



S.B. No. 1 (Plain)

METROPOLITAN POLICE

SPECIAL BRANCH

Special Report }

Handwritten signatures and stamps, including a box with '1' and '2' and the word 'Initials..'

16th day of October 1969

SUBJECT Ultra-Leftism in Britain - a Communist Party pamphlet. Reference to Papers

400/69/174

1. Submitted and reviewed herewith is a copy of "Ultra-Leftism in Britain", a 56 page pamphlet written by Betty REID and published by the Communist Party, 16, King Street, London, W.C.2. It can be obtained from Central Books Ltd., 37, Grays Inn Road, W.C.1, price 5 shillings. Nothing in it appears to be actionable.

2. The pamphlet gives an account of the main left-wing groups outside the Communist Party, in three categories, Trotskyist, Anarchist and Maoist. It is well-informed on Trotskyists, but is very superficial on Anarchists and Maoists. It has two main aims; first to reassure communists of the soundness of King Street policies, and secondly to put forward the doctrine of the Party that allies must be sought among other groups on the Left on the basis of mutual co-operation on specific issues.

3. The writer states that during the 1960's there grew up a world-wide movement of youth in all countries which was anti-establishment, anti-racialist and anti-war in outlook. This development is welcome, in her view, as a further nail in the coffin of capitalism and world imperialism. What is disturbing to her is that many young people who are influenced by this movement find their way not into the Communist Parties but into various ultra-left groups. In some instances they have been seduced by the false claims made by some groups, in others they have been carried along by a wave of genuine political feeling but without access to a correct Marxist perspective. For her it is less important that these young people join the Communist Party than that they should fight against Imperialism and Capitalism. The aim of communists should be not to win them away from false views by sectarian arguments but to sponsor suitable activities into which ultra-left groups can be drawn. For this purpose it is necessary for communists to have some understanding of the policies of other groups.

4. The three categories of the ultra-left are as follows:-

"Trotskyist groups of various kinds, who may attack each other fiercely, but who nevertheless share a common heritage in that they look to the writings of Trotsky for their main inspiration and would publicly or privately agree that this was so.

Groups which do not have a trotskyist background and



whose policies stem from anarchist and syndicalist ideas.

Groups which consider that they support the line of the Communist Party of China, and here again there are many controversies and feuds between them."

5. Pages 8 to 16 deal with the alleged shortcomings of the Trotskyist movement during the period 1920-45. Reference is made to the permanent revolution theories of Trotsky, and these are compared unfavourably with the "Socialism in one Country" stand taken by Lenin and Stalin. Trotskyism is found to be characterised by short cuts, adventurist policies and many other faults, none of which Betty REID attributes to communism.

6. In a passage on the recent history of Trotskyist groups in Britain Betty REID writes with insight on entryism, and the role played by the IVth International. She then deals in turn with the different trotskyist groups at present operating in Britain.

7. Socialist Labour League (page 18)

It is clear from this passage that the S.L.L. is one of the chief targets of Communist Party hostility. Gerry HEALY is said to have come to prominence in 1953 when he led a significant section of the 400 British trotskyists away from the IVth International. He was joined by Peter FRYER, an ex-Daily Worker reporter, who in 1957 became the editor of the S.L.L. publication "Newsletter". The S.L.L. was a secret organisation until 1959 and did not formally declare itself to be Trotskyist until 1960. Among the many faults attributed to the S.L.L. by Betty REID are, the indiscriminate advocacy of strike action, unfair attacks on other groups, secrecy about its finances and internal elections, the fencing off of its Youth Section from all other groups, and the extravagant wastage of potential revolutionary talent.

8. International Marxist Group

The I.M.G. was formed from those loyal supporters of the IVth International who did not follow Gerry HEALY in his break-away in 1953. They buried themselves in the Labour Party and became a semi-secret group round the publication "The Week". By 1968 the IVth International policies on entryism changed. The I.M.G. came into the open and produced a new magazine "International", and was officially acknowledged as the representative of the IVth International in Britain. Despite some misgivings towards the Labour Party I.M.G. continue to favour entryism as a means of achieving socialist policies. Betty REID claims that I.M.G. policies are characterised by bravado, rhetoric and lack of realism, but her strictures on this group are quite moderate.

9. Revolutionary Socialist League.

This organisation, started by Ted. GRANT in the 1950's, is now mainly in evidence because of its publication the

[REDACTED]

9. "Militant". It is described as a trotskyist group which travels along its own route and more strongly opposed to communism than the rest.

10. Revolutionary Marxist Tendency

This group of supporters of Michael PABLO is said to be very small, and nearer in outlook to the pro-Chinese Communist groups than other trotskyists. Members of this Tendency are the true Pabloites although Gerry HEALY wrongly uses the term to describe members of I.M.G. (Note: Betty REID probably included this group to clear up a misunderstanding which arose in V.S.C. circles when Privacy became secretary. He is a Pabloite, i.e. a member of the Revolutionary Marxist Tendency, but not, as was thought by Communists and others, a member of I.M.G.)

11. Revolutionary Workers Party.

According to the pamphlet the R.W.P. is a lunatic fringe distributing the publications "European Marxist Review" and the "Red Flag", based on material supplied by Privacy of the Latin-American break-away section of the IVth International.

12. International Socialism.

Betty REID offers her explanation for the description "state capitalists" which is often ascribed to I.S. Trotsky made a number of rash descriptions of the regime of the Soviet Union, one of these being that it was a form of state capitalism. An American trotskyist, Max SCHACTMAN, was much taken with this description even though later Trotsky himself abandoned it. SCHACTMAN was in favour of the overthrow of all regimes, even that of the Soviet Union, in the name of "International Socialism". Followers of SCHACTMAN existed in Britain for several years and rallied behind the publications "International Socialism" (quarterly), "Labour Worker" and the youth paper "Rebel". The current publication of this group is "Socialist Worker". Some I.S. members are openly anti-communist, but many others have worked with communists on various issues. The writer suggests that communists must define the issues very closely when working with I.S. as the latter have anarchist as well as empire building tendencies.

13. Anarchist and Syndicalist Groups.

In Betty REID's view anarchist ideas are simply a reaction to right-wing social democracy and are not of serious consequence. She believes that anarchists have chosen an isolated and disruptive path but that their attitude of criticism is of value, and could be harnessed in the struggle against capitalism. She discusses only one anarchist group, Solidarity, which she describes as basically trotskyist.

14. Maoist Groups.

Maoist groups are to be recognised as such when they attack communist ideas such as "peaceful co-existence" as revisionist. The writer finds it impossible to discern the lines along which Maoist groups divide. She mentions three such groups:-

The Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), which was set up by Reg. BIRCH, and publishes "The Worker".

The Working Peoples Party of England, which publishes the "Workers Broadsheet", and which is said to advocate the formation of a "peoples army".

Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Britain, which supports Liu Shao Chi instead of Chairman Mao, and produces the publication "Red Front".

15. The remainder of the pamphlet is taken up with a defence of Communist Party attitudes on the Paris uprisings of 1968, and the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. The comment regarding the influence of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation on V.S.C. is particularly shrewd. For a time the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation was in the grip of Trotskyists from the International Marxist Group, and the rise of V.S.C. was closely connected with this. Now that I.M.G. members have been ousted from the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation the V.S.C. has gone into a decline. (The implication of this is that Trotskyists left to themselves have no money).

16. In her conclusion Betty REID calls for a forum of the left, and announces that the Communist Party is prepared to work with other groups on the left on specific issues, without bans or proscriptions.

17. The I.S. and I.M.G. come out of Betty REID's review with the fewest scars and on the evidence available it would appear that they are the only groups of those described which are likely to respond to the C.P. call for joint action. Relations between the S.L.L. and the C.P. seem to have made no improvement despite the fact that Gerry HEALY is not the principal figure, though Betty REID is not quite as vituperative as some other members of the C.P. It is some three years since [Privacy] was instructed "to do a hatchet job on the S.L.L. Young Socialists" in the Y.C.L. bulletin. This latest pamphlet is an attempt to tentatively "bury the hatchet".

[3]

(R. Creamer)  
Sergeant.

Submitted

[4]

Chief Inspector.

[5]

CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT.

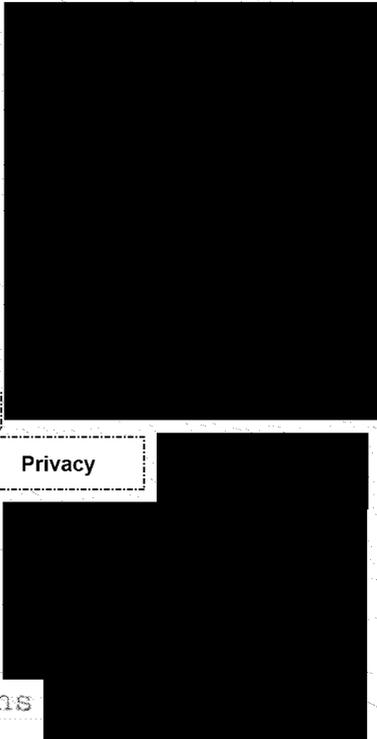


Appendix to Special Branch report dated 16.10.69 concerning the booklet "Ultra-Left in Britain"  
-400/69/174

The following organisations and persons are mentioned in the above booklet:-

- Communist Party - 400/69/174
- Young Communist League ✓ - 400/69/70
- Socialist Labour League ✓ - 400/68/217
- International Marxist Group ✓ - 400/69/135
- Revolutionary Socialist League ✓ - 400/64/147
- Revolutionary Marxist Tendency ✓ - 400/68/208
- Revolutionary Workers Party ✓ - 400/64/21
- International Socialism ✓ - 400/69/132
- Solidarity ✓ - mentions
- Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist) ✓ - 400/68/166
- Marxist Leninist Organisation Of Britain ✓ - 400/66/41
- Vietnam Solidarity Campaign ✓ - 400/69/41
- Britain Vietnam Solidarity Front - 400/66/120
- Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation - 400/64/135
- British Vietnam Committee ✓ - 400/54/23

- - - - -
- Betty REID - RF 402/ Privacy
  - Gerry HEALY - RF 402/ Privacy
  - Peter FRYER - RF 402/ Privacy
  - Privacy - RF Privacy
  - Ted. GRANT - RF 301/MP/6784
  - Michael PABLO - RF 405/47/469
  - Max SCHACTION - RF 402/48/98
  - Pat. JORDAN - RF 402/60/182
  - Privacy - RF Privacy
  - Privacy - mentioned Privacy
  - Tony CLIFF - RF 408/56/38
  - Privacy - RF Privacy
  - Privacy - RF Privacy
  - Privacy - several mentions



The following publications are also mentioned in the above booklet:-

- Newsletter (now Workers Press) - 347/69/1
  - Socialist Outlook - 400/55/235
  - Keep Left - 347/67/11
  - Fourth International - 347/41/29
  - International - 347/64/23
  - The Week - 347/64/23
  - Intercontinental Press - mentions
  - Militant - 347/64/29
  - Socialist Fight - 347/58/9
  - Socialist Current - 347/62/6
  - Red Flag - 347/63/21
  - Socialist Worker - 347/64/11
  - International Socialism - mentions
  - Freedom - 347/67/22
  - Black Flag - 347/42/3
  - Monthly Review - 347/53/9
  - Red Front - mentions
  - Solidarity - 347/64/5
  - Black Dwarf - 347/68/33
- - - - -