

SECRET

*in D Heaton*

(THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT)

AC(H)(WG)(68)3

27th May 1968

10

COPY NO. \_\_\_\_\_

CABINET

OFFICIAL COMMITTEE ON COMMUNISM (HOME)

STUDENT PROTEST

Note by the Secretary

Attached is a paper by the Security Service, commissioned at the last meeting (AC)(H)(WG)(68) 1st Meeting), on some aspects, primarily domestic, of Student Protest.

(Signed) D. HEATON

Cabinet Office, S.W.1.

27th May 1968

SECRET

SUBVERSIVE INFLUENCES ON STUDENT PROTESTNote by the Security ServiceINTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to examine the role played by subversive organisations in student protest and the extent to which their activities are internationally co-ordinated.

2. Issues on which there has been a substantial volume of protest by students in recent months fall into two broad categories, namely those of immediate concern to students themselves and secondly wider issues in which they become involved as members of a political community. The former is largely concerned with criticism of the university system and the latter, while theoretically concerned with the entire range of political issues, tends in practice to be confined to the more emotive ones - notably the Vietnam War and the action which H.M.G. should or should not take in relation to it. On both categories, in so far as the subversive establishment has become involved, it is the Left, that is the Communists, Trotskyists, Syndicalists and Anarchists who have participated and the Right, in the form of the Fascists and the Neo-Fascists, have taken no active part other than to stage an occasional protest against "Protest".

THE ROLE OF SUBVERSIVE ORGANISATIONS

3. The subversive political parties of the Left can try to determine the choice of issues and the methods of protest through two distinct channels: directly through those students who are members or active contacts of their parties and indirectly through "front organisations" on the leadership of which they can bring significant influence to bear. While the former is not to be discounted the latter is potentially the greater problem since recent experience indicates that most of the subversive parties each have favoured front organisations but, as they frequently come together for the purpose of demonstrations, lines of demarkation are often blurred and the precise significance of each is not easy to define.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY

4. In the present context when solely dependent on its own resources the Communist Party is of relatively little significance. It has a small headquarters and district apparatus headed by a young and active official, its Student Organiser Fergus NICHOLSON, directed at the student community, and it claims a student membership of between 600-800. To obtain this figure it has to include students at technical colleges and its true membership in the universities scarcely exceeds 300-400. In recent

/years .....

years it has made little or no headway and in many universities it has lost ground to the Trotskyists who have even succeeded in penetrating a number of its student branches. The Party's numerical weakness has meant that in this field, as in so many others, it has had to concentrate on the penetration of organisations larger than itself in the hope that by so doing it will magnify its influence. This emphasis on penetration, while potentially dangerous, is often in practice a restraining factor and one which compels it to adopt policies less militant than would be its natural inclination, and on occasion policies barely acceptable to its own younger element.

5. The Party's principal target is the National Union of Students (NUS) where its aim is to replace the present leadership of the Union with a group of students who would, it hopes, convert the NUS into a political instrument, break off contact with the Western orientated International Student Conference, and ultimately line up U.K. students with the international communist community via the International Union of Students. Its frontal attacks on the NUS leadership at the Union's Annual Conferences were a complete failure and in consequence two years ago it was forced to change its tactics, since when its chosen instrument has been the Radical Students Alliance.

#### THE RADICAL STUDENTS ALLIANCE (RSA)

6. RSA is the brainchild of Fergus NICHOLSON and was conceived in October 1966 when NICHOLSON succeeded in bringing together at Communist Party Headquarters an apparently diverse assortment of student politicians and persuaded them to sign the original RSA Manifesto. Of the twelve signatories two were young Liberals, two members of the Labour Party who subsequently turned out to be Trotskyists, two were members of the National Students Committee of the Communist Party and the remainder had no known political affiliations. The declared objectives of RSA as set out in the manifesto were:-

- i) Student Rights - students should have control over their unions and funds, election of officers and students representatives.
- ii) Education must be Classless - schools should be integrated and comprehensive at all levels.
- iii) Students and Society - students must be able to take collective action on matters of general social concern.

7. When RSA elected its first national council in January 1967 five of the twenty members were Communists and there has been no significant change since. Its present Secretary, Chris GILMORE, is also a Communist and it is known that a small caucus of Communist students meets shortly before the national council sessions and determines policy. From the Communist Party's point of view RSA's principal function is as an instrument with which to

/penetrate ..

penetrate and ultimately to control the NUS. In this it has so far failed and the Party is inclined to attribute this failure to RSA involvement in heavily publicized political demonstrations with which the Party sympathises privately but disapproves in practice. Despite the Party's lukewarm attitude RSA has played a major role in recent student demonstrations both against the Vietnam war and against the university authorities at L.S.E., Leicester and Essex. It was also largely responsible for the demonstrations at the German Embassy and the London office of the Springer group following the shooting of the German student leader DUTSCHKE.

#### THE ROLE OF THE TROTSKYISTS

8. In recent years the major influence on radical student opinion has been Trotskyist rather than Communist and this in fact would have been even greater had it not been for the divided character of the Trotskyist movement itself. Although the largest Trotskyist organisation, the Socialist Labour League, succeeded in splitting the Labour Party's re-formed youth organisation, the Young Socialist Movement, in 1965 the League's appeal to students has been less successful and in this field it has had to yield pride of place to a second Trotskyist group, the International Socialism Group.

#### THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM GROUP (I.S. Group)

9. This Group, which is sometimes also known as the CLIFF Group, has an estimated university membership of 400 with significant concentrations in the L.S.E. and some of the northern universities, notably Manchester. The essence of its appeal is that students are an integral part of the working class trapped in a university system devised by the ruling class to provide its successor and the student's proper function is therefore to identify himself with working class issues. On these premises the I.S.Group tends to regard issues which are solely or predominantly of interest to students as sectarian and while it is not actively opposed to demonstrations of student power in conflict with the university authorities it has yet to finalise a policy in relation to it. Thus any individual student member of the I.S.Group interested in aspects of student power tends to operate through the RSA rather than through the I.S.Group itself. The only significant exception to this general pattern of I.S.Group behaviour was the recent controversy at Manchester University where the student leaders were members of the I.S.Group.

10. In practice the group tries to concentrate student attention on wider political issues, some industrial as at the Barbican Site, but predominantly on the anti-Vietnam campaign and members of the group are known to have played a leading part in demonstrations against the Prime Minister and other leading political figures at university centres such as at Cambridge and Sheffield. In this effort the group's principal instrument has been the nexus of university

/Socialist .....

Socialist and Labour clubs many of which it has succeeded in penetrating at committee level. This has been made easier by the Labour Party's action in dis-affiliating the National Association of Labour Student Organisations (NALSO) which has meant that the Socialist/Labour clubs at the universities have become a haven for those Labour Party student politicians who are opposed to the policies of the present Government. At the same time NALSO itself has partially disintegrated and the only effective portion left is now under the control of the I.S.Group's principal Trotskyist rival - the Socialist Labour League.

11. Present indications are that when the I.S.Group finalises its attitude towards student power it will try to operate through the newly formed Revolutionary Socialist Students Organisation. This organisation was first mooted as a result of student discussions at Leicester and Leeds and a formal inaugural conference of the organisation is planned at L.S.E. on June 15/16th. It is intended that this will cover such topics as racism and fascism and workers control of industry. The recent 'sleep in' at L.S.E. is predominantly I.S.Group inspired and the appeal to industrial workers is in effect a pilot operation for the Revolutionary Socialist Students Organisation.

#### THE VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN (VSC)

12. The I.S.Group's effort in the anti-Vietnam campaign is also deployed through VSC which was founded in December 1965 as an off-shoot of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. In November 1967 largely as a result of the absence in the United States of Russell's Secretary Ralph SCHOENMAN, political differences and shortage of money the Foundation withdrew its support from VSC which is now independent. Since mid-1966 VSC has been under Trotskyist control as a result of a working understanding reached between the I.S.Group and a third Trotskyist organisation the International Marxist Group (IMG) which is affiliated to the Trotskyist Fourth International. Relations between the two groups are uneasy and present indications are that the IMG is in practice the senior partner since it controls VSC's office accommodation and provides most of its administrative organisation.

13. VSC was one of the major constituents of the ad hoc committee set up to organise the Grosvenor Square demonstration on March 17th and it was VSC which extended the invitation to the West German Socialist Student Organisation (SDS) to send a contingent. This contingent was about 100 strong, was well-drilled, aggressive and vicious and gave advice to other demonstrators on anti-police techniques.

#### INTERNATIONAL CO-ORDINATION

14. So far as U.K. experience goes there are indications that in recent demonstrations there may have been some limited international co-ordination. In practice

/this has been ...

this has been confined to the selection of targets and the choice of dates and on present evidence it does not amount to centralised direction although there are several organisations potentially capable of fulfilling this role.

#### THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

15. Protest against American policy in Vietnam is an important element in the policies of all Communist front organisations, particularly the World Council of Peace and the World Federation of Trade Unions. These organisations have arranged international conferences on the subject and have been effective in publicizing the cause. It is not known how far - if at all - they have sought to penetrate anti-Vietnam organisations on the Continent but in the U.K. there has been no need for them to do more than endorse the activities of demonstrating groups with which the C.P.G.B. has effective links.

#### THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

16. The office of the VSC in London is in the same building as the Pioneer Bookshop run by a Canadian, Ernest TATE, the London representative of the Fourth International. VSC is known to have used TATE's contact with the Fourth International as a channel of communication with Trotskyist groups at the planning stage of the March 17th demonstration outside the U.S. Embassy in London and under the same auspices VSC participated in an international Vietnam conference in Berlin in February 1968. As a result of the contacts made there VSC invited the SDS to participate in the March 17th demonstration. There were similar contacts immediately before the 1968 Aldermaston March and the proposal that there should on that occasion be demonstrations outside the German Embassy and the Springer Office in London reached VSC via TATE and a contact in the Fourth International, namely Art SHARON.

17. In April 1968 an International Symposium on Imperialism was held in London under the sponsorship of the IMG which is affiliated to the Fourth International. It was organised by TATE, its purpose was to consider a world-wide strategy against American Imperialism in Vietnam and the principal speakers were Pierre FRANK (France), Livio MAITAN (Italy) and Ernest MANDEL (Belgium) all of whom are prominent members of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

#### THE STOP IT COMMITTEE

18. This Committee which was formed in 1967 consists entirely of Americans resident in the U.K., almost all of whom are students. Their original aim was to stimulate British protest against the war and latterly to direct opposition to the American draft. The Committee is not a disciplined organisation and its present strength cannot be estimated. Its members and those who speak in its name are well educated and sophisticated when compared with some of

/the ....

SECRET

- 6 -

the British groups with which they associate and most of them realise that the violence displayed in recent demonstrations does their cause more harm than good.

INTERNATIONAL SYNDICALISM

19. In recent demonstrations of student power in the U.K. there have been indications of nascent syndicalism notably a wish to identify the student with the worker and to achieve for the student the same control over his affairs as is sought for the worker in the Syndicalist Movement proper. The process has not gone very far but there are indications that it can be attributed in part to American and Western European influences. The U.S. element has come from individual Americans resident in the U.K. who in the initial stages of student protest demonstrated to their British counterparts the lessons learnt in places like the University of California. More recently there have been indications that the syndicalism which has infected the Students for Democratic Society in the U.S. and student groups in Western Europe has spread to the U.K. via the RSA which has a working relationship with the recently formed Congress of European Syndicalist Organisations. The RSA Secretary - GILMORE - despite the fact that he is a Communist, is also known to have a wide range of contacts with European student organisations controlled or penetrated by syndicalists.

27 May, 1968

SECRET