

Geoffrey Smith

Brittan defends Special Branch right to spy on strikers

By Richard Evans, Lobby Reporter

Mr Leon Brittan, Home Secretary, has again defended the rights of the Special Branch to spy on strikers and suspects not directly involved in criminal activities.

But he denied that trade unions were picked out specially for surveillance and said there was a "clear distinction" between subversive and active opposition to government policies.

Responding to complaints from Mr John Prescott, Labour's chief employment spokesman, about recently issued Special Branch guidelines, Mr Brittan said nothing would be of no interest to special branches if it was conducted peacefully and within the law.

"But where picketing may pose a threat to public order it is entirely right that a chief officer should have access to any relevant information that his Special Branch can provide to help him determine an appropriate level of picketing."

Mr Brittan, who is to give evidence on the Special Branch to the Commons Select Committee on Home Affairs tomorrow, said the concept of subversion "is interpreted differently in relation to trade unions than in relation to any other group in society."

But he insisted that the definition of subversion - activities that threaten the safety or well-being of the state - which are intended to undermine or overthrow parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means - was not limited to criminal acts.

Mr Brittan, who will be questioned by MPs about the definition, said that in an open society it was all too easy to use

tactics which were not themselves unlawful or subversive.

"Those who are entrusted with safeguarding our democratic institutions from subversive attack must not be prevented from looking into the activities of those whose real aim is to harm our democracy but who, for tactical or other reasons, choose to keep, either in the long or the short term, within the letter of the law in what they do."

Mr Brittan denied a suggestion from Mr Prescott that the existing definition allowed Special Branch officers to make "judicial judgements" about subversives involved in industrial activity.

"Under the definition an activity is subversive only if it is carried on with the aim of undermining or overthrowing parliamentary democracy and only if it threatens the safety or well-being of the state itself."

"There is a clear distinction between subversion and opposition to the policies of the government which the spy or peaceful campaigning is doing about changes in those policies or to influence public opinion generally."

'Spying' ridicule

Allegations of a secret surveillance operation to monitor objectives to the Government were ridiculed yesterday by the rear of the controversy.

Mr Peter Hamilton, a private detective and former military intelligence officer, was named in Mr Oates as the mastermind behind the spy network.

But he said that the operation, for a private client in the United Kingdom, was a non-political assignment.

It is hardly the best advertisement for the dream itself in its working hours that Mr Neil Kinnock and Mr Roy Hattersley should now be favouring different candidates to be the general secretary of the Labour Party. That is surely indicated by the fact that Labour has got itself over the appointment of a successor to Mr Jim Morrison, which is to be made by the national executive committee tomorrow.

The choice is critical for the party's future. Only a strong and administratively capable general secretary will stand a chance of steering out Labour's financial mess. Yet nobody has been named who is generally acceptable to the vast majority in the party, and the balance of forces which is shaping up for the election will make it harder for whoever tries to do the job effectively.

Many of those who were either considered potential front-runners are not available. So the effective choice lies between Mr Larry Whitty, the research officer of the General and Municipal, who is supported by Mr Kinnock; and Mrs Helen Lidell, secretary of the party in Scotland, whom Mr Hattersley would prefer.

That is not a simple left-right contest. The G and M, which is campaigning hard for Mr Whitty, is not a left-wing union. The Transport and General Workers' Union, which is reputed to be backing Mrs Lidell, is decidedly more to the left. The scales is complicated by union obligations and rivalries.

Second ballot Geolcive

But the broad picture is that most of Mr Whitty's support in the first ballot will come from the soft and undisciplined left - Mr David Blackburn, ex-convict, is put in that category - and from those associated with his union. Mrs Lidell's support will come mostly from the right, and the hard left will support either Mrs Joyce Gould or one of the other outsiders.

Neither Mr Whitty nor Mrs Lidell is expected to have an overall majority on the first ballot. On the second ballot some of the hard left may abstain, but enough of them seem likely at this stage to vote for Mr Whitty to give him the edge.

It thus happens Mr Whitty will be seen as having been preceded to power by the left. That should be damaging for him and perhaps rather harsh.

The right have definite misgivings about him. He is reputed to have compared Mr Tony Benn against Mr Dennis Healey for the deputy leadership in 1981, although it would be more accurate to say that his position was not decided to seek for Mr Healey's re-election even though the Healey campaign was largely being organised from the union.

Reforms need right's support

Mr Whitty is a man whose political instincts are to the left.

Teenagers' killers get life

The leader of a gang which savagely murdered two innocent teenagers in the Peak District was jailed for life yesterday with a recommendation that he serves at least 25 years.

Mr Justice Jupp sentenced Peter Murray, aged 36, to three life sentences for the murders of Mitchell Eggar, aged 17, a student, and Marina Pollitt, aged 16, and for conspiring to murder Mr John Rodden, aged 21.

The other members of the gang, Michael Bailey, aged 20, John Bainbridge, aged 21, and Michael Howe, aged 20, were each given three life sentences.

The jury had been told that the gang peddled its victims off the streets and offered them jobs with a lucrative garage business. The teenagers were lured to an isolated spot at Claydon, near Buxton, Derbyshire, where they were brutally beaten on the orders of Murray and Bailey.

Murray, unemployed, of Stockport Road, Cheadle Heath, Stockport, Greater Manchester, and Bailey, unemployed, of Warrill Crescent, Cheadle Heath, both changed their pleas to guilty to all three charges during the 10-day trial.

Howe, a part-time salesman, also of Stockport Road, and Bainbridge, a labourer of Seaford address, had denied the charges. The jury took 90 minutes to return guilty verdicts on all three charges.

Drink case judge is banned

A judge who pleaded guilty to driving with excess alcohol in his blood after a city pitting in court was banned from driving for 18 months and fined £200 by magistrates yesterday.

John Holwell, aged 44, a judge at Chichester Crown Court, pleaded guilty through his solicitor at Arundel Magistrates' Court, West Sussex.

The court was told he was involved in an accident on the A27 road at Poynton, near Worthing, driving back to his home in Fife Road, Lancing, last September. Mr David Adams, the Director of Public Prosecutions, said that Judge Holwell's conviction was the only vehicle involved in the accident. He was accused of failing to provide a breath specimen.

A blood sample analysis later showed he had 200mg of alcohol to 100ml of blood in his system. The legal limit is 50mg.

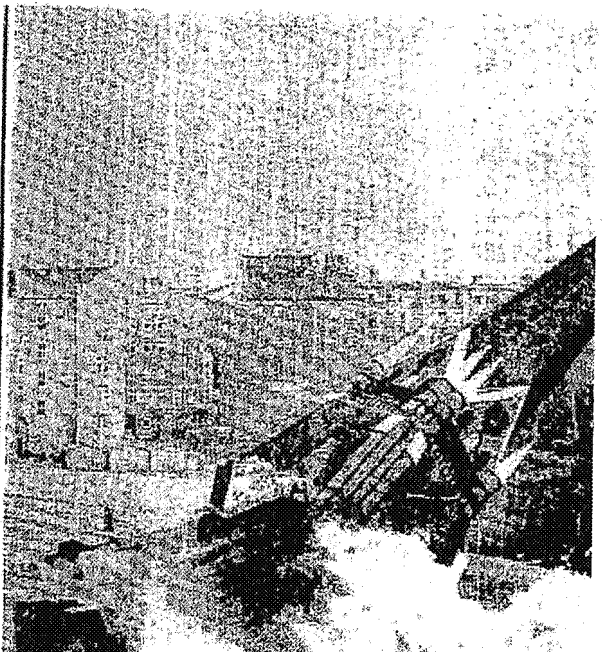
Mr Ian Lay, for the judge, said: "My client much regrets the whole affair. He had finished his normal public work at the court and then finished his paper work before enjoying some sherry."

"The accident had shaken him and he drank from a flask kept in a glove compartment in the car."

Proceeding yesterday's court case Judge Holwell had been transferred to Crofton Crown Court and had not to be concerned.

Free daily battles for slice of £25m adverts

By Craig Selton The Birmingham Post and



Israelis hope to solve mystery of their lost submarine

From Christopher Walker Beersheva

Israel is optimistic that one result of the talks with Egypt here will be a solution to the mystery surrounding one of the country's worst maritime disasters - the loss 17 years ago of the submarine Dakar and all 89 members of its crew crew.

The British-built submarine disappeared without trace on its voyage in Haifa from Ploesti, month, where it had been refitted and lengthened by 195 to pack in extra men and serve equipment.

"We have reason to believe that the wreck may be lying on the seabed in Egyptian coastal waters and we intend formally to request permission to conduct a search there to find it," Mr Eshed told the Israeli Foreign Ministry today.

The Dakar was last heard of in a coded radio message sent on January 21, 1968, after which it had left Haifa and was making the long journey of its voyage under water at a speed of seven knots.

A French and an American submarine also disappeared at roughly the same time.

Kidnapped envoy seen on video

Mr William Bushley, the US diplomat kidnapped in Beirut 10 months ago, was alive and well as recently as last week, a video film released yesterday showed.

On the film obtained by Reuters, the International television news agency, he said that fellow-Americans Mr Jerome Levin and Mr Benjamin Weitz, also kidnapped last year, were alive and well, too.

The Islamic Jihad, (IJI) West Wall group said it was holding the men hostage with ten other US citizens.

A search extending over tens of thousands of square miles conducted by the seven services of five countries and two front Capron found no trace of the Dakar until a year later, when an emergency fluss was washed up on the Mediterranean coast in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip.

The mystery was deepened by the unexplained fact that two radio messages purported to be from the submarine were received in Israel at the time of the disappearance, but were dismissed by the intelligence

services as misinformation to disrupt the hunt for the crew. Because of the "deco" messages and the fact that six US service submarines are believed to have been in the area at the time of the disappearance, there are the who have never completely been traced and the crew taken prisoner. "These sources" have a "strong" theory.

"Our main concern is to find the remains of the crew and bring them back to Israel," explained Mr G. "One of the central tenets of our policy is that the US will make every effort to help any families lost above the funeral in Israeli soil."

The disappearance of the Dakar was long treated as a public indignation in Israel. This month family members organised an emotional memorial service for the lost crew.

A special national ship named was made to allow a review of the missing crew. In addition, the status of soldiers under Jewish religious law at sea. Parliamentary acts have been put on the agenda about the chances of the future search along the coast. Such where the Israeli believe the wreck may be lying 1,000 deep.

Couple who kept sex slave jailed

Bundeswehr (AP) - A court yesterday convicted a West German couple of sexually abusing their child's nanny and sentenced them to long prison terms.

Gisela Engelbrecht, aged 41, the wealthy owner of a cable factory near Düsseldorf, was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, and her 29-year-old wife Helma was given a six-year

prison term for keeping Miss Sylvia Hanke as a sex slave over a 15-month period.

They were found guilty of possessing child sexual pictures, causing severe bodily harm and deprivation of personal liberty. Engelbrecht's sentence was more severe because he was the instigator, the court said.

The case came to light when Eintracht Herten, near 19, set to police after she was raped by Engelbrecht. She was 18 in 1982 when she was 19 to care for the couple's five-year-old daughter, Paula.

Instead the couple held her in a windowless basement room their home, where she was sexually assaulted, threatened and beaten.

Three killed as gunmen take over in Sidon

From Robert Fisk, Beirut

As Israeli Army convoys continued yesterday to creep south down the coast road from Sidon in advance of the Israeli withdrawal from the city, the growing wariness of southern Lebanese continued, with gun battles in the large Ploesti camp at Ein Helwe and three reported killings, including that of a seven-year-old schoolgirl.

The overnight fighting in Ein Helwe - between guerrillas and

came under fire from Israeli tanks at a checkpoint.

Western correspondents - whom the Israeli are attempting to exclude from southern Lebanon - were unable to visit the scene of the shooting, outside Tyre.

If there was any hope for Sidon yesterday, it came in Beirut, where the Education Minister, Mr Ghazi al-Hafiz, withdrew his resignation and

Kremlin's silence fuels talk

From Richard Owen Moscow

"Mark my words," it without Kremlin watch said. "These rumours about the attack are going to become more substantial the longer it stays out of sight."

One drawback of a class and ambassadorial society is the Soviet Union is that it is absence of official statements.