

S.B. No. 1 (Plain)

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METROPOLITAN POLICE

137

SPECIAL BRANCH

Special Report }

9th day of October, 1968

SUBJECT V.S.C.

"Autumn
Offensive"

Reference to Papers

346/68/15(B)

The most important single event of the past week is that the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has decided not to back the demonstration of the 27th October. This means that the pacifist element, which has hitherto provided a large percentage of the demonstrators at any street action in London, will be absent, and that the unruly faction will not be able to shelter behind a screen of peaceful marchers. The attitude of the Communist Party will probably be decided at a Joint Action for Peace Consultative Conference due to be held in Manchester on 13.10.68, and if the communists decline to take part another large segment of reasonably responsible protesters will be withdrawn from the scene.

These factors are leading to a growing mood of despondency in V.S.C. circles, and there is a tendency to clutch at straws. For example, a campaign has begun to marshal V.S.C. support for the A.E.F. strike, and it is hoped that the engineers will reciprocate by taking part in the demonstration of the 27th October in large numbers. Soundings taken in the trade union movement indicate that this is likely to be merely a pious wish, and that only D.A.T.A. and A.S.S.E.T. are going to give the V.S.C. any appreciable support. Attempts to link recent events in Northern Ireland and Chicago with the probable course of the forthcoming demonstration are being made, but propaganda on these lines is subject to the law of diminishing returns, and the theme is already well-worn. On the financial side the organisation is running at a loss of about £70 a month, and appeal for an extra donation of 5/- per V.S.C. member per month has been launched.

The fatalistic view, common to almost all intending participants in the demonstration, that there will be serious disorder is having a

"backlash" effect on the more timid on the British left. It is noticeable that some of the original enthusiasts are now having second thoughts, and it is known that the leaders of the V.S.C. now plan to be on view when the photographers record the start of the march, and at the final dispersal, but intend to absent themselves during the intervening "confrontation" with Police. An appeal at a recent press conference on the lines that if only the Police will stay away all will be well has been greeted with derision and disbelief: even the most politically-naive student or starry-eyed intellectual finds this hard to swallow, and treats the pronouncement as so much mere window-dressing for the mass media.

Television companies have been making approaches to various groups of demonstrators to obtain interviews and film meetings in progress. The financial inducements they are offering are substantial, and some groups are giving them every assistance. We can expect a spate of films dealing exhaustively with the rights and wrongs of militant action as a medium for achieving social change and forcing drastic alterations to government policies: no doubt official reticence will be subject to mis-interpretation, and a fairly one-sided presentation will ensue.

New "targets" mentioned in the last few days are:

New Zealand House
The Greek Embassy
West End Central Police Station
Guys Hospital
American Express, Haymarket.

Lambeth V.S.C. are discussing a "two-pronged attack" on Police premises. The suggestion was made at a recent meeting that they cause damage at Tintagel House and enter Vauxhall Garage by night to put sugar in the petrol tanks of Police coaches. Any indication that these plans are to be put into effect will be made the subject of a special report.

The Glasgow contingent - about 160 strong - will be spending the night of the 26th/27th October in London after travelling in coaches from that city, and an appeal has been made for overnight accommodation. The Oxford contingent will be travelling by special train on the 27th; a report that a large group of Plaid Cymru supporters will be present on the day has yet to be confirmed. The Camden Committee for Peace in Vietnam, some 40 strong, will be assembling at South End Green, N.W.3 at 11.45 a.m. on the 27th and march by way of Camden Town, Mornington Crescent, Gower Street and St. Martins Lane to the Embankment to join the main body by 2 p.m. that day.

Conrad Dixon
Chief Inspector.

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H CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT.