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In defence of our histories of liberation

To all Bristol students, and in particular those from colonised, neocolonised, sovereign and socialist countries,

We write to you in recognition of a shared history of struggle, and with a call for assistance against campus groups who want to rewrite that history in order to whitewash British imperialism's past and maintain its power in the present.

While the banners of formal colonial empires have been folded, their machinery has been modernised into a neocolonial order enforced through debt, sanctions and war. This global order has been laundered by a facade of 'international' institutions whose real role is to maintain the economic and political subordination of the majority of poor and underdeveloped nations.

In the 20th century, liberation fighters across the oppressed world found a powerful ally in the Soviet Union. At a time when western powers were drowning their colonies' liberation struggles in blood, the USSR provided essential economic aid, weaponry, diplomatic support, and even on occasion volunteer fighters – all of which supported victories in Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique, Cuba, China, Burkina Faso and many other countries.

For the colonised world, the Hammer and Sickle was not merely the symbol of a single Eurasian state; it was the internationalist banner under which real material support flowed to those fighting to break the chains of colonial slavery.

On 10 October 2025, an on-campus coalition of various UoB societies, including the Young Liberals and the Labour Party Club, made a public statement calling for the banning of all symbols related to the Soviet Union, in particular the hammer and sickle. For them, this symbol of global liberation is a threat.

Their attack is an attack on our history

While it is no surprise to see which groups have rallied to attack the symbols of working-class political power, their false presentation of the Soviet Union as "a genocidal entity ... one of the 20th century's greatest tragedies" broadens the attack to all of the Union's comrades in arms – the oppressed peoples of the world.

In promoting their anticommunist lies, they are at the same time negating every liberation movement to whom the Soviets gave vital support – and ignoring the tremendous suffering of all the nations that have found themselves in the firing line of a new wave of genocidal sanctions and regime-change wars since the Soviet counter-revolution of 1991.

Clearly, for those demanding the banning of 'Soviet' (international communist) symbols, the great liberation struggles and the tremendous blood sacrifice made by so many nations struggling for their freedom from imperialist powers are of little account.

They are not horrified by the ongoing subjugation of the peoples of the global south, but by the audacity of those revolutionary workers and peasants who founded the world's first socialist state, abolished class exploitation, emancipated women, cancelled their country's debts to western banks, stood with the colonised against the colonisers and developed into a global superpower.

That they act now is no coincidence

Imperialism is in a deep and deepening global economic crisis. As more and more countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America are forging new, mutually beneficial ties outside the old west-dominated structures, the ruling class is desperate to turn back the clock – and needs to control the narrative at home in order to justify its aggressive actions around the world. Their friends on campus want to ban the symbols of the most significant anti-imperialist power in modern history to make us forget what that country achieved; to take away from us the knowledge that a different world is possible and that we have the power to build it.

The genocide in Gaza is of course a key flashpoint in this struggle for narrative control. The brazenness with which the west has supported, both materially and diplomatically, the most flagrant crime of the 21st century has destroyed its rulers' legitimacy in the eyes of a growing section of their own populations. In this context, we note that the issuers of the statement against Soviet symbols have *cropped* the picture they used to show our party flag (with its communist hammer and sickle emblem) at a campus demonstration in support of Gaza – *hiding the fact that it was accompanied by a Palestinian flag!*

Compare their version with the complete banner that they would clearly prefer you not to see:



Presumably, these people would also rather you didn't know that the Palestinian resistance received financial, diplomatic and military support from the Soviet Union for decades, and that many founding fathers of the Palestinian resistance, such as George Habash, were Marxist-Leninists who fought under the Hammer and Sickle!

This deception alone should make it abundantly clear what this coalition really stands for. *Save British imperialism at all costs*, tell any lie that may keep the people on your side, no matter the suffering that results.

We invite you to join us

Come for a night of celebration and defence of our shared history of resistance. Bring the flags of your independence struggles and the stories of your freedom fighters, whether well-known figures like Thomas Sankara and Ho Chi Minh or less publicised ones who deserve to be honoured likewise.

Let us share a toast and commemorate the international solidarity that made their victories possible. And let us strive for more victories in this coming period of growing global anti-imperialist resistance!

Bring flags**Bring a guitar and resistance songs (and lyrics!)**Bring resistance stories – bonus points if it's family history!

Event: Toasting the Titans: A Night for Liberation Histories

Date: 29 November

Time: 2.00pm

Location: College Green moving onto a local pub

In solidarity,

Bristol CPGB-ML