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~~R. Archibald,~~
Mr Barclay

MTCO, the you.
D. Nicolson
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6th July, 1976

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As you know, the interdepartmental group for long-term intelligence reports on subversion in public life (SPL) has not formally been disbanded; but it has been inactive for the last two years or so. We had a word about this the other day, and came to the conclusion that the time had come when the group could usefully be reactivated. It remains the case that, as Jimmy Waddell said when the group first met, the episodic reporting of covert intelligence in this field of the kind provided by the Industrial Assessments Group (IAG) and ad hoc by the Security Service can produce a distorted picture unless fitted into periodic and balanced assessments; and the Security Service would, I know, welcome the opportunity to have their periodic studies scrutinised, set in context and assessed by the sort of group that SPL has been.

2. I have been reviewing the terms of reference of the group, which are at present:

"To supervise and direct the collection of intelligence about threats to the internal security of Great Britain arising from subversive activities, particularly in industry; and to make regular reports to the officials concerned".

I think that these should now read:

"To give guidance on the collection and to co-ordinate the assessment of intelligence about threats to the internal security of Great Britain arising from subversive activities, and to make periodic reports to the officials concerned".

3. There are two significant changes here. The first is to bring out the Group's assessment function as well as its role of giving guidance on the direction which collection should take. They need not be precluded from indicating directions in which the assessment may point to the need for some action; but it is not for them to initiate or recommend action. This role used to be discharged by the Subversion (Home) Committee which was dissolved in 1974 and which I propose now to reconstitute with the following terms of reference:-

/"To advise

Sir Arthur Peterson, KCB, MVO

"To advise Ministers, as necessary, on appropriate measures to counter subversive activities in the United Kingdom (other than those which are within the purview of the Official Committee on Security), and to oversee the work of the interdepartmental Group on Subversion in Public Life (SPL)".

I would again take the chair with the Permanent Secretaries of the Home Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Employment, the Director General of the Security Service and the Chairman of SPL as regular members with other Permanent Secretaries being invited as necessary according to the subject under discussion.

4. The second change is to omit the specific reference to subversion in industry. (In this context Robert Armstrong might also look again at the scope of the IAG). We certainly do not need to diminish the attention given to industrial subversion; but we do, I suggest, need also to pay attention to subversion in the public service, in education, and in the media, and to the possible interactions and relationships between subversive elements in these various sectors of the community. For this reason I am inclined to think that the Civil Service Department and the Department of Education and Science should now be added to the list of Departments with permanent (as opposed to ad hoc) representation on the group.

5. I enclose a note of the present composition of the SPL group. We agreed that it should be chaired by Robert Armstrong; I propose that Frank Brenchley should represent the Cabinet Office. I should be grateful if those to whom I am sending copies of this letter would either confirm their representation or let me know whom they nominate instead.

6. I hope that Douglas Allen will agree to nominate someone from the CSD, perhaps Johnny Moore; and that Jim Hamilton will agree that it would now be useful for his Department to be represented on the group, perhaps by John Hudson. I should remind them both that the existence of the group is secret, and knowledge of it and of its product must be confined to officials who are positively vetted and have a need to know; and that reports by the group must not be placed on normal Departmental files but retained in the safe keeping of recipients. If Jim Hamilton wants to think further and discuss the implications before making up his mind whether to accept this invitation, I have asked Robert Armstrong to be available to talk to him.

7. I am sending copies of this letter to Douglas Allen, Michael Palliser, Nick Morrison, Ken Barnes, Jim Hamilton and Michael Hanley. I should be grateful if you would take the lead in consulting Robert Mark about New Scotland Yard's representation on SPL.