

It would be a departure of great significance to seek intelligence from a target which could not properly be regarded as subversive. The Home Secretary wondered whether our view of what was subversive needed bringing up to date: the Unions were seeking to blackmail H.M.G. and in so doing were threatening the security of the State. This was a point which might be considered at greater leisure.

Sir Burke Trend asked to see Simkins after his meeting with Maudling and told him that Sir Philip Allen was 'very uneasy' about the suggestion of bugging the meeting at the Electricity Council. Simkins noted afterwards: 'In my presence [Trend] telephoned Allen to let him know that the Prime Minister's proposal was not being pursued. I emphasized that it was both outside the Charter and could also run very great risks of discovery.' Though Trend appeared to agree,¹¹ the Home Secretary did not. Three days later Allen reported that Maudling wanted 'an examination undertaken of the role of the Security Service in relation to industrial action which brought pressure on the government'.¹²

On 27 January 1971 FJ sent Maudling, via Allen, a memo entitled 'Industrial Action: The Role of the Security Service' which firmly restated the traditional limits to the Service's involvement in industrial intelligence collection:

The tendency over the sixty years of the Security Service's existence has been to keep the Service within narrow limits and at once to insulate it from involvement in politics while bringing it increasingly under formal controls. Both tendencies have been healthy. Because the work of the Security Service has to remain secret, there is a special obligation to see that it is kept within strict limits erring, if at all, on the side of caution.

... What are the motives of the leaders of Unions, e.g. in the Electrical Power industry, in seeking to obtain what many regard as excessively large wage increases? Their principal motive is the perfectly proper one of ensuring that their members do not lose ground in the inflationary race. The fact that by adopting this course they increase the pace of inflation, does not impugn their motives ... They are performing the task for which they were elected and, though they may be damaging the State, they cannot properly be described as subversive.

Nevertheless, the recent tendency towards the use or threat of industrial action as a political weapon introduces a different factor. This has so far been advocated and encouraged by subversive organizations and by individuals on the extreme left ... It is possible that in an endeavour to outflank the militants, the T.U.C. and Trade Union leaders would give tacit or even open encouragement to such industrial action.

Would such action with such an objective properly be regarded as subversive and therefore within the sights of the Security Service?¹³