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CABINET

OFFICIAL COMMITTEE ON COMMUNISM (HOME)

WORKING GROUP ON COUNTERMEASURES

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SUBVERSION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM - SPRING 1968

Note by the Secretary

Attached is a paper by the Security Service on Subversion in the United Kingdom - Spring 1968.

This paper will be considered by the Working Group at their meeting arranged for Friday 17th May at 3 p.m.

(Signed) D. HEATON

Cabinet Office, S.W.1.

10th May 1968

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SUBVERSION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM - SPRING 1968INTRODUCTION

This paper differs from its predecessors in that whereas the subversive threat to the nation's livelihood still lies in the Communist Party's attack on the prices and incomes policy through its penetration of the trade unions which continues on familiar lines with some disquieting success, pride of place is given to the subversive elements behind the various protest demonstrations, some of them violent, which have taken place in the last six months with attendant publicity. The possibility of violent extremism in Wales also deserves mention. Behind lurks the racial situation with the subversive potentialities of Black Power both in its own right and as a stimulant and polariser of Fascism.

PROTEST

2. Since last October about a dozen protest demonstrations have taken place which have had a security significance as well as obvious law and order aspects. The injection of violence for political purposes is a new factor which differentiates these demonstrations from the old C.N.D. marches and even from the more militant activities of the Committee of 100 which were largely confined to the invasion of prohibited areas and lying down in the street. The change has been brought about by an increase in anarchism which is no longer of the arm-chair variety and which thrives on the publicity produced by clashes with the very governmental authority it is out to destroy. The Solidarity Group led by Doctor Christopher PALLIS led the way last year in its attack on the Greek Embassy, but the momentum has noticeably increased since.

3. There is no evidence that these activities have been co-ordinated from any one central point but two organisations have played a prominent part, the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (V.S.C.) and the Radical Student Alliance (R.S.A.).

4. The V.S.C. was founded in December 1965 as an off-shoot of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation with which it broke off relations in November 1967. Over half the members of the 1967 National Council and Executive Committee of the V.S.C. are Trotskyists and its most active officials are Patrick JORDAN, Mike MARTIN (Trotskyists) and Tariq ALI. It shares a London office with the Pioneer Book Shop, whose manager is Ernie TATE, the Canadian representative in London of the Trotskyist Fourth International. Both TATE and JORDAN are in regular contact with the Fourth International in Paris and Brussels, and through these Trotskyist links the V.S.C. has been able to build up a wide range of contacts with European Vietnam and student organisations. It was the V.S.C. which was responsible for the violent disturbances in Grosvenor Square on 22 October 1967.

5. The R.S.A. was founded in 1966 on the initiative of the National Student Organiser of the Communist Party as a ginger group within the a-political National Union of Students (N.U.S.) and was composed of Communists, radical elements of the Young Liberals and members of the Trotskyist International Socialism Group, which at the time controlled the National Association of Labour Student Organisation. The Communist target for the R.S.A. was to gain control of the N.U.S. and to force it out of the right-wing International Student Congress and, eventually, into the Communist-controlled International Union of Students. The central organisation of the R.S.A. has remained firmly under the direction of the Communists, but the branches at university level are controlled by students whose political opinions range throughout the political spectrum from Liberal to Anarchist and include many "activists" with no political convictions. Since the R.S.A. has yet to acquire a formal structure it is not possible to give membership figures but the votes cast for its candidates at the N.U.S. elections indicate that it has gained substantial support. It has twice failed to achieve control of the N.U.S. executive, but in 1967 and 1968 two of the ten executive officials elected were on the R.S.A. "ticket". The 1968 results would have been more favourable to the R.S.A. had the elections not taken place shortly after the 17 March demonstration in Grosvenor Square, which from the R.S.A. leadership's point of view "boomeranged".

6. Both the V.S.C. and R.S.A. were responsible for this particular demonstration in which they were assisted by the Stop It Committee, a body which is wholly American in concept and consists predominantly of American students in the U.K. with a fair proportion of emigres avoiding the draft. Despite R.S.A. participation, the Communist Party was opposed to the demonstration but was unable to prevent a contingent of the Young Communist League from taking part although it did not engage in violence. The worst offenders were the Germans, about a hundred strong, who had come as a result of an invitation extended by a V.S.C. delegation at an international Vietnam conference held in February in Berlin. They were the most aggressive and used the occasion to give other demonstrators advice in anti-police techniques.

7. The other disturbances with international ramifications were those which accompanied the Aldermaston March on Easter Monday, one at the German Embassy and the other at the "Daily Mirror" building, where the representative of the SPRINGER Group of German newspapers has his office. Both were again primarily the work of the V.S.C. and R.S.A. On Friday, 12 April, Ernie TATE (see paragraph 4 above) received a message from the Fourth International in Brussels impressing upon him the need for a demonstration in London in support of similar demonstrations then taking place in Germany as the result of the shooting of the student leader Rudi DUTSCHKE. TATE, who was not unreceptive, realised that most of his contacts were on the Aldermaston March and did not want to give the appearance of breaking it up. He consulted some of his V.S.C. colleagues, notably Tariq ALI, Mike MARTIN and Pat JORDAN, and it was decided that there should be a

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demonstration at the German Embassy at midday on Easter Monday, shortly before the main assembly for the rally in Trafalgar Square. ALI is also known to have been in contact independently but to the same purpose with the German Socialist Student League (S.D.S.). The demonstration took place as planned.

8. The other disturbance was planned on Sunday, 14 April when Chris GILMORE, the Communist Secretary of the R.S.A., who is known to have extensive European student contacts including links with the S.D.S., told MARTIN of the V.S.C. that he, GILMORE, was organising a demonstration outside the "Daily Mirror" offices for 6 p.m. on the 15th. He was put in touch with Tariq ALI and contact was also made with students from Sussex University. This demonstration was supported by members of the International Socialism Group of Trotskyists and by Anarchists who had caused minor trouble on the Aldermaston March itself. A number of French students were arrested during it, but they had almost certainly come over for the March itself and there is no reason to suppose that they were specially imported for either of the two demonstrations.

9. While these events indicated some degree of international co-ordination, more disquieting perhaps was the spontaneous ability of the protesters, particularly the students, to adapt themselves with speed and efficiency to the protest requirements following the DUTSCHKE shooting. Student participation thus merits further comment.

10. Over recent years the dominance of Communism in radical student affairs has to a considerable extent been superseded by the influence of Trotskyism and Anarchism. Working through Socialist Societies, left-wing Labour clubs and Vietnam Action Groups, the Trotskyists in particular have been successful in exploiting the students' underlying feeling of political frustration and social discontent. The most active students have belonged to the International Socialist Group of Trotskyists (I.S.) which regards students as part of the exploited working-class, trapped in an educational system run by the ruling-class for the production of a successor to itself. They wish to turn the interest of students towards industrial activities, tenants' campaigns and such like in order to identify them with the working class. This policy is similar to that of syndicalists on the continent who regard student unions as working class trade unions. Trotskyists, including the International Socialists, played an important part in the recent demonstrations in Manchester, Sheffield and Cambridge and, through the Northern Universities Co-ordinating Committee, organised student support for the 17 March demonstration.

11. The problem presented by such organisations as the R.S.A. and the Northern Universities Co-ordinating Committee is that they provide a rallying point and in some degree co-ordinate the activities of a relatively small number of left-wing students and hooligans who would otherwise be largely isolated in student life. That they are small in number but can cause serious embarrassment is well illustrated by a recent incident at Sussex University. In February an American Embassy official

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attended a "teach-in" at the University on the war in Vietnam. This official was covered in paint thrown by a student; the American flag was burned; and the police vehicle which drove away with the official was pelted with placards and eggs. Only about ten people were actually involved in the disturbance, which was organised by pro-Chinese Communists with the participation of a member of the Trotskyist Socialist Labour League and the support of one of the staff who was formerly prominent in the Young Liberal element of the R.S.A. When the two principal demonstrators were rusticated it was proposed to call a strike of students until they were reinstated. At the meeting held to consider this action only some sixty people voted in favour of the strike out of the thousand students present. This was presumably the maximum support the radicals could assemble.

12. This incident shows the necessity of getting demonstrations into the right perspective. Some of the more recent ones have shown that the organisers are aware of the dangers of alienating public opinion as a result of the violent activities of an extremist minority. The organisers of the demonstration against the Greek regime on 21 April and of that against Enoch Powell on 28 April appointed sufficient capable stewards to marshal the demonstrators so that the unruly element was prevented from getting out of hand. Although the publicity gained for the respective causes on these occasions was not as great as when violent incidents occurred it is apparent that in some quarters at least violence is considered to be counter-productive. The slow and much less publicised reaction of the majority of students who wish to get on with their studies should not be underestimated. The American Stop It Committee also appears to have been worried about the damage which may have been done to its image by the violence in Grosvenor Square.

13. In view of the number of member countries who have had experience of them, protest movements and demonstrations have been of considerable concern to N.A.T.O., and a comprehensive paper, to which the U.K. is making a contribution, is being prepared on the subject for the Council. It is hoped that the temptation will be resisted to exaggerate unduly the similarities and connections between groups in the various countries and that the paper will treat them in the context of differing social systems, not least in the academic world.

14. The increasingly diffuse nature of the subversive threat, which is the result of these developments, has meant that the Security Service, while keeping its effort against Communism constant, has had to deploy resources in a wider field. Because of the law and order aspects co-operation with the police has been exceptionally close, with Special Branches of the police forces feeding information to their Uniformed Branches and the Security Service briefing the Special Branches. This has led to a pooling of experience on the subject in Security Service training courses with the Police which have brought out the vital need for timely intelligence if the right balance is to be struck between what protection is necessary and what might appear provocative.

/THE COMMUNIST PARTY .....

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE TRADE UNIONS

15. The swing in union opinion towards policies which have whole-hearted Communist support has resulted in a reversion to more traditional attitudes on the part of the Party itself. It is using this period of greater acceptability to strengthen its position on the Executive Councils and among fulltime officials of the more important unions. It has consequently been less concerned with unofficial disputes. The decline in the extent of Party penetration which followed the Electrical Trades Union (E.T.U.) trial has been reversed. Although the most startling success has been perhaps in the National Union of Seamen (N.U.S.) where Party representation among 33 elected members of the Executive Council has risen from nothing to eight, the more significant gains have been in the Amalgamated Engineering and Foundry Workers Union (A.E.F.). The election of Hugh SCANLON as President was followed by the election of two Communists to important national posts in the union. Although the Party and its sympathisers are a minority on the Executive Council and National Committee, SCANLON works very closely with the Industrial Department of the Party in leading the union in opposition to the incomes policy of the Government and the T.U.C.

16. In the Transport and General Workers Union (T.G.W.U.) the Party is confident that the ban on Communists and Fascists holding office will be lifted in the summer and that a substantial number of officials in the union will be able to declare themselves as Communists, including such leading Executive Council members as Bill JONES and Vic SELWAY. The Party will support Jack JONES, an ex-Communist, in the election which will follow the expected retirement of Frank COUSINS, and hopes to bring about a Party-influenced alliance on the Left between SCANLON and JONES. JONES however is far less dependent on Party advice and support than is SCANLON. It remains to be seen whether success in the election would bring him overtly closer to the Party.

17. If events in the A.E.F. and T.G.W.U. turn out as the Party hopes, it is likely to concentrate its attention next on the E.T.U. where CANNON's position is far less secure than it at one time seemed. In this union the Party is anxious to bring about a repeal of the ban on Communists holding office and to re-establish its position on the Executive and among office holders.

18. The aim of the Communist Party is thus seen as one of exploiting the temporary popularity of its policies in order to consolidate a position in the centres of power in the trade union movement which could be more durable than the current union consensus on economic policy.

WELSH EXTREMISM

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19. A Celtic Youth Congress was held at Bangor, North Wales between 29 March and 1 April 1968 which brought together a number of members of the Free Wales Army and the National Patriotic Front, both extremist organisations. The latter dominated the discussions and the Congress showed itself to be not only hostile to the Investiture and all things "English" but also strongly critical of the Plaid Cymru and in particular of Gwynfor IEVANS, who was described as a "narrow nationalist". There was support for the sabotage attacks which have been made on dams providing water for English towns and for the explosions at the Temple of Peace and the Inland Revenue offices at Cardiff. On the grounds that the establishment of English industries in Wales was a subtle means of perpetuating English influence in the Principality, a resolution was adopted that all possible steps should be taken to prevent the installation of English factories in Wales.

20. The Celtic Youth Congress is a body representative of Welsh, Irish, Scottish and Breton nationalists, but on this occasion, no Bretons were present and the Irish contingent was lightweight and inarticulate. However, there was a fair contingent of Scottish nationalists under the leadership of Major Derrick BOOTHBY, who has come to notice recently in connection with the activities of the 1320 Club, a breakaway group of militants from the Scottish National Party.

21. Until further evidence is received of some coherent direction of Welsh extremists, it is impossible to evaluate the threat with any precision and the police have set up co-ordinating machinery to collect and assess all information about it. Further acts of sabotage directed at water supplies, electricity undertakings and possibly Government offices are to be expected and opportunities will be taken to create a climate of antagonism towards the Investiture. Such activities would be an embarrassment to the Plaid Cymru, committed as it is to a constitutional approach to independence.

THE SUBVERSIVE ASPECTS OF THE RACIAL SITUATION

22. Last October Black Power activities in the U.K. were assessed as being in their infancy and most of its leading protagonists were not of sufficient calibre to attract effective support. There may be significant developments in the aftermath of the Enoch Powell speech, but the importance of these could be exaggerated.

23. At least coincident with but not as a direct result of that speech has been the formation of a so-called Black People's Alliance (B.P.A.) which was announced on 28 April. The aim of this body is to provide a militant immigrant front to combat racialism. Its steering committee consists of Jagmohan JOSHI, a leading extreme pro-Chinese Indian Communist who has some degree of active support in the Indian Workers Association - Great Britain (I.W.A. - G.B.); Roy SAWH, leader of a small Black Power faction styled as the Universal Coloured Peoples and Arab

/Association (U.C.P.A.A.);

Association (U.C.P.A.A.); and some leading members of the Standing Conference of West Indian Organisations (S.C.W.I.O.), the National Federation of Pakistani Associations (N.F.P.A.) and the London Branch of the Pakistani Workers Association (P.W.A.). None of the three latter organisations is subject to extreme racist or effective left-wing influence. A few of the minor groups reported to be associated with the formation of the B.P.A. are subject to a variety of extreme left-wing (including pro-Chinese) influence.

24. The Communist Party has had no association with this development, and, with one possible exception, no known Party members are involved. The Black power faction which styles itself the Universal Coloured People's Association (U.C.P.A.) has not (at any rate not as yet) associated itself with the B.P.A. (despite press reports to this effect).

25. Although a desire for militancy on race relations issues may provide a unifying factor, the divergent policies of the individuals involved in the B.P.A. leadership are likely to inhibit its effective development. The degree of broad support forthcoming from the major immigrant organisations with which they are connected, whose rank-and-file have almost certainly not been consulted, must also remain in doubt.

26. A more immediate effect of the Enoch Powell speech, at least in the law and order field, is the stimulus it has given to the Fascists. Colin JORDAN has already tried to exploit reaction in the Midlands, but his following at the moment is negligible. The most significant effect is likely to be a Fascist polarisation round the National Front, which is a merger of two typical Fascist groups, the British National Party and the Greater Britain Movement, with the extreme right-wing League of Empire Loyalists. The National Front's aim is to gain support by adopting, at least publicly, a more respectable programme than that formerly promulgated by its Fascist components and by discouraging violence. Its present membership does not exceed two hundred and fifty, but any Fascist activity, as has already been shown in the case of JORDAN, can provoke opposition from Trotskyists and anarchists with accompanying violence. The mixture is explosive.

10 May 1967