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SIR JOHN HUNTSPL

You outlined your reservations on the proposals in Mr Armstrong's minute in the attached set of papers (which I return) and invited any additional comments I might have.

2. Your reservations about the right point for co-ordinating and controlling action to counter subversion seem to be borne out by past practice: as you pointed out in your minute to the Prime Minister of January 1975, the activities of IRD in this field were supervised by a Cabinet Official Committee. This Committee was, until January 1969, the Official Committee on Communism (Home); it then became the Official Committee on Subversion at Home (SH Committee), under the Chairmanship of the Secretary of the Cabinet. From a quick look at its work it seems to have co-ordinated both the assessment of material and the action to be taken to counter subversive activities. It appears to not to have met formally after 1970 and you approved its dissolution in 1974. The SPL Group in its current form was introduced in 1972. I attach the bound volume of its meetings and memoranda in case you would like to glance through them.

3. You may wish to consider whether something on the lines of the SH Committee should be revived, either simply to co-ordinate and direct counter subversion - in which event the Chairman of the SPL might attend both as a departmental representative and as rapporteur for the activities of his Group - or as a co-ordinating body for both assessments and counter action (while retaining the SPL Group).

4. The Cabinet Office continues to be closely associated with work in this field: you are consulted on membership, preparation and distribution of papers and we provide two members of the SPL Group (Mr Benner and Mr Elliott) as well as a joint Secretary, who through his appointment as Secretary JIC, arranges for the secure handling and distribution of papers - an administrative aspect which should not be ignored in considering any arrangements for new machinery. The peculiar sensitivity of the subject; the close interest the Prime Minister takes in it; the fact that counter action could involve a wide range of Government Departments; and the central role in the co-ordination of intelligence exercised by the Cabinet Office, tend to suggest more central control is required than envisaged by Mr Armstrong.

5. I also attach, for convenience, an up to date note on the composition and terms of reference of the SPL Group. With the exception of Mr Elliott and Mr Henderson all are at Under Secretary level as above.

D A Nicholls

D A NICHOLLS

8 January 1975

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL GROUP FOR LONG-TERM
INTELLIGENCE REPORTS ON SUBVERSION IN PUBLIC LIFE (SPL)

1. The group's terms of reference as approved by the Prime Minister in August 1972 are -

"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."

2. The composition of the group is -

Chairman

Mr R T Armstrong

Home Office

Members

Mr Scrivener

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Mr D M Smith

Department of Employment

Mr C D Henderson, *Ellie Burns*

Scottish Office

Sir Michael Hanley

Security Service

Mr D A Hamblen

Security Service

Deputy Assistant Commissioner

~~V G Gilbert~~ *JS Wilson*

New Scotland Yard

Mr ~~P Benner~~ (Being replaced
by Mr ~~McIndoe~~, *2.2.76*)

Cabinet Office

Mr J S Elliott

Cabinet Office (Assessments Staff)

Secretaries

Mr D A Nicholls

Cabinet Office

Mr G L Angel

Home Office