciate the distinct anti-war approaches of Stanton, Young, Duff and Kerr.

⁹⁵ See Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties* (London: Little Brown, 2006), p. 503 and Roberts, 'The campaign of the "red-bearded radical"', pp. 336-358.

Section C:

*Gender and anti-war action
in the 1960s and 1970s*

Chapter 5

Gendering the conflict: motherist and feminist approaches to the Vietnam War

The other chapters of this thesis have discussed female activists who utilised a variety of approaches in order to agitate for peace in Vietnam. Each chapter has illustrated the limited way in which the concept of gender influenced the activism of these women. Conversely, this chapter seeks to uncover the ways in which gender and the anti-war movement intersected, thus providing a framework with which to contrast and contextualise the activism of the women studied in the first four chapters. Only by having already appraised and appreciated the limited role which gender played in informing the anti-war activism of Kerr, Duff, Young and Stanton, can we now examine alternative examples which contrast with them. This chapter will illustrate not only the way in which other activists connected their gender very closely to their anti-war activism, but will also demonstrate the pervasiveness of gendered anti-war activism within the historiography on females within the movement against the Vietnam War.

Gendered rhetoric has been employed by disparate groups across varying time periods and in numerous geographical regions.¹ Activists in Britain have also repeatedly deployed such tropes. Anna Davin has demonstrated that a ‘powerful ideology of motherhood emerged’ in the late nineteenth century, which encompassed concerns about the birth rate at the turn of the century, and was bound up in imperialist implications for maternal responsibility.² Sarah Hellawell has traced how maternal rhetoric was employed by both feminist pacifists and patriots during the First World War.³ The first honorary secretary of the Women’s International League, a British women’s peace organisation founded in 1915, deemed militarism an

¹ See e.g. Simona Sharoni, Julia Welland, Linda Steiner and Jennifer Pendersen (eds.), *Handbook on Gender and War* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016); Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993) and Jennifer Anne Davy, ‘Pacifist Thought and Gender Ideology in the Political Biographies of Women Peace Activists in Germany, 1889-1970: Introduction’, *Journal of Women’s History*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Autumn, 2001), pp. 34-45.

² Anna Davin, ‘Imperialism and Motherhood’, *History Workshop*, No. 5 (Spring, 1978), pp. 9-65.

³ Sarah Hellawell, ‘Antimilitarism, Citizenship and Motherhood: the formation and early years of the Women’s International League (WIL), 1915-1919’, *Women’s History Review*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (2018), p. 553.

‘outrage on motherhood’ due to the perceived waste war made of women’s roles in raising sons.⁴ In November 1961, an anti-nuclear march to the Soviet Embassy in London was led by mothers pushing prams. A letter addressed to Khrushchev emphasised the group’s concerns were specifically concentrated around their traditional female roles as homemakers, stating that ‘up to now women have not had much say in politics [...] but we can’t just go on cooking food for our families when we know it is being contaminated with radioactive poisons’.⁵ More generally, Joan Scott and Inger Skjelsbaek and Dan Smith have highlighted the constructed nature of the association of women with pacifism – this is something which was constructed to oppose associations of militarism with masculinity.⁶

Kelly Dye has defined gendering as ‘the process of ascribing characteristics of masculinity of femininity, femaleness or maleness to a phenomenon (i.e., a role, position, concept, person, object, organisation, or artefact)’.⁷ This process of gendering was undertaken by a range of diverse anti-war protesters, both in Britain and in the U.S. We can identify two primary ways in which the Vietnam conflict was gendered by women activists. The first of these will be referred to in this chapter as ‘motherist’ approaches to the conflict and adopted rhetoric emphasising ‘traditional’ female roles as mothers and homemakers. This approach was essentially laced in ideas about the differences between women and men – most notably the emphasis that women were inherently more peaceful beings than men. The second approach which will be dealt with here is concerned with the ideological intertwining of the anti-war movement with the movement for women’s liberation. Such approaches will be referred to here as ‘feminist’ approaches as they were informed by an increasing feminist consciousness present at the time. Such rhetoric was often espoused by women who felt that the Vietnam War was a damaging manifestation of male assertiveness on the world stage; what would today be referred to as ‘toxic masculinity’. Feminist approaches also often encompassed women who had felt oppressed within male-dominated anti-war groups, and, as such, were stimulated to

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Sheila Rowbotham, *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 344.

⁶ See Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 3-4 and Inger Skjelsbaek and Dan Smith, ‘Introduction’, in Inger Skjelsbaek and Dan Smith (eds.), *Gender, Peace and Conflict* (London: Sage, 2001), p. 2.

⁷ Kelly Dye, ‘Gendering’, in Albert J. Mills, Gabrielle Durepos & Elden Wiebe (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2012), p. 413.

increasingly focus on women's issues. As this chapter will show, particularly in a British context, feminist approaches were informed by ideas around socialism and class.

Two things are particularly striking about the treatment of gender within the anti-Vietnam War movement. Firstly, studies concerning the actions of women who opposed the war in gendered terms dominate the literature on female anti-war campaigning, in both a British and an international context. Women who gendered the conflict dominate the historiography to the extent that many other female anti-war campaigners, such as the case studies comprising this thesis, have been neglected. Say Burgin has also recognised the limitations of the field, highlighting that the relatively small field which examines linkages between gender and the anti-Vietnam war movement is characterised by studies which explicitly examine female activist efforts in a separate context to those undertaken by male protesters.⁸ The second striking factor concerning gender and the anti-Vietnam War movement relates to chronology. Given its timing, we need to consider the anti-Vietnam War movement with regard to its relation to other protest movements of the time, including the civil rights movement in America, the student radicalism associated with the year 1968 and, most crucially, the movement for women's liberation which was becoming established in the late 1960s.

This chapter will be structured around the exploration of both motherist and feminist manifestations of gendered anti-Vietnam War approaches. Firstly, the chapter will deal with motherist approaches to the war. As there is little published scholarship concerning motherist rhetoric and the anti-war movement in Britain, the chapter will utilise an array of texts examining the phenomenon in a non-British context. It will also draw on select examples, most notably the U.S. women's peace group, Women Strike for Peace (WSP), in order to illustrate how, and to what purpose, motherist rhetoric was utilised by the group when campaigning against the Vietnam War. The chapter will then move on to examine some of the feminist approaches towards the war in Britain. Some particular examples will be utilised, including a discussion surrounding Sheila Rowbotham's experiences transitioning

⁸ Say Burgin, 'Understanding Antiwar Activism as a Gendering Activity: A Look at the U.S.'s Anti-Vietnam War Movement', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 6 (Dec., 2012), p. 20.

from the anti-Vietnam War movement to women's liberation, as well as an analysis of *Spare Rib* magazine, a long-running feminist monthly which, perhaps surprisingly, dealt with the conflict to some extent.

As Marsha Henry points out, within International Relations literature, scholars have increasingly asked critical questions of the relationship between war, violence and gender such as “are militarised masculinities to blame?” [...] and “do women offer a less violent approach to conflict?”⁹ In the field of history, there have been several notable enquiries which have sought to encompass such considerations. Amy Swerdlow's *Women Strike for Peace* and Jessica Frazier's *Women's Antiwar Diplomacy* are two studies which have given careful treatment to the role played by gender in informing anti-war protest.¹⁰ However, current scholarship continues, in many ways, to reiterate extant patterns, focussing on the adoption of maternal or feminist rhetoric by predominantly female groups. Moreover, the groups which have prompted studies such as those by Frazier and Swerdlow were, in any case, largely situated within the U.S. and Canada. This is possibly due to an assumption that, in terms of female peace activism, the American peace movement remained stronger than its British counterpart ‘despite the fluctuating fortunes of both and the assertiveness of British women in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament’.¹¹ Perhaps it is this contention, combined with the direct involvement of the U.S. in the Vietnam War, which has made scholars more inclined to study the U.S. peace movement.

Having already examined the activism of Duff, Kerr, Young and Stanton, and the rather limited role that gendered rhetoric played in their anti-war exploits, this analysis of gendered critiques of the war enables us to consider how the four case studies analysed in the preceding chapters differ from other examples and expectations. Furthermore, only by analysing contemporary examples of gendering, can we appreciate the different approaches to the war adopted by each of these

⁹ Marsha Henry, ‘War, Violence and Militarisation’, in Mary Evans, Clare Hemmings, Marsha Henry, Hazel Johnstone, Sumi Madhok, Ania Plmien and Sadie Wearing, *The SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory* (London: SAGE, 2014), p. 529.

¹⁰ Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* and Jessica M. Frazier, *Women's Antiwar Diplomacy during the Vietnam War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

¹¹ Christine Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned? Race, Class and Internationalism in the American and British Women's Movements, c. 1880s-1970s* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 180.

women. This is an important step towards fleshing out our understanding of female roles within the movement in Britain, as well as contextualising the anti-war work of the women under consideration in this thesis in other social movements of the time.

Motherist rhetoric

Women's roles as mothers have often been drawn upon by scholars in order to further the point that fundamental differences between males and females can inform women's activism. The adoption of maternalist rhetoric by female peace groups throughout history has also been cited as further historical evidence of this. In such scholarship, females are depicted as naturally more peaceful, a factor heightened by their ability to carry and bear children, as well as their roles in child rearing. This scholarly trend has been dubbed the 'Peace School' by Rhodri Jeffrys-Jones, an academic who has identified the limitations of historiography concerning women and foreign policy, which, he states, is too often constructed around the concept of 'nurturant motherhood'.¹² The work of Sara Ruddick has been particularly dominant in establishing theoretical links between the practice of mothering and attitudes towards militarism. Ruddick argues that preservation, nurture and socialisation of children are key aims of mothers.¹³ Furthermore, she states that the act of mothering includes maternal practices such as renunciation, resistance, reconciliation and peacekeeping – concepts essential in nonviolent approaches to peace making.¹⁴ Mothers thus develop ways of thinking and acting that serve as a potential basis for political peace activity.

The invocation of the concept of motherhood in any discourse pertaining to women and peace proves highly contested, not least due to the biologically reductionist nature of the rather crude argument that one's ability to give birth inherently alters their attitude towards peace. Whilst supporting Ruddick's efforts to deal with maternal practice conceptually, Alison Bailey believes that the diversity of mothers needs to be more acutely incorporated into her analysis.¹⁵ As the vast

¹² Quoted in Anne Marie Pois, 'Perspectives on Twentieth-Century Women's International Activism: Peace, Feminism, and Foreign Policy', *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Autumn, 1999), p. 218.

¹³ Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), p. 17.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

¹⁵ See Alison Bailey, 'Mothering, Diversity, and Peace Politics', *Hypatia*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Feminism and Peace (Spring, 1994), pp. 188-98.

majority of mothers are women, Ruddick's argument serves to reinforce gender binaries in relation to peace: Conover and Sapiro deduce that 'as it turns out "maternal thinking" is mostly women's thinking.'¹⁶ Ruddick's motherist framework for discussing linkages between women and peace thus proves problematic, as it does not account for those anti-war actors who did not have children, or who framed their own anti-war positions in different terms. This is of particular relevance to the women analysed in this thesis, whose anti-war activism hardly referred to the concept of motherhood, despite the fact that they all had children, or indeed, to the very fact of their being females.

Moreover, in their 1993 study concerning gender differences and responses to the Gulf War crisis, Conover and Sapiro found parental status to be *weakly* correlated with just two variables, namely the amount of attention paid to the Gulf War and emotional distress over the war.¹⁷ They stated that 'among women, we found only one significant difference: mothers paid more attention to the war than nonmothers', and thus conclude that 'there is, then, virtually no evidence to support the "mothering" thesis in its simple form [that being a mother predisposes one to be less militaristic]'.¹⁸ Perhaps, then, as Ruddick herself suggests, the very concept of

¹⁶ P.J. Conover and V. Sapiro, 'Gender, Feminist Consciousness, and War', *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Nov., 1993), p. 1081.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1087.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* Indeed, discussions around gender and militarism remain controversial today, as evidenced by comments in the press upon Theresa May's selection as Britain's Prime Minister. See Sara C. Nelson, 'Frankie Boyle Describes Theresa May's Cabinet as the Most Right Wing in Modern History', *Huffington Post Online*, 19 July 2016. <http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/frankie-boyles-describes-theresa-mays-cabinet-as-the-most-right-wing-in-modern-history_uk_578e4c0ce4b019e5fd89f10> [accessed 30 August 2016]. See also Rebecca Glover, 'Don't be fooled by Theresa May – she's no progressive Conservative', *The Independent Online*, 29 June 2016. <<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/theresa-may-conservative-party-leader-shes-no-progressive-conservative-a7109121.htm>> [accessed 30 August 2016]. Glover deems May's political history as 'staunchly more conservative, more anti-immigration, and more isolationist' than that of her rival for the Conservative Party leadership, Boris Johnson. Britain's youngest MP, Mhairi Black has also drawn attention to May's militarism in terms of defence when she took to twitter stating that the 'PM says austerity on her citizens is called "living within our means" and yet is fully prepared to pay anything for renewing Trident', in James Wright, 'The UK's youngest MP destroys Theresa May's first go at PMQs with a single comment', *The Canary*, 20 July 2016. <<http://www.thecanary.co/2016/07/20/uks-youngest-mp-destroys-theresa-mays-first-go-pmqs-single-comment/>> [accessed 30 August 2016]. More specifically pertaining to motherhood, a recent example in which motherhood was discussed as giving one a larger interest in the future and, by extension, being more concerned about peace, was Andrea Leadsom's controversial contention during the Conservative Party leadership contest in which she told *The Times* journalist Rachel Sylvester that she felt that 'being a mum means you have a real stake in the future of our country, a tangible stake', thus implying that she was more suited for the position than Theresa May, who has no children. See Rachel Sylvester, 'Being a mother gives me edge on May – Leadsom', *The Times*, 9 July 2016. <<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/being-a-mother-gives-me-edge-on-may-leadsom-0t7bbm29x>> [accessed 24 September 2018].

maternal peacefulness needs to be understood as ‘a truth in the making.’¹⁹ Of course it is entirely possible that *some* females’ experiences of motherhood *can* alter their attitudes to topics of war and peace. This has been exhibited throughout history by peace groups which have invoked notions of motherhood to advance their cause. However, by over-emphasising the concept of motherhood, scholars run the risk of ignoring how individual personal circumstances serve to influence the activist efforts of women. As Amy Schneidhorst has pointed out: ‘self-identity is an important component of activism, whether it is one’s motivation for joining a particular group, the tactics one chooses, the issues one is concerned with, or the ideological basis for one’s activism’.²⁰ The focus on motherhood in female peace scholarship, then, whilst undoubtedly reflecting an important aspect of an activist’s conception of their personal identity, may inadvertently negate a whole host of other important factors which influence peace activist efforts.

Amy Schneidhorst has highlighted that whilst peace movement historiography in the latter twentieth century increasingly encompassed the actions of female peace organisations, the weaving of female peace activism into broader narratives concerning the peace activism of the 1960s and 1970s, and particularly that pertaining to Vietnam ‘remains in the early stages’.²¹ Bearing in mind Schneidhorst’s assessment of the field, which attests to a paucity of analyses regarding the relationship between female peace activism and Vietnam, then, how does the historiography discussed so far play out when applied to specifically to the period around anti-Vietnam War protest?

Within scholarship on peace efforts relating to the Vietnam War, analyses of so-called motherist activist approaches have proved pervasive. This is perhaps expected when one recounts the multiplicity of more general studies on women and peace activism which situate female peace activism within motherist frameworks. Within a historiographical field in which the number of studies on female anti-Vietnam War activists is relatively low, Amy Swerdlow’s study on WSP stands out as a predominant case study on this issue. The monograph gives a broad history of WSP, detailing its initial activist efforts concerning nuclear weapons. Significantly

¹⁹ Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking*, p. 160.

²⁰ Amy Schneidhorst, “‘Little Old Ladies and Dangerous Women’: Women’s Peace and Social Justice Activism in Chicago, 1960-1975”, *Peace & Change*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Jul., 2001), p. 379.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

though, the book gives the group's anti-Vietnam activism substantial attention – Swerdlow, herself a WSP activist, asserts that from 1964 until 1973 WSP 'conducted intense and consistent campaign lobbying' in protest against the Vietnam conflict.²² As the title suggests, Swerdlow draws attention to the maternalist-orientated tactics and ideology adopted by WSP. Interestingly, however, Swerdlow concedes that WSP knowingly employed notions of traditional gender roles (particularly that of the woman as mother), in order to undermine the same militarised patriarchal culture which produced these perceptions of the natural roles of men and women. For instance, she documents that WSP staged many 'dramatic mothers' protests at home and abroad' which were 'planned to appeal to the much-sought after average mother who was concerned about the fate of her son'.²³ The targeting of mothers by WSP was also underpinned through the organisation's most widely-used slogan in the late 1960s: "'Not Our Sons, Not Your Sons, Not Their Sons'".²⁴ It is clear, then, that historiographical frameworks analysed thus far concerning motherhood and peace prove applicable to the study of female anti-Vietnam protest, particularly when one uses the example of WSP. Moreover, the deliberateness with which this female rhetoric was adopted links back to the work of Josephine Elgin, who has highlighted that the Women's Committee of CND similarly framed its criticism of nuclear weapons in emotional terms in order to elicit more sympathy from women for their cause.²⁵

Amy Schneidhorst has also analysed the utilisation of motherhood by anti-Vietnam War groups in an article concerning female activism in Chicago throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. Through a nuanced analysis which helps to further complicate our conceptions of the relationship between motherist rhetoric and anti-war activism, she has shown how activists employed maternal rhetoric, not merely for ideological purposes, but also as pragmatic and practical choice of campaign tactic. Her work thus reinforces Swerdlow's notions, which have emphasised the targeted and considered employment of maternalist rhetoric as a protest tactic. Schneidhorst draws on the work of Temma Kaplan who argues that 'even when the

²² Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, p. 129.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Josephine Elgin, 'Women and Peace: from the Suffragists to the Greenham Women,' in Richard Taylor and Nigel Young (eds.), *Campaigns for Peace: British Peace Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 238.

women opposed injustices on other grounds, tactically they sometimes chose to represent themselves as maternal figures because police and soldiers were more reluctant to confront mothers than to attack the same women claiming their rights as citizens.²⁶ This is reminiscent of Margaret Stanton's recognition that her non-threatening stature as a slightly older, white, female activist afforded her more respect from police in Birmingham.²⁷ In emphasising that 'some women became activists out of concern for their sons who were vulnerable to the draft', Schneidhorst also highlights a dichotomy in motivations between American women and their British counterparts.²⁸

Women's peace efforts relating to the Vietnam War also feature in Jon Coburn's work. He has indicated how the mothering rhetoric of WSP was particularly suited to the cause of draft resistance. This furthers the notion of a dichotomy concerning the motivations to become activists amongst American and British women. Crucially, Coburn elucidates that members of WSP involved themselves with draft work by emphasising their roles as mothers, rather than simply, women, something which allowed them to avoid much of the sexism afforded to other women in the draft movement.²⁹ Coburn has emphasised that, 'in essence, WSPers accepted that their role was to provide support for draft resisters, but reconciled the potential marginalisation of this work by framing the issue through a maternal lens, adopting a seemingly natural position of protection and support in opposition to selective service'.³⁰ This role empowered WSPers and solidified their importance in the draft resistance movements. Andrea Estepa, herself a member of WSP, wrote that WSP carved out work for itself as part of the draft resistance movement. This autonomy meant that members played forthright roles in an otherwise male-dominated milieu. Furthermore, much of this forthrightness, Estepa claimed, was due to the women's identities as mothers.³¹

²⁶ Temma Kaplan, *Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 186.

²⁷ Transcript of interview with Margaret Stanton by William Beinart and Rebecca Beinart, 23 August 1999, Margaret Stanton's personal archive.

²⁸ Schneidhorst, "Little Old Ladies and Dangerous Women", p. 379.

²⁹ Jon Coburn, 'Making a Difference: the History and Memory of "Women Strike for Peace", 1961-1990', (PhD thesis, Northumbria University, December 2015), p. 141.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

³¹ Andrea Estepa, 'Taking the White Gloves Off: Women Strike for Peace and the Transformation of Women's Activist Identities in the United States, 1961-1980', (PhD thesis, Rutgers University, May 2012), p. 256.

Women Strike for Peace also used rhetoric concerning motherhood in order to evidence their status as respectable protesters, particularly with reference to the cause of draft resistance. Believing this would enabled them to be taken more seriously, this notion of respectability was something which would cause friction later in the decade when some members urged the group to forgo its respectable image by advocating increasingly radical tactics, including civil disobedience. Such dialogue was illustrative of broader trends which were happening within the British left as well. This tension within WSP was illustrated around the group's decision to demonstrate in front of the Pentagon. Revealing a chasm within the group, this action alienated some members who felt that it irrevocably damaged the respectable image of the group.³²

One study concerning female anti-Vietnam activists in particular challenges the traditional employment of the maternalist framework by activist groups in relation to the Vietnam War. Like Swerdlow and Schneidhorst, Jessica Frazier's work examines the use of maternalist rhetoric. Frazier's scholarship focuses on the interaction between WSP and two Vietnamese women's peace groups: the Women's Union of Liberation (WUL) and the Vietnamese Women's Union (VWU). However, Frazier's findings serve to complicate commonly-held notions of female activists as inherently more peaceful than their male counterparts. Frazier analyses a series of meetings between WSP, VWU and the WUL, who met almost every year between 1965 and 1973, and maintained an exchange of correspondence. According to Frazier, this relationship drew on the expression of a traditionalist feminine role: 'connecting women's potential motherhood to their "natural" roles as nonviolence peace advocates, WSP constructed an image of American and Vietnamese womanhood that would convince the American public and politicians to demand that the United States end its war in Viet Nam'.³³

However, Frazier reveals that for the Vietnamese women of the WUL and VWU, motherhood, far from being associated with peace, was actually associated with increased female militarisation: these 'militiawomen known as "long-haired warriors"', saw their active participation in the revolutionary struggle for their

³² *Ibid.*, p. 146.

³³ Jessica M. Frazier, 'Collaborative Efforts to End the War in Viet Nam: The Interactions of Women Strike for Peace, the Vietnamese Women's Union, and the Women's Union of Liberation, 1965-1968', *Peace & Change*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Jul., 2012), p. 342.

country as central to their role as mothers'.³⁴ Here Frazier makes reference to the Vietnamese activists with whom members of WSP met, many of whom were in fact, militiawomen. Contrary to WSP's construction of maternity, these Vietnamese women saw their militancy as central to their conception of the mothering role; peaceful nonviolence was certainly not a prerequisite.³⁵ Despite these obvious tensions concerning ideas over what and how a mother should be, WSP, according to Frazier, purposefully sought to downplay the militancy of their collaborators, presenting oftentimes whitewashed versions of their life stories in internal publications in order to present motherhood, and ergo, nonviolence, as a central cohesive factor to their collaborative efforts at peace making.³⁶ This image of their Vietnamese contacts as nonviolent peace advocates was therefore constructed and presented by WSP in the face of evidence which *negated* this traditional maternal image. As Frazier explains 'WSP reconciled these differences by trying to ignore Vietnamese women's participation in guerrilla warfare and by labelling it as defensive when it could not be ignored'.³⁷

The work of Frazier then, provides an indicative example of how the concept of motherhood has been turned on its head in relation to the anti-war movement. It also reinforces some of the contentions raised by Coburn and Burkett concerning women activists' sensitivities to the images they were projecting, and crucially, their understanding of the need to be deemed respectable in order to have any success. Similar concerns have been evidenced amongst the activists featured in this thesis – Margaret Stanton most notably made a connection between her respectable image and how the work of the Birmingham CPV was treated by local police and in the local press.³⁸ In assessing the differing relationship between nonviolence and motherhood offered by WSP and its Vietnamese counterparts, Frazier's work thus simultaneously reinforces the motherist framework, vouching for the centrality of the concept's employment to the activism of WSP, whilst providing a more nuanced account taking into consideration how cultural, political and historical differences affected how the concept of motherhood was employed by different activist groups

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ See Frazier, *Women's Antiwar Diplomacy*, p. 31.

³⁶ See Frazier, 'Collaborative Efforts to End the War in Viet Nam', pp. 347, 355.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 342.

³⁸ Transcript of interview with Margaret Stanton by William Beinart and Rebecca Beinart, 23 August 1999, Margaret Stanton's personal archive; Interview with Jennifer Stanton, 21 April 2017.

approaching the same issue. Again, the work attests to the purposeful decisions made around employment of motherist rhetoric, which was in this instance to make the stories and testimonies of Vietnamese women more palatable to a sympathetic U.S.-based audience. Whilst WSP, VWU and WUL all shared common ground in their utilisation of motherhood then, Vietnamese women challenged WSP's depictions of mothers as inherently peaceful beings through their championing of women's militarised roles.³⁹

Noticeably, the studies concerning female peace activism and the Vietnam War examined so far pay little attention to the *British* anti-war movement. It is fair to say that historiography on the British movement is scant at best, and there is little consideration in particular of the roles of women therein. There is certainly no volume like Swerdlow's analysing a group of British anti-war activists. Instead, the movement is usually touched upon in broader pieces of scholarship and has thus been given little rigorous historiographical attention. Undoubtedly, there have been no studies which have analysed the employment of maternal rhetoric by British women with regards to Vietnam.

Holger Nehring has examined the gendered rhetoric of CND, however, which proved such an important pre-cursory organisation to the British anti-war movement. Nehring contends that women within CND linked male domination in politics with the nuclear arms race, thus perpetuating a link between feminism and anti-militarism.⁴⁰ Other scholars, however, have emphasised subordination of women's roles within CND, particularly through emphasising the brevity of the CND Women's Committee.⁴¹ Of the limited scholarship on women in the British movement, Jodi Burkett is the only scholar to have thoroughly analysed the gender make-up of CND. Burkett points out Peggy Duff's role as a female general secretary of this organisation whose leadership was otherwise largely male.⁴² Significantly, she also claims that 'CND attempted to cater specifically for its female membership

³⁹ Frazier, *Women's Antiwar Diplomacy*, p. 10.

⁴⁰ Holger Nehring, 'The British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons and the Cultures of the Cold War, 1957-64', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Jun., 2005), p. 233.

⁴¹ Jodi Burkett, 'Gender and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the 1960s', in Sharoni, Welland, Steiner and Pendersen (eds.), *Handbook on Gender and War*, p. 428.

⁴² Jodi Burkett, 'Re-defining British morality: "Britishness" and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament 1958-68', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Jan., 2010), p. 194.

while advocating a traditional female role as mother and caregiver'.⁴³ Josephine Elgin also adds that CND had a Women's Committee which 'always stressed that theirs was an emotional and moral response to nuclear weapons'.⁴⁴

Crucially, by emphasising motherhood, CND was also able to emphasise its respectability. The Introduction to this thesis outlined how CND desired to portray a respectable image. Jodi Burkett has emphasised that this also had a gendered purpose. Burkett has indicated that the invocation of motherist rhetoric and themes by CND, including a large focus on the impact of nuclear fallout and radiation upon children, served to combat the impression that being politically active within CND subverted traditional gender norms.⁴⁵ This meant that in stressing themes related to motherhood, CND was able to reinforce its respectable image, which it viewed as crucial in forming its reputation.

It is clear that this employment of maternal rhetoric was something which continued as CND focused more attention upon the war in Vietnam. However, the reasoning for this appears to be an attempt to appeal to the humanity of all readers, rather than a specifically mother-orientated focus. Examples are prevalent throughout CND's newspaper *Sanity*, which often featured graphic images of Vietnamese women and children suffering as a result of the conflict. This included the August 1965 issue, the front page of which depicted a woman fleeing her burning home with her two children in her arms. The caption added: 'one of the soldiers who is burning her village strides after her'.⁴⁶ Likewise, the February 1967 issue featured a double-page spread containing images of Vietnamese children who had been horrifically injured under the headline 'this is what they are doing'.⁴⁷ However, this material was not presented in a particularly female guise – there was no appeal to mothers, for example, rather, such articles appealed to readers' humanity. In this sense, *Sanity*'s coverage of Vietnam differed from earlier anti-nuclear coverage, as the war meant that there was evidence in the form of photographs and testimony, which it could present throughout its pages.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 194-5.

⁴⁴ Elgin, 'Women and Peace', p. 238.

⁴⁵ Burkett, 'Gender and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament', p. 432.

⁴⁶ *Sanity*, August 1965.

⁴⁷ *Sanity*, February 1967.

Martin Pugh has pointed out, however, that by the end of the decade, the female-orientated approach by older peace organisations like CND, was deemed outdated by many. Pugh contends that ‘the emphasis of the older peace organisations on maternalist peace campaigns now looked somewhat dated and inadequate to younger and more radical women’.⁴⁸ This is reinforced by Burkett and Lawrence Wittner, who have emphasised that, in the face of the proliferation of groups and discourse pertaining to women’s liberation, CND continued to advance traditional notions of femininity based around female domesticity.⁴⁹ Broadly reinforcing the conclusions drawn from the case studies in this thesis, Josephine Elgin writes that the prominent women activists within large, mixed sex peace groups did not ‘express any understanding of the relationship between peace and feminism’.⁵⁰ However, as a new movement for women emerged, conversations increasingly arose within the women of this British New Left regarding the relationship between women and peace activism. This was partly in reaction to the disillusionment which many women felt with the large, mixed sex peace groups mentioned by Elgin, due to the treatment of women therein. It is to these manifestations of gendered anti-war activism which this chapter will now turn.

Feminist approaches

Say Burgin contends that most gendered examinations of Vietnam War activism which push beyond a motherist framework of analysis ‘often recount the anti-Vietnam War movement’s sexism, highlighting the ways in which women responded to it while taking it for granted as a pervasive, culturally-bestowed dynamic for movement men’.⁵¹ Like motherist theories, feminist approaches to peace often endorsed a binary distinction on the basis of gender between males and females. Whether this was emphasised as being due to physiological differences or to different experiences of socialisation, distinctions between the sexes remained a central facet. However, it is important to remember that feminists were not a homogeneous block. Elizabeth Frazer and Kimberly Hutchings have pointed out that radical feminists were critical of feminist peace protests at Greenham Common in

⁴⁸ Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women’s Movement in Britain* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 318.

⁴⁹ See Burkett ‘Gender and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament’, p. 428 and Lawrence S. Wittner, ‘Gender roles and nuclear disarmament, 1954-1965’, *Gender & History*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Apr., 2000), p. 205.

⁵⁰ Elgin, ‘Women and Peace’, p. 239.

⁵¹ Burgin, ‘Understanding Antiwar Activism as a Gendering Activity’, p. 20.

the 1980s and were wary about collaborating with pacifist feminists, for example.⁵² Elgin has identified two main groups present within the movement for women's liberation in the early 1970s: radical feminists who prioritised women's oppression over other types of oppression, and socialist feminists who viewed women's subordination as symptomatic of broader inequalities caused by class.⁵³

Barbara Roberts argued in 1984 that 'although there are some women peace scholars and many women peace activists, peace research has generally expressed a male point of view'.⁵⁴ Espousing the virtues of a feminist approach to peace research, she wrote that 'a peace research shaped by feminism would not discuss war and violence as if they were chess games. "Theatres of operation" would become millions of women, men and children'.⁵⁵ In Roberts' view, feminist approaches to International Relations would provide a valid and potentially more peaceful approach. Similarly, since Roberts' work, many scholars have also deemphasised mothering as a category of analysis within International Relations, and instead focused on the links between feminist politics and peace politics. Works in the field of Feminist International Relations and studies adopting feminist approaches to issues of war and peace have thus proliferated.

However, many of these works have not taken an historical perspective, but rather have focussed on more contemporary contributions of women to the realm of foreign policy.⁵⁶ An article by Conover and Sapiro, for example, deemed feminism a more important factor than either gender or parental status in determining pacifist views.⁵⁷ Indeed, there is a convincing scholarly analysis which identifies common factors between feminism and pacifism. Academics have identified 'freedom, quality, and self-government' as key values held by feminists, and therefore imply that 'this commitment, alone [to feminism], may be sufficient to generate a pacifist

⁵² Elizabeth Frazer and Kimberly Hutchings, 'Revisiting Ruddick: Feminism, pacifism and non-violence', *Journal of International Political Theory*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Feb., 2014), p. 113.

⁵³ Elgin, 'Women and Peace', p. 240.

⁵⁴ Barbara Roberts, 'The Death of Machothink: Feminist Research and the Transformation of Peace Studies', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (1984), p. 195.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁵⁶ See for example, Gordana Rabrenovic and Laura Roskos, 'Introduction: Civil Society, Feminism, and the Gendered Politics of War and Peace', *NWSA Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Summer, 2001), pp. 40-54 and Gillian Youngs, 'Feminist International Relations: a contradiction in terms? Or: why women and gender are essential to understanding the world "we" live in', *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (2004), pp. 75-87.

⁵⁷ Conover and Sapiro, 'Gender, Feminist Consciousness, and War', p. 1081.

orientation on foreign policy issues'.⁵⁸ Karen J. Warren and Duane L. Cady have supported this apparent connection between feminist orientation and peace, writing that 'both are critical of, and committed to the elimination of, coercive power-over privilege systems of domination as a basis of interaction between individuals and groups'.⁵⁹ They therefore see any feminist peace critique as a de facto critique of unjust domination and believe that 'for feminist pacifists, the organised violence of war [is] understood as the prerequisite for and the product of a structurally and directly violent sex-gender system'.⁶⁰

From a more historical perspective, Christine Bolt claims that women in this period did not develop any collective ideology with relation to foreign policy, in either Britain or the U.S. She stresses that women did not elaborate upon the emphases of previous female activists, emphases which included international institutions, arbitration, peace and disarmament and actions which were of particular interest to women, including the reform of married women's nationality rights.⁶¹ Yet, Bolt provides evidence of a relationship between women and peace, claiming that 'in both countries there was a discernible tendency for women to be more hostile to militarism than men'.⁶² Frazier has developed this analysis further, arguing that the specific circumstances of the war in Vietnam served to generate feminist perspectives on militarism.⁶³

As women's liberation spread in the late 1960s and early 1970s some female peace groups adapted their rhetoric. Even the most maternally-orientated of peace groups, WSP, found that this became necessary. As noted by Coburn, the group recognised that it needed to 'make subtle changes to its traditional image in order to appeal to the new constituency of politicised women'.⁶⁴ It therefore began to 'lower its emphasis on maternal rhetoric, speaking to "sisters" in the United States'.⁶⁵ The group even sought to whitewash its history by portraying that it had harboured

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1082.

⁵⁹ Karen J. Warren and Duane L. Cady, 'Feminism and Peace: Seeing Connections', in Karen J. Warren and Duane L. Cady (eds.), *Bringing Peace Home: Feminism, Violence, and Nature* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 3.

⁶⁰ Frazer and Hutchings, 'Revisiting Ruddick', p. 112-3.

⁶¹ Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned*, p. 173.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Frazier, *Women's Antiwar Diplomacy*, p. 80.

⁶⁴ Coburn, 'Making a Difference', p. 189.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

feminist intentions since its foundation.⁶⁶ Many female peace groups were not convinced, however. In 1968, the radical group the Jeanette Rankin Brigade held a counter-demonstration to one being held by WSP and called out WSP for its 'efforts to organise women around anything other than the oppression of women'.⁶⁷

Before analysing the interactions of British feminists with the anti-Vietnam War movement, it is worth pausing to consider terminology. In *English Feminism*, Barbara Caine has highlighted problems with the employment of the term 'feminism'. Testimony which shows women's actions to have been unconsciously feminist calls into question whether the term can be used to describe such activities. Complicating the term's use further, Caine highlights that whilst the lack of such common language or readily grasped term like 'feminism' amongst women in the interwar period served to 'inhibit any sense of continuity' of feminist agendas throughout the twentieth century, in the postwar period it is the consistent use of the term which proves problematic.⁶⁸ 'Even though the term "feminism" never lost adherents', Caine explains, 'is it not still more important to recognise that the aims, objectives, strategy, rhetoric, and style of feminism of Women's Liberation in the 1960s bore almost no relationship to that feminist activity which continued during and after the war?'⁶⁹

Presciently, Caine puts forward the argument that the main point of disconnect between feminism in the two periods is that through women's liberation, feminism ceased to be confined to a definition concerning the political and legal emancipation of women, but rather became concerned with personal experience and liberation of the personal life.⁷⁰ Moreover, in an observation of particular relevance here, Caine states that the term 'women's liberation' served not only to differentiate the period from earlier examples of feminism, but also emphasised the connection between this new movement by women and other liberation movements which existed in the 1960s, including those concerning sexual emancipation, and those with racial and post-colonial overtones, as well as student-orientated movements.⁷¹ In this

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁶⁹ Barbara Caine, *English Feminism, 1780-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 225.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 255-6.

section, feminism and women's liberation will be used interchangeably for the sake of avoiding repetition, with feminism being concerned with the period of the late 1960s and early 1970s, unless explained otherwise.

In Britain, Vicky Randall has located the political roots of the movement for women's liberation within both older groups such as CND and newer, more radical groups such as the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC), the women of the International Socialists and those involved in the International Marxist Group.⁷² Elizabeth Wilson has identified the role played by the fiftieth anniversary of women's suffrage in 1968 in catalysing the emergence of women's liberation.⁷³ Barbara Caine writes that whilst there was not a huge fanfare or 'fulsome rejoicing' around this anniversary, it was 'certainly not ignored'.⁷⁴ As well as these factors, a number of industrial disputes served to ferment women's politicisation in this era. These included the equal pay strikes of the late 1960s and a militant campaign by Hull women for higher standards of safety for men on fishing trawlers, attracted considerable attention and led to the formation of equal rights groups in Hull and elsewhere.⁷⁵ However, as has already been noted, Elgin has testified to the lack of feminist sentiment present within established peace groups of this period.⁷⁶

As Chapter One illustrated, Peggy Duff was openly sceptical of feminism, and whilst the oppression of women did not feature within her activism, she did emphasise other forms of oppression including freedom from capitalism, colonialism, and racism.⁷⁷ This highlights the need for a focussed study on the complexities of the relationship between females and anti-Vietnam War activism in this specific period. As this section will show, whilst Duff did not make theoretical or ideological links between the social ills she stressed and the contemporary position of women, many of her contemporaries within the peace movement did. One such example is Sheila Rowbotham, whose writings enable us to understand how she and other activists in Britain increasingly came to adopt feminist rhetoric

⁷² Vicky Randall, *Women and Politics: An International Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 230.

⁷³ Elizabeth Wilson, *Only Halfway to Paradise: Women in Postwar Britain 1945-1968* (Tavistock, London, 1980), p. 230.

⁷⁴ Caine, *English Feminism*, p. 253.

⁷⁵ Elizabeth Meehan, 'British Feminism from the 1960s to the 1980s', in Harold Smith (ed.), *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), p. 193.

⁷⁶ Elgin, 'Women and Peace', pp. 238-9.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

concerning Vietnam. As such this section will draw heavily on her testimony and experiences within the anti-war movement.

Sheila Rowbotham was born in Leeds, West Yorkshire in 1948. Rowbotham attended St Hilda's College at the University of Oxford and pursued a career as a teacher. Concurrently, she became involved with CND and increasingly mixed in socialist circles. Rowbotham progressively became disillusioned with party politics and became involved in an array of left-wing campaigns, including writing for and editing the radical left-wing newspaper *Black Dwarf*. Through her left-wing activism, Rowbotham became deeply involved with the anti-Vietnam War campaigns of the late 1960s. Her activist experiences led her to increasingly question the status of women, and she became one of the founders of the History Workshop movement. Rowbotham initiated the call for the first national Women's Liberation Movement Conference which took place at Ruskin College, Oxford in 1970. Initially conceived as a women's history conference, the event was adapted to address women's issues more broadly after almost 600 activists from around Britain expressed a desire to attend. Rowbotham has written a plethora of books dealing with women's history and liberation, and also encapsulated her own experiences as an activist in her memoir.⁷⁸

Rowbotham's experiences support the widely-promoted contention that part of the reasoning for the emergence of the women's liberation movement can be found in the interconnectedness of the social movements of this period. Many women who had felt themselves subordinated within the political movements against the Vietnam War and other movements, now found expression for such frustrations within the emerging movement for women's liberation. In this way, many women's experiences in Britain reflected those of their counterparts in the U.S. – Simon Hall has written of the relationship between the anti-war movement and second-wave feminism in an American context, explaining that 'to a considerable degree women's experiences of sexism within the New Left and anti-war movements were a source of division and ultimately led them to organise separately'.⁷⁹ In *Women in the Twentieth Century*, Rowbotham describes the 'inescapable connections' which some young Catholics in Belfast saw between their struggle and the American civil rights

⁷⁸ See Sheila Rowbotham, *Promise of a Dream: Remembering the Sixties* (London: Penguin, 2000).

⁷⁹ Simon Hall, *Rethinking the American Anti-War Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 108.

movement, and, moreover, how one young woman's experiences within this movement were characterised by subordination.⁸⁰ Quoting one young Catholic activist, Rowbotham explained the woman's feeling that 'men did not consider me or my women friends capable and equal'.⁸¹ Reflecting the contention of Elizabeth Meehan as to the catalysing effect of industrial disputes upon women's politicisation, Rowbotham also discussed how the women's strike at the Ford factory in Dagenham and the campaigns of Lil Bolocca for safer conditions for fishermen in Hull had fed into an increased consciousness concerning women's liberation: 'they influenced us, serving along with the Vietnamese guerrilla fighters as what are now called our "role models". Anger was to galvanise me'.⁸² In a volume dedicated to the growth of the women's movement in Britain, Rowbotham explicitly addressed the interrelated nature of many of the protest movements of the late 1960s. She wrote that 'consciousness-raising came from the new left out of civil rights; the slogan "The personal is political" comes from the American student movement. These were not biological intuitions of the women's movement, they were a creative inheritance from a wider political rebellion in more than one country'.⁸³ Just as Rowbotham recognised the inherent similarities between women's liberation and its political predecessors, so too can we see how women's liberation intersected in various ways with campaigns against the Vietnam War. This occurred in various ways: practically; in terms of the personnel who were involved to some extent in both movements, and also ideologically – as some female anti-war campaigners increasingly analysed the conflict through a gendered lens.

These perceived links between different social movements and causes of the era continued to crystallise around the late 1960s and early 1970s, and in both the U.S. and Britain, activists increasingly expressed ideologies linking women's liberation and Vietnam. During a 1971 anti-war march to the Pentagon, Sarah Eisenstein, a young feminist historian, linked women's opposition to imperialism to a wider history of resistance, citing women suffrage campaigners, witches and those women involved in the Paris commune.⁸⁴ In a U.S. context, chapters of the

⁸⁰ Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, p. 346.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Meehan, 'British Feminism', p. 193; Rowbotham, *Promise of a Dream*, p. 203.

⁸³ Sheila Rowbotham, 'The Beginnings of Women's Liberation in Britain', in Michelene Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist: Stories of a Generation* (London: Virago, 1990), p. 37.

⁸⁴ Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, p. 440.

university-orientated Students for a Democratic Society became recruiting grounds for early ‘Women’s Libbers’, and leftist students were influenced by the ‘fullest expression of conscious feminism’ and the ‘fury of black power’.⁸⁵ So too did British activists absorb momentum and ideological impetus from other contemporary movements; it is clear that, to some extent, at least, women’s liberation was a product of the social and political milieu from which it emerged. For Rowbotham, such linkages came from a new vision on behalf of the British left concerning a fundamental transformation of society: ‘not just a transfer of political power or economic ownership but the democratization of all relationships in society and an end to personal as well as public inequalities seemed possible in the late 1960s’.⁸⁶ This vision of a fundamental change in society informed the anti-war thought of Kerr, Duff, Young and Stanton. All four of these women believed that fundamental changes to society – whether in terms of geopolitical relationships or a move towards socialism or communism – would have a transformative effect upon Britain’s foreign policy. In Rowbotham’s case, however, she envisioned that this transformation would affect gender relationships on a personal level through its transformation of all unequal relationships.

In Britain, female campaigners increasingly linked female oppression and concepts pertaining to colonial rule in Vietnam and elsewhere. In a discussion of female sexual exploitation under French rule in Vietnam, it was, Rowbotham claimed, ‘impossible really to isolate the “woman problem” from the expulsion of the French invaders [...] [the] totalizing effects of the war [made] it impossible to distinguish the liberation of women from national liberation’.⁸⁷ The war was also discussed as highlighting to South Vietnamese women the value which ‘western capitalism sets on human life’.⁸⁸ Interestingly here, Rowbotham’s work drew on distinct female experiences – most notably motherhood – in order to further her point about the lack of value placed on human life by U.S. imperial actions. She cited the ‘abnormally high percentage of miscarriages, stillbirths and deformed children, born with large heads and small brains’ and added that ‘when you carry your child nine months in your womb, bear it in labour with death all around you, only to find the

⁸⁵ Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: the roots of women’s liberation in the civil rights movement and the New Left*, p. 101.

⁸⁶ Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, p. 348.

⁸⁷ Sheila Rowbotham, *Women, Resistance and Revolution* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1974), pp. 209-11.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

monstrous weapons of imperial technology have assaulted you even there, you carry the war deep inside you'.⁸⁹ This constitutes an interesting example: Rowbotham was clearly keen to promote women's liberation, and understood the war as having a particular effect on women. However, in this instance, her analysis still drew on the concept of motherhood in order to frame a mutual point of reference shared by women in Vietnam and elsewhere.

Say Burgin has highlighted how the anti-war movement cemented traditional gender roles, with male superiority being reinforced in anti-war groups. This behaviour is also often cited as a prompting factor in the emergence of women's liberation. Burgin has also evidenced how this motivated some American women, who were not threatened by the draft, to believe themselves 'better more righteous anti-war protesters'.⁹⁰ Margery Tabankin of Students for a Democratic Society is quoted as stating her feeling that "we [women] felt that we were motivated by something higher because we didn't have to go to war with ourselves".⁹¹ Adding further shades of female anti-war engagement, Burgin also explains that some women, who became known within the U.S. movement as 'politicos' believed women's issues were peripheral to the work of anti-war activism. These women were 'often caught between a desire to be taken seriously by the movement (by men) and identifying with feminist issues'.⁹² An example of such activists would be those who acquiesced with the popular, but, for many feminists, sexually demeaning, anti-war slogan, 'Girls Say Yes to Boys Who Say No'.⁹³ Moreover, Burgin also writes that politics were also ideologically motivated, as many believed capitalism to be the source of women's oppression and saw socialist revolution – such as the one taking place in Vietnam – as the event which would end women's oppression.⁹⁴ This belief has elements of resonance with the beliefs of Kerr, Young and Stanton which emphasised that a more socialist society would ultimately be a more just one. However, they stopped short of applying this rationale directly to the plight of women. This 'Politico ideology' on the relationship between capitalism and the war also held many points of crossover with the manifestation of the anti-war movement in Britain within circles of women's liberation.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Burgin, 'Understanding Antiwar Activism as a Gendering Activity', p. 20.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-1.

Historical and sociological studies alike have attested to the problems of masculinity within social movements during this period, which often promoted a culture orientated around machismo. Celia Hughes has examined this within a British context – specifically in the context of men concerned with the group International Socialists. She states that the culture of this group was ‘defined by male sociability’.⁹⁵ Crucially, Hughes’ work also elucidates how such a culture became incorporated within the anti-war movement, explaining that this ‘intellectually rooted’ form of masculinity became subsumed into the politics of the VSC.⁹⁶ The VSC was ‘predicated upon competitive and masculine social and sexual codes’ – for women, involvement in the organisation was thus based around navigating these codes and attempting to gain recognition.⁹⁷ Hughes adds that ‘in the late sixties, division between activist men and women often occurred in the discursive arena of politics where men held a physical and psychological monopoly, thriving off the intellectual intensity and rhetorical competition of meetings’.⁹⁸ Recounting her own experiences at the first meeting of the East London VSC, Rowbotham writes that

Sure enough it was all too familiar – another meeting dominated by unpractical but opinionated Trotskyist men. The new East London VSC group had no money. I brightly suggested a jumble sale; no one responded, so I piped up again. They kept cutting me out of the discussion as if I had never spoken. I was exasperated but it was a familiar pattern. The unconscious assumption was that because a jumble sale involved women – old women to boot – it was inherently “reformist”. But they had no other suggestions for raising funds and I stuck to my guns. I knew how to organise a jumble sale. We had no money. My voice was beginning to rise. I was being overemphatic.⁹⁹

Rowbotham continued that it wasn’t until an American comrade from the group ‘Stop It’ gave her a lift home that he told her about ‘this thing called “male chauvinism” and that’s what had been going on in that VSC meeting’.¹⁰⁰ This prompted Rowbotham to reflect that ‘I could acknowledge that the common deadpan response from men when I or another woman spoke *might* be because we had said something foolish. On the other hand, this was not how they behaved with men. If

⁹⁵ Celia Hughes, *Young Lives on the Left: Sixties Activism and the Liberation of the Self* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 91.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-2.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Rowbotham, *Promise of a Dream*, pp. 160-1.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

they disagreed with one another, they engaged and argued. Our remarks seemed, in contrast, to just fall into oblivion. It was as if you had never spoken'.¹⁰¹

It is little wonder, then, that Rowbotham would go on to mock the masculine culture of British revolutionary groups, stating that 'the culture which was presented as "revolutionary" was merely phallic'.¹⁰² She derided the 'naked genitals' of 'street-fighting man – the cult of Che, the paraphernalia of helmets, the militancy that could shout the loudest'.¹⁰³ In volunteering to take up the guerrilla mantle of the NLF, some young men drew upon romantic constructions of the 1930s International Brigades, expressing the street-fighting masculinity which was visible in the first two marches of the VSC.¹⁰⁴ Rowbotham's deeming of women's liberation as a form of 'new politics' – thus underscored women's liberation as distinct from the alienating culture she had encountered within Trotskyist groups and the VSC.¹⁰⁵

Even when, in 1969, *Black Dwarf* devoted an issue discussing 1969 as the 'Year of the Militant Woman', Rowbotham confessed that her 'heart sank'. when she saw that the designer had drawn an image of a woman in a boiler suit 'in comic-book style, her pocket buttons substituting for protruding nipples [...] "Women's liberation" in the designer's mind seemed to evoke everyone taking their clothes off, so he had scattered photographs of Marilyn Monroe, Yoko Ono and John Lennon with nothing on over the pages'.¹⁰⁶ Tariq Ali described how 'our hippy friend [the designer] had designed it so that the key denunciations of male chauvinism were imprinted on the two breasts. It was obvious that it was neither the dialectic that was at work here nor an ultra-subtle deconstruction, but ignorance'.¹⁰⁷ Whilst Rowbotham credited fellow editor Tariq Ali with taking these images out, the editorial team had missed a mock personal advert which the designer had inserted, which read as follows: 'Dwarf Designer Seeks Girl: Head girl type to make tea, organise paper, me. Free food, smoke, space. Suit American negress'.¹⁰⁸ For Rowbotham, such an advert epitomised the 'seedy side of the underground: arrogant,

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Sheila Rowbotham, *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* (London: Penguin, 1979), p. 24.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Hughes, *Young Lives*, p. 134.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹⁰⁶ Rowbotham, *Promise of a Dream*, p. 210.

¹⁰⁷ Tariq Ali, *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties* (New York: Verso, 2005), p. 313.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

ignorant and prejudiced' and added that it was actions such as these which led to the anger held by many women working on such underground papers as *Black Dwarf*.¹⁰⁹

As with the motherist examples studied earlier, Rowbotham's analysis of female roles in politics were based around difference, not similarity, with men. She claimed that 'women related differently to politics and ideas [...] were less inclined to lose ourselves in abstractions [...] I was convinced that women could make a unique contribution to radical thinking about behaviour, responses, everyday existence and consciousness'.¹¹⁰ Prior to her own experiences with gendered politics, however, Rowbotham's conception of women's political engagement was rather limited. She wrote that in 1967 feminism did not interest her; she associated it with the suffrage movement and as a narrow demand for external rights as opposed to something which could be applied to her personal relationships. Rowbotham explains that she and women like her began to connect the dots between different social ills slowly through her experiences in writing and editing *Black Dwarf*.

There were articles about being an unsupported mother, how to get contraceptive advice, women in trade unions, and Marxism and psychology (by a man) and a thing by me trying to relate how you encountered sexual humiliation to Marxism. They all appear very obvious now but at the time it was very hard to make the connections, and just having something down on paper meant you didn't feel either a hopeless bitter rage or as if you were a completely neurotic freak.¹¹¹

Rowbotham's comments highlight how the gendering of the Vietnam issue by activists was not necessarily a conscious action, unlike some of the motherist rhetoric which was often adopted with a specific purpose in mind. In this sense, many feminist activists, whose gendering of the conflict was often a product of the contemporary social movements of which they were a part, were distinct from those who included motherist rhetoric within their anti-war activism. Linking back to the points regarding the usage of the term 'feminism' by Barbara Caine, it is important to bear in mind that the women under study here did not really have the language to express their actions in terms of 'feminism' or 'maternalism', as such terms have come to fruition much later. This consideration further encourages us to explore the extent to which activists' employment of gender within their campaigning was intuitive – and informed by concurrent political trends and movements – rather than

¹⁰⁹ Rowbotham, *Promise of a Dream*, p. 210.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

¹¹¹ Rowbotham, 'The Beginnings of Women's Liberation in Britain', p. 17.

systematically planned. Whilst questions such as ‘how did young women make sense of their experiences of gender and class in relation to dissident masculine subcultures?’ have been asked by social scientists such as Celia Hughes in the time elapsed since the political turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s, from a historical perspective, it is unclear as to whether activists consciously asked such questions of themselves.¹¹² Rather, it would appear that they just navigated the political terrain in a more instinctive manner. As Sheila Rowbotham explains: ‘I didn’t have a specific idea of myself as a woman doing whatever I would be doing. I would simply be doing things’.¹¹³

The British and American movements differed in that, in the U.S., the civil rights movement played a strong role in influencing the emergence of women’s liberation. British feminists tended to respond less to issues of race, although recent historiographical efforts have sought to redress this by locating black feminists within the pages of the feminist periodical *Spare Rib*.¹¹⁴ Overall, however, the pre-occupation of British feminists with issues pertaining to social class is something which has been recognised as a point of contrast with their U.S. counterparts. Frazier’s work on the development of ‘third world’ feminist networks by WSP is a useful historiographical example which illustrates the interplay of gender and the anti-war movement with racial concerns.¹¹⁵ Martin Pugh has identified the weaker status of liberal feminism in Britain, and stated that there was no equivalent to Betty Friedan in the U.S. in terms of a British figure to articulate liberal feminism.¹¹⁶ It was therefore the New Left which shaped the women’s movement in Britain, most notably the variety of socialist and Marxist groups which comprised it.¹¹⁷ Caine has highlighted that as a historian, Rowbotham’s approach to the history of feminism does serve to express the widely-held determination amongst the women of the women’s liberation movement to ‘connect feminism with the left, to extol its sexual radicalism, and to eschew its bourgeois past’.¹¹⁸ Similarly, it has been suggested that the British Women’s Liberation Movement was essentially socialist in its early years

¹¹² Hughes, *Young Lives*, p. 70.

¹¹³ Rowbotham, *Woman’s Consciousness, Man’s World*, p. 12.

¹¹⁴ Donna Chambers and Rob Worrall, ‘The Frontiers of Sisterhood: Representations of Black Feminism in *Spare Rib* (1972-1979)’, in Angela Smith (ed.), *Re-Reading Spare Rib* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 159-78.

¹¹⁵ Frazier, *Women’s Antiwar Diplomacy*, particularly pp. 54-78.

¹¹⁶ Pugh, *Women and the Women’s Movement in Britain*, p. 318.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Caine, *English Feminism*, p. 262.

due to the continuities it exhibited, in terms of theory and membership, with the New Left and neo-Marxist groups of the late 1960s.¹¹⁹ Pugh has also identified the different role gender played in the British peace movement, stating that

the British movement owed much more to women's experience in the peace movement [compared to its U.S. counterpart]. The campaign over Vietnam in the United States had been fuelled very much by men's opposition to the draft for military service. In Britain, women such as Vera Brittain, Diana Collins and Edith Summerskill had been prominent in the protests over the testing of the H-bomb in the 1950s, and women often formed a majority of local activists. Following the foundation of CND in January 1958, Peggy Duff, Jacquetta Hawkes and Dora Russell enjoyed high-profile roles.¹²⁰

Scholars have also identified how the women's movement in Britain was much more influenced by class issues than its U.S. counterpart, which concerned itself more with issues pertaining to race. Local industrial action by low-paid workers informed the growth of women's liberation in Britain, much of which was supported by feminists. Along with the influence of the New Left, this spate of industrial actions spurred women's engagement with industrial militancy and led to the creation of the National Joint Action Committee for Women's Equal Rights in 1969, which Randall deems a 'significant symbol, if short-lived'.¹²¹ This was 'followed up by the International Marxist Group, the revolutionary Socialist Student Federation, the International Socialists and the Communist Party which created several journals including *Socialist Woman* and *Women's Voice* with a view to analysing the sexual oppression of women within the framework of capitalist society'.¹²²

Spare Rib

It is clear that feminists increasingly made conceptual links between socialism, imperialism, women and Vietnam. In order to illustrate this, this chapter will now turn to examine how Vietnam featured within the pages of *Spare Rib*. *Spare Rib* was a key publication in the Women's Liberation Movement as it emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, not least because it was available in many mainstream newsagents. Moreover, whilst its circulation reached only 20,000 copies per month, this figure obscures the fact that the publication was estimated to have been read by

¹¹⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 232.

¹²⁰ Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain*, p. 318.

¹²¹ Randall, *Women and Politics*, p. 230.

¹²² Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain*, p. 317.

around quadruple that number, due to copies being circulated within women's networks.¹²³ The magazine also ran from 1972 to 1993, making it the UK's longest running feminist magazine. Co-founders Marsha Rowe and Rosie Boycott both had prior experience working in the underground press, most notably on papers such as *Oz* and *Frendz*. Echoing some females' experiences within new leftist groups of the era, *Spare Rib* was also a response to 'the great male bias in publishing, where female employees were overwhelmingly responsible for making the tea and doing the typing'.¹²⁴ According to Caine, the publication 'played an important role in reviving and popularising the history of feminism, extending beyond the suffragettes with its articles on nineteenth-century feminists'.¹²⁵ Lynn Edmonds and Rosie White have highlighted the Cold War context in which the magazine was produced, writing that 'politics is traditionally seen as a masculine domain, and the Cold War was personified by the US and Soviet political leaders of the time. However, in the spirit of female activism that *Spare Rib* fostered, women in Britain gave voice to a feminine anti-war movement in the form of the Greenham Common peace camps'.¹²⁶ This section seeks to complicate this notion by exploring how this anti-war voice was expressed within the pages of *Spare Rib* prior to the establishment of Greenham Common in 1981.

Whilst *Spare Rib* reflected the Cold War context in which it was produced, clearly, the Vietnam War was not the primary concern of the magazine. The publication did have an international awareness, however, reflecting broader discourse within second-wave feminist praxis emphasising international solidarity between women. As Sheila Quaid explains, *Spare Rib* 'recognised the need for women to understand each other's socio-economic and cultural positioning. This gave insights into struggles and experiences in diverse parts of the world that were offering alternatives to the mainstream media'.¹²⁷ Such ventures by *Spare Rib*'s editorial team, which Quaid terms 'doing positionality', led to the exploration of women's circumstances worldwide, including in war-torn Vietnam.¹²⁸

¹²³ Angela Smith and Sheila Quaid, 'Introduction', in Smith (ed.), *Re-Reading Spare Rib*, p. 12.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹²⁵ Caine, *English Feminism*, pp. 259-60.

¹²⁶ Lynn Edmonds and Rosie White, "'What did it mean?' A Generational Conversation', in Smith (ed.), *Re-Reading Spare Rib*, p. 25.

¹²⁷ Sheila Quaid, 'Reflections on reading *Spare Rib*: Personal and Political', in *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

One of the major ways the conflict featured within *Spare Rib* was through its reportage of the problem of women's imprisonment in Vietnam – at least half of the estimated 300,000 political prisoners within South Vietnam's prisons were women. *Spare Rib* sought to draw attention to how, despite having fought side by side with men in the war, women's treatment in prison differed because their biology made them 'particularly vulnerable to the sadism of their captors'.¹²⁹ This article then described how many were raped or sexually assaulted in prison, and that numerous pregnant prisoners had had miscarriages. *Spare Rib* also promoted a campaign, which was an initiative of the BCPV, through which people could adopt a South Vietnamese female prisoner. This involved writing to the prisoner, and pressuring authorities to demand her release and better treatment.¹³⁰

Articles within *Spare Rib* also devoted attention to the differing statuses of women around the world, in an attempt to link the plight of womankind as experienced in different countries to different political and economic contexts. One article which explored the situation for women in Cuba emphasised the closeness and sense of solidarity felt by the Cubans with the people of North Vietnam:

The identification of the Cuban people with the North Vietnamese is vividly seen in the name of farms – a rice plan may be called the Plan Hanoi; in portraits of Ho Chi Minh; in banners and hand-drawn posters in Work Centres or shop windows.¹³¹

One woman profiled, Maria Elena, 40-years-old, even had a three-year-old son named Hanoi.¹³² The article explained how essential women's liberation was to the socialist situation in Cuba: 'while Women's Lib in the West is still perhaps regarded as the plaything of the middle classes, in Cuba it is an essential and integrated part of the Socialist experience. Equal opportunities in work and education, free contraception and abortion, fair wages and nursery schooling are not considered a women's rights, but the Revolution's necessity'.¹³³ Again here we are able to see how socialism is discussed as synonymous with a fairer and more equal society. Engaging with the anti-American rhetoric which was becoming prevalent in Britain during this time, the article also drew on another similarity between the two nations, emphasising North Vietnam's struggle against 'American imperialism and all its

¹²⁹ Zoe Fairbairns, '150,000 women prisoners', *Spare Rib*, September, 1973, p. 22.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Yvonne Roberts, 'On Being A Woman in Cuba', *Spare Rib*, Dec., 1972, p. 5.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

weapons’, whilst Cuba was ‘only 90 miles away from the same threat’.¹³⁴ This reinforces the linked nature of Cuba and Vietnam in the minds of activists as a result of both nations facing a perceived threat from U.S. imperialism.

One article in 1973 also revolved indirectly around Vietnam in another vein, namely a defence of the actress and high-profile anti-war activist, Jane Fonda. Filmmakers Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin produced *A Letter to Jane*, a film which was to accompany screenings of their newly-produced feature film *Tout Va Bien* when it was screened at film festivals in New York and San Francisco, in 1972. In November 1973, *Spare Rib* reproduced a transcript from *A Letter to Jane*, in which both filmmakers analysed a photograph of Fonda speaking with locals on a recent visit to Vietnam. In this, Godard was quoted as stating that:

the facial expression of the militant in this photograph is in fact that of a tragic actress. But a tragic actress with a particular social and technical background formed and deformed by the Hollywood school of Stanislavsky and show biz. The actress also had this expression in *Klute* as she looked at her friend, a policeman played by Donald Sutherland, with a terrific sense of pity on her face and made up her mind to spend the night with him. And even further back in the actress’ paternal history, within the history of the cinema, it was still the same expression that Henry Fonda used to cast a profound and tragic look on the black people in *Young Mr Lincoln* made by the future admiral of the Navy, John Ford.¹³⁵

Clearly, the article revealed Godard and Gorin to be exceptionally critical and sceptical of Fonda’s anti-war activities. The publication of this in *Spare Rib* was therefore something which yielded responses from several readers. One wrote: ‘I was upset at your publication of Godard and Gorin’s attack on Jane Fonda. She has been so maligned by the establishment for her activities in regard to Vietnam [...] I think the woman has had more shit thrown at her than these men ever dream exist’.¹³⁶ Referring to Fonda’s lack of response to the critique from the French filmmakers, this reader wrote that she could ‘see why she doesn’t answer – it must really hurt to get it from those who pretended to be your friends’.¹³⁷

The Women in Indochina Study Group was given a platform within the pages of *Spare Rib* to disseminate information about women in Indochina. This group was formed in December 1972 with the intention of examining parallels between the

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ ‘A Letter to Jane’, *Spare Rib*, November 1973, p. 16.

¹³⁶ S. Freake to Editors of *Spare Rib*, ‘Answering Letter to Jane’, *Spare Rib*, February 1974, pp. 5-6

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

lives of women in Britain and in Indochina. The group also intended to study how the position of women had altered in Indochina due to the war, and sought to ‘examine the restructuring of society that has taken place in the liberated areas, and see what relevance it has for our own society’.¹³⁸ Moreover, the group aimed to raise feminist consciousness amongst women’s groups in Britain, and hoped through its work on Indochina to give an international dimension to the domestic women’s movement. In an August 1974 article in *Spare Rib*, written by a member of the Women in Indochina Study Group, the author sought to dispel some of the criticism that the group had encountered due to this approach:

Many of our friends in the women’s movement regard the Women in Indochina Study Group with suspicion. “You are avoiding your own problems”, they say. “You don’t live in Indochina, you’d do better to examine your own situation here in England”. Obviously this group gives us something for ourselves or we wouldn’t be doing it.¹³⁹

This passage highlights the rationale held by women, which sought to link their own experiences with those of the Vietnamese. It is also interesting, and perhaps telling, that the passage explains that ‘this group gives us something or we wouldn’t be doing it’. This would indicate that the group was not motivated primarily by moral concerns for the women’s welfare, but rather was interested in the plight of the Vietnamese for more practical and ideological purposes: namely, to help the women in the group further understand their own experiences of feminism and how these differed with those in Indochina. Rather than campaigning for the cause of the women then, here, Vietnam featured within the pages of *Spare Rib* with the more practical intention of increasing international linkages for the women’s movement in Britain.

The article further explained how the Women in Indochina Study Group identified their own feminism with the plight of the Vietnamese:

As feminists we can identify in several ways with the Vietnamese women. We, like they, are becoming new people through stretching our capacities, learning new skills, gaining experience of action leading to changes in our own lives. But what makes their situation so much more ambivalent than our own is that they are fighting *alongside* their men *against* US imperialism. Because of the desperate situation of Vietnamese women *and* men, fighting for the very existence of their country, the women can easily be seen – and see themselves – in the traditional woman’s role of sacrificial victim or martyr. If their awareness of their own position remains at this level then is it not likely that they will sink back into

¹³⁸ Women in Indochina Study Group, ‘Women and the Revolution in Indochina’, *Spare Rib*, no. August 1974, p. 24.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25

traditional roles when sacrifice for their country is no longer demanded of them?¹⁴⁰

This concern for the plight of Vietnamese female emancipation is in contrast to the less complex, fundamentally positive nature of the Vietnamese women's experiences as expressed in Frazier's scholarship.¹⁴¹ This helps to complicate the narrative somewhat, by highlighting the complexities which groups such as the Women in Indochina Solidarity Group identified in the changing experience which the Vietnamese women were undergoing as a consequence of the war. Such sources help us to further understand the rationale behind such political groups, and also help us to appreciate how and what women's groups in Britain sought to learn from the conflict, even after the cease of U.S. hostilities in the region. It is interesting to appraise that the Women in Indochina Study Group believed that there was a role for a group such as theirs in the period after the Paris Peace Accords. In this sense, we can see a thread of similarity with Peggy Duff's belief in the need for SCV to continue its anti-war work into 1975, however, the function of SCV was certainly not framed around women's roles.

It is clear that the Women in Indochina Study Group also saw similarities with Vietnamese women in terms of the mutual anti-Americanism they harboured. Like the four campaigners featured within the earlier chapters of this thesis, the group saw the Anglo-American alliance, and U.S. militarism therein, as a fundamental cause of the Vietnam conflict. In the cases of Kerr and Duff, this opposition to the Anglo-American alliance was overtly expressed in their writings on the role Britain ought to play in facilitating peace. In the cases of Young and Stanton, the BCPV's fundamental goal of British dissociation was emblematic of their rejection of the Anglo-American alliance. The August 1974 *Spare Rib* article outlining the group's interest in Indochina contended that some in the group saw

the whole US war machine as a feminist problem. The Pentagon, the whole military-industrial complex, a 100% male organisation, dedicated to male ideals, the patriarchal big Daddy with his big stick/prick. This is what we are fighting everywhere, and in the Vietnam war we have a perfect symbolic expression of the fight.¹⁴²

It is clear that for the Women in Indochina Study Group, then, as with the other women in this thesis, the conflict was emblematic of wider problems within British

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁴¹ See Frazier, 'Collaborative Efforts to End the War in Viet Nam', pp. 339-65.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

foreign policy – most notably the Anglo-American relationship. Where the British feminists differed in their analysis with Duff, Kerr, Young and Stanton, however, was in their contention that this relationship was emblematic of the problems of excessive masculinity (in this instance expressed on the world stage), and in their preoccupation with what this expression meant for womankind specifically.

In this vein, we can see that the group continued to publish material in *Spare Rib* on the plight of Vietnamese women as late as July 1975. In this issue, the paper published an interview by the Women in Indochina Study Group, with a Vietnamese woman, Phan Thi Minh. This interview highlighted some of the problems caused by the war which affected women in particular, such as women turning to prostitution to support and feed their children, and also discussed differences between the north and the south.¹⁴³ The interview also covered the role of women in the army, and quoted Minh as saying: ‘people often speak of military women in our country. They are simply comrades like the others, they lead a very simple life. They have a family, children, they are occupied in production to feed their children, they’re busy with their housework. At the same time they participate in the struggle’.¹⁴⁴

Analysis of *Spare Rib* reveals that the publication was attentive to the changes and fluxes within the anti-war movement: mention of Vietnam increased during issues in 1973, the year in which American involvement was ended through the Paris Peace Accords. However, there were more ideological reasons behind this concern about Vietnam too. Women’s own ideological liberation and awareness of the issues they faced here in Britain increasingly meant that they saw the issue of Vietnam through this gendered lens. The women’s liberation movement thus saw a prevalence of discourse concerning revolutionary movements, socialism and women’s equality, as evidenced in publications such as *Spare Rib*. The magazine advertised courses which encouraged readers to consider the plight of women in other countries, and looked at women in countries including China, Cuba and Vietnam, in terms of Marx and Engels’ views on the equality of women.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Women in Indochina Study Group, ‘Mothers Became Prostitutes So That Their Children Would Not Die of Hunger’, *Spare Rib*, July 1975, p. 19.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 21.

¹⁴⁵ Carol Dix, ‘Where to Study Women’s Studies’, *Spare Rib*, December 1973, p. 35.

After the conclusion of hostilities between North and South Vietnam in 1975, *Spare Rib* continued to promote events which focused on international solidarity, for instance, publicising an event in Merseyside which included speakers from Portugal, Chile, Ireland and Vietnam.¹⁴⁶ After 1975, there was a steady decline in the amount that the conflict featured within *Spare Rib* – Vietnam predominantly featured in the form of book reviews on themes concerning the plight of women in Vietnam, for instance when Susan Brownmiller’s book concerning rape was reviewed in the May 1976 issue.¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, women viewed the war in Vietnam in different ways. This chapter has outlined two of the primary approaches which have been covered within historiography on the movement: namely motherist and feminist critiques of the war. This analysis has shown how female activists approached the war in different ways, thus enabling us to appreciate the distinct contribution that the four case studies in this thesis make to current conceptions of female activism against the Vietnam War in this period. Whilst this chapter has shown that numerous women expressed their discontent about the war utilising gendered rhetoric in various forms, and that this type of activism has been covered extensively by historians, the case studies in this thesis seek to complicate this dominant narrative somewhat, by highlighting how other women approached anti-war protest on much less gendered terms.

This chapter has also sought to complicate our current conceptions of gendered activism towards the Vietnam War, by bringing together women who approached the war using rhetoric concerning motherhood with those women whose critiques were influenced by the contemporary movement for women’s liberation. Through this, we have been able to see the similarities and differences between the two approaches. One key similarity is that both approaches were grounded in the idea that women were particularly distinct from men – as this chapter has illustrated, both approaches made reference to feelings of solidarity with Vietnamese women and espoused women as having a separate understanding of the war due to their gender. Motherist approaches were expressed through the female experience of emphasising opposition due to an inherent maternal concern. Amongst feminists, this

¹⁴⁶ ‘Shortlist’, *Spare Rib*, October 1975, p. 6.

¹⁴⁷ Victoria Green, ‘Against Our Will’, *Spare Rib*, May 1976, pp. 41-3.

was expressed in terms of women both in Vietnam and elsewhere seeking liberation from male dominance. Amongst British feminists, this expression was framed by a belief in the connectedness of different forms of oppression – whether caused by imperialism or patriarchy. Oppression was experienced within inherently sexist New Left and anti-war movements (as in the case of Sheila Rowbotham). Also concerns about more general societal oppression of women, and the contribution which the war in Vietnam made in underpinning this oppression, were expressed, particularly by the Women in Indochina Study Group.

One key difference between these approaches, however, concerns agency. It is clear that motherist rhetoric was often used with the agenda of encouraging other mothers to be concerned about the war. In this sense groups such as WSP, who adopted such rhetoric, did so knowing the effects that it would have. Concerns about portraying a respectable image were also related to this concept of agency, as some female groups actively sought to portray a more respectable image as they believed themselves less likely to get into trouble with authorities in doing so. Inherent within this respectable image was the concept of motherhood. In this sense, there was a very similar mindset regarding conscious respectability to those orchestrating early CND marches who believed that their calls for nuclear disarmament would be taken much more seriously if they conducted themselves in a respectable manner. This desire to exude an air of respectability was most notably exhibited in this context when peace groups sought to whitewash the stories of their Vietnamese counterparts in order to make their stories of violence more palatable and thus easier for U.S. women to empathise with. We can see that there were points of crossover for women who gendered the conflict, particularly with relation to their admiration of Vietnamese women and their roles in the hostilities. However, there was a clear difference between those more conservative women's groups, whose emphasis on traditional female roles meant that they felt they needed to portray a more palatable version of Vietnamese women to the U.S. public, and feminist women who appear to have been less motivated by the need to do this, as their gendering of the war was inherently bound up in their developing viewpoints about the need for women's liberation.

The works mentioned within this chapter have added further nuance to our understanding of the interplay of gender and peace activism in relation to the

Vietnam War. However, there still remains the issue of insufficient attention given to female activists, like the British women in this thesis, whose activism was not overtly gendered: they did not adopt maternalist rhetoric or involve themselves exclusively with female-orientated peace groups, at least not in this period. Margaret Stanton and Anne Kerr both became involved with specifically female-orientated political campaigns much later in their careers, but these exploits had nothing to do with their protest of the Vietnam War. For Stanton's part, she became more acutely active in feminist politics throughout her later life. However, during this period at least, gender does not appear to have overtly influenced the approach of any of the women at the centre of this study.

In the case of the women in question here, it is not the case that their anti-war activism fed into subsequent involvement with movements concerning women's liberation. Rather, the confidence they gained from their own anti-war experiences may simply have meant that a gendered approach to anti-war campaigning was unnecessary. As an MP, Anne Kerr was well-connected and had the opportunity to have her voice heard in Parliament. Peggy Duff headed an international organisation and directed its policy and tactics. Amicia Young played an influential role within her trade union as well as directing the organisation of a national anti-war body, and Margaret Stanton enjoyed relative autonomy in conducting the affairs of the Birmingham Campaign for Peace in Vietnam. These women had cut their political teeth in mixed-sex (although, predominantly male) organisations, and successfully too. Therefore perhaps they simply did not feel the need to approach the issue of Vietnam with reference to their gender, status as mothers, or indeed, with any feminist philosophy in mind. However, this chapter has illustrated a couple of points of similarity with the rhetoric expressed by feminists in this era. These have included a shared criticism of the Anglo-American alliance as well as a belief in the effects that a socialist future would have on ensuring a more just society. Whilst feminists expressed this socialist future as ensuring equality between the sexes, however, the women within the case studies of this thesis who expressed a desire for socialism in some form, notably Kerr, Young and Stanton, did not overtly extend their analysis of this future society to ensuring gender equality.

Seemingly then, unlike many prominent women of the latterly women's liberation movement who had their political origins within CND and anti-Vietnam

protest, these women, whilst also hailing their political legacies back to CND (to varying degrees), and to protesting the conflict, did not do so with ideology of female liberation in mind. It is probably an overstatement to suggest that gender played no role in the activism of the women in this study. Presumably, their status as women in the traditionally male domain of politics, and in an anti-war movement which has been identified by scholars as male-dominated, must have influenced their thought, tactics, or actions, at some level. For example, Schneidhorst has identified a compulsion on the part of the activists at the centre of her study to ‘defend their political activity in the male-dominated arena of politics’, largely because they were ‘unlike men who were socialised to view themselves as political actors’.¹⁴⁸ It is certainly probable then that any influence of gender will have been latent and unintentional in the cases of Kerr, Duff, Young and Stanton.

Evidently, it was not always the case that women drew upon traditional gender roles in order to support and augment their activism as was the case, for example, with WSP. Therefore, it is necessary to address the confluence of gender and anti-Vietnam activism, or political activism more generally, in a subtler way than has been previously done. Female peace activism has usually been studied with regards to Vietnam where the concept of gender had obvious, tangible effects on the construction of, or approach to peace-making by the women in question. There appears to be nothing so tangible concerning the interrelation of the gender of these women and their anti-Vietnam War activism. In this sense, scholars have also played a role in gendering the Vietnam conflict, by focussing almost exclusively on women who protested it on gendered grounds. This is a study that aims to begin to redress this historiographical imbalance somewhat.

¹⁴⁸ Schneidhorst, “‘Little Old Ladies and Dangerous Women’”, p. 375.

Conclusion

Celia Hughes has highlighted that ‘it is all too tempting for internationally framed studies to disparage the actions and rhetoric of British activists as insignificant in comparison to the national power struggles played out elsewhere across the globe’ during the 1960s.¹ The limited body of literature on the British movement against the Vietnam War seems to illustrate her point. This thesis has sought to address this imbalance, providing the most extensive study exclusively dedicated to the efforts of British agitation against the American conflict. The quasi-biographical approach has shed light on the experiences and motivations of four anti-war campaigners, whilst contextualising their efforts in terms of Britain’s international position, transnational activism and the evolution of the political left. In using four case studies as a gateway to exploring the British anti-war movement, the thesis has considered the place of Vietnam protest within the British left during this period.

Like the broader political environment of Sixties Britain, the political left was an activist sphere dominated by men. As highlighted in the thesis, the women campaigners under consideration sought recognition and representation in this male-dominated sphere, rather than emphasizing gendered approaches to peacebuilding. Of course, the activists in question did occasionally work with women’s peace groups. Most notably, Anne Kerr and Amicia Young maintained relations with and took an interest in the work of female peace organisations. Duff’s tenure at CND coincided with the establishment of the organisation’s Women’s Committee, and Margaret Stanton clearly became increasingly involved with gendered initiatives. However, such efforts did not constitute the principal strand of any of these women’s activism against the Vietnam War. In other words, the efforts of the four women under consideration stood somewhat apart from the tradition of gendered pacifism that manifested itself in prominent female groups such as the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom and WSP. Nor did the activism of these campaigners intersect with the so-called ‘second wave’ of feminism, which gathered momentum in the late 1960s and early 1970s, partly linked to a growing counterculture throughout the 1960s. This counterculture has been largely mythologised within

¹ Celia Hughes, *Young Lives on the Left: Sixties Activism and the Liberation of the Self* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 8-9.

Sixties historiography, as the Introduction to this thesis noted. Whilst the anti-war movement figured prominently therein further manifestations of the movement in Britain, operating at a distance from this counterculture, have been investigated here.

The case-study chapters have revealed that feminism and gendered rhetoric were not the principal forces driving the activism of these women. Whilst it is difficult to analyse something which was not overtly present within the activism of the women, in highlighting its absence, this thesis has sought to diversify notions of female activists, beyond those who used motherist or feminist gendered frameworks.² The fifth chapter has bolstered this analysis by elucidating how the lack of gendered rhetoric adopted by these women marked a pronounced difference from many contemporary activists.

Taking all of this into account, what forces can we identify as driving the anti-war activism of Kerr, Duff, Young and Stanton? All women had roots within the British left and, in many ways, they maintained important political and emotional attachments to the old labour left, categorised as the ‘orthodox’ left by Llew Gardner.³ Anne Kerr’s commitment to this traditional labour left is the most obvious due to her role as a Labour Party MP, which exemplified her continued belief in the Labour Party as a central vehicle for leftist activity. Other women, including Margaret Stanton (at times) and, most notably, Peggy Duff, were disillusioned with the Labour Party, while Amicia Young was a member of the Communist Party. None of these three women favoured the new tactics or revolutionary political ideologies that were gaining traction within the British left, however. Indeed, the approach of the BCPV ultimately seemed to target the Labour Party, rather than appealing to a new, radical generation of activists. In this way, the anti-war movement played a central role in exposing and furthering fundamental differences of opinion amongst activists as to the role that the Labour Party ought to play in assisting its cause.

² Jessica M. Frazier, *Women’s Antiwar Diplomacy during the Vietnam War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) and Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) constitute notable examples which have examined how female peace groups utilised rhetoric pertaining to motherhood within their anti-war efforts. Scholarship examining how anti-war critiques were informed by the women’s liberation includes Sheila Rowbotham, *Women, Resistance and Revolution* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1974) and contemporary memoirs such as Sheila Rowbotham, *Promise of a Dream: Remembering the Sixties* (London: Penguin, 2000).

³ Llew Gardner, ‘The Fringe Left’, in Gerald Kaufman (ed.), *The Left* (London: Anthony Blond, 1966), p. 116.

The growth of new and radical protest currents was most notably exemplified by the VSC. Whilst most of the women studied here had some interactions with Tariq Ali and other members of the VSC, the rhetoric and tactics that they adopted continued to be informed by their formative, old left political experiences. In this regard, CND provided an important platform from which much of their activism took root: the discourse used by CND, which emphasised the primacy of morality within foreign policy and a grappling with the effects of the Anglo-American alliance, shaped the political landscape in which anti-Vietnam war activism subsequently flourished. David Caute has deemed the distinction between the old and new lefts as ‘one of outlook, temperament and style’.⁴ He adds that ‘generation also played a part – the idealistic exuberance of youth, the crusty caution of middle age – but many individuals were able to cross that frontier’.⁵ This thesis has examined activists who straddled these boundaries: they came from an older generation but were involved in a movement associated with youthful rebellion. More specifically, Anne Kerr’s commitment to a more traditional conceptualisation of leftist politics is illustrated through enduring loyalty to the Labour Party in spite of its stance on Vietnam. Peggy Duff remained a traditionalist who expressed her frustration with the approach of the ‘Marxist sect[s]’ that gained prominence within the British left and increasingly channelled her anti-war activities at an international level, through the ICDP. The activism of Amicia Young and Margaret Stanton was informed by their engagement with the Communist Party and trade union links played a central role within the anti-war approach of the BCPV.

At the same time, the women studied here exceeded the constituent organisations with which they were involved. The case studies of the female activists in question have therefore provided further insight into the British movement against the war in Vietnam, as each chapter has taken into consideration the broader scope of each activist’s anti-war work. In the case of Anne Kerr, elements of her activism that were extraneous to her role as an MP were examined, and we were therefore able to see how she embraced transnational opportunities and framed her activism as part of a wider collaborative effort. Likewise, in the case of Peggy Duff, her departure from CND to the ICDP provides an insight into the wide-ranging transnational anti-war

⁴ David Caute, *Sixty-Eight: Year of the Barricades* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1988), p. 20

⁵ *Ibid.*

operation of which Britain was merely a part. Examining the activism of Amicia Young enabled us to see how her scientific and trade union background informed her anti-war rhetoric and intersected with her responsibilities at the BCPV. Moreover, in the cases of both Young and Margaret Stanton, we have been afforded an insight into how the British movement intersected with the CPGB, and the tensions which were evident through the BCPV's multitudinous links to communism.

The sheer variety of organisations and bodies which the four women utilised in order to agitate for peace in Vietnam enabled them to deploy a range of approaches. Kerr clearly favoured anti-war work to be channelled through the Labour Party, attempting to pressurise the Wilson government through letters and telegrams, parliamentary motions and stressing the cause of Vietnam at Labour Party conferences. Peggy Duff's frustration with the Labour Party and subsequent international focus meant that she increasingly selected international conferences as a *modus operandi*. In this sense, her belief was that mass academic opinion could bring pressure on governments around the world. This is something which made Duff's activism particularly distinct from that of Young or Stanton, for whom anti-war work with the BCPV entailed petitioning, collecting signatures and releasing declarations in order to bring about anti-war sentiment *en masse*. Whilst the local context of Stanton's activism necessitated a change in rhetoric, the tactics she pursued on behalf of the Birmingham CPV in Britain's 'second city' broadly mirrored those being employed at the national level by Young.

On the whole, this thesis has combined the analysis of personal activism with the study of the associations and networks through which these women operated. This approach has facilitated an exploration of developments within the left during the 1960s and the central role played by the cause of Vietnam within this. In adopting this perspective, the thesis has also shed light on one of the most prominent (and rarely studied) British-based anti-Vietnam War organisations, the BCPV, at both the national and local levels. Meanwhile, the case studies have affirmed the agency of women within Britain's anti-war movement, notwithstanding the limited influence of gendered rhetoric in their activism against the war. In this sense the thesis has made a distinct contribution not only to the history of the British left during this period, but in the fields of women's history, gender history and peace history.

Appendix One

General election results in Birmingham constituencies in the period 1959–1974

(Key: L = Labour victory/ C = Conservative victory/ X = seat not in existence)

Constituency	1959	1964	1966	1970	Feb., 1974	Oct., 1974
Ladywood	L (Victor Yates)	L (Yates)	L (Yates)	L (Doris Fischer)	L (Brian Walden)	L (Walden)
Sparkbrook	C (Leslie Seymour)	L (Roy Hattersley)	L (Hattersley)	L (Hattersley)	L (Hattersley)	L (Hattersley)
Small Heath	Labour Co-Op (William Wheeldon)	L (Denis Howell)				
Erdington	X	X	X	X	L (Julius Silverman)	L (Julius Silverman)
Solihull	C (Martin Lindsay)	C (Percy Grieve)				
Handsworth	C (Edward Boyle)	C (Edward Boyle)	C (Edward Boyle)	C (Sydney Chapman)	L (John Lee)	L (John Lee)
Aston	L (Julius Silverman)	L (Julius Silverman)	L (Julius Silverman)	L (Julius Silverman)	X	X
Edgbaston	C (Edith Pitt)	C (Edith Pitt)	C (Jill Knight)	C (Jill Knight)	C (Jill Knight)	C (Jill Knight)
Hall Green	C	C	C	C	C	C

	(Aubrey Jones)	(Aubrey Jones)	(Reginald Eyre)	(Reginald Eyre)	(Reginald Eyre)	(Reginald Eyre)
Perry Barr	L (Charles Howell)	C (Wyndham Davies)	L (Christopher Price)	C (Joseph Kinsey)	L (Jeff Rooker)	L (Jeff Rooker)
All Saints	C (John Harold Hollingworth)	L (Brian Walden)	L (Brian Walden)	L (Brian Walden)	X	X
Stechford	L (Roy Jenkins)	L (Roy Jenkins)	L (Roy Jenkins)	L (Roy Jenkins)	L (Roy Jenkins)	L (Roy Jenkins)
Selly Oak	C (Harold Gurden)	C (Harold Gurden)	C (Harold Gurden)	C (Harold Gurden)	C (Harold Gurden)	L (Tom Litterick)
Yardley	C (Leonard Cleaver)	Labour Co-Op (Ioan Evans)	Labour Co-Op (Ioan Evans)	C Derek Coombs	L Syd Tierney	L Syd Tierney

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