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Many of the front organisations’ long-standing techniques have been deployed in their current anti-NATO modernisation and anti-nuclear weapons campaigns. But the methods employed have become more sophisticated to appeal as widely as possible to Western public opinion, with the obvious intention of exploiting the genuine element of pacifism, distrust of all things nuclear and impatience at the lack of progress over arms control which inspire the anti-nuclear movements outside their immediate control. Continuous repetition of the argument that NATO’s nuclear modernisation would create a new and dangerous phase of the arms race has caused many people not normally sympathetic to echo the Soviet claims. The greatest advantage derived by the Soviet Union from its activities has been to force NATO governments on to the defensive with public opinion in their own countries. So the justification for NATO’s collective response to what was originally a Soviet nuclear build-up – the deployment of the SS-20s – has had to be provided against a background of opposition often ranging from scepticism to outright hostility. This chapter describes the activities of the international front organisations in the United States and in the United Kingdom, and ends with a general review of the involvement of these organisations in the anti-nuclear campaign in Europe in recent years.

THE UNITED STATES

The front organisations now operating in the US, under the guidance of the WPC in the current peace and disarmament campaigns first attracted public attention between 1966 and 1975 in the anti-Vietnam war movement. The National Mobilisation
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Committee to End the War in Vietnam and its successors, the New Mobilisation Committee (New Mobe) and the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice, worked closely with American WPC officials, many of them Communists, who coordinated their activities in key cities and who travelled abroad to take part in WPC meetings. One such key city was Chicago, whose Peace Council comprised about 30 organisations, Communist and non-Communist. This council was run by a small group of six people, many of whom were to reappear in connection with other front activities: Sidney Lens, already an experienced activist; Dorothy Hayes, representing the WILPF, under strong Communist influence; Ben Friedlander, representing SANE (the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy); and Eva Friedlander, representing the Chicago affiliate of Women Strike for Peace (WSP), the US affiliate of the WIDF, who coordinated American deserters from Vietnam in Sweden; Jack Spiegel and Sylvia Kushner. Five of the six were members of the Communist Party of the USA (CPUSA); Lens had been associated with a dissident Trotskyist group known as the Revolutionary Workers League.

Strong Communist influence was shown in the composition of the US delegation to the WPC's World Assembly of Peace in East Berlin in 1969. It included members of the Clergy and Laity Concerned (CALC) which had co-sponsored an anti-Vietnam war demonstration at the White House in 1967; other WSP and WILPF members; various quasi-religious groups including the Methodist Federation for Social Action, one of the CPUSA's oldest fronts; a substantial number of veteran Communists, including two US members of the WPC presidential Committee, Herbert Aptheker and Dr Carlton Goodlett; Barbara Bick of WSP, and Stanley Faulkner for the National Lawyers Guild, the US affiliate of the IADL. In May 1969, the Stockholm Conference on Vietnam Emergency Action emerged as one of the WPC's main instruments, and the 31 members of its International Liaison Committee, apart from the WPC President Romesh Chandra and Alexander Berkov of the Soviet Peace Committee, included Irving Sarnoff and Ronald Young, both officially representing the US New Mobilisation Committee (whose 'Fall Offensive' culminated in three days of riots in Washington in November 1969).

Another example of WPC influence over the anti-Vietnam war