

SPECIAL BRANCH
ANNUAL REPORT

1981

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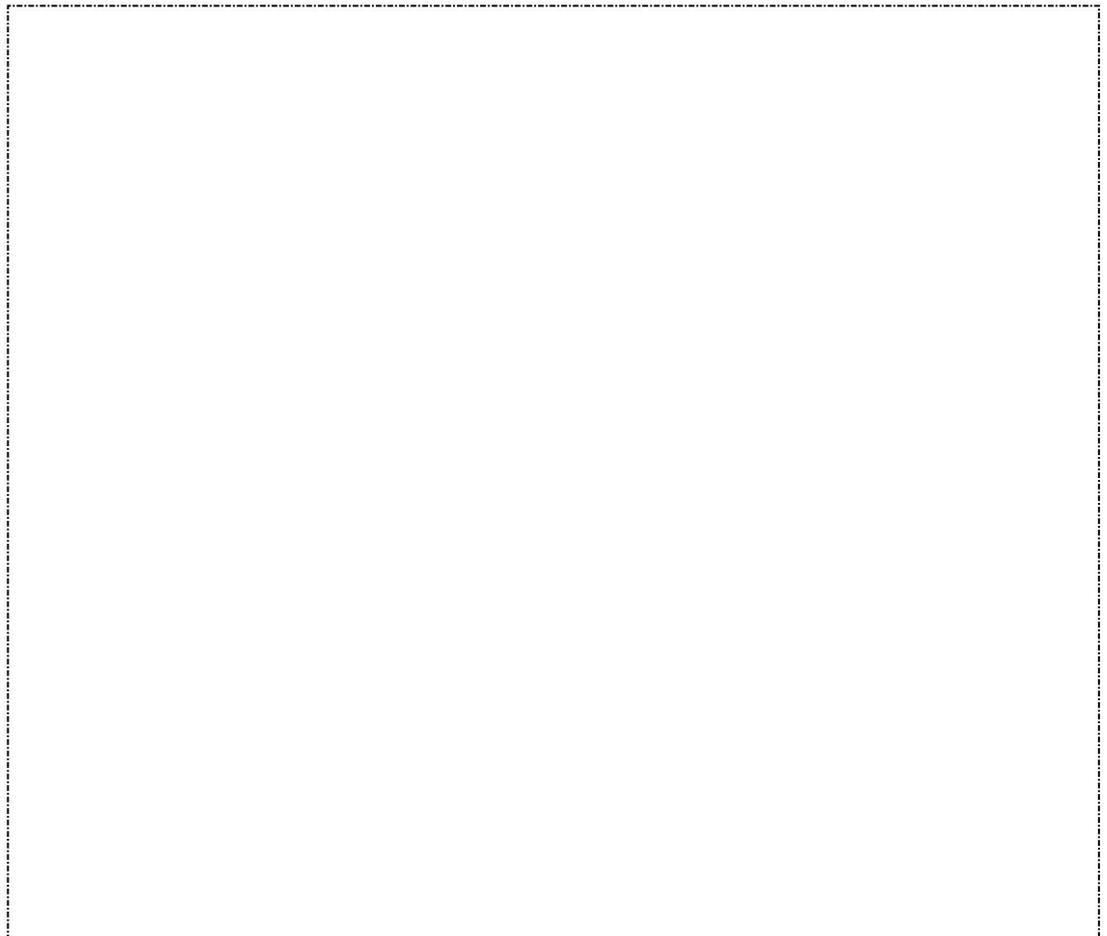
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Special Branch
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Commissioner

I have the honour to submit this report on the work of your Special Branch during 1981.

The year was marked by unprecedented civil disorders witnessed in numerous inner city areas throughout the country, some of the most serious of which occurred in Brixton during April and July when hundreds of young persons were arrested and many police officers injured.



PUBLIC ORDER

The year saw a series of incidents which became well-publicised and helped to widen the rift between police and certain elements of the black community. The first occurred in January when a fire broke out at a West Indian party in Deptford, causing the deaths of 13 young blacks. Political extremists alleged that the fire was the latest in a series of "burnings" which the black community has had to endure, together with police indifference to their plight. As a result of this fire, the 'Black Peoples' Day of Action' was organised in March to show solidarity against all forms of racism in the United Kingdom and, much to the surprise of the organisers, as many as 3,500 West Indians marched from Deptford to Hyde Park. During the course of the march, about 300 young blacks broke away

from the main body of protesters, and rampaged through the streets smashing shop windows, looting and attacking police.

Undoubtedly the most serious public order incidents of the year occurred during the violent disturbances which took place during April and July in many 'deprived' areas of the country. These incidents began in Brixton in April when a number of black youths attacked two police officers after the latter attempted to question a coloured youth who had been stabbed. Following this single incident, an orgy of violence and destruction took place in which groups of predominately black youths threw petrol bombs at the police, caused extensive criminal damage and engaged in widespread looting and robbery.

These disturbances led to the arrest of 318 persons, damage to more than 100 police vehicles and injury to many hundreds of police officers. Following the rioting, the Home Secretary promised to examine the causes of the disturbances and appointed Lord Scarman to inquire into the circumstances surrounding the disorder, amid speculation that the black community in Brixton would boycott the proceedings.

In July, prior to the completion of the Scarman report, violence again erupted in the suburbs of London and rapidly spread to several other areas of the country where the scenes witnessed in Brixton earlier in the year were to become all too familiar. Looting and the use of petrol bombs were again prevalent. The media reported that the riots had been planned by political extremists; whilst it is true to say that a number of anarchists and members of left-wing groups were identified during the disorders, it was clear from intelligence reports that the troubles were spontaneous and that these individuals capitalised on an existing explosive situation.

The revival of interest in the anti-nuclear campaign throughout Europe resulted in a marked increase in membership and commitment for many environmental organisations in this country. One such organisation, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) currently enjoys a respectable image which has attracted wide support from ordinary apolitical citizens and consequently membership increased from 4-5,000 to a little over 25,000 persons during the year.

As a result of this revival, London witnessed crowds in excess of 100,000 at the annual CND march and demonstration in October. The protest was very well organised and conducted almost without incident but the event was relatively staid compared with the early sixties, even though speakers representing Holland, West Germany, Australia and Japan attended the event. However, the organisers were extremely pleased with the attendance figures which clearly reflected the growth of the movement in this rather emotive sphere of public protest.



The activities and campaigns of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) during 1981 were aimed almost exclusively against Tory policy and, to this end, leading Party activists devoted much of their energy towards fomenting industrial unrest. The leadership also planned to gain a controlling interest in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) during the period under review, but this proposal met with little success. Nevertheless, representation on the policy-making committee of the CND remains a prime target of the SWP leadership, who clearly

consider disarmament a long term prospect through which to project the Party. The financial difficulties experienced by the SWP would appear to be the root cause of the decline of this ailing Party and its dominated groups. This lack of funds has also affected the Party's newspaper which appeared until recently to have escaped any financial restrictions, and comes at a time when the journal is also plagued by distribution problems. It is clear that until the SWP overcomes its present financial crisis, it is unlikely to succeed in its efforts to be a major influence in the left-wing political arena.

The International Marxist Group (IMG), the most international of the Trotskyist groups, has maintained links with other, predominantly European, Trotskyist organisations throughout the year. The party rose to prominence during the 1960s but has fallen from grace more recently due, in part, to its middle class/student origins. This problem, coupled with the realisation that its efforts have been largely dissipated by its lack of organisation and resources, had been recognised and IMG now channels its efforts into three main areas; namely the infiltration of industry, the Labour Party and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

The hardline Trotskyist organisation, Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), formed in 1976, posed problems in the public order field through its espousal of confrontation politics. Although small in number, it gives the impression of having far greater support than actually exists, through the adept use of publicity and the utilisation of its excellent contacts in the media. It is more commonly recognised through its satellite organisations; East London Workers Against Racism (ELWAR), South London Workers Against Racism (SOLWAR) and the Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign (SPTAC).

The Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) remains a well-organised and affluent Trotskyist organisation with the largest paper membership of a group of its kind in the United Kingdom. It continues to be subsidised by the Libyan regime, which allegedly financed a new printing press for the organisation during the year. The Party organised only two minor demonstrations in 1981 and is not considered to be a threat to public order.

Troops Out Movement (TOM)

51. This year has been an enigmatic one for the Troops Out Movement: while seeming to flourish through its representation on, and commitment to, the activities of various hunger-strike committees, TOM itself has fallen into disarray, both financially and politically. Until recently the Steering Committee, elected in February 1981, had failed to carry out even the basic tasks of maintaining the London-based National Office and ensuring a sound financial base. Much of this had gone unnoticed by the ordinary members of TOM who had committed themselves wholeheartedly to the Hunger-Strike Campaign and it has only been due to the more active TOM supporters that the situation has begun to be rectified. The ending of the hunger-strike has, however, left TOM in a political vacuum. The movement is unsure whether to pursue its main political platform based on 'Troops Out Now' - 'Self Determination for the Irish People as a Whole', or to adopt a change of approach with more emphasis on demands for a United Ireland. It may be that its annual delegates' visit to Belfast in August has caused this rethink, but it will be some time before a clearer more definitive policy evolves.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Animal Liberation Front

39. During the night of 3rd/4th January, considerable damage was caused to the London homes and property of five persons employed in fields of research necessitating experiments on animals. Simultaneous paint-daubing and more serious attacks were made in Oxford and Cambridge against houses owned by persons likewise employed.

40. In a message to the Press Association, responsibility for the behaviour was claimed by the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) which, during its four years of existence, is thought to have caused damage to property totalling about one million pounds. During the afternoon of 4th January, persons entering Conway Hall, WC1, to attend a meeting of animal welfare organisations were handed leaflets listing the names and private addresses of individuals employed in this field of research. One person named was Lord Zuckerman, former chief scientific adviser to the Government. Although the persons handing out these leaflets were unidentified, they were reported to have made it clear that they had personal knowledge of the attacks.

Central London Hunt Saboteurs

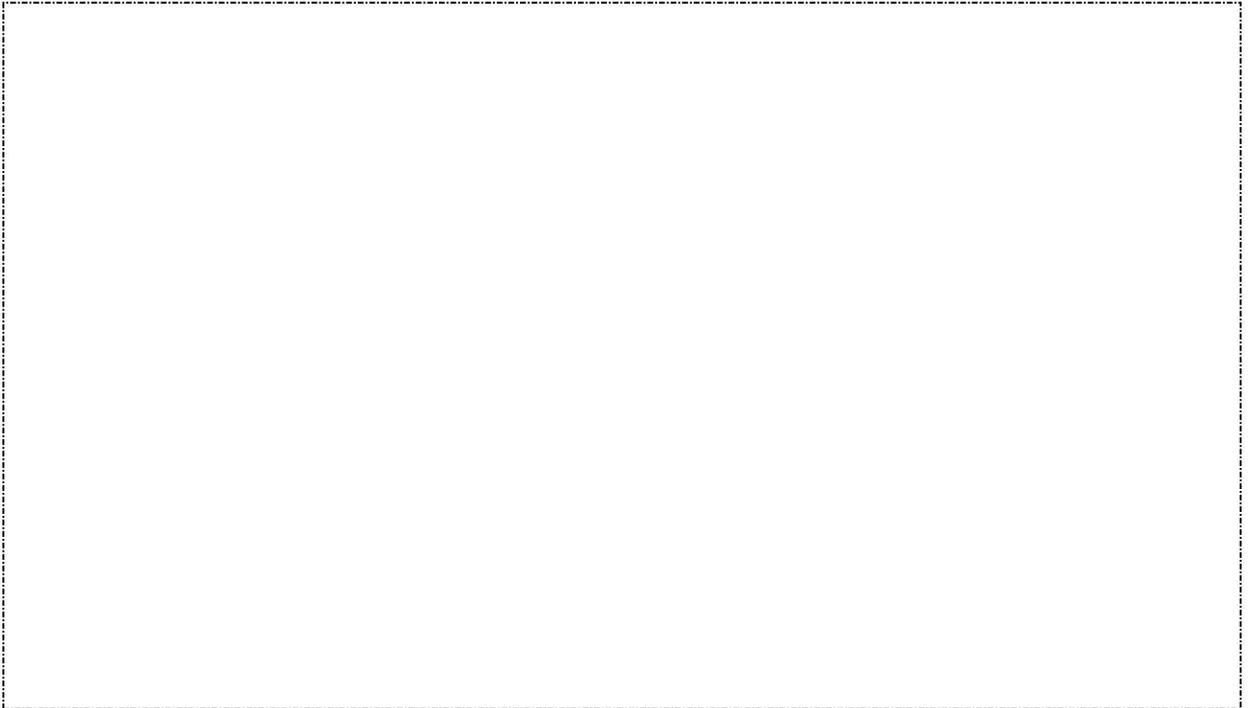
50. On 25th January, 800 supporters of the Central London Hunt Saboteurs marched from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square, where a rally was held to condemn the Government for its failure to outlaw blood sports. Although two of the speakers attempted to politicize what was ostensibly an apolitical occasion, the main call to the demonstrators was to step up direct action against huntsmen and to attend the Waterloo Cup hare coursing meet at Altcar from 11th/13th February in such numbers as to disrupt proceedings.

Animal Liberation Front

31. During the early hours of 4th March, damage was caused to furriers' premises in London, Brighton, Manchester, Leeds and Glasgow in synchronised action for which responsibility has been claimed by the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). Targets in London included Selfridges Department Store, which had red paint splashed across its main door and shop windows. Damage to other premises was effected by windows being smashed and 'super-glue' squirted into door locks. Slogans painted included "Ban the Fur Trade" and "Fur means Murder". In Hove an ALF member was arrested after catapulting marbles through a furrier's window.

32. An ALF spokesman claimed that 200 members took part in the action with the object of drawing public attention to the misery and suffering caused to the creatures trapped and reared for fur coats.

33. This latest action by the increasingly militant movement occurred one week after it claimed to have stolen 11 beagle dogs from a Southampton laboratory and two months after synchronised acts of vandalism against the homes of persons employed in research necessitating experiments on animals.



MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Events in Brixton and Related Matters

21. During the 10th/13th April, some of the worst scenes of civil disorder witnessed in this country in recent years occurred when mobs of

predominantly black youths ran amok through the streets of Brixton, particularly in Railton Road and Mayall Road. During an orgy of destruction and violence, which included the burning of buildings and motor vehicles, wanton and indiscriminate damage to property, widespread looting, robbery and assaults, the principal object of hostility was the police (at whom petrol bombs were thrown) although members of other emergency services also came under attack. During the conflict injuries were sustained by 157 police officers (many of whom were subsequently detained in hospital), 4 police vehicles were destroyed and 129 damaged. A total of 318 persons were arrested.

22. Any part played by political extremists, either before or during the disturbances, is as yet uncertain, although anarchists based in Brixton have claimed that 15 of their number took part in the clashes with police and two were indeed arrested. Two of the most vociferous black extremist leaders were present at the start of rioting (both lived locally) but quickly absented themselves from the scene and thereafter kept a very low profile.

23. In the aftermath of the episode, political extremists and opportunists readily sought to exploit the situation with a view to recruitment, personal prestige and fomentation of further disorder. Prominent amongst these was the ubiquitous and politically ambitious West Indian lawyer Rudy NARAYAN, who swiftly set up the Brixton Defence Committee (BDC) - with himself as self-appointed spokesman - and was equally swiftly ousted by younger, more militant blacks, led by Linton JOHNSON, a virulently anti-white and anti-police poet who is something of a cult hero amongst young blacks.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)

14. On 24th October, a total of 110,000 persons participated in CND's national demonstration and rally in Central London; this was one of a series of such events in European capitals aimed particularly at influencing public opinion against the proposed siting in Western Europe of American 'Cruise' and 'Trident' missiles. The demonstrators, who were well-stewarded by CND volunteer officials, assembled at Victoria Embankment and marched in a massive column to the rally venue in Serpentine Road, Hyde Park, via Trafalgar Square and Piccadilly. In order to ensure that the entire assembly arrived at the rally by the appointed time, police diverted some 20,000 of the demonstrators along a supplementary route through the Victoria area and the tails of both columns finally entered Hyde Park some five hours after the first marchers had left Victoria Embankment.

.../...

15. The rally itself reflected the wide international resurgence of the previously moribund disarmament movement, speakers representing countries such as Holland, West Germany, Australia and Japan. Among the British contingent of speakers were Michael FOOT, Tony BENN, Lord BROCKWAY, and Professor E P THOMPSON. The assembly finally dispersed in the same co-operative and orderly manner as had prevailed throughout the day. Despite the presence of small groups representing every section of left-wing and anti-establishment opinion, the overwhelming number of genuine pacifists and environmentalists ensured that an impressive and dignified event remained free of untoward incident.

TROTSKYIST AND ANARCHIST MATTERS

Picket Outside Paddington Green Police Station

8. On 4th November a vocal but otherwise peaceful picket was held outside Paddington Green Police Station by the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and the Troops Out Movement (TOM) to draw attention to the 13 people detained there under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and to encourage the Government to withdraw British troops from Northern Ireland. Approximately 50 protesters heard speeches from Ann DILLON, Fran EDEN and Keith THOMPSON. They then marched twice around the police station and after about two hours dispersed peacefully.

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

23. During the weekend of Friday 13th November to Sunday 15th November the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament held its Annual Conference at Queen Mary's College, Mile End Road, E1. The conference was attended by more than 500 delegates representing CND groups and affiliated organisations from areas throughout the British Isles. Much of the conference was devoted to organisational changes to cope with the campaign's phenomenal growth from 3,000 to 30,000 members in a year. Faced with a total of 126 resolutions the conference mainly followed established CND policy, although one departure from this was a vote not to fight for British withdrawal from NATO. Conference elected a new chairman, Miss Joan RUDDOCK, a Labour Party activist who defeated another contender for the post, John COX (a veteran CND campaigner).