

SUBVERSION IN THE U.K. - 1972

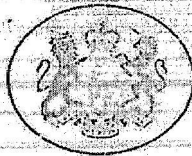
INTRODUCTION

Note: The activities of the I.R.A. and other Irish extremist groups are not considered in this paper.

There are several issues today which provide subversive organisations with opportunities for exploitation, by propaganda and by direct forms of protest. British entry into the E.E.C., the Industrial Relations legislation, the level of unemployment, the conduct of affairs in Northern Ireland, even lesser issues such as the decision to limit free school milk and the proposals for controlling student union funds, are matters on which substantial sections of the community tend to oppose the government. These issues provide causes which subversive organisations have not been slow to seize on but their role and what they have achieved must be seen in perspective. In recent major issues, for example the coal miners' strike, Upper Clyde Shipbuilders and opposition to the Industrial Relations legislation, the efforts of subversive groups represent a small part of a general momentum. While not insignificant, their efforts have not been decisive.

2. The number of people who may be described as committed supporters of the various subversive organisations or who are violently inclined Anarchists, is little more than 40,000 or well below 0.1% of the population. This figure bears little relationship to the temporary, wider support which subversive organisations sometimes obtain when they adopt causes of the day which enjoy a broad appeal. The largely Trotskyist inspired demonstration over Vietnam in

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- 2 -

Grosvenor Square, London in October 1968 was attended by some 25,000 people - at least six times the known number of Trotskyists in the U.K. Similarly the 29,000 strong Communist Party of Great Britain (C.P.G.B.) exercises a disproportionate influence among 10 million trade unionists.

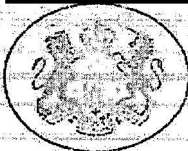
3. All subversive groups view popular causes as opportunities for extending their influence. Although from time to time they find it tactically acceptable to make common cause in joint demonstrations, it should not be inferred that there are 40,000 organised militants, with identical subversive aims, permanently capable of united action and under centralised direction. Experience over the past five years suggests that the more revolutionary groups of the ultra-left, the Trotskyists and Maoists for example, are incapable of forming lasting associations. When they do collaborate among themselves and with the C.P.G.B., their relationship is usually uneasy and ephemeral, punctuated by doctrinal rivalries and power struggles.

THE SOURCES OF SUBVERSION

The Communists

4. The C.P.G.B., which with 29,000 members is the strongest subversive group in the country, aims to create a socialist state through peaceful means. It plans first to bring about a broad socialist alliance which will lead a large scale, popular struggle to improve the social and economic conditions of working people. Once in power it proposes to consolidate its position by filling the leading appointments in the public service, armed forces and police

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- 3 -

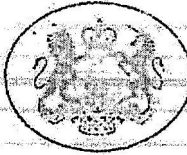
with trusted nominees. In practice, having consistently failed to attract the electorate, it is pursuing political power through infiltrating the trade unions. Using union representation, the Communists hope to influence Labour Party policy to the point where an alliance, which they would try to dominate, became possible.

5. The Party's aims are coherent and positive; they are directed to a change in society rather than to its destruction and the Party has an interest in succeeding to a viable rather than a ruined economy. The Party does not advocate violence or lawlessness. Its attitude to promoting industrial unrest, as towards intervention in political, social and economic issues, is calculated in terms of the political advantage likely to accrue from its participation. Although, through its industrial influence, its size and its relatively strong organisation, the C.P.G.B. remains the major long term subversive threat in this country, it is weakened by internal dissension.

The Trotskyists

6. The Trotskyists groups taken together are about 4,000 strong, one seventh the size of the C.P.G.B., but their membership is increasing. Despite constant tactical and doctrinal disputes among themselves they share common basic aims and convictions. They believe that a decaying capitalist system is maintained artificially by an arms economy and that without this prop, which is already weakening, the country will decline into a pre-revolutionary situation. At this stage, because of economic hardship, the working class will be induced to accept Trotskyist leadership, which will steer the proletariat into direct confrontation with the forces of authority until the point of revolution is reached.

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- 4 -

7. The Trotskyists see no need to build mass parties or secure Parliamentary power for this purpose. They aim to identify and make contacts in groups they consider to be currently alienated from society - militant students, Irish activists, Black Power groups and workers in industry are among their present targets. They hope to use these first to hasten the spread of disillusionment with the capitalist system and ultimately to further the cause of revolution. Much of the Trotskyist effort is occupied in manipulating front organisations which they use to maintain what is often a deliberately violent challenge to authority. A characteristic of this front activity is the Trotskyists' ability to attract the support not only of intellectuals and well known personalities such as Bernadette Devlin, John Lennon and Vanessa Redgrave but also of large numbers of students with militant inclinations who sometimes inflate Trotskyist confrontations to dimensions far beyond those of the hard core membership.

Maoists and Anarchists

8. Of the remaining subversive groups only the Maoists and the Anarchists are significant. (Though they have a total membership of about 4,500 the Fascist groups represent only an occasional problem for law and order rather than a threat to national security).

9. The Maoists, who number less than 500, are fragmented; their numerous splinter groups contain a few intellectuals, some businessmen and several trade unionists. Some young people including students have been attracted to Maoism by the revolutionary spirit exemplified in the former Red Guard

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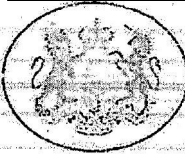
- 5 -

movement in China. This finds reflection in the violence sometimes shown by small groups of Maoists when participating in demonstrations organised by others. All Maoist groups in this country are hostile to the C.P.G.B. and Trotskyist groups. They derive some hospitality and moral encouragement from the Chinese Diplomatic Mission in London.

10. The number of traditional Anarchists in this country is hard to assess as they avoid organisation, but their press suggests that about one hundred small groups often not numbering as many as ten persons now exist - almost double the number five years ago. While all are theoretically dedicated to the overthrow of any system of government in this country, few are prepared to carry their beliefs beyond the bounds of lawful protest and much of their public activity comprises participation in demonstrations or forms of social protest such as squatting in empty accommodation and publicising the alleged injustices of the Social Services. A small number however are prepared to show solidarity with continental Anarchists, for example by creating propaganda explosions in Spanish and Italian government or business premises in this country.

Neo-Anarchism

11. A recent development has been the appearance of what may be called a 'neo-Anarchist' group - The Angry Brigade. Its planting of bombs resembles traditional Anarchist violence but the source of its political inspiration is to be found more in the modern revolutionary philosophies of GUEVARA, MARCUSE and MARIGHIELLA which have encouraged the development of urban guerilla movements in other parts of the world. It is dedicated to the complete overthrow of present society, though its proposals for replacing it are not defined. Apart from the I.R.A., the Angry Brigade's activities in 1971 represent the most



- 6 -

violent form of active political protest in present day society. Since the arrest of a number of members of the Angry Brigade, there have been three unclaimed and unexplained explosions. It must therefore be recognised that members of the group may still be at large or that other groups may engage in violence of this kind.

12. Neo-Anarchist movements find haven and support in the so-called Alternative Society, a form of personal and cultural protest which has developed on a small scale in this country. Some of its members have established and live in communes, one of which played a part in the Angry Brigade case, and its views and attitudes are represented in the Underground Press. The latter, far from being clandestine, is published openly and offered for sale commercially. It is characterised by its revolutionary and frequently obscene content and its general aim appears to be the undermining of present society by destroying public confidence in its institutions. The precursor was perhaps 'Private Eye' though this is less crude and professionally more competent, enjoying a commercial viability which has eluded 'IT', 'OZ', 'FRIENDZ', 'INK' and the more serious '7 DAYS'. While they exist these publications may achieve a circulation of up to 30,000 though it is usually considerably less. Only the weekly London entertainment guide 'Time Out' which also devotes space to revolutionary articles and to advertising protest meetings appears to be securely established at present.

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