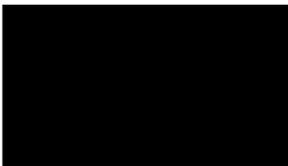


SPECIAL BRANCH  
ANNUAL REPORT  
1983



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Whilst continuing to attack Government policies, especially in respect of the Trade Union Reform Bill, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) focussed its attention on the industrial front, as evidenced by a presence at many industrial disputes. The Party did not field its own candidates at the General Election but instead gave its support to the Labour Party.

Earlier in the year SWP involvement with the CND ebbed because of the consensus that the anti-nuclear campaign had lost momentum. The SWP was well represented, however, at the CND rally in October with some 900 supporters taking part. There are signs that the Party is now emerging from a period of self-doubt and increased effort can be expected particularly with regard to street campaigns.

The International Marxist Group emerged from its 1982 Conference renamed the Socialist League (SL) and, members hoped, revitalised by the process. Although it boasts 500 members nationwide, internal squabbles among leading members have left the rank and file confused and demoralised. Their weekly newspaper 'Socialist Challenge' underwent a similar renaming process and now appears as 'Socialist Action'.

The Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) remains one of the largest and best organised of the Trotskyist groups. Its main objective during 1983 appears to have been to build its youth section, the Young Socialists (WRPYS) into a viable organisation.

The WRP fielded 21 candidates at the General Election but the result was, for them, disappointing with the party receiving a mere 3,854 votes. Overall, the WRP seems to have gained ground during the year, both financially and in respect of recruitment, but it remains to be seen if many new recruits will remain committed as the WRP is notoriously demanding of its members' time and money. Although there has been a noticeable increase in street protest the WRP has never posed a threat to public order.

In contrast, the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) continues to pose a public order problem, and for its size, a fairly constant 200 countrywide, it spreads its activities widely and noisily on the streets. It attempts to provoke police into making arrests, thereby leading to protracted court appearances which, with the occasional acquittal, provides further propaganda for the RCG.

The main direction of RCG operations continues to be support for 'Political Prisoners' in Northern Ireland. This manifests itself in demonstrations by the North, South and West London Irish Solidarity Campaigns, and by sending letters, newspapers and other literature to convicted prisoners, not only terrorists, in British prisons.

Although numerically small, the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), a hard-line Trotskyist group, operates through a countrywide network of small cells and dedicated members are moved according to need. Its adroit manipulation of the media has ensured that various causes, particularly in the anti-racist field, receive disproportionate coverage. This is facilitated by operating through 'front' organisations, such as 'Workers Against Racism'. Consequently the true nature of the RCP is not always understood by the media or the general public.

'Red Action', a small, potentially violent, Trotskyist group, fielded significant numbers in opposition to a National

Front rally and in support of a march by the RCG. Although ideologically opposed to the National Front, its members adopt a similar mode of dress and aggressive 'skinhead' behaviour. Any future encounter between left and right wing organisations would allow it to fulfil its desire for a physical confrontation with fascists.

The 121 Anarchist Collective in Railton Road, Brixton continues to be the foremost anarchist forum in London. Members of this group are among those responsible for the regular publication of 'Freedom', 'Black Flag' and 'The Crowbar'. The last is an underground broadsheet which publicises the concerns of the squatting fraternity in Brixton while sniping at the police and local council and advocating looting and violent resistance to authority. More disturbingly violent in outlook is a broadsheet called 'Class War' which virtually calls for a bloody revolution by the oppressed workers. The anarchists have done little in public other than their disruptive attendance at the 'Stop the City' Campaign and CND's October rally. Their front line soldiers are always the young punks who tend to identify with the movement without any clear understanding of its ideals.



PUBLIC ORDER

Relations between police and coloured youths were generally more subdued than in recent years and there was an encouraging reduction in incidents of disorder in some areas traditionally regarded as racially sensitive. This improvement is considered to be due in part to the formation of Police Consultative Groups which enable police officers, black community leaders and council representatives to debate local problems.

One event which did cause public order difficulties for police, however, was the death from shotgun wounds of a coloured youth, Colin ROACH, in the foyer of Stoke Newington Police Station. This incident sparked off numerous demonstrations, resulting in over 100 arrests for public order offences and led to the formation of two pressure groups. Attempts by the 'white left' to infiltrate one of these groups, the Roach Family Support Committee, were largely unsuccessful, but the Stoke Newington and Hackney Defence Campaign drew support exclusively from the RCG.



1983 has seen the animal activist movement become a major threat to public order, not so much because of the size of demonstrations, but through the willingness of individuals to be arrested for the 'cause'. There are numerous groups in London and their membership is steadily increasing.

Animal welfare has traditionally been the preserve of the RSPCA but today's activists feel this organisation has abdicated its responsibilities. Accordingly, animal activist leaders support a policy of infiltration into the RSPCA in order to make it more militant. Political motivation on the part of animal activists is minimal, however, although there seem to be links with the Ecology and Peace Movements.

Many animal activists are quite law-abiding but a substantial minority believe that only 'public disobedience' will have any effect. The leading exponents of this activity are drawn from the considerable punk-anarchist movement which adheres to the cause. These people, while supporting actions by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) and other groups, frequently challenge police at demonstrations and many are arrested. The BUAV is now the umbrella organisation for the various groups and is believed to have a membership of 15,000. The organisation of greatest concern, however,

is the secretive Animal Liberation Front (ALF), members of which resort to theft, burglary and criminal damage in order to 'liberate' animals.

Violence has featured in several demonstrations by animal activists and the serious disorder which ensued led to numerous arrests. Policing these events has proved difficult as the demonstrators have adopted a cell structure for security purposes and use 'disinformation' tactics in order to mislead police. They can amass substantial support at short notice as demonstrators are willing to be called out from all parts of the country.

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) continues to be the largest and most influential 'peace' group in the country, attracting a broad range of opinions across the political spectrum. The organisation is considerably influenced by the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), whose position was enhanced by the General Secretary of CND, Monsignor Bruce KENT when he stated in November that the CPGB and the Society of Friends (Quakers) were the most consistent supporters of disarmament. The present membership of CND is estimated to be about 500,000, of which 200,000 are regarded as active supporters.

Tensions within CND will undoubtedly increase in 1984 and it is felt that if the organisation fails to achieve its ends lawfully it will gradually resort to physical means, creating greater public order problems and making the adoption of violent measures by 'anti-militarist' groups a possibility.

The Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp continues to flourish and can attract several thousand female supporters on occasions. The wider 'peace' movement now regards the women as an awkward group of ultra feminists whom they are nonetheless constrained to support.

Trotskyist Groups

In general terms the coming period is viewed by the various Trotskyist groups as one of retrenchment and consolidation, aimed at ensuring a strong political base. Morale among these groups is now recovering after the defeat of the 'left' at the General Election and in consequence there is likely to be marginal increase in street activities.

Animal Activist Movement

This movement is certainly the growth industry of public protest and the signs are that 1984 will witness an increase in attacks on chicken farms, laboratories or anywhere else suspected of 'exploiting' animals. These protests have no identifiable political direction and, accordingly, they are most difficult to predict and combat. Nevertheless, one issue sure to attract vigorous attention is a Government White Paper intended to amend the Cruelty to Animals Act, 1876. Activists assert that this Paper will not improve matters and may make things worse. Consequently a wide range of protests directed against the Home Office can be anticipated.

Anti-Nuclear Movement/Anarchists

Even though anti-nuclear activities have abated temporarily, events will continue on a substantial scale. In the Metropolitan Police District London Peace Action will support another anarchist organised 'Stop the City' demonstration in March and Greenham Common Women will certainly make sporadic appearances, with their main targets being the Ministry of Defence, Parliament and Holloway Prison.

The key event will be the proposed visit to London in June of President REAGAN to attend a summit of 'Developed Countries'. His presence would certainly engender brief, but concerted action with the probability of large-scale civil disobedience. Also, isolated violence by 'punk anarchists' must be expected. The visit would also attract considerable opposition from Trotskyists and the CPGB.