

Special Branch

24 February 1976

MEMORANDUM

Ch. Supt. 'S' Squad

1. Another year has passed and we are required to submit a case within the next few weeks to Home Office for the continuation of the Special Demonstrations Squad (SDS) for a further period of 12 months.
2. As you are aware this Squad has been in existence since the Summer of 1968 and it is considered timely at this juncture for a complete review of the Squad to be undertaken, its activities and objectives. The SDS was set up initially to produce intelligence by way of penetration by undercover Special Branch officers at a time when ultra-extremist left-wing activity on the streets of London was at a peak. Confrontation with police with the planned objective of creating scenes of violence and public disorder by divers of Trotskyist, Maoist, Anarchist etc. were exceedingly regular features.
3. Over the past 7 years, however, this form of political activity by minority extremist groups has dwindled considerably, and with the exception of the Red Lion Square conflict in 1974 and possibly one or two other incidents of deliberate confrontation, upsurges of violence in the streets have become less and less frequent.
4. To assist, therefore, in preparing the case for submission to Mr Robert Armstrong, the Deputy Permanent Assistant Secretary of State, I wish you to set up a small study group under your chairmanship, comprising Ch. Supt. R Wilson, Ch. Supt. [1HN332], Ch. Insp. Kneale and Insp. Craft. Your terms of reference are as follows:-
 - a) Is there a continuing need for the SDS as constituted at present
 - b) Does the public order problem demand the coverage of the range of extremist subversive organisations currently effected
 - c) What proportion of the overall intelligence gathered is of primary benefit towards assisting uniform police to control public meetings and demonstrations, and that which is of interest mainly to the Security Service.

M.D. Rodger
Commander