

SECRET



SIR ARTHUR PETERSON KCB MVO
PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE

HOME OFFICE
WHITEHALL SW1A 2AP

23rd December 1975

CABINET
A 4108
29 DEC 1975
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No.

*PI attach App. about
the English Section of IRD
(Haggins by minute to
the P.M.)*

flag X

Tom/2/1

Dear John

I enclose a minute which I have had from Robert Armstrong about possible counter subversive action. This is, of course, a very delicate area and I think it would be helpful if I could have a talk about it with you together with Michael Palliser and Conrad Heron. If I may I will ask my Private Secretary to arrange a meeting early in the New Year.

I am sending copies of this letter and the enclosure to Michael Palliser and Conrad Heron.

Yours sincerely

Arthur Peterson

(ARTHUR PETERSON)

Sir John Hunt K.C.B.

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SIR ARTHUR PETERSON

Subversion in Public Life

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I have (as you know) succeeded Sir James Waddell as Chairman of a small official committee on subversion in public life, the present membership of which consists of representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (I.R.D.), the Department of Employment, the Scottish Office and the Security Service. The Committee has not met for nearly two years. I understand, however, that the Security Service is on the point of completing an up-to-date assessment of the subversive threat, which will deal with the present threat not just in industry but in education, the media and other sections of public life. The Security Service considers that this new assessment could well be discussed more widely in Whitehall. The most suitable way to do this would seem to me to be to circulate it for discussion at a meeting of the official committee, to which other departments (e.g. Education, Health, perhaps Industry) might be invited to send representatives as appropriate. The committee could both comment on the assessment and consider what action (if any) needed to be taken on it.

2. As you know, there is no regular machinery for organising or disseminating counter subversion - material designed to counter or discredit the subversive elements in society - though techniques for doing so exist and have been put to use on two occasions on the initiative of the Prime Minister, when he has seen particular opportunities for counter-subversive action. I should like to suggest the institution of arrangements whereby officials could put forward particular proposals for counter-subversive action when suitable opportunities seem to present themselves. One such opportunity has now arisen: the Security Service has come into possession of a copy of a document prepared by a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain on the organisation of subversion in trade unions, and of evidence that the publication of this document would cause grave embarrassment to the leadership of the Party. The publication of this document could be arranged without prejudice to sources, and would clearly be timely in relation to the C.P.G.B.'s recent reverses in the A.U.E.W. and the E.E.P.T.U. The sort of arrangement I have in mind is that, where the Security Service considers that such an opportunity may present itself, it should put a

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proposal to me; the proposal should then be discussed with the F.C.O. (IRD) and the Department of Employment; if there is agreement that the action proposed is timely and appropriate, and that it can be taken without prejudice to sources, the proposal should then be put to the Home Secretary for endorsement. I think that the Prime Minister's approval in principle should be sought for the institution of such arrangements; it is for question whether his approval, as well as that of the Home Secretary, should be required for each individual proposal.

3. If you agree with the proposals in this minute, the next stage would be to discuss them with Sir Michael Palliser, Sir Conrad Heron and Sir John Hunt. You may like to invite them for a meeting for this purpose: the discussion could perhaps be based on this minute, which could be copied to those concerned.

RA

22 December 1975

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