

posted out of F Branch, responsibility for these operations was taken on by David Ranson, who had been appointed Director F.¹⁴

Besides industrial disruption, the area where the Thatcher government - the Prime Minister and the MoD in particular - most feared the hidden hand of subversion during the early 1980s was in the peace movement, which organized mass protests over the deployment of US cruise missiles on British soil as a dangerous escalation of the nuclear arms race. Though Mrs Thatcher believed that support for CND had passed its peak in 1981, it remained, in her view, 'dangerously strong'.¹⁵ Of especial concern was the possibility of KGB and Communist subversion within the peace movement. Though rarely alarmist in its assessments, the Security Service had taken the view that 'as CND grew more influential, the potential for subversives to threaten national security through it also increased'. By the mid-1970s CPGB members occupied eight of the fifteen seats on the CND national executive.¹⁶ While monitoring Communist influence in CND was clearly within the Service's remit, the case for opening a temporary file on Monsignor Bruce Kent as a 'possible Anarchist' when he became CND chairman in 1977 and for converting this into a permanent file on his election as CND secretary general from 1979 now appears distinctly dubious.¹⁷ In April 1982 FiA reported that CND was expanding at such a rate that Kent no longer knew precisely how large its membership was - possibly 30,000 in the national organization and as many as 250,000 in independent local groups. CND would remain a target for Communist and Trotskyist groups because it offered 'not only access to a broad-based popular movement with growing influence in political fields, but also an opportunity to challenge Government policies in key areas'.¹⁸

The section of the peace movement which attracted the greatest international media attention was the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp set up in September 1981 outside the airbase near Newbury in Berkshire which had been selected as a site for cruise missiles. For the next two years, the women protesters attempted - in the end unsuccessfully - to disrupt the construction of the missile site by blockading the base and cutting down parts of the perimeter fence. In May 1983 a temporary file on the Camp was converted into a permanent file on the grounds that it was 'subject to penetration by subversive groups'.¹⁹ No significant subversive penetration, however, came to light.²⁰ The dominant element in the Peace Camp was believed to be militant feminists who saw nuclear arms as a problem created by a male-dominated world order. Though Communists, Trotskyists and their sympathizers (all members of male-dominated organizations) had an important role in organizing mass demonstrations in