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SH(69) 1st Meeting

COPY NO. 14

CABINET

OFFICIAL COMMITTEE ON SUBVERSION AT HOME

MINUTES of a Meeting held in Sir Burke Trend's
Room, Cabinet Office, S.W.1, on
FRIDAY, 31st JANUARY 1969 at 3.00 p.m.

PRESENT:

Sir Burke Trend,
Cabinet Office (In the Chair)

Mr. J.H. Peck,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Mr. A.S. Kerr,
Department of Employment
and Productivity

Mr. J.H. Waddell,
Home Office

Mr. R.J. Guppy,
Department of Education
and Science

Mr. C.A.G. Simkins,
Security Service

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. J. Tyrer,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Mr. R. Thistlethwaite,
Security Service

Security Service

SECRETARY:

Mr. D. Heaton

S U B J E C T:

SUBVERSION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM
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SUBVERSION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The Committee had before them a Note by the Secretary (SH(69)2), covering a Note by the Security Service on Subversion in the United Kingdom.

MR. THISTLETHWAITE said that with the broadening of the subversive threat there was a danger that the longer-standing threat from the Communist Party might be lost sight of. There was no intention of this being allowed to happen. For the time being the Party seemed likely to concentrate on the industrial front, and would try to exploit the friction between the Government and the trade union movement. The Young Communist League could be expected to take a more active part in demonstrations organised by the various segments of the Trotskyist movement. In general, intelligence coverage of subversive groups would at least be maintained, and the close cooperation of the Security Service with both the police and West European security services would continue.

In discussion the following main points were made:

(a) The Communist Party. The Party would certainly exploit difficulties over the new trade union legislation likely to be included in the programme for next session. Meanwhile, the motor industry offered them the best opportunities for stirring up trouble with widespread repercussions. There was no dividend for them in the present inter-union dispute in the steel industry. The Party had serious internal differences, and appropriate publicity could be given to the strength of the opposition to the Party leadership over the Czechoslovak issue.

(b) Demonstrations. A round of further demonstrations had been planned to take place in March. Of these, the biggest would probably be that on 16th March, to be organised by the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. The main theme of this was to be a welcome to members of the National Liberation Front (NLF) delegation to the Paris talks and a number of North Vietnamese, who were being invited as a challenge to the Government's policy of refusing them visas. At present, there seemed to be no good reason for excluding Madame Binh and members of the NLF delegation, though North Vietnamese (e.g. students from East Berlin) would no doubt be excluded. In general, it was desirable to distinguish between those concerned or negotiating to achieve a settlement in Vietnam, and the

Maoists and others who simply want to see the Americans done down. Similarly, publicity should concentrate on emphasising the differences between groups concerned with the Vietnam issue, and not on the issue itself. On the whole demonstration front, there was no reason for complacency, and the defensive arrangements made last year should continue at least until the summer.

(c) Students. Not surprisingly, there were differences between Vice Chancellors as to the right policy for dealing with unruly students. In general, though it was true that they had been reluctant to take action against individual students, it was a fact that such attempts as had been made had been greeted with cries of 'victimisation' from even the moderate students. The university authorities should take advantage of the changed climate of public opinion which was now evident, and the recent speech in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for Education and Science might encourage them to be more resolute. The Committee needed someone to replace Sir John Wolfenden as a link with the Vice Chancellors. The Secretary of the UGC was just leaving, and therefore not suitable, but the new Chairman might be suitable, when he had had more time to settle into the job and to gain the Vice Chancellors' confidence. A disturbing new feature was the increased interest by the Trotskyists and the pro-Chinese communists in secondary school children, and the report that Granada TV had paid the expenses of some delegates to a national conference of sixth form pupils. IRD had just completed a paper on Student Unrest, and a shorter one on the Soviet Attitude to Student Unrest, and the Committee would welcome these unclassified papers being circulated to them.

(d) Welsh Nationalist Extremists. Changes in police organisation made last year were paying off in terms of improved intelligence. The leadership of the extremists was genuinely nationalist, and there was no direct link with France. The links with the IRA were not of great significance, since the extremists needed neither money nor training in the use of explosives.

Summing up the discussion, THE CHAIRMAN said that since the Committee were formally concerned with all aspects of subversion at home, it was right for them to take a look at the whole subversive field from time to time. A good deal was going on, but the arrangements for obtaining and disseminating good intelligence were broadly satisfactory; and the

principles for our countermeasures should be those in paragraphs 12-14 of SH(69)2. He proposed to report the main developments to the Prime Minister. An outstanding matter was the question of a successor to Sir John Wolfenden as an unofficial link with Vice Chancellors. This could be considered again at the Committee's next meeting, which might appropriately be held towards the end of April.

The Committee -

Took note, with approval, of the Chairman's summing up.

Cabinet Office, S.W.1.

3rd February 1969