

TRUE SPIES 1. SUBVERSIVE MY ARSE

Opening Titles - True SPIES

Commentary: There's a shadowy body that lies at the heart of government - the Secret State. Its arms are M15 and Special Branch.

For years it's been spying on its own citizens - even including a member of the Royle Family.

Caption:

The Royle Family. BBC2.

Archive:

"So what's the name of this band then?"

"Exit. No, listen, it's a marketing thing - wherever we play our name's up in lights."

"Exit My arse....."

Commentary: Ricky Tomlinson, who plays the couch potato Jim Royle, was once a member of the National Front. Then he became a militant trades unionist and his politics changed.

RICKY TOMLINSON

Ricky Tomlinson: I was moving to the left...I know what's right and I know what's wrong and I know when someone is getting a raw deal and someone is exploiting someone.

Commentary: Special Branch showed a particular interest in Ricky Tomlinson when he became involved with the Workers Revolutionary Party.

TONY ROBINSON

Lancashire Police Special Branch, 1965-81

Tony Robinson: They're not reticent in promoting violence in pursuit of their aims, and for a time Rickie Tomlinson went along with them... and more or less intimated that he would like to join the Workers Revolutionary Party...

Interviewer: Did you ever consider joining the Workers Revolutionary Party?

Ricky Tomlinson: I did actually. I did actually, and I've done quite a lot of work for them i.e. going round and speaking at meetings and stuff like that...

STELLA RIMINGTON

Director general, MI5, 1992-96

Interviewer: What sort of threat did they pose?

Stella Rimington: Well all I can say is that Communist and Trotskyist organisations, by their philosophy, their published aims, would have fallen within the definition of subversion.

Commentary: That's actions intended to 'overthrow or undermine parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means'.

Interviewer: Were you a subversive?

Ricky Tomlinson: My arse. I love England. I love Britain.

I'm totally gobsmacked If they can do it to me, then they can do it to anyone. Anyone. They can do it to anyone.

Tony Robinson: You have to draw a line somewhere when it comes to protecting the state. And if at the end of the day civil liberties are infringed then so be it.

Subtitle: Subversive My Arse

Archive:

"I'm managing a band... [laughs] Bloody hell its Brian Epstein!"

Commentary: Ricky Tomlinson wasn't always the nations' favourite slob or an actor. 30 years ago he organised flying pickets during a building workers strike in Shrewsbury.

Ricky Tomlinson: I think the conditions was far more important than the wages because if you wanted to go to the toilet you couldn't. And so the fellas used to go in.. used to go and dig a little bloody hole and crap in a hole or stuff like that.

Commentary: The strike became notorious. Tomlinson and his mate Dessie Warren were charged with intimidation, fighting and affray. In court the pickets were described as 'a frenzied horde of Apache Indians'.

TONY ROBINSON

Lancashire Police Special Branch , 1965-81

Tony Robinson: The strike was very very violent and extended over the whole of the country and they used to travel the length and breadth of the country and for want of a better word intimidate building workers who insisted on carrying on working or who wouldn't go on strike.

Interviewer: Did you intimidate them?

Ricky Tomlinson: No, I don't think I did. I certainly had my say...

Interviewer: Did you use violence against anybody?

Ricky Tomlinson: I personally never used violence against anyone.

Commentary: Tomlinson and Warren were gaoled and became known as 'the Shrewsbury Two'. Tomlinson got two years.

Their case became a trades union cause celebre. To the rank and file, they'd been defending workers' rights against exploitation.

Archive:

"...if you want to do a job of work in the trade union movement this is not the way to do it."

Commentary : When Tomlinson was released from gaol, his request to address the TUC was turned down. But he refused to be silenced.

By now Tomlinson had a Special Branch file.

Ricky Tomlinson: Well you do surprise me. You really do surprise me.

Interviewer: It's true.

Ricky Tomlinson: I take your word for it, yes.

Interviewer: How does that strike you?

Ricky Tomlinson: Frightening I suppose. Frightening, but if it's true it's true.

Tony Robinson: The file on Ricky Tomlinson said that he was a left wing agitator and prone to violence and basically speaking was a political thug.

Interviewer: Was the word thug used in his file?

Tony Robinson: Yes.

Interviewer: We've interviewed the Special Branch officer who had you on file and he says that your file described you as a 'thug'.

Ricky Tomlinson: A thug! Well I find that strange....

Interviewer: Well that's what he says the file says about you.

Ricky Tomlinson: How does he back that up?

Interviewer: Because of your activities during the building workers strike.

Ricky Tomlinson: Mmm hm.

Interviewer: How do you feel about being described as a thug on a Special Branch file?

Ricky Tomlinson: I hate it. I hate it. It's not right. It's untrue and more importantly it's unfair.

Interviewer: Do you regret your actions?

Ricky Tomlinson: Not at all. Not in any way. No..

Interviewer: Not a subversive?

Ricky Tomlinson: Not a subversive and definitely not a bloody thug.

Commentary: Ricky Tomlinson's file was only one of hundreds of thousands that Special Branch compiled on suspected subversives. Each file was copied to M15 - the Security Service.

Tony Robinson: When I first joined Special Branch I went on a preliminary course down at the headquarters of MI5, and we were briefly taken down to what was called 'the Registry', which was where the files were kept, just these thousands and thousands of thousands of files in the racks there must have been upwards, if not more, than a million

Commentary: Those MI5's files ranged from trade unionists to the then Prime Minister, Harold Wilson. We've also established that they included members of Friends of the Earth, Amnesty International, and even the anti-Asbestos campaign.

STELLA RIMINGTON
Director General, MI5, 1992-96

Stella Rimington: The rules under which the opening of files are governed was less formalised than it became later on and files might have been opened on people who would not now be regarded as falling firmly within a recording category...looked at from, you know, the point of view of the 21st century, we could say that in some cases it might have been over-zealous.

Interviewer: Are you proud of what you did?

Tony Robinson: Very proud. I can't make any apologies for it, in fact I wont. I did the job I was paid for and we did it well.

Caption:
Grosvenor Square
March 1968

Commentary: 1968 was a watershed year for the Secret State.

Ken Day: We had no training at all for demonstrations. We were just bussed in a coach, didn't know what we were going to do, No preparation for it whatsoever.

Archive:

Tariq Ali: "We are here to express our solidarity with the guerrillas of the National Liberation Front..."

Commentary: So-called 'Subversion' and public disorder now seemed ideological allies. 100,000 young demonstrators marched to Grosvenor Square in protest against the Vietnam War they laid siege to the American Embassy.

WILF

Metropolitan Police Special Branch, 1962-77

Wilf: We underestimated how many were coming. We were ill-equipped at the time and couldn't bring enough men in to control it consequently when the violence erupted. We were amateurs then, link arms and hold them back. They just kicked fertiliser out of you.

Archive:

"Also there were troublemakers, a hardcore with intentions to drag the majority of well intentioned demonstrators down to their sickening level."

TARIQ ALI

Tariq Ali: When the Cossacks came in, as we called them, there were punch ups. A big fracas took place and it became one of those events which were very, very symbolic for British politics and British culture at the time.

Commentary: The Secret State was alarmed not just because of the violence but because it believed new subversive forces on the Left lay behind it - determined to assault parliamentary democracy.

Tony Robinson: I got a very, very good insight into how they worked. I think they're inherently violent, like most Trotskyist groups are,.. I think the philosophy is one of violent revolution without any doubt whatsoever.

Commentary: Grosvenor Square shook the Secret State because of the global context of the time.

Ever since the onset of the Cold War, MI5 had been worried about Soviet penetration of British political life.

DAN

Metropolitan police Special Branch, 1964-89

Dan: A quite senior officer warned that in his view it was quite likely that in ten years Britain could become a Communist State.

Interviewer: Is that what you believed, it wasn't just 'Reds under the bed', the scare?

Tony Robinson: No, it was a very, very serious threat.

Stella Rimington: You have to remember that one of the objectives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was to spread communism world-wide and the way they tried to do that was by what are known as subversive means, by undermining democratic systems of government in other countries.

Commentary: Grosvenor Square was a wake-up call for the Secret State. MI5 was the lead agency and with Special Branches around the country in support. 1968 showed its spies were not up to scratch.

Wilf: The recognition was that we were totally inept at both the information we gathered and the way we dealt with that information.

Commentary: So the Met. Special Branch devises an extraordinary plan. It's never been revealed before. In a Northern town, one of its officers searches the headstones for a new identity.

Richard: I just read the Frederick Forsyth novel 'Day of the Jackal' and used a similar technique to that. I found a young boy who'd died at a fairly young age, and as it were resurrected him.'

Commentary: Traditional methods of gathering intelligence were now inadequate. Special Branch needed to get closer to its targets. A new top secret unit was set up - the Special Demonstration Squad.

WILF

Metropolitan Police Special Branch, 1962-77

Wilf: A group of very, very brave, dedicated officers had personae created for them and went out to work in the field undercover totally divorced from their friends, their family, and they literally worked their way into organisations the nearest analogy I can put to it is in the military terms the SAS.

Commentary: The officer researches the boy's family history and assumes the identity of the adult he would have become, had he lived.

To avoid blowing his cover, he has to be word perfect on every detail of the person he's now become.

RICHARD

Former Metropolitan Police Special Branch

Interviewer: And what sort of things did you absorb from that town?

Richard: Oh the streets, the parks, one thing about towns in England is that you always describe the whereabouts by pubs and corners don't you, you know, "Turn left at Red Lion and you're in so and so", that sort of thing. Sod's law says that you go into an organisation, you find someone who's also from that background - that's the great dread of it, you get asked the question out of the blue that you're not going to have the right answer to - you sweat on the inside.

Archive:

"Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!"

Commentary: The secret squad's prime function was to combat the street violence that was proving increasingly difficult to control.

Richard: I allowed the Metropolitan Police to prevent blood on the streets as it were. Things could have been very, very nasty, but with pre-emptive intelligence that was prevented.

Commentary: This elite group of undercover officers lived their new lives, out there in the wilds, for up to five years.

Wilf: They had a complete new personality created for them, new names, new addresses, new apartments, new driving licenses, new social security numbers. They just were wiped off the face of the earth as far as police identification went. They were true spies, true spies.

BRIAN

Metropolitan Police Special Branch, 1968-92

Brian: I adopted the identity of a Londoner who worked in the engineering field. I lived in a small flat and changed my lifestyle to be that person.

Commentary: Their mission was to penetrate what was, to most police officers, an alien world.

This was the alternative society, its enemy - the police state.

Caption:

ITV's THIS WEEK and Date

Archive:

"The audience doesn't find the song implausible, they're apparently unaware of how a real police state - Nazi Germany, Russia, Spain - compares with theirs."

Commentary: For Special Branch officers to blend into the alternative society required a complete makeover job.

Interviewer: What did you all look like?

Brian: Grew a beard. Long hair. Outrageous.

GEOFF

Metropolitan Police Special Branch, 1974-2002

Geoff: Big hair. That particular time long hair was in. One of the requirements was to grow your hair long, and also to have a beard. But my hair was very fine, so unfortunately it was decided that I'd have a perm.

Interviewer: A perm?

Geoff: A perm. Yes, a permanent wave. And so I ended up a bit Mark Bolan-y, it was easier to handle, and of course it was completely different.

Wilf: We called them the 'hairies' because they all grew their hair long down to their shoulders. A policeman wasn't short back and sides like the marines anymore. These guys wore hair down to their shoulders, looked like Jesus Christ incarnate and changed dramatically.

Archive:
Singing of Internationale

Brian: I wouldn't say I became a revolutionary - but certainly there were times when I became very close to being native...

Archive:
"Ho-Ho Ho Chi Minh!"

Brian: I seemed to develop, take on board the aims and objectives of the people I was infiltrating,

Interviewer: So you became a Marxist revolutionary?

Brian: Yeah.

Interviewer: Take part in debates?

Brian: Take part in debates, chair meetings.

Interviewer: You became an expert on dialectical materialism?

Brian: Almost. Difficult subject to master.

Interviewer: But you had to.

Brian: Yeah, the theory.

Interviewer: You had to read the books, know the language.

Brian: Know, the ideology, know the language.

Archive:

"It seems to me that the best way we can attack imperialism is to build a revolutionary movement in this country."

JACK DROMEY
Trade Unionist

Interviewer: This was not just infiltration it was long term penetration of organisations of the hard left.

Jack Dromey: I find that amazing. I try to conjure up this image of someone with flat feet learning to sing the Internationale and call for the end of capitalism must have been a rather interesting experience for them, but that they felt that they had to do that I find extraordinary.

Caption:

TARIQ ALI

Students in Revolt, BBC2, 1968

Archive:

"We believe in all power to the Soviets, we believe in the abolition of money, we believe in the appropriation of all private property and we believe in a large mass of people in their respective jobs."

"This is a very big programme indeed."

"Well ... it's just that these are the bare essentials."

Commentary: Tariq Ali edited the paper of the International Marxists Group - the IMG.

The Black Dwarf was required reading for every M15 and Special Branch officer in the land. So was his post.

TARIQ ALI
Editor, Black Dwarf, 1968-70

Tariq Ali: Often in those days where surveillance was much cruder than it is now our letters would arrive badly, you know, stuck together. And there were two or three occasions when letters to me came with the wrong letters in them, so you obviously realised that something was going on.

Commentary: But Tariq Ali was also a top target for the Hairies. One of them had infiltrated the IMG and managed to get hold of the keys to its headquarters.

DAN

Metropolitan Police Special Branch, 1964-89

Dan: I was aware that some of the keys that I was holding when I was babysitting those offices gave access to offices that we, or the Security Service, might be interested in, so I was able to take pressings of all the keys.

Interviewer: Pressings?

Dan: Yes, pressing into plasticine for the copies to be made.

Interviewer: And you just happened to have the plasticine handy did you?

Dan: I had an idea that I might have an opportunity so I took some with me.

Interviewer: And then?

Dan: And then the offices were subsequently visited on another occasion.

Commentary: The keys were passed on to the 'visitors' and the 'visitors' - presumably MI5 - turned them and got in. The purpose of such intrusions was to spy on what the organisation was up to.

Interviewer: He made the impression of the key in a block of plasticine that he just happened to have in his pocket.

Tariq Ali: It's quite amazing, it's quite amazing.

Interviewer: Why is it amazing?

Tariq Ali: Well it's always a bit awful when someone who you trust completely, and he must have been trusted to have had a key to that office and to have been allowed access to it, and the person is completely betraying you all the time, it is.. it is a bit distressing, especially as.. obviously he must have been liked, he must have made friends, so it's.. I'm just wondering now who it was, because one's memory fades about who the people were

Brian: They would probably feel that I abused the friendship. The fact of the matter is it was a friendship which I valued at the time, and I enjoyed, but the objective was to provide a service.

Interviewer: But you betrayed those friendships.

Brian: I don't regard it as a betrayal.

Tariq Ali: Well I mean that's.. yeah, a form of fundamentalism for you. You know, basically you're prepared to subordinate everything else to what is your political aim or your.. or work aim, and I

guess that's what spies are.

Commentary: It was a dangerous world out there and the Hairies lived with the abiding fear of being compromised.

On one occasion, a telephone tap revealed that a Hairy was suspected by the group he'd infiltrated. He was warned to expect a grilling.

Dan: After the meeting I was invited to a pub - and I remember drinking something in the region of 9 or 10 pints of beer.

I was very concerned that I was getting the point where my guard would slip, that I would reveal something which would give something away or expose a colleague and I remember my mind seeming to stay ice cold.

The rest of me felt like jelly but they had drunk along with me so they were showing considerable signs of wear as well, and I don't know if I satisfied them or not but I was allowed to go and then I was met shortly afterwards by a colleague, then I just collapsed. I was absolutely drunk as a skunk, but I'd held it together until then.

Commentary: Many of the Hairies relished the adrenalin rush that came with the job. Their years undercover were the best of their police careers. But for a few, the pressure was unbearable.

Interviewer: Did you decide that after that experience enough was enough?

Dan: Yes I did. Yes. Yes I had a family to consider and it was taking its toll on those relationships. It was time to stop.

Commentary: Other Special Branch officers in forces around the country also needed to live on their wits. They too spied on suspected subversives. One of them, Tony, was renowned for his guile.

TONY ROBINSON

Lancashire Police Special Branch, 1965-81

Tony Robinson: One thing you could not do was to make that person, the subject, aware that he was the subject of an investigation. This meant using all sorts of subterfuges. I once went as a Church of England vicar.

Interviewer: A vicar?

Tony Robinson: A vicar, complete with dog collar, and got away with it. New to the parish etc, etc.

Interviewer: Did you find out as a vicar what you wanted to know?

Tony Robinson: Indeed so. But I've got to say that it's a rather tense situation and you've got to be a good actor at the same time.

Interviewer: But you're telling lies, you're misleading the public.

Tony Robinson: I suppose so. The whole business of.. I would think in many instances of being a Special Branch officer is based on lies.

Interviewer: And deception?

Tony Robinson: And deception, otherwise you can't do your job.

Commentary: Tony also infiltrated a local Vietnam Peace Committee - opposing a nearby American base. To do so, he exchanged his dog collar for a woolly hat.

Tony Robinson: In those days... it was fashionable to have a rather hippy experience.. I used to wander around with no socks on in my shoes, and sandals sometimes...the beard sort of gave me an appearance of left wing respectability for want of a better word.

Commentary: Under the guise of the Peace Committee, Tony spied on militants running a strike at the Pilkington glass works.

He thought he had the perfect cover...until it was blown by a Special Branch colleague, apparently jealous of his success.

Tony Robinson: I was stood at the back monitoring the proceedings and the vote went up to go back to work and the crowd just disappeared. I turned round and.. ready to make.. go off myself, and all of a sudden I was surrounded by members of the strike committee, most of them CP members sort of ringed me.

I said.. "Anything wrong fellas?", "You bastard, you're a Special Branch.. you're a Special Branch aren't you?". I didn't make any reply, there was only one way to tackle it and that was to walk towards the largest, which I did do, and he stood to one side and there was no confrontation.

Archive:

"Heathrow Airport. Demonstrators faced a cordon of security staff as they prepared to greet the incoming Springbok rugby touring team from South Africa..."

Commentary: The visit shows how the 'Hairies' pre-emptive intelligence was translated into action. There was huge opposition from radical groups to the planned visits of the South African rugby and cricket teams whom they viewed as ambassadors for

Apartheid. Their plan was to disrupt the Springboks' tour. To the protestors, they were apologists in rugby shorts.

PETER HAIN

Stop the '70 Tour campaign

Archive:

Peter Hain: "This is a campaign against the cricket tour and the rugby tour and apartheid in sport in general - our organising tactic will be one of non-violent direct action - that is run on to the pitch and disrupt matches."

Dan: I remember meeting with a senior officer at Scotland Yard and I said there would be an awful lot of blood spilled on the streets of London, and that wasn't the view that was held in some circles at that time within the police service.'

Commentary: With potential violence in the offing, the 'Hairies' were tasked to infiltrate the 'Stop the Tour' campaign and to get as close as possible to its controversial organiser, the young Peter Hain.

Caption:

PANORAMA

BBC1, 1970

Wilfred Wooller. Member of Cricket Council

Archive:

Panorama discussion featuring row between Hain and Wilfred Wooller, Member of Cricket Council (and Secretary of Glamorgan C.C.)

"The issue is one of racialism and we're prepared to take a fundamental stand...What evidence have you got in this world that a boycott or isolation has ever done any good. Has it done any good in Rhodesia? Is the demonstrations doing any good in Northern Ireland, two typical current events. These are irrelevant."

"They are not irrelevant. You're suggesting that we should isolate South Africa. Now this is the vital question."

Commentary : The verbal battle in the Panorama studio became a war of cushions on the terraces - between the toffs in the stands and the protestors below.

In general, the Hairies aim was to rise within an organisation but not to end up running it.

In the case of the Stop The Seventy Tour, the 'Hairy' who got very close to the top was called Mike. Hairies had handlers and Mike's handler was Wilf.

WILF

Metropolitan Police Special Branch, 1962-77

Wilf: Mike worked his way into the organisation by his.. shall I say his enthusiasm, his dedication, his skill, his intelligence, worked his way up to being Peter Hain's number two. I don't think Peter Hain ever, ever realised that he had a police officer as his number two

PETER HAIN

Foreign Office Minister, 2002

Interviewer: Were you aware of the attentions of Special Branch and MI5?

Peter Hain: I was not directly aware in the sense that somebody tapped me on the shoulder and said "Hey, we're keeping a watch on you", but we had good reason to believe that this was happening and a number of events occurred during the Stop the Tour campaign which confirmed that.

Commentary: The Hairies' finest hour came at the climax of the tour - during the match between the Springboks and the Barbarians at Twickenham.

Wilf: The intention was for the demonstrators, just prior to half time, to throw flare bombs, smoke bombs and metal tacks onto the pitch.

Mike passed that information on, it was passed on to the uniform, and at the appointed time officers were there with sand buckets and metal magnets and although they threw as many as they could onto the pitch they were snuffed out, taken away and and the players didn't know that it had taken place and when they came out after half time the game carried on.

Later on at a meeting Peter Hain felt that there quite rightly was a spy in their midst and there was one poor devil that Mike Ferguson looked down the room and said I think it's him, and he got thrown out, and Ferguson survived - bless him.

Interviewer: Do you recall that?

Peter Hain: I do recall that, yes.

Interviewer: Just tell us about that, what did you do? Did you suspect the spy?

Peter Hain: There was lots of suspicions at the time, but I just took the view that what we were doing was correct, and I wasn't going to be deflected by fringe sort of pressures of that kind.

Interviewer: But you got the wrong spy.

Peter Hain: Well quite possibly.

Commentary: The Secret State adopted a range of techniques to spy on the lives of its citizens. Telephones were tapped and private conversations recorded. This is the first time that those directly involved have spoken openly about these sensitive operations.

Wilf: There was a government building, not far from the House of Commons. It was called the bunker. It was the most miserable place on earth. It was the nearest thing to a subterranean underground car park building you've ever seen, and that's where we sat with just taps and banks and banks of tape recorders running all the time, and that's all you did.

You just tapped those kind of people, people high up who were the organisers, the organisers, the brains I mean I suppose you could call them.

Interviewer: Tariq Ali?

Wilf: Tariq Ali was tapped for a long time but then you see Tariq Ali was never afraid of either the publicity or the notoriety which he obtained.

TARIQ ALI

Editor, Black Dwarf, 1968-70

Tariq Ali: One didn't have too many illusions about how the state functioned in those times - it was well known that the state regarded anyone who was opposed to it as an enemy.

Commentary: Telephone tapping was done with government authority. Permission had to be sought and given. 'Bugging' was different. There were no rules.

Wilf: Sometimes you simply drilled a hole through the wall, and stuck a probe through and tried to listen to what they were saying I remember drilling with the connivance of the hotel, drilling a hole through a wall in a hotel in West London where a meeting was going to take place, and we drilled through 15 inches taking four days working at night to get into this meeting room and we finally struck a girder which was supporting the whole of the hotel ... We.. sometimes I wasn't very professional. (laughs)

Commentary: Occasionally the Secret State was rumbled. One of its prime targets was Communist Party Headquarters in Covent Garden.

GEORGE MATTHEWS

Head of Press, Communist Party of Great Britain, 1974-79

George Matthews: Well the builders who were reconstructing the conference room, found embedded in the wood of the platform a quite large bug. And it was still functioning, that was when we

first got absolute proof that there had been bugging.

Archive:

Matthews press conference:

"We assume that it was one of the intelligence services - our own opinion is a British intelligence service who put it in..."

George Matthews: If the State wants to fight us, let it fight us in the political field but not by using the forces of the state to interfere with our legitimate democratic rights. That's what we objected to.

Commentary: Over the years, the Secret State bugged and burgled as it saw fit - to keep so-called subversion at bay.

Wilf: You were outside of the law, let's understand that. You were working outside of the law. You just did it because you happen to believe that this is a wonderful country worth living in and you were trying to keep it clean and democratic, and maybe we were dirty ourselves.

Commentary: At the height of the Cold War, the Secret State was anxious to stop those it saw as subversives from getting sensitive jobs - especially in the defence industries.

It was called vetting. But first it had to be established who the so-called subversives were.

TONY ROBINSON

Lancashire Police Special Branch, 1965-81

Tony Robinson: Proof of membership was the ultimate in the intelligence field in respect of recording of subversives.

Interviewer: And it was known as?

Tony Robinson: It was known as 'still life'. It was prima-facie evidence of membership.

Commentary: One of Tony's agents had access to Communist Party Headquarters in a Northern city. On a routine basis he borrowed its membership cards.

Tony Robinson: Twice a year, we had a specially adapted observation van, he would have the legitimate access into the premises, and he would come out with the.. the new registration cards at the start of the year, and we would photograph them, just put them four at a time in front, click, click and on it went. Cards back in the same position and off we drove.

Commentary: But it wasn't just the defence industry that the Secret State vetted. The BBC was also targeted because of its key

role in times of national crisis.

ALAN

Metropolitan Police Special Branch, 1965-83

Interviewer: Did you have informers, sources within the media?

Alan: Yes.

Interviewer: Journalists talking to special?

Alan: Yes. I did have a source within the BBC to which I could go for information if I wanted it.

Interviewer: And what kind of information would you be seeking from within the BBC?

Alan: We'll be looking at trade union activity bordering on the militancy and stuff like that.

Commentary: The BBC as an organisation was ready to cooperate with the Secret State.

In Room 105 - it employed a personnel officer to liaise with MI5 - the aim being to keep troublemakers out of sensitive jobs.

Suspects had a Christmas Tree stamped on their files.

Commentary: And it wasn't just BBC trades unionists who were watched. Its creative talents were monitored too. In 1974 a play called 'Leeds United' caused a storm because of its supposedly subversive bias.

Archive:

"What's up with you?"

"Michael says he's a communist."

"So bloody what?"

"It's what you're paid for ?? not your politics. "

"Anyone what gets this lot off their arses I don't care if he's Mao Tse bloody Tung."

Commentary: Its director was Roy Battersby, a member of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

ROY BATTERSBY

Television Director

Roy Battersby: Leeds United was a film written by Colin Welland about a strike amongst the Leeds clothing workers, and they were striking for a shilling an hour increase. And again it was an explosive strike.

Archive:

"And we're supposed to swallow miserable bloody pittance they give us last month. They give us it three months ago and we got it three weeks back."

Commentary: The BBC's head of Drama was ordered in plain terms not to employ Battersby.

Interviewer: Nevertheless your name's on the credits.

Roy Battersby: Yes, it's true, and I know that only happened however, like Christopher Morahan for example who was head of drama at the time, refused to accept instructions that I couldn't be hired.

Archive:

"Hey, come on, it's five to. Put your fag out Mollie."

"Don't bleedin' tempt me."

Commentary: Though he eventually went on to direct 'Inspector Morse' for ITV, Roy Battersby was not able to make another film for the BBC for a decade.

Roy Battersby: I think it's meant that I haven't had the opportunity to do the kind of work that I would like to have done, and the cost has been.. I feel the cost has been high. Certainly the cost has been high to me.

Commentary: The Secret State's greatest concern in this period was with what it saw as Communist subversion within industry.

Through the late 60s and early 70s industrial unrest gripped the country - from the coalfields to the docks. MI5 and Special Branch had no doubt the hand of the communists lay behind it.

DAN

Metropolitan Police Special Branch, 1964-89

Dan: We were going through a lot of unrest in the docks, in the print, in Ford and other motor works. A lot of big threats to the stability of our society. So at some stages, it felt as if you were paddling in a pool of subversion.

Archive:

Clip from Til Death Do Us Part

Caption:

BBC1, 1974

"Look the reason your car workers.....cos of Bolshie bastards like him.....on a soldier's wages - see how they like that..."

Commentary: The Secret State was determined to put an end to the onward march of the militants - in particular in hotbeds of industrial unrest like Liverpool, where jobs were as scarce as salmon in the Mersey.

TOM

Tom: Well it was very frustrating, You had to walk everywhere then, to go and get a job no matter how far it were, you had to walk. You could walk 7, 8 miles, 10 miles, wherever a job was, you went there. You just running up blind alleys all the time.

Commentary: We understand that Ford, whose giant plant at Halewood employed 12,000 workers, only agreed to invest there because of a secret agreement.

Tony Robinson: It was very, very important that the unions were monitored, and I as a Special Branch officer make no apologies for doing it as efficiently as I could.

Archive:

"Before making this investment the Ford Motor company investigated other sites in Britain in great depth, but finally chose Liverpool with its excellent communications and available labour force."

Commentary: It also chose Liverpool because of a secret assurance.

Tony Robinson: My senior officer, said "One of your responsibilities, Tony, is to make certain that the Fords factory is kept clean of subversives,

Commentary: Ford struck a deal involving MI5 and Special Branch.

Tony Robinson: Part of the plan drawn up was to make certain that working would carry on smoothly at Fords without the expected Merseyside disease of strikes and layoffs and God knows what, that the workforce would be vetted. The arrangement was thus drawn up, unofficially of course, that the Special Branch would do this

Commentary: Every week, Ford would submit the names of the latest job applicants to the local Special Branch.

Tony Robinson: We were expected to check these lists against our known subversives, and if any were seen on the list then strike a line through it, go and see our contact and say "So and so, so and so has been.. is a member of the CP or has been a member of the CP, didn't renew his membership last year" or something like that.

Interviewer: It's called blacklisting isn't it?

Tony Robinson: Well, there's no other term for it, but it was done

obviously with.. to my way of thinking, the right reasons.

Interviewer: Did you cross many people off?

Tony Robinson: From time to time, yes.

Tom: I apply for a job in Fords, filled the form in, sent it in, went along, passed the medical

Interviewer: And did you think you'd get the job?

Tom: Well I thought I will get a job there, because at the time they were looking for people. But then he sent me a letter saying there was no vacancies.

Interviewer: No vacancies!

Tom: No vacancies. How the hell can he turn around and say to me that there's no job there and they're still taking people on.

Interviewer: Why did you cross Tom's name off?

Tony Robinson: Tom, was according to the records, was a well known industrial militant, he was a member of the Communist Party on Merseyside. He had a record of, for want of a better word, disruption.

Interviewer: How long were you out of work for after Fords had said there was no job?

Tom: It was about 2 ½ - 3 years.

Tony Robinson: I don't feel a personal responsibility for that. No. I'm sorry for him, I'm sorry for his family, but in any sort of war there are always going to be casualties and it's just one of those unfortunate things that Tom was one of the casualties.

Interviewer: Your name was on a list and you were blacklisted, that's why you didn't get the job. Did you know that?

Tom: I didn't know I was blacklisted, no.

Interviewer: Well you were.

Tom: Black listed for fight... no, for fighting for your rights - I was a member of a trade union, I was a member of the Communist Party. But my political view should have nothing to do with that. And MI5, how they come to get involved in a thing like this I don't know.

JACK DROMEY
Trade Unionist

Jack Dromey: I am dismayed at what it was, an antidemocratic disgrace. I know Liverpool well. There are people who were confined to decades of misery as a consequence of having been black listed with the support of the police. It's outrageous.

TONY ROBINSON

Lancashire Police Special Branch, 1965-81

Tony Robinson: You call it blacklisting and that's what it is, but one has to look at the fact that if you have a factory like Fords - a tremendously large employer, we're talking about thousands of families depend on continued employment, you have a small group of subversives who can bring that factory to a stop, then I think the ends justify the means.

Jack Dromey: The manufacture of Ford Capris is a wee bit different from the production of nuclear warheads. The idea that you black list somebody because of their politics from going in to make cars is crazy.

Tom: I think it's disgusting - How can you proud of Britain when there's things like that going on? And I didn't know nothing at all about it until you told me. I never knew nothing whatsoever about it. I'm very surprised and I'm very bitter.

Interviewer: What right have Special Branch or MI5 got to vet me for my job?

Tony Robinson: Unfortunately in the real world this has to be so, there's no other explanation for it.

Interviewer: And I don't get the job because I have certain political views.

Tony Robinson: Tough.

Commentary: suspected subversives out of key industrial jobs, some inevitably slipped through the net.

But there was a second line of defence against industrial troublemakers - manned by another secret unit within Special Branch. It was called the Industrial Section.

ALAN

Metropolitan Police Special Branch, 1965-83

Alan: Our main position was to obtain the intelligence and information as to what these militants would be up to, so that we could inform the government of the day just exactly what was going to take place or what we thought was going to take place so they could combat it in the ways they thought possible.

Commentary: The Industrial Section had a highly sensitive role - to cultivate sources around the trade union movement's top table.

Interviewer: And what sort of relationship did you establish with these trade union leaders?

Alan: A very close working relationship. You could pick up the telephone and hopefully you could talk to them. We would meet them.

Commentary: Joe Gormley was President of the National Union of Mineworkers. The Labour Party was as deep within him as the coal in the ground.

Gormley's great rival was Arthur Scargill, a former Young Communist who was a then rising star within the Union.

Archive:

"Why then start to put a lot of complicated facts and figures on in the form of a package deal which can only tend to lead to confusion?"

"I know your point of view Arthur, you've expressed it here. Don't expect it to be my point of view at the moment until..."

Commentary: Joe was invariably up for a deal. Arthur decidedly not.

Archive:

"... and if you keep winking me I shall not wink back... (laughter)"

KEN DAY

Metropolitan Police Special Branch, 1969-98

Ken Day: The extreme left were getting the upper hand and were dictating the policy of the unions to some great extent, then we found ourselves actually going to unions and talking to top union officials about what was actually going on.

Interviewer: Top union officials?

Ken Day: People at the very top.

Alan: One of them would be Joe Gormley in the National Union of Mineworkers. Certainly he was in a position of power and was in a position to furnish us with what we were looking for.

Interviewer: Would Joe Gormley's trade union colleagues have known that he was talking to Special Branch?

Alan: I doubt it, very much.

Interviewer: Would you be surprised to hear that Joe Gormley was speaking to Special Branch very privately and giving them vital intelligence?

Jack Dromey: I would be stunned. Stunned.

Interviewer: Well he was.

Jack Dromey: Shameful! It should never have happened.

Interviewer: But it did.

Jack Dromey: Any self-respecting trade unionist should not cooperate in that way with those regarding their members to be a threat to the state. Outrageous.

ARTHUR SCARGILL

National Executive, N.U.M. 1972-2002

Interviewer: Are you surprised that Joe Gormley was talking secretly to Special Branch?

Arthur Scargill: Not at all, because the history of our movement is littered with people in leadership positions who were either connected with Special Branch or connected with the state.

Interviewer: But why would Joe Gormley, the President of the Miner's Union be talking to the Metropolitan Police Special Branch?

Alan: He loved his country. He was a patriot and he was very wary and worried about the growth of militancy within his own union
TU leaders en masse

Commentary: Joe Gormley was by no means the only trade union leader to have such secret friends.

Alan: I think we had 22 or 23 different characters there that we were discussing with.

Interviewer: What, 22 or 23 senior trade unionists?

Alan: Yes.

Interviewer: What, talking to Special Branch?

Alan: Yes.

Interviewer: That's almost unbelievable isn't it? Trade unionists aren't supposed to talk to Special Branch.

Alan: It would be unbelievable if I... You're the bogey man. It would be unbelievable if I didn't know it had happened, but having been there in that period of time I know it did happen.

Interviewer: Does that surprise you, over 20 trade unionists, senior members of the trade union movement talking to Special Branch?

Arthur Scargill: Yes it does surprise me, I thought it would be many more than that.

Commentary: Scargill first became a working class hero during the Miners' Strike of 1972 when he led an army of trades unionists to lay siege to Saltley coke depot.

His strategy was to starve the power stations of fuel and bring the country to a halt - thus forcing the government to give in to the miners's wage claim.

First the drivers had to be persuaded not to take the coke out of the depot.

Archive:

Arthur Scargill: You can ask the police and I'm quite sure they will confirm what I'm saying, there was no lorry gone through here today. I'm not telling any lies at all...

Commentary: The police, unprepared for the confrontation, were swamped by sea of flying pickets from all over the country.

After a tumultuous and historic week, Arthur's army won. The gates of Saltley closed.

Arthur Scargill: The miners were taking really united strike action for the first time really since 1926. And we were doing it in a way which had never been done before with the use of flying pickets from all over Britain. They not only closed Saltley Gates, but more important they did something fundamental, they changed in my view the whole of British politics.

Commentary: But the tantalising mystery remains. Because Joe Gormley was talking to Special Branch before 1972 and telling them of the miners' plans for a strike, why didn't the Secret State head it off?

Interviewer: Did you foresee the 1972 miners strike?

Alan: Yes we did.

Interviewer: How did you foresee it?

Alan: Because we were told by Joe Gormley that it would happen.

Interviewer: And what did you do with that information.?

Alan: That information was passed on to MI5.

Interviewer: So MI5 would know what was happening at the very top of the Miners Union.

Alan: Yes. I'm given to understand that MI5 reported to the government that such a strike would not take place.

Interviewer: Would not take place?

Alan: Would not take place.

Commentary: We can only speculate why MI5 might have been sensitive to the Industrial Section's extraordinary activities. Was it jealousy? A Turf War? Or a class thing?

WILF

Metropolitan Police Special Branch, 1962-77

Wilf: It was a very, very strained relationship. They were public school, we were grammar school or maybe below, and therefore there was a certain amount of antagonism. I think they regarded us as wooden tops, as plods.

Commentary: Not only were the Industrial Section's warnings ignored - worse was to follow. Its activities were wound down.

Alan: We were informed that the Squad has been disbanded, that we've been investigating probably too much, and that was the end of it, and we all went off to the four corners of the earth, into other squads.

Commentary: Ironically, no sooner was the Section disbanded than its prophecy of future industrial unrest came true.

In 1974 the Conservative Prime Minister, Ted Heath, took on the miners in another strike - and lost.

The government fell - toppled by mass trades union action.

The Labour government that followed fared no better as militant trade unionists grew stronger. The climax was a violent clash at a photo lab in London called Grunwick.

CHARLES POLLARD

Metropolitan Police, 1964-79

Charles Pollard: This is beyond peaceful picketing which is about trying to persuade people peacefully. This was just about naked violence to stop it and stuff everybody else. Stuff the police,

stuff the government, we're going to stop it. Now that's not right?

Wilf: We became spotters, and you would literally go along to some of the more violent demonstrations. At Grunwick it was our job to go and see who was associating and organising small bands of anarchists and leftwing people to be attacking the police. you went up looking as scruffy and dirty and as unkempt as they were. We weren't hairies, but we certainly didn't go out in pinstripe suits with our club ties on..

Commentary: Workers, largely Asian, were in dispute over union recognition. The management sacked the activists and refused to reinstate them. Staff who wanted to carry on working were bussed in through the picket lines. The Secret State watched with growing alarm.

Dan: It was the first indication of a move down the road of disorder and it needed careful monitoring.

Wilf: So you'd do a couple of days up there and then you'd come away and you'd write up all your notes on who you saw, who they were with, what cars they were with, where they were coming from

Commentary: The Secret State's prime target was Jack Dromey. But Special Branch suspected that Dromey had his own subversive agenda.

Dan: Jack Dromey, in my view, had a capacity to excite people and his audience were sufficiently impassioned to become excited with a little stimulus from Jack, whether it was a loudhailer outside Grunwick or at Ealing Town Hall.

JACK DROMEY

Chairman, Grunwick Strike Committee, 1976-78

Jack Dromey: Over the years I have met several policemen who were at Grunwick, including Special Branch men, and they've told me that I, who was simply standing up for workers rights, that my phone was bugged at home, that they had a listening device in the strike headquarters, and that I was periodically followed. Anyone would think that I was a member of the IRA or a Soviet spy. All I was, was a good trade unionist.

Charles Pollard: Well he may say that. At the time the perception was that he was a very extreme person with agendas way beyond that.

Jack Dromey: It was madness. It frankly reflects upon the appalling paranoia that characterised the Special Branch and the Security Services at the time.

Commentary: To the Secret State, the sight of Arthur Scargill at

Grunwick confirmed his growing status as subversive enemy number one.

Geoff: I was present when Arthur turned up with the miners to show solidarity with the workers. There he was neatly coiffured at the head of the brass band, it was like a scene out of a Ken Loach movie.

Arthur Scargill: There was the possibility here in Britain that the trade union movement could use direct action, not merely to improve their wages or better their conditions, but also to bring about fundamental changes in the political system itself.

Commentary: Despite the Secret State's intrusion into the lives of its citizens, it had proved unable to stem the tide of apparent industrial anarchy.

By the end of the decade, governments of both Right and Left had been swept away by militant trade union power.

But as Scargill marched on, Mrs. Thatcher was already gathering her forces to halt the red tide.

A final showdown loomed.

For more information on tonight's programme, visit our website at [www.bbc.co.uk/true spies](http://www.bbc.co.uk/true_spies)

In next week's programme....