

S.B. No. 1 (Plain)

Special Report }

SUBJECT V.S.C.
Autumn Offensive
1968.

Reference to Papers
346/68/15-2

[1]

[2]

METROPOLITAN POLICE

SPECIAL BRANCH

5th day of September, 1968

163

With further reference to the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign's "Autumn Offensive":

It now seems reasonably certain that the final mass protest demonstration of the Autumn Offensive will take place on the 27th October, 1968, starting at 2 p.m. at the Embankment by Charing Cross.

[3]

An ambivalent attitude still exists on the question of the employment of violence. Officially, the left-wing groups involved are condemning the use of violence, making arrangements for one steward to every ten marchers, and appointing "political commissars" to stop dissident groups getting out of line. At the local level tactics are being discussed by ad-hoc groups. There is general agreement on two points. One is that steel poles be used as banner holders so that the poles can be used as offensive weapons at the appropriate moment: the other is that the march be halted by spreading out and blocking the road close to large department stores so that windows can be broken by activists carrying bricks. To this end the activists will march in the centre of the column with the mass of demonstrators between them and the police.

The use of more sophisticated weapons is also being discussed, and a suggestion that Molotov Cocktails,

[4]

used is receiving some consideration.

In this context it is worth noting that the police search of the "Black Dwarf" offices on 3.9.68 revealed that a drawing of a Molotov Cocktail and instructions were drawn on a wall. This matter is still being actively pursued in this Branch.

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It is a matter of common knowledge that the National Press are beginning to take a considerable amount of interest in police preparations for this demonstration.

On 3.9.68 the "Evening Standard" had a brief report about the raid on the "Black Dwarf" offices and on the following day the "Evening News" front page contained a lengthy report on the use of weapons at mass demonstrations. This report stated, quite categorically, that Molotov Cocktails and bombs are being manufactured and stored at secret addresses in London, and that extremists have been buying small arms to use against the police. This report also indicated that an under-cover team, operating from Scotland Yard, are making enquiries about this matter and that the United States Embassy, the Russian Embassy, the Hilton Hotel and No. 10 Downing Street are targets for the demonstrators.

Today's copy of "The Times" also features this matter and stresses that a small army of militant extremists plan to seize control of buildings in Central London while 6000 policemen are controlling the demonstration. This report repeats the information in the "Evening News" about a special squad of detectives, the manufacture of Molotov Cocktails, and the targets to be attacked. One difference is that "The Times" mentions the Australian High Commission and the Ministry of Defence as possible objectives. It is also stated that simultaneous demonstrations will take place in France, Germany and Italy: we have no knowledge of such demonstrations at this stage.

The "Evening News" and "Times" reports are unnecessarily alarming in their presentation of the facts of the situation. They categorically state that certain groups have manufactured Molotov Cocktails from electric light bulbs, have acquired a cache of small arms and have made plans to occupy certain public buildings. There has been fairly comprehensive coverage by Special Branch of the activities of the most extreme of the groups involved in the forthcoming October demonstration. This has produced information that individuals in certain groups have talked about the possibility of making Molotov Cocktails and occupying public buildings, but no firm plans to execute these ideas have so far been made. There has also been talk of taking such steps as jamming police radios and flooding the police communication system with 999 calls, but again nothing firm has been decided, and it will be appreciated a very large number of people would have to be involved were such plans to be carried out.

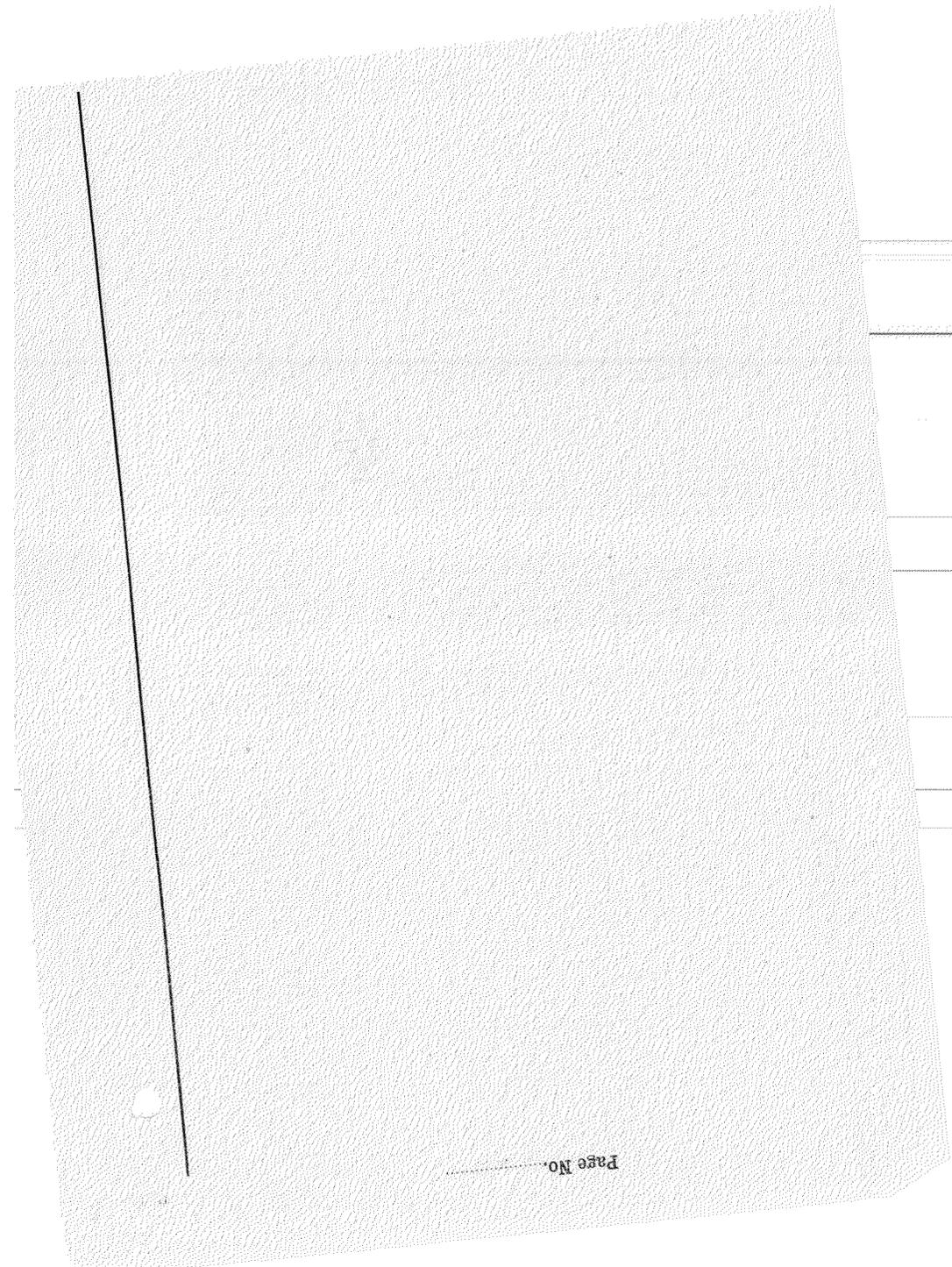
With regard to firearms, there has been an allegation that a member of the Highgate Vietnam Solidarity Campaign has acquired four revolvers which might possibly be used in the demonstration, but no confirmation has been received to date. Indeed, certain action taken by this Branch has confirmed that they are certainly not at the address of the individual concerned.

The press reports are, of course, correct in saying that violence by some of the more extreme groups can be expected on 27th October, but this is common knowledge based on past experience.

A study of these press reports, therefore, leads to the conclusion that they are a carefully-constructed pastiche of information, gathered from a number of sources, and spiced with inspired guess-work. The search at "Black Dwarf" has triggered off this sudden rush of interest in the demonstration of the 27th October, and has given it much valuable publicity. The reaction of the militant left-wingers involved in planning the demonstration to this aspect will be ascertained, and reported on in due course.

C. H. Dixon
C. H. DIXON
Chief Inspector

A. Cunningham
CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT



Page No.

Vietnam marchers lay 'no-violence' plans

BY OUR OWN REPORTER

Determined plans to avoid violence are being drawn up by the Left-wing groups organising London's next big Vietnam demonstration on October 27. Measures may include a decision not to march past the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square because, one organiser said yesterday, "demonstrators tend to go there expecting a punch-up."

The two marches to Grosvenor Square in June and March this year turned out to be the most violent held in Britain for years. At the first there was a pitched battle between demonstrators and police in the square, and at the second, a fringe of 200 militants left a trail of broken windows and damaged cars in the West End. The ad-hoc committee of Left-

wing groups planning the October demonstration is worried that these incidents may have alienated the working class support it needs. Its slogan for the march will be "No arrests, no provocation." The International Socialist contingent has gone as far as to arrange for one steward to keep every 10 marchers in line. "We have instructed that if anything nasty happens on the

march we shall just withdraw." Mr Roger Proux, editor of the International Socialist weekly "Socialist Worker" said yesterday.

For the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, Mr Tariq Ali, one of its leaders, said they would have marshals on the march who would act as "political commissars" to stop dissident groups breaking out of line.

"I think this will be a very peaceful march," he said.

"The Guardian" 5-9-68

Newspaper
clipping

Militant plot feared in London

By CLIVE BORRELL and BRIAN CASHINELLA

A small army of militant extremists plans to seize control of certain highly sensitive installations and buildings in central London next month, while 6,000 Metropolitan policemen are busy controlling an estimated crowd of 100,000 anti-Vietnam war demonstrators on a peaceful march.

This startling plot has been uncovered by a special squad of detectives formed to track down the extremists, who are understood to be manufacturing "Molotov cocktail" bombs and amassing a small arsenal of weapons. They plan to use these against police and property in an attempt to dislocate communications and law and order.

The violence has been planned for October 27, when the peaceful Vietnam demonstrators—who have no connexion with the extremists—march on the American and Russian embassies, the Australian High Commission, the Ministry of Defence, and Downing Street.

Mr. Tariq Ali, one of the organizers of the peaceful demonstration, offered the police "a personal guarantee" that there would be no violence "if they agreed to stay away".

"Needless to say, they refused. We said we would be responsible for the behaviour of the demonstrators, provided they kept uniform men out of sight." Mr. Ali said they did not want violence, but it would not be easy to control some of the fringe elements.

He told us in his office in Carnaby Street, Soho, that final plans for the anti-Vietnam

march were still to be settled, but it was hoped to assemble on the Victoria Embankment near Charing Cross pier. From there the demonstrators were expected to march to the Australian High Commission, the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall, and probably Downing Street.

To cope with this demonstration, all police leave has been cancelled and every available policeman and policewoman will be on duty. While they are occupied in controlling what is expected to be the biggest demonstration ever held in London, the extremists will go into action.

They plan to take advantage of police preoccupation and hope to face little resistance when storming their selected targets in central London. If they succeed, Home Office officials and senior Scotland Yard officers fear it may take several days to flush them out and regain control.

Militants behind the violence include American army "draft dodgers" and students from the United States, studying in Britain.

Simultaneous demonstrations have been planned in France, Germany and Italy.

The special undercover squad investigating their activities and sources was assembled on the personal instructions of Mr. Callaghan, Home Secretary, who has asked to be kept informed of all developments.

For several weeks Home Office officials have been in close touch with Scotland Yard, preparing plans for security that week-

end. One of those directly involved is Commander John Lawlor, recently appointed to take charge of crowd control during public demonstrations.

The latest assessment of the situation is that it would require only 400 highly trained militants to disrupt seriously law and order in central London, provided they were prepared to use extreme violence.

Scotland Yard officially denied last night that they had received reports that "Molotov cocktails", home-made bombs and firearms might be used in a mass demonstration planned for London on October 27. They also denied that a special undercover team was searching for an arms cache, for the people responsible for buying arms, and for those who financed them.

But our inquiries among students make it clear that among those who plan to use violence are several anarchist groups with contacts in extremist factions.

Police and leaders of the peaceful demonstrators share the view that October 27 could bring the most violent upheaval in Britain for many years. Some senior officials believe that they are faced with a situation potentially as violent as the student demonstrations in Paris and Berlin earlier this year.

"The aim of these extremists seems to be to usurp authority and disrupt the administration. This is trouble-making for the sake of making trouble. They want to do this with authority. Whitehall source says last night.

Leading article, page 6.

YARD IN TERROR BOMBS HUNT

Evening News
4-9-68

The police are hunting for a man who is believed to be the author of a series of bombs which exploded in London last night.

The man is believed to be a member of the Weathermen group and is thought to be in the area of the docks.

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