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23rd January 1969

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CABINET

OFFICIAL COMMITTEE ON SUBVERSION AT HOME

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SUBVERSION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Note by the Secretary

Attached is a Note by the Security Service on Subversion in the United Kingdom, which is to be considered by the Committee at their next meeting.

(Signed) D. HEATON

Cabinet Office, S.W.1.

23rd January 1969

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SUBVERSION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

(Note by the Security Service)

INTRODUCTION

It is many years since subversion has been as much in the minds of the British people as it is today. This is because last year the subversive threat no longer derived solely from political activity and industrial action, largely by the Communist Party, but because it also found expression in major incidents of violence either in the form of demonstrations, such as those in London on 17 March, 21 July and 27 October, or of student disturbances or of acts of sabotage by Welsh extremists. All were given maximum publicity by the press, radio and television. The Communist Party of Great Britain (C.P.G.B.) did not fully share this limelight, largely because of its desire to keep in the background. Nevertheless, Communism generally received its fair share of attention, thanks to the activities of the French and Italian Parties in the Spring and still more to the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in the Summer.

COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN (C.P.G.B.)

2. By almost any yardstick save that of activity in the industrial field, 1968 was a poor year for the C.P.G.B. Membership at 31 October 1968 was down by about 500 and the noticeably low level of public activity in Party Districts and Branches reflected the continued decline in morale of the individual member. Despite this the Party was anxious to assume the leadership of those campaigns, such as Vietnam, which seemed likely to evoke mass support, but its action was usually hesitant and often counter-productive. Its failure in this field can be attributed to the reluctance of its leadership to endorse, or perhaps more accurately to be seen to be endorsing, public violence. The result was to leave the field open to the Trotskyists and the Anarchists who had relatively little difficulty in representing the C.P.G.B. as a group of burnt-out revolutionaries scarcely distinguishable from the more bourgeois segments of the political establishment.

3. From the C.P.G.B.'s point of view, failure at home was aggravated by disappointment abroad, notably in relation to Czechoslovakia. The Party leadership held no particular brief for DUBCEK and in some degree shared the Warsaw Powers' doubts of his ability and that of his Party to withstand "counter-revolutionary" pressures. Nevertheless as a Party which at its last Congress publicly committed itself to the sovereignty of national and governing Parties, the C.P.G.B. had no choice (nor so far as its national leadership was concerned was there any desire) but to oppose the Russian intervention. Despite a surprising volume of opposition from its intermediate leadership in the Districts,

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where the feeling is that the Russian action was unavoidable, the Party leadership remains opposed to it and by so doing almost certainly reflects the views of the membership as a whole. It is this which has saved the Party from defections on the Hungarian scale.

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#### TROTSKYIST ACTIVITY

5. All the Trotskyist groups can look back on 1968 with some satisfaction. The largest, the Socialist Labour League (S.L.L.), took little part in the demonstrations and preferred to concentrate on improving its own organisation and developing its industrial contacts at shop steward level. It went some way to solving its perennial financial problems and increased the circulation and frequency of issue of its publication 'The Newsletter'. The International Socialism (I.S.) Group made substantial headway in the universities, virtually doubled its membership (now standing at about 1,000), and was notably successful in penetrating the nexus of university labour and socialist clubs. In this it worked in uneasy alliance with the International Marxist Group (I.M.G.). Together they played an important part in much of the unrest inside the universities, and their penetration of university societies was a major factor in bringing on to the streets a large number of students in the series of demonstrations which culminated in that of 27 October.

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6. In general, and certainly in public, the I.S. and the I.M.G. claim that these demonstrations were a success. They argue that the violence anticipated from them was the invention of a hostile Press and they are now planning a new series to start in earnest in March 1969. While it would be foolish to under-estimate the nuisance value of these groups and their student supporters, experience has shown that, given adequate advance intelligence, their demonstrations can be contained by normal police methods. At no time was the aim of some of the organisers, namely to bring about a "revolutionary situation", within measurable distance of attainment and the fragmentation of the Trotskyists suggests that they would not have been able to exploit it even if it had been.

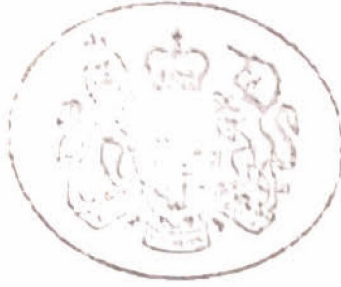
7. Despite the air of confidence which the Trotskyists give in public and their undoubted intentions to resume their efforts in the Spring it is open to question whether they can keep up the pace. Both the I.S. and I.M.G. suspect that Vietnam as an issue is beginning to lose its emotional appeal and while each is anxious to get control of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (V.S.C.) for the purpose of the new demonstrations, they both have an uneasy feeling that they may be quarrelling over a sick man, if not a corpse. Their anxieties on this score are aggravated by their recognition that the Marcusian appeal for unity of students and workers has virtually everywhere met with a dusty answer. The only significant exception, the Draughtsmen and Allied Technicians' Association (D.A.T.A.), in which the Maoists have made some headway, affords them scant consolation.

#### WELSH NATIONALISM

8. The threat of subversion in Wales comes from a small group of Welshmen who are prepared to enforce their demands by criminal acts, predominantly sabotage. In practice there are both short- and long-term threats, the former against the Investiture of the Prince of Wales, and the latter likely to continue beyond it.

9. In 1968 there were changes in police organisation and a substantial increase in the overall investigational effort. This has resulted in the identification of between 40 and 50 extremists who are either prepared to engage in criminal acts or to afford active sympathy. Physical conditions in Wales contribute to the difficulties of investigation, notably when surveillance is required, and at present there is insufficient evidence for prosecution on charges of sabotage. Nevertheless there is an encouraging increase in the flow of information.



THE LIKELY PATTERN IN 1969

10. There are likely to be further demonstrations on the 1968 pattern which will absorb most of the energies of the I.S. and I.M.G. segments of the Trotskyist movement, and, despite the reservations of the Party proper, the Young Communist League (Y.C.L.) can be expected to take a more active part. Since the Y.C.L. is a more disciplined and potentially less violent body than the Trotskyist groups, its participation is, on balance, a welcome development.

11. The C.P.G.B. seems likely to concentrate on the industrial front and will try to make propaganda out of any friction between the Government and the Trade Union Movement. The S.L.L. section of the Trotskyists will take the same line and its influence among shop stewards may force the C.P.G.B. to adopt bolder and less "official" tactics in the Trade Union Movement. There are indications that the Party is already thinking on these lines.

COUNTER-MEASURES

12. Intelligence coverage is essential and needs to be maintained if not extended. This means the maintenance by the Security Service of the existing intimate relations with Police Forces, particularly the Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police, and continued co-operation with West European Security Services.

13. Education of those in authority who need to know, including the Police, about the nature of the subversive threat should continue. The aim should be to put it into perspective.

14. Publicity is grist to the mill of the subversive groups. What is required is that mass media should portray the subversive threat with accuracy and without exaggeration and seldom.

January 1969.