

MEMORANDUMCommander 'Operations'

1. Although the numerical strength of the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) remains at seventeen officers, the rank structure is slightly different from that which existed in 1974. Twelve officers are operational in the field (five Sergeants and seven Constables) while supervisory and administrative duties are carried out by five officers based at CO (one Chief Inspector, one Inspector, two Sergeants and one Constable). In addition, as the SDS is part of 'S' Squad which co-ordinates the various Special Branch technical and support functions, further supervision is exercised by a Chief Superintendent and a Superintendent.

2. Since 1968, the SDS has concentrated on gathering intelligence about the activities of those extremists whose political views are to the left of the Communist Party of Great Britain, generally described as the 'ultra-left', and the anarchist and libertarian movements. The primary aim has been to give warning of impending demonstrations and to obtain information, not available from any other source, regarding the number of persons taking part and the degree of planned or likely public disorder. This information enables 'A' Department to assess the required police coverage to ensure adequate control. In pursuance of this aim, valuable information is also obtained regarding subversive organisations which is passed to other Special Branch Squads and to the Security Service.

3. To achieve this purpose, the twelve operational officers were able to gain access to a number of principal organisations whose activities included the greatest potential for public disorder. These were:

Troops Out Movement)	
Big Flame Irish Commission)	Pro-Irish
Bloody Sunday Commemoration Ad-Hoc Committee)	Organisations
[A] [REDACTED])	
)	
International Socialists)	
International Marxist Group)	
Workers Revolutionary Party)	
Workers Revolutionary Party Young Socialists)	Trotskyist
Revolutionary Communist Group)	Groups
League for Socialist Action)	
International - Communist League)	
(an amalgamation of Workers Fight and Workers Power))	

[E] [REDACTED])
Communist Unity Association (Marxist-Leninist))
[F] [REDACTED]) Maoists
The East London Marxist-Leninist Association)
National Front) Extreme right-
Legion of St George) wing

Through the involvement of some of these major organisations with anarchist, alternative society and racist groups, valuable information was also obtained about the militant activities planned by them. Such groups included:

West London Campaign Against Racism and Fascism
Anarchist Workers Association (formerly the
Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists)
Campaign for the Repeal of the Immigration Act 1971
Claimants' Union

[1] [REDACTED]
Stop All Racist Tours

4. Product and Distribution

The product of the operational officers has again been invaluable and there has been a slightly wider coverage over a greater number of organisations, necessitated by the growth of maoist and anti-fascist groupings. For the first time an officer has penetrated the National Front, at the instigation of a leading member of the Workers Revolutionary Party with whom he is particularly friendly, and is thus obliged to lead a 'treble' life. By attending National Front meetings in the East End of London he has discovered a small group of hard line fascists, dissatisfied with the National Front leadership, calling themselves the Legion of St George, whose intent is to move even further to the right. Although few in number, such a group could well pose future public order problems.

5. The proliferation of new groupings, with major schisms in the largest Trotskyist organisations - the Workers Revolutionary Party, the International Socialists and the International Marxist Group - shows the disunity of the 'ultra-left' who, lacking a sufficiently strong common purpose, such as they had against American involvement in the Vietnam war, have had but slight success with their rallying call against the spectre of fascism.

6. Other calls for left-wing unity in the struggle against unemployment, for solidarity with true socialists in Spain and Portugal and for a

[REDACTED]

woman's right to choose abortion, failed to reach the organisers' expectations. Some campaigns, especially for abortion on demand, succeeded temporarily in uniting the various factions, particularly on the day of the demonstration, but once this had ended, sectarian differences soon re-emerged and the fervent loyalty rapidly dissolved.

7. Such schisms and smaller groupings are of course to the advantage of the police, whose manpower would be severely stretched should the 'ultra-left' sink their differences and unite for joint demonstrations. This advantage, however, is to some extent outweighed by the need for greater SDS coverage of the smaller groups, who, unlike the larger, more established organisations rarely inform police of their intention to demonstrate, and lacking a committee structure or headquarters, cannot be contacted in the normal way. Such information which is obtained by the SDS is passed, with the necessary safeguards, by Commander 'Operations' to Commander 'A' Department.

8. Coverage of Irish activists has centred on the fringe organisations such as the Troops Out Movement which, although basically a left-wing libertarian movement, [REDACTED]

2

[REDACTED] Irish bombers arrested over here recently have not been involved, as far as can be ascertained, with political activity in this country, [REDACTED]

3

[REDACTED] Demonstrations organised by purely Irish groups during the past year have excited little public interest and have been poorly attended. There are, however, slight indications that Irish extremists are becoming more active in demonstrations, and this trend will be watched by the SDS, [REDACTED]

4

9. Personnel

5

During the year under review a Detective Inspector, [REDACTED] was promoted to Detective Chief Inspector by the Commissioner, using his discretionary powers under General Orders Section 9/42. This officer had provided valuable information over a number of years regarding public order [REDACTED] 6

Two Constables were also promoted to Sergeant during 1974. It is expected that three officers will return to normal duties during the first few months of 1976, having completed their tours of duty. Volunteers have been selected to take their place but the effects of interchangeability have still to be felt. It has to be remembered that to achieve worthwhile results an officer must remain in the field for a considerable period, and on his return must be given suitable duties to avoid any possible risk of embarrassment. Special consideration will be asked for those officers who pass the competitive promotion

examination whilst serving in the operational field to safeguard not only their present work, and the SDS operations as a whole, but also their future career within the police service. During 1975 two officers [REDACTED] were recalled from field duties, and because of the necessity of training replacements, only one was immediately posted to operational duties. For some months therefore, only eleven officers instead of twelve were operational.

10. Security

Over the past eight years since the inception of the SDS, security has been of paramount importance, not only to prevent embarrassment to the Commissioner should any leakage of our activities occur, but also to protect the field officers themselves. This is achieved primarily through supervision, and it is probably true that no other unit of police officers is so regularly or so strongly supervised. In addition to normal supervisory visits, the field officers have been seen by Commander 'Operations', DAC and the ACC.

11. Accommodation

One of the two SDS headquarter flats was changed during 1975, following the normal procedure of moving from one district to another to avoid creating undue suspicion locally. The problems of finding a suitable flat, in a sufficiently anonymous block, at a reasonable rent, have been almost unsurmountable, and with current Government legislation encouraging landlords to sell rather than let, the situation can only become more difficult.

12. Operational officers have had to spend more time in their cover flats, not only because of their increasing commitment, but also to prevent well-meaning neighbours, conscious of the warnings on television concerning suspicious characters, reporting their movements to local police. The problems mentioned earlier in connection with finding headquarter accommodation, apply similarly to the cover flats used by operational officers. The difficulties of finding single accommodation in suitable areas, without resident landlords, has led to an experiment whereby two officers share a double flat. These are easier to obtain, the flat can be better covered, and it is a more normal way of life for a young man living in London. There are minor problems involved, but the experiment appears to be running successfully, although it will, of course, be reviewed periodically.

13. Transport

The use of second-hand cars and vans continues to provide the best means of operational mobility and efficiency. This has been clearly shown on the few occasions when field officers have temporarily been without their own transport because of repairs, and have had to use public transport. A fuller report, dealing with all aspects of SDS transport is submitted on Secret file TR 14/73/10.

14. Finance

Expenditure for the first nine months of the current year was as follows:

	£
Rent	3,368.48
Electricity and Gas	121.48
Telephone	289.03
Rates	328.18
Operational expenses	417.38
TOTAL (1.4.75 - 31.12.75)	<u>4,524.55</u>

15. It is not anticipated that the requirement for the final quarter of the year will exceed £1,800, therefore, approximately £2,300 of the £8,600 budget should remain undrawn.

16. The budgetary figure was produced in January 1975 by a considerable degree of educated guesswork, but in the event our worst fears were not realised. Whilst considerable difficulty was encountered in replacing one of the headquarter flats, premises were eventually obtained at a slightly lower rental than had been paid formerly. The anticipated thirty per cent increase in the rental of fresh cover flats for individual officers did not materialise, though they became increasingly scarce. A further reduction in expenditure was brought about through the experimental operational advantage of six field officers sharing three cover flats, combined with the fact that for the greater part of the period under review it was only possible to keep eleven, as opposed to twelve, officers in the field.

17. To project a figure for likely expenditure in the forthcoming year is as difficult now as it was twelve months ago. SDS operational requirements may well preclude the continuation of flat sharing on the present scale, and we cannot rely upon replacing them at current rents. The charges for both headquarter flats have recently been placed before the local Rent Officers, and the judgement in one case will result in an annual rise of £200. Whilst no decision has yet been reached on the second flat it seems virtually certain that a similar increase will be approved. There is little doubt that rates, telephone, electricity and gas charges will also continue to increase.

18. Under all these circumstances, the best estimate which can be put forward for the financial year 1976/1977, is that it should be possible to keep expenditure within last year's budget of £8,600. It is to be hoped that by the continued application of strict financial control a sum may again be left undrawn.

19. The SDS accounts for 1974/1975 were audited by [REDACTED], F3

Branch, on 22 April 1975, who expressed her satisfaction with them. The Squad's appreciation of [REDACTED] assistance on financial matters is recorded. [9]

20. Review

The SDS provided accurate information about the numbers taking part as well as the potential for public disorder on all the major, and most minor, demonstrations during the past year. On many occasions the organisers' estimates were widely inaccurate, and in some cases, particularly demonstrations and pickets arranged by 'splinter' groups, police were either not officially informed or could not contact the organisers. After the demonstrations, identifying particulars of those taking part were supplied to the officer reporting the event. Some of the major events are listed below.

21. One of the biggest events of the year was that organised by the National Abortion Campaign on 21 June 1975 to rally support for abortion on demand which attracted between 15/20,000 supporters, including large contingents from all the 'ultra-left' and anarchist groups. Although this was a very emotive issue, there was no disorder.

22. Most of the public order problems were concerned with the activities of the National Front. The year opened with their annual general meeting at Conway Hall on 4 January when it was agreed to adhere to the fundamental policies and principles of the movement and ignore actions designed to capture popular support.

23. On 25 March some 600 National Front followers marched through Islington with flags flying and drums beating and were met by about 2,000 counter demonstrators outside Islington Town Hall. The presence of a large contingent of uniformed police kept the rival factions firmly apart and there was no serious attempt to break the police cordon. Later in the year, on 6 September, about 1,000 persons took part in a National Front march from Hackney to Hoxton to protest against 'muggings' allegedly committed by black youths on the white population. This was again met by a counter demonstration from the 'ultra-left' marshalled under the banners of the Hackney Committee Against Racism and the Hackney Trades Council. On this occasion, some members of the International Socialists and Workers Fight decided not to support the opposition rally but to harass the National Front march. A pathetic attempt to block the road by this group was thwarted by police who were anticipating such an occurrence. Nine people were arrested, but there was no serious public disorder.

24. The final attempt by the 'ultra-left' to disrupt a National Front function in 1975 occurred during the latter's extraordinary general meeting at Chelsea Old Town Hall on 11 October. Smarting from previous failures, the 'ultra-left' set up a special ad-hoc committee - The West London Campaign Against Racism and Fascism - to co-ordinate the [REDACTED]

planning for the counter demonstration. The inaugural meeting attracted support from nearly all the left-wing organisations, including the Communist Party of Great Britain, but in typical fashion soon ran into sectarian problems over the question of leadership. This meeting was disrupted by a group of National Front supporters who succeeded in breaking furniture and fittings, before one of their number was arrested. Future meetings were held in conditions of greater secrecy, but little agreement was reached and most factions decided to go their own way. From early morning on the day of the National Front meeting a picket was held opposite the Town Hall by supporters of various groups, including the International Marxist Group, the International Socialists, the Communist Party of England (Marxist-Leninist) and the remnants of the West London Campaign Against Racism and Fascism. Later in the day a total of 1,200 left-wing sympathisers marched past the Town Hall to hold a meeting at World's End, and by the time the National Front meeting ended nearly all the opponents had dispersed. Although a number of extremists were arrested, including members of the Communist Party of England (Marxist-Leninist) - still the most virulent anti-police group - uniformed police were able to prevent a potentially violent situation developing into a serious defiance of the law.

25. On 1 February the third anniversary of 'Bloody Sunday' was commemorated in London by two separate events - a Troops Out Movement rally at Conway Hall, a meeting and torchlight procession organised by the Bloody Sunday Commemoration Ad Hoc Committee, an amalgam of the International Marxist Group, the International Socialists and the Troops Out Movement. A total of 1,750 people supported the two demonstrations. A similar number took part in the Troops Out Movement national demonstration in London on 6 April to demand troop withdrawal from Northern Ireland.

26. At the end of April, 21 members of the Confederation of Iranian Students gained admittance to the Iranian Embassy and occupied most of the unlocked rooms. The arrest of these students sparked off a vigorous campaign to secure the withdrawal of the charges and several meetings and demonstrations were held to this end, with the support of the extreme left. Other happenings abroad led to 5,000 taking part in the Portuguese Workers Co-ordinating Committee's march from the Embankment to Speakers' Corner on 20 September. At the conclusion of the demonstration about 300 people, mainly members of the International Marxist Group, marched to the Spanish Embassy to register their protest against the death sentences passed on a group of urban guerrillas in Spain, and to protest against the arrest of 19 of their own members who had tried to occupy the Iberian Airlines office in Regent Street, W1 some ten days earlier.

27. The following month, on 21 October, about 5,000 people, mainly students, supported a mass lobby of Parliament in an attempt to prevent proposed cuts in the education budget.

28. During the year the Workers Revolutionary Party, which rarely joins with other organisations to protest, continued its support for the release of the 'Shrewsbury Two' pickets who were imprisoned after violent clashes during the 1972 building workers' strike (only one

now remains in prison). Following the police raid on their educational centre in Derbyshire, the Workers Revolutionary Party has held several indoor meetings and outside demonstrations protesting against the raid and demanding a full enquiry. Such demonstrations, although supported by their own members, have attracted little practical support from other revolutionaries. Since their potential for public disorder appears to have diminished, SDS coverage of this organisation will now be withdrawn.

29. Future Activities

It is anticipated that public order problems arising out of political demonstrations in 1976 will be similar to those of 1975. Major demonstrations are already being planned to protest against the rising level of unemployment and revolutionaries are being urged to occupy any of their places of employment threatened with closure because of the economic situation. Unemployment and the right to work are the main topics in extremist literature, and the 'ultra-left' will seek to exploit these issues to the full in order to further their own ends.

30. It is believed that events abroad will attract increasing support particularly for the allegedly repressive regimes of countries like Chile and Brazil, as well as the very topical issues of Rhodesia and South Africa. Other protests will be directed at the growth of fascism, the continued presence of British troops in Ulster, the inadequacy of student grants and various Government measures unpopular with the 'ultra-left', including those dealing with terrorism and immigration.

31. Whilst, for a variety of reasons there has, over the past few years, been a decline in the disorders associated with political demonstrations, violence generally has increased within our society and the potential for attacks on public order are ever present. The situation could change rapidly and it is the responsibility of the SDS to watch such trends carefully and be strategically placed to take efficient action.

32. Irish extremists, frightened off the streets by the Prevention of Terrorism Act, now appear to be re-emerging, although it is doubtful if they will present any serious threat to public order in the near future. The proposed lecture tour of the United Kingdom by the recently formed Irish Republican Socialist Party failed to take place, and although a few people from this country attended their first annual conference held in Dublin in April 1975, they have made little impact here. Rumours of new groups being formed to campaign for the release of Irish political prisoners have not yet been confirmed,

33. The Commissioner has stated that 'the maintenance of order during political demonstrations has always been the most sensitive problem of the Metropolitan Police'. The SDS was formed in 1968 to assist in providing a solution to this very problem and the officers currently serving, closely supervised and constantly aware of the need for security, will continue to provide valuable intelligence on public order, which only they can obtain.

11

Signature

Derek J Kneale
Chief Inspector

SB
19.3.76.