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17th October 1967

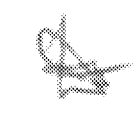
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CABINET

OFFICIAL COMMITTEE ON COMMUNISM (HOME)
WORKING GROUP ON COUNTERMEASURES

SUBVERSION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Note by the Secretary

attached details (see AC(H)(WG)(67)5 (Revise)) 
A comprehensive paper by the Security Service entitled "Subversion in the United Kingdom Autumn 1967" is attached. This will be considered at a meeting of the Working Group to be held in Sir Burke Trend's room on Friday 20th October at 3 p.m., for which no separate Agenda or Meeting Notice will be issued.

(Signed) D. HEATON

Cabinet Office, S.W.1.

17th October 1967

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SUBVERSION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM - AUTUMN 1967

1967 is the fiftieth anniversary year of the October Revolution. 1968 will mark the twentieth anniversary of the opening salvo of what came to be known as the cold war and also of the creation of the British security system in its present form. In February of that year the Government of Czechoslovakia fell to Communist subversion from within and to the threat of the Red Army from without. In March 1948 the Prime Minister made what has come to be known as the Attlee Declaration. "The Government", he said, had "reached the conclusion that the only prudent course to adopt is to ensure that no one who is known to be a member of the Communist Party, or to be associated with it in such a way as to raise legitimate doubts about his or her reliability, is employed in connection with work the nature of which is vital to the security of the State". A similar ruling applied to Fascists. The aim of this paper is not to treat the current subversive threat historically, still less to suggest policy changes in the handling of it. It does aim however to show that, although the threat has diminished in gravity, it has become more complicated in its nature and in consequence may require more sophisticated treatment. It is for example no longer susceptible to the same relatively simple exposure treatment.

COMMUNISM

2. Over the last twelve months the most significant development in the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) has been a decline in morale brought about by the intensification of the Sino-Soviet dispute, by the hesitations of its leaders and by its manifest failure to exploit the industrial opportunities arising from the country's economic difficulties.

The CPGB and the Sino-Soviet Dispute

3. The CPGB stands to lose as much as any Communist Party from the Sino-Soviet dispute. The KHRUSHCHEV thesis of peaceful co-existence in international terms bears a close relationship to the non-violent and quasi-constitutional domestic manoeuvring of the CPGB as expressed, and recently confirmed, in the "British Road to Socialism" (BRS). The wholesale rejection of this thesis by the Chinese, and by implication of the tactics of the BRS, could hardly fail to raise doubts in the minds of many British Communists. From the outset the Party was aware of this danger. Its inept counter-measures, first to try and conceal the existence of the dispute from its members, then to adopt a policy of dubious neutrality and finally to condemn the Chinese outright have succeeded only in bewildering ordinary Party members. The CPGB now finds itself forced further and further into the Russian camp by the pressure of events, despite the fact that its distrust of Russian tactics continues to increase.

4. The crux of the matter is Russian determination to have an international conference of Communist Parties to determine doctrinal differences. The CPGB believes such a conference could have only one result, the expulsion of the Chinese from and the final dissolution of the International Communist Movement (ICM). At the end of September 1967 GOLLAN, the Party's General Secretary, and his principal henchman, MATTHEWS (editor of the "Morning Star") met BRESHNEV in Moscow to read this lesson. BRESHNEV, who seems to have been anxious to win over the CPGB, disclaimed any intention to outlaw China but, pointing to Russian reverses in Indonesia, China and the Middle East and to the awkward attitude of Rumania, argued that there was an urgent need for the Communist Parties of the world to meet and define their line on nationalism. He clearly had in mind national communism. GOLLAN suspected a trap and argued strongly that a conference on national communism was unlikely to be attended by the more national-minded Parties and would inevitably degenerate into an ideological argument over China. Neither side seems to have given much away, and the final communique confined itself to a condemnation of Chinese errors and approval of the conference on specific issues, notably American "aggression" in Vietnam. This is a favourite CPGB solution for differences on the ICM. There was moreover no reference in the communique to differences between the CPGB and the Russians over the latter's support for the Arabs which at one stage almost brought the meeting to an end. (With its relatively large Jewish membership the CPGB is sensitive on this issue.)

5. The CPGB's real position towards the ICM is to be found in the terms of a resolution which will come before its National Congress in November and which clearly has the imprint of GOLLAN's drafting. This states:

- (a) that all Communist Parties have the responsibility for working out their own policies;
- (b) that irrespective of size and of whether they participate in government all Parties have equal rights;
- (c) that the affairs of the International Communist Movement can no longer be conducted on the basis of international conferences which would conflict with the sovereign rights of individual Parties.

This is a far cry from the hegemony of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and no doubt explains the CPGB's obvious reluctance to participate in a conference on national communism.

The CPGB and the Domestic Scene

6. After a brief moment of euphoria, following the electoral defeat of the Conservatives, the CPGB quickly came to the conclusion that a Labour Government which they regarded as committed to making Capitalism work was no improvement on its predecessors. It disagreed with most of the new Government's policies, both foreign and domestic, but in view of the impact of the measures to protect sterling inevitably had to concentrate its attention on the industrial situation.
7. The story of the CPGB's industrial activity during this period is largely that of its new Industrial Organiser RAMELSON, who took office in February 1966. In intellectual and administrative ability RAMELSON is much more formidable than his bubbling predecessor KERRIGAN, and his handling of the Seamen's Strike, where in spite of the Party's negligible numerical strength he was nevertheless able to exercise significant influence, showed tactical skill of a high order. It was to be expected that similar efforts would be made to mobilize opposition to the "July measures" of 1966 and RAMELSON certainly tried. Appeals for strike action were made both to the busmen and to the railwaymen and, later in the autumn, to employees in the motor industry. There was virtually no response and it became plain that however much the unions might disapprove of the new measures they had learned the lesson of the Seamen's Strike and were not prepared to engage in open conflict with the Government itself. This was the advice that RAMELSON received from leading Communist trade union officials who had no more stomach for a fight than had their non-Communist colleagues.
8. The implication of these failures was not lost on RAMELSON, who in any case, as a newcomer to the CPGB's industrial department, was disinclined to accept without question the working practices of its apparatus. The present position seems to be that he has no intention of discarding the well-established policy of penetrating the labour unions at official level and he recognises that from the Party's point of view the dividends to be expected from this policy are not to be despised. Nevertheless he is shrewd enough to see that the advantages are largely political in character, such as anti-Government votes in the Trades Union Congress (TUC), and he does not place very much trust in the capacity of the trade union comrades to undertake industrial action in periods of acute economic stress. He has, therefore, been forced to look elsewhere and now seems to be readier than his predecessors to back unofficial action by shop stewards.

9. RAMELSON's views do not go unchallenged by the more traditionalist members of CPHQ; and the currently divided counsel in the Industrial Department is well illustrated by reference to the Party's behaviour in the London Dock strike. With one important exception the Communist Party leaders never had much enthusiasm for this strike and were strongly critical of DASH's failure to use the trade union machinery. The exception was RAMELSON, who felt that DASH had no choice but to take unofficial action in view of his previous opposition to the modernisation scheme and the fact that the TGWU was fully committed to it.

The State of the Party

10. Until very recently rumours were circulating at Communist Party Headquarters and among the editorial staff of the "Morning Star" that GOLLAN intended to resign. The popular forecast for the date was the National Congress in November 1967. Ultimately MATTHEWS succeeded in eliciting a denial from GOLLAN, but nevertheless the rumours appear to have had some foundation. GOLLAN is in poor health and whenever he surveys the domestic and foreign scene he sees little cause for satisfaction.

11. The readership of the "Morning Star", after a temporary boost, is now almost back to that of the old "Daily Worker", and CPGB nominal membership at 33,000 is at best static. This conceals a qualitative deterioration reflected in the declining activity of the individual member and his increasing failure to pay his Party dues. The worst hit area is London District where the current reluctance of the Jewish members to open their purses constitutes an additional problem. CPHQ has been hard hit by Selective Employment Tax and has had to reduce staff, notably in the industrial department where the normal complement of four officers has been reduced to RAMELSON, who owing to ill health is less mobile than he would wish, with one full-time and one part-time assistant. The foreign scene is little better and there have been occasions recently when GOLLAN has been driven almost to distraction by the importunities of the Russians and the antics of the Chinese.

12. The probability is that GOLLAN will go in the reasonably near future, but his choice of timing will be determined by his wish to ensure that his successor is a man in his own image. MATTHEWS, the editor of the "Morning Star", would be GOLLAN's choice, the principal rival probably being RAMELSON who could be expected to take a much harder line, both at home and abroad. Meanwhile GOLLAN holds that survival must be the

CPGB's first priority and he sees no practical alternative to the Party's current non-violent and quasi-constitutional tactics. The "British Road to Socialism" has been re-written with this very much in mind and GOLLAN's vision of the future is a major regrouping of the Left in which the CPGB's role will be that of an equal - doubtless in the Orwellian sense. If, in order to bring this about, the CPGB has to become more nationalist and to pay little more than doctrinal lip service to international communism, this is a price which GOLLAN is prepared to pay.

13. At the end of the annual review in February 1967, YCL membership stood at 5,434 (a rise of 600 on the previous year) and by May had risen to 5,842. While the latter figure doubtless errs on the side of optimism in that it includes a number of YCL members who may have resigned in the interval, it nevertheless reflects the upward trend of previous years. There is also growing confirmation that a relatively high proportion of YCL members joined the organisation to enjoy its social activities and show little interest in its political doctrines.

Students

14. The National Union of Students (NUS) Council met at the beginning of April 1967 and was once again the target of the Radical Student Alliance (RSA), an organisation in which there is considerable Communist influence. In general the NUS Executive withstood the assaults of the RSA supporters, whose only tangible success was the election of two of their number to the Executive. Motions calling for disaffiliation from the International Student Conference (ISC) in favour of joining the Communist-orientated International Union of Students (IUS) were defeated; but the Executive had to give a promise that it would examine allegations that the ISC had received funds from the CIA. The Party, through the RSA, can be expected to return to the charge at the November Council.

CHINESE COMMUNISM

15. The pro-Chinese organisations in the United Kingdom came into existence as a result of the impact of the Sino-Soviet dispute on the CPGB's rank and file. They fall into two distinct types - the so-called mass organisations and the small activist groups. The mass organisations of which there are two, the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding (SACU) and the Friends of China, are both under Communist influence, but their appeal for friendship and understanding of Maoist China is directed primarily to the non-committed. The activist groups are composed predominantly of past and present members of the CPGB and their ultimate aim is the establishment of a new Communist Party committed to the principles of Maoism and opposed to the revisionist policies of the CPGB.

The Mass Organisations

16. Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding. SACU was formally inaugurated in May 1965 in the presence of the Chinese charge d'affaires and with the blessing of over 150 sponsors, many of them well-known figures in artistic, academic and cultural circles. It expanded rapidly in its first year and in spite of recent defections is believed still to have a membership of over 2,000. From the outset it was controlled, through its Secretariat, by a small clique of Communist and ex-Communist businessmen with commercial interests in China, of whom the most important is Roland BERGER. BERGER, who is believed to have terminated his membership with the CPGB in about 1964, has a long history of secret Communist activity. SACU soon demonstrated that its appeal for understanding of Mao's China was not to be hampered by impartiality and by the beginning of 1967 Communist control of the organisation became increasingly apparent. Many of the moderate members resigned and since the 1967 Annual General Meeting the Society has made little attempt to conceal its sympathies with Chinese Communism. Typical is its recent statement welcoming the explosion of the Chinese hydrogen bomb. This change of front has not received unanimous support within the Society and there are signs of resistance in some of the provincial branches and of increasing financial difficulties due to the withholding of subscriptions. The Society is now heavily dependent on donations from a few undisclosed sources.

17. The Friends of China. This organisation, which is not to be confused with the Society of the same name which merged in the SACU in 1965, held its inaugural rally in London in February 1967. Its declared aim was "to nail the lies, slanders and distortions" which were alleged to be rife in this country concerning the cultural revolution and the thoughts of Mao Tse Tung. Unlike SACU it was openly pro-Communist Chinese from its inception and there is reason to believe that it enjoys more official Chinese support than does SACU. A noticeable feature is that it lacks intellectual or middle class backing and derives most of its support from coloured immigrants, mostly Indian.

The Activist Groups

18. The activist groups, which change their titles with bewildering frequency, comprise little more than a handful of members. They are perpetually at loggerheads and are united only in their allegiance to Maoist China and their disagreement with the non-violent policies of the CPGB. The CPGB treats them with contempt but, by expelling their associates as soon as they can be identified, ensures that they receive a steady trickle of recruits.

19. Currently the only group of any significance is that operating around the new journal "The Marxist". This first appeared in November 1966, is well produced and of a high polemical standard. Its target is the CPGB, which promptly retaliated by expelling from its ranks the members of its Editorial Board. Financially "The Marxist" is dependent upon Roland BERGER and his associates and is a successor to a similar project - "The Forum" - which also represented the views of BERGER. It encourages its readers to form discussion groups and it has had some limited success in attracting support from the Young Communist League (YCL).

20. The principal problem which faces all these groups is whether to try and work within the CPGB, despite its hostility, or to form a new breakaway Party sympathetic to China. They are deeply divided on this issue, as are the Chinese themselves, without whose assistance a breakaway Party could hardly expect to get off the ground. While this uncertainty remains the various groups tend to compete in militancy in the hope that ultimately they will become the chosen instrument of the Chinese.

TROTSKYISM

21. Saddled with an ideology largely irrelevant to modern industrial conditions and broken up into a number of conflicting groups, the British Trotskyist Movement presents only a limited threat. With an active membership of scarcely 2,000 and about 4,000 constantly-changing young supporters its only hope of exerting significant political influence is by penetrating larger and less militant parties. Its natural target is the Labour Party, but even there its impact is reduced by divided tactics, with some groups trying to work from the inside, and the largest group, the Socialist Labour League (SLL) having no choice but to work from without.

The Socialist Labour League (SLL)

22. This accounts for about half the total Trotskyist strength in the country and its main impact is in the field of youth where it has had considerable success in winning over substantial sections of the Labour Party's Young Socialists. It is undoubtedly helped by a well-devised programme of attractive social activities directed with enthusiasm by its General Secretary, Gerry HEALY. In January 1967 the SLL gained control of the National Association of Labour Student Organisations (NALSO) which soon after was disaffiliated by the Labour Party and deprived of its financial subsidy. A few months later the SLL lost control of NALSO to an alliance of other Trotskyist groups with some CPGB backing but is ready to resume control as soon as an opportunity is presented.

23. In the industrial sphere the SLL contacts are mainly at shop steward rather than at official level in the unions and its principal impact is in the docks and the motor industry. It has taken every opportunity to oppose the new dock labour scheme but, even on Merseyside where the SLL has in the past successfully penetrated the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers (a naverick union in opposition to the Transport and General Workers Union), SLL influence has been limited. The sectional interests of the SLL have been subordinated to the general claims of a large group of militant dockers.

24. There are also a considerable number of SLL contacts in the motor industry in the Midlands, mainly in component suppliers as opposed to assembly plants, and the unofficial Oxford Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions is virtually under SLL control. This SLL apparatus presents a continuing threat to industrial peace in the various plants of British Motor Holdings (BMH).

The International Socialism Group

25. This group led by Ygael GLUCKSTEIN and Tony CLIFF increased its membership in 1967 from 300 to 400 and now has thirty branches in London and the provinces (mostly in the University towns). CLIFF, who is an able lecturer and a political controversialist of no mean order, puts across a rigid Trotskyist line and makes no concessions to expediency or, for that matter, to commonsense. Nevertheless his doctrinaire Trotskyism seems to have a peculiar fascination for the Socialist university student and the group has made considerable headway in the university Socialist Societies, largely at the expense of the CPGB and the SLL. This gave the Group a decisive influence in wresting control of NALSO from the SLL this year. In industry the Group follows the familiar Trotskyist pattern of concentrating on shop-stewards but its predominantly intellectual and white-collar membership is a disadvantage and it has had relatively little support. The Group has made contacts in the docks and amongst unofficial shop-stewards' committees in London but the Group follows rather than leads in industrial disputes.

26. In general, in a year in which differences of opinion within the Left over foreign and domestic policies might have been expected to provide unusually favourable opportunities, the Trotskyists have made little headway and there has been no significant change in their overall strength. Internal divisions and personality clashes continue to be their most noticeable feature and the short-term triumph of one group over another is still regarded as more important than efforts to pursue a co-ordinated strategy of subversion.

SYNDICALISM

27. The only Syndicalist group of any significance is the Solidarity or Socialism Reaffirmed Group (SRG) which works in close association with the more militant section of the Committee of 100. This Group, which is led by Dr. Christopher PALLIS, concentrates upon activities calculated to receive maximum publicity. Typical were the interruption of the Prime Minister's reading of the lesson at Brighton and the invasion of the Greek Embassy, both of which were planned and organised from PALLIS's house. There have been recent indications that the Group may be shifting its emphasis from political to industrial issues and it is known to have had a hand in recent stoppages in the motor industry. The minor riot in the paint shop at the Vauxhall plant in Luton in June 1967 is very much in line with Solidarity tactics and, although it cannot be established that the disturbance was organised by PALLIS, some of those directly involved are known to have been in contact with him at the time.

28. In practical terms this Group could be written off as no more than a nuisance, were it not for the ability, persistence and ingenuity of PALLIS and the Group's interest, through the Committee of 100, in secret defence installations.

WELSH EXTREMISM

29. Scattered throughout Wales there are tiny groups of extreme Nationalists, some calling themselves the Free Welsh Army, some the Welsh Citizen Army and others operating under no known title. They are in no way co-ordinated and are constantly forming and reforming. The most heavily publicised is the Free ^{Welsh} Welsh Army, ostensibly commanded by Julian CAYO-EVANS, a small farmer of good family who mentally is scarcely an adolescent. Investigation has disproved his claim to have several thousand supporters and the truth is that his Army consists of himself and a handful of associates of much the same calibre. CAYO-EVANS is only too ready to utter threats of sabotage and to claim responsibility for any acts which take place. Nevertheless he is unlikely to be involved and it is doubtful whether he could organise a successful sabotage operation in the unlikely event of his engaging in one.

30. He has contacts with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and has visited Dublin for this purpose. His two principal contacts are low-grade members of the IRA and the most likely explanation of this liaison is that the political wing of IRA, which is interested in promoting Pan-Celtic organisations, including those in Wales, has been misled as to his status by the publicity given to him.

31. The major threat of sabotage is in mid-Wales where there is considerable resentment felt at the flooding of Welsh valleys to provide reservoirs for English cities. This threat comes from individuals who do not form part of any known organisation and who are therefore difficult to identify. It is safe to assume that many of them are connected with the mining industry and have experience in the handling of explosives to which, by the nature of their employment, they can gain access. Their ability to cause considerable damage was demonstrated in September 1967 when an attempt was made to damage two of four pipe-lines which take water to Liverpool. Only one charge succeeded; but, had the other pipe also been damaged, there would have been a serious interruption of Liverpool's water supply.

FASCISM

32. There is no reason to suppose that the Fascist groups have gained in overall strength and the threat they present remains predominantly one to law and order. There are nevertheless some signs that the Movement may be less divided in the future than it has been in the past. In December 1966 the League of Empire Loyalists decided to merge with the National Party led by John BEAN and this union is now effective. At the time the National Party seems to have given an assurance that it would tone down its propaganda and exclude from its ranks individuals who, through their notoriety as Fascists, might bring the new organisation into disrepute. For this reason a similar proposal to include the Racial Preservation Society in the merger fell through. This was in line with an earlier announcement by BEAN that henceforward the National Party would give greater emphasis to economic affairs, less prominence to coloured immigrants and would actively discourage anti-semitism.

33. This diversion into the paths of righteousness did not last long, since in July 1967 the National Party decided to admit to its ranks John TYNDALL, the leader of the Greater Britain Movement (GBM) shortly after his release from jail. The GBM, like its rival JORDAN's National Socialist Movement, is one of the last two refuges of the old type Fascist rabble rouser. The GBM has since gone into dissolution and TYNDALL has advised all his followers to apply for membership of the National Party and, if they succeed, they will do nothing to improve its public image or its behaviour.

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CONCLUSION

34. The subversive threat has become more diffuse. Phenomena like Protest and Flower People can present a threat to law and order but only become subversive when there is an element of organisation, be it only in a loose anarchical group. The Communist Party remains the most disciplined and highly organised subversive organisation and, with the possible exception of the Socialist Labour League, the only one capable of having a long-term strategy. Despite its pseudo-respectability and its overtures to the Left, it constitutes a threat by its very existence. Dissatisfaction with its gradualist approach, however, and the erosion of its discipline as a result of the Sino-Soviet dispute, have led to an increase in the nuisance value of those extremist organisations which lack the Communist Party's fundamental discipline and are willing to take short-term risks. Here the threat impinges on law-and-order and is primarily a police responsibility. These groups however thrive on publicity and the less they are given the better.

October 1967

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