Special Branch Annual Report 1973

### SPECIAL BRANCH ANNUAL REPORT

# 1973

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Special Branch New Scotland Yard SW1H OBG

#### Commissioner

I have the honour to submit this report on the work of your Special Branch during 1973.

The extremist scene in London was dominated for most of the year by the activities of Irish Republican terrorists who were responsible for a total of 97 incidents throughout Great Britain involving the use of car bombs, time bombs, letter bombs and incendiary devices. This represented the long-awaited transference of part of the IRA's campaign from Northern Ireland to this country, and the number of incidents here was the highest since the IRA's 1939 campaign. This situation placed great operational strain upon your national responsibility for countering such terrorist activity.

## (V) IRISH SUPPORT GROUPS IN BRITAIN

The year was notable for the comparative lack of overt activity among Irish support organisations in this country. The largest demonstration, supported by 2,000 persons, was staged in January but subsequent activity appeared to decrease in inverse proportion to the number of bombs which exploded in the capital, and by the end of the year attendance at demonstrations was low and the outlook for organisations in this category seemed bleak. The raison d'etre for these groups also changed during the year. In the early months protest was directed against the policy of interment but emphasis later shifted to demands for the withdrawal of troops from Northern Ireland and the return of Irish "political" prisoners to their native land. A feature of the year was the increase in the number of ad hoc committees, especially instant "Defence Committees", and these were invariably dominated by left-wingers, even when the persons defended were "Frovisional" IRA supporters. Among these bodies were the Belfast 10 Defence Committee, the Coventry 7 Defence Committee, the Luton 3 Defence Committee and the Blackburn 3 Defence Committee.

The Anxi-Interement League, which had been the dominant force in this field in 1972, experienced a dramatic decline. The year began hopefully enough with a march and rally on 28 January, the first anniversary of "Bloody Sunday", which attracted some 2,000 persons; a high proportion of these were from Trotskyist groups, but both main Republican organisations were well represented. The proceedings were peaceful and the number of participants was, for a change, rather in excess of that anticipated by the organisers. Signs of impending expiry were, however, soon evident: on 5 February the South London Branch was disbanded because of lack of interest;

a demonstration under the League's auspices in Hyde Park on 25 March on the subject of the White Paper attracted only 150 persons; and in early April Clann na h'Eireann withdrew its support for the League. Expectations were nevertheless raised in mid-April with the production, after a long gestation period, of the League's own monthly newspaper "Free Ireland", but publication ceased after only three issues. On 19 May a conference on "The British Labour Movement and the British Army in Ireland" was attended by about 500 persons, the majority being extreme left-wing activists.

The Irish Civil Righ	nts Association (Britain) claimed
	n London and branches in Liverpool,
	out undertook little activity during the
	a demonstration staged on 1 April when
	in an orderly manner from Hyde Park
	e an audience of about 450 heard a number
	eral from Ireland, lay stress on the
	the field of civil rights. The committee
	visional' Sinn Fein members or sympathisers
and comprised the following	7.18 5.18
Cheirman	Michael O'KANE
Cheirman Secretary	Michael O'KANE  Privacy
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Secretary	Privacy
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Unlike the Communist Party and the Maoists, Trotskyists in Britain have no association with, and owe no allegiance to, a foreign country. They are essentially international in outlook. One result of this is that Trotskyism is split into a number of rival groups constantly at ideological odds with each other and seldom able to make common cause. As one of the minor groups observed, in a parody of the old song, "we walk alike, we talk alike - and what is more we hate each other very much". Despite their differences the three principal Trotskyist groups saw a significant rise in their fortunes in 1973 and they exuded an air of confidence which was in marked contrast to the soul-searching of the Communist Party. Furthermore, their influence can be expected to increase, particularly in industry where the International Socialists may soon come close to rivalling the influence of the Communist Party at shop floor level. Each advance made by Trotskyists is widely publicised in the torrent of propaganda which issues from their presses, and consequently they are seldow out of the public eye. For this reason it is as well to remember that the total of Trotskyists in this country is still less than one-third of that of the Communist Party.

In three years the International Socialism group has transformed itself from a university based party to an industrially orientated one, increasing its membership in the process from 991 in 1971 to 3,500 in late 1973. It is claimed that well over 1,500 members are now white collar or manual workers, compared with only about 600 students. Growth has not been achieved without problems, not the least of which was solidarity. The re-emergence of right and left "factions" - as dissident elements are known - gave the leadership cause for concern, but it was a sign of its growing confidence that it was able to deal with these rebels by threats of suspension or expulsion. The leadership itself was not immune from factionalism and allegations that the central

organisation had become too remote forced the entire executive committee to resign in August, to be replaced by a hard-core of militant industrial organisers under the control of Andreas NAGLIATTI.

The IS administrative machine was radically re-organised during the year. Whilst headquarters remain at 6 Cottons Gardens, E2, the printshop, known as SW Litho Ltd, moved to Corbridge Works, Corbridge Crescent, E2, in May at a cost of £30,000 and it was indicative of the group's financial strength that this sum was raised without difficulty. In September the IS Bookshop moved from Cottons Gardens to new premises at 265 Seven Sisters Road, E4, from which the London Regional Committee also operates.

Average circulation of the group's well produced weekly, the "Socialist Worker" increased by 4,000 to 28,000 a week, and at the annual conference in March hopes were expressed that circulation would be increased to 40,000 over the next twelve months. One important outcome of the March conference was the decision to form independent factory branches as separate entities - a decision which further reflects the organisation's growing confidence in the industrial power base it has established and one which will certainly increase its capacity to intervene effectively in industrial disputes and thereby challenge the Communist Party hegemony. To this end the group now takes an active part in union elections, particularly at branch and district level. To back up its industrial effort SW latho produces a series of "rank and file" newspapers sixed at specific sections of industry such as the docks, car workers, teachers and civil servants and, as a further indication of its capacity, it produced no less than a quarter of a million leaflets urging militant action in the days proceding the gas-workers dispute in the Spring.

As a matter of policy International Socialists seek to intervene in industrial disputes, providing support for existing grievances and on occasions instigating their own industrial action. Unlike the more cumbersome Communist Party machine they are flexible and prompt in their response to an industrial situation. Although they were not involved in any dispute in London comparable with their involvement in the Chrysler strike in Stoke or at the Anchor site in Scuntherpe, they played a major role in the "Worlds End", Fulham, building site strike where John FONTAINE, secretary of the group's building "fraction" was employed as a brick layer and which finally caused the contractors to withdraw at enormous cost. TS was also closely involved in the Briant Colour Printing dispute in the Spring, where for some weeks they took control of the picket lines outside the firm's Old Kent Road factory. On 13 February they provided a sizeable proportion of the 2,500 who took part in the march from the factory to the Houses of Parliament.

In recognition of its growing coloured membership and in an effort to attract further immigrant support IS launched in July Urdu and Punjabi language newspapers called "Chingari", in which particular emphasis was laid on the need to fight the immigration laws and the exploitation of coloured workers. In other fields the group's involvement with broad-left alliances continued to decline, and in August it was decided to withdraw support from the Anti-Internment League on the grounds that it had degenerated into a talking shop. Although IS members provided the largest contingent for the anti-Vietnem war demenstration in Iondon on 20 January organised by the Indo-China Solidarity Conference, it was not allowed to have a speaker and consequently decided to withdraw from that organisation also. An exception to this trend was the attempt in April and October to form an ad-hoc alliance with the Socialist Labour League and the International Marxist Group to protest at police raids on the homes of Irish

Republicans connected with the Anti-Internment League.

Attempts to co-opt the Communist Party were unsuccessful, and although the constituent groups have continued to voice their protests independently, the ad-hoc committee never really achieved the required degree of co-operation. Elsewhere IS gave active support to the Black Workers Movement, the May Day march, the National Union of Students and the National Union of Journalists, where it was instrumental in setting up a ginger group known as the Journalists Charter with a view to increasing its influence within the news media.

It was a momentous year too for the Socialist Labour League, which embarked on the task of transforming itself into what it termed a "revolutionary party". The campaign was launched at a "pageant of history" at the Empire Pool, Wembley, on 11 March, at which 5,000 people gathered for a programme of indoctrination and entertainment designed to boost morale and introduce the party to a wider section of the working class. During the ensuing wonths the organisation's well-produced daily paper "Torkers Fress", with a circulation of 20,000, carried articles by recent recruits urging people to join, and on 11 August the paper published a draft resolution on the "draft perspectives to transform the SLL into a revolutionary party". This was followed by a series of country-wide meetings to discuss the proposals, culminating in a "Founding Conference" in London on h November attended by 1,000 at which it changed its name to the Workers Revolutionary Party. The declared aim of the new organisation was to become a broad-based revolutionary party with mass appeal which would be clearly recognised as a viable alternative to the Labour Party. Such a change is difficult to reconcile with the SLL's reputation as a tightly-knit, elite and dedicated group restricted to a carefully collected and disciplined membership under the distatorial control of its national secretary, Gerry HEALY. The answer to the questions posed by this apparently

radical change probably lies in the area of industrial militancy, where the party obviously sees most scope for expansion and where it is striving to compete with the growing influence of the International Socialists and other groups of the left through its own industrial wing, the All Trades Union Alliance. On the evidence at present available, there is no reason to suppose that these moves will lead to any sudden upsurge of militancy likely to present a public order problem. The immediate challenge to the new party is recruitment. At the November conference membership was given as 2,800, an increase of 500 over the year, and an ambitious, if probably unrealistic target of 10,000 was set for Whitsun 1974. The dedication of members, however, backed up by a first class newspaper and a successful fund raising drive may well produce surprising results. An idea of the group's financial strength was obtained at the conference when £5,277 was collected within a matter of minutes to bring the fighting fund to 299,000.

The party continued to operate from a number of buildings grouped together at 180-1864 Clapham High Street, SW4.

Somewhat surprisingly, in view of its previously austere image, the party has made considerable impact on the world of entertainment. It has active and talented members among actors, film producers, writers and directors, whose abilities are put to good use to put across generally unfocussed left-wing propaganda and to win support specifically for the Lague. To this and, entertainment always forms an integral part of all major meetings and conferences, and the group can call upon the services of such well-known names as Vanessa and Corin REDGRAVE, Clive DERN, Colin WELLAND, Privacy

Privacy , Spike MILLICAN and many others.

Public meetings and demonstrations, although few in number, were always well attended and orderly. 1,000 turned out for the group's own May Day march, and on 20 September 300 members marched in the pouring rain to protest against the overthrow of President Allende. The Party's youth wing, the Koung Socialists, although nominally a separate organisation, acted largely in support of its parent body. Membership is estimated at 1,500 and a weekly magazine, "Keep Left", has a circulation of 8,500. On the streets, the Young Socialists gave active support to the National Union of Students Grants Action Campaign and the Briant Colour Printing dispute.

The International Marxist Group, with a membership of about 500 composed largely of young intellectuals, is the smallest of the three main Trotskyist organisations, and as the British Section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, is the only one to have substantive international connections. With the decline in the appeal of the Vietnam cause which had so pre-occupied it for the previous four years, the Group spent most of the year searching in vain for a suitable vehicle of protest in line with its policy of support for discontented minority groups. In the process it lapsed into a state of internal feuding which resulted in the emergence of no less than six separate "tendencies", as its dissident factions are known. Such was the disarray of the leadership that at the national conference in April an impasse was reached when no one tendency could muster a sufficient majority. As a result a compremise was reached and the new national committee came under the centrol of the tendency favouring concentration on industrial and student problems under the leadership of John ROSS, a 26 year old convert from the International Socialists. Although an able organiser and a Trotskyist theoretician of repute, ROSS is known to be mentally unstable and it remains to be seen how long he can maintain his position. Toriq ALI, the Group's 'eminence grise', meanwhile, has been biding his time and spent much of the year abroad.

The Group maintained its close involvement in the Anti-Internment League, whose newspaper "Free Ireland" it prints, and it was significant that it pre-empted London Sinn Fein to assume control of the League's one big demonstration held in August. The Group participated actively in the organisation of the End the Alliance Campaign's demonstrations against the visit of Dr Caetano in July and in the demonstrations against the overthrow of President Allende of Chile later in the year. It was closely involved in the Ad Hoc Committee Against Fascism which protested violently on 13 October on the occasion of the National Front's annual general meeting; gave support to the Black Workers Movement in protests against the alleged maltreatment of immigrants by police in South London; demonstrated outside Pentonville Prison on b August against the 1972 Immigration Act; and attempted to drum up support for the "Shrewsbury 2h" building workers. The transient nature of these issues epitomised the problems facing the Group, which has always seen itself as the elite organiser of effective large-scale demonstrations. With its failure to find a sufficiently emotive issue a large proportion of the membership began by the end of the year to question the Group's role as the sponsor of a single issue campaign. With few exceptions they have found it futile to try to influence the policies of other groups and the indications are that, in common with other organisations of the extreme left, the Group will turn its attentions to industrial situations in an effort to promote factory confrontations between workers and management. IMG's headquarters remain at 182 Pentonville Road, NI, and in the Spring it acquired new premises for a bookshop in Boundary Road, NWS.

Pollowing the French Covernment's ban in June on the Trotskyist Lique Communiste peaceful demonstrations in support of their sister organisation were held in London by Eritish Trotskyists on 7 and 8 July. Organised principally by the International Marxist Group (most closely related to the Lique)

and the Socialist Labour League, support was also forthcoming from the International Socialists, <u>Workers</u>

<u>Fight</u> (one of the smaller Trotskyist groups) and the Communist Party, and about 400 people turned out on each occasion for a march to the French Embassy.

Claimants Unions declined in influence during the year, and apart from sporadic action - usually in the form of leaflet distribution outside Department of Health and Social Security offices, presented little threat to public order.

Most activity within the Momens Liberation Movement is organised at group level, and the movement as a whole had shown itself unable to mobilise large numbers at short notice. The only demonstration of note occurred on 2 February when about 120 women demonstrated outside the House of Commons during a debate on the Anti-Discrimination Bill. Some entered the public gallery where they appleaded and cheered; later about 200 marched to Downing Street to present a petition. Other groups which made occasional appearances on the streets included the Gay Liberation Front and Preservation of the Rights of Prisoners.

Amidst these more immediate matters the question of South Africa's participation in international sport was not ignored, and on 23 July Stop the Apartheid Rugby Tour was launched by the Anti-Apartheid Movement, the Young Liberals, the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee, the Young Communist League, the National Union of Students and others with a view to securing the cancellation of the British Lions tour of South Africa in the Spring of 1974. Privacy  Privacy a full-time political organiser of the London Co-operative Society was appointed chairman and the ubiquitous Peter HAIN vice-chairman. Activities so far have been restricted to the distribution of leaflets at rugby matches and although full-scale demonstrations may be expected nearer the da'e of the tour no serious disorder is expected.