

INFLUENCE OF SUBVERSIVE ORGANISATIONS IN

MAJOR TRADE UNIONS

OUTLINE

The aim of this paper is to update the information about subversive organisations contained in SPL(74)1 and to provide an assessment of those major trade unions not previously included.

2. The paper is divided into five parts as follows:

Part I: Introduction and Summary

Part II: The Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU);  
the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW);  
the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Trades Union (EETPU);  
the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT);  
the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM);  
the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR); the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) and the Transport Salaried Staffs Association (TISSA).

Part III: The Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA), and the Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS);  
the National and Local Government Officers Association (NALGO);  
the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE);  
the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs (ASTMS).

Part IV: The National Union of Journalists (NUJ);  
the National Graphical Association (NGA); the National Society of Operative Printers, Graphical and Media Personnel (NATSOPA) and the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades (SOGAT);

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the Society of Lithographic Artists, Designers,  
Engravers and Process Workers (SLADE);

the Association of Broadcasting Staffs (ABS) and  
the Association of Cinematograph, Television and  
Allied Technicians (ACTT);

the National Association of Theatrical, Television  
and Kine Employees (NATTKE).

Part V: The Trades Union Congress (TUC);

the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC);

the Wales Trades Union Council (Wales TUC).

3. The Appendix shows the penetration by subversive organisations  
in 34 major trade unions, including all those listed in the  
Appendix to SPL(74)1.

4. In Parts II to V the information ordinarily relates to the  
national level of the union concerned but includes information  
about regional levels where this is significant in the  
constitution of the union. In the Appendix, the figures relate  
only to the national level. The data are correct up to  
15 January 1979.

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PART I

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Introduction

The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) continues the pursuit of its long-term political objectives by seeking to acquire positions of influence at the top policy-making levels in the trade unions. The exercise of such influence is ultimately aimed not merely at the policies of particular unions but in the long run at those of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and, at one remove, those of the Government of the day.

2. The CPGB does not control any trade union at national level; but it does dominate the Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section (TASS) of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW). The Party's industrial apparatus is directed from its Industrial Department at its London HQ which works through the Party district organisation as well as through a system of (mainly) secret advisory committees in all major trade unions and industries.

3. Trotskyist groups, having objectives different from the CPGB, do not generally seek positions of influence at policy-making and national official levels in the trade union movement, preferring to work at rank and file level and through unofficial shop stewards' combines and committees. They have, however, in recent years seen advantage in securing representation, which they have done, in executive committees of some "white-collar" unions in the public service, teaching and journalism. Trotskyist groups tend to devote their main efforts to the production of effective propaganda newspapers and bulletins.

4. Some measure of the success of the CPGB and other subversive groups in gaining positions of influence is shown by the fact that, in the 25 unions examined in some detail in the course of this study, the subversive fraction at national level amongst executives and full-time officials amounts to some 20 per cent, of which about half are Communist Party members. Amongst all trade unionists the proportion of Communist Party members is about 1 in 800. In those trade unions of which a similarly detailed study was made five years ago, the CPGB and other subversive groups have not in general gained or lost ground significantly in the intervening period.

5. But figures are not an accurate guide to subversive organisations' power to influence events, since the circumstances of industrial disputes are often extremely complex. Powerful individuals in key positions at national or even at local level can sometimes exercise disproportionate influence. One example

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is Bernard DIX, a Communist sympathiser who is one of the assistant general secretaries of NUPE, a union which has recently behaved in a militant way although only one of the 26 members of the Executive Council and only 3 out of 8 full-time national officials have any subversive affiliation. Well-known examples of influential individuals at local level are Derek ROBINSON, a Communist, who is a convenor of shop stewards at BL Longbridge, and Roy FRASER, the unofficial leader of BL craftsmen, who has no known subversive affiliation. Powerful individuals of moderate views are WEIGHELL in the NUR and CHAPPLE of EETPU.

6. No subversive organisation is strong enough to engineer industrial action where no grievance (whether genuine or not) exists. But subversives are adept at identifying and exploiting grievances. In the recent road haulage dispute the Communist Party was able to keep in touch with events through its well established contacts in the TGWU. It used the dispute as a weapon with which to attack pay policy with vigour. Trotskyist groups made determined efforts at local level to get in on the act and to persuade union members to take militant industrial action beyond that authorised by the official union leadership. They had some successes; but no subversive group ever achieved control of the strike at either national or regional level. The circumstances of the National Health Service disputes were more complex and confused than in the road haulage industry. The union leadership, particularly NUPE, had its plan of campaign for selective industrial action; but at a number of sites a single Trotskyist or other militant shop steward was able to cause trouble and obtain much emotive publicity. In the Civil Service dispute, industrial action was for the most part less well supported than the leadership called for. The Trotskyists have used their usual tactics of trying to provoke unofficial industrial action but have had little success.

7. Since the beginning of the present pay policy, the Communist Party has consistently and vigorously campaigned in opposition to wage restraint. Its campaigns have always been linked with the issue of unemployment, but the Party has had difficulty in generating mass opposition to the Government's economic policy. However, the rejection of imposed norms and a commitment to free collective bargaining by most unions has placed the Party in the unusual position of being in agreement with the main stream of trade union opinion. This has encouraged it to launch a new propaganda campaign centred on pay policy, unemployment and the 35-hour week.

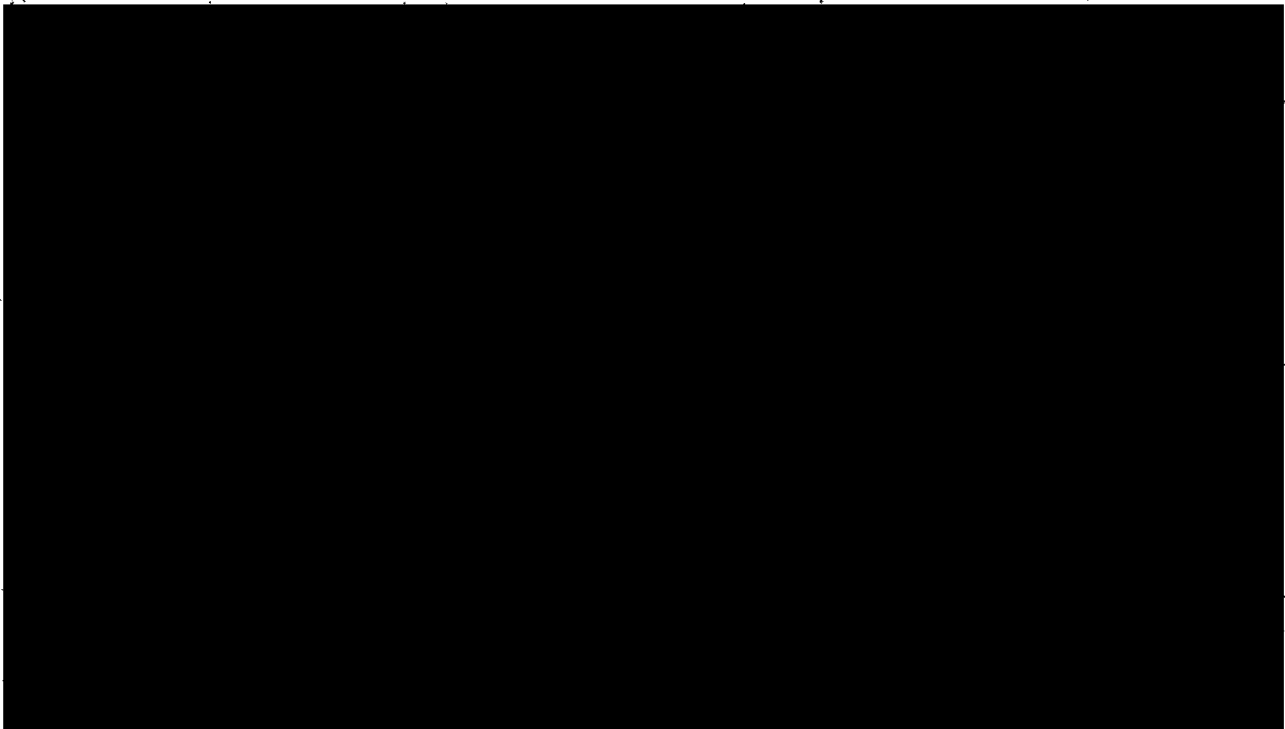
8. The Trotskyist groups have all consistently and stridently publicised their own total opposition to wage restraint and incomes policies although none have significantly improved their position in industry. Nevertheless, they do not feel constrained (as does the Communist Party) by any desire to help the Labour Party to stay in office, and will certainly continue to exploit individual industrial disputes by their more militant activities, which are more likely to lead to local breaches of public order than to influence economic policy.

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9. The Communist Party's potential in a changed industrial climate to exploit industrial issues at a national level for political purposes remains. Thus although in recent times Trotskyists have taken the lead in exacerbating industrial issues, the CPGB, with its greater influence throughout the trade union movement, continues to represent the more significant subversive threat.

Summary



11. Trotskyist activity in the unions referred to in the preceding paragraph has been concentrated at rank and file level; and none of the Trotskyist groups has given much attention to penetrating these unions at a national level. (Particulars of the unions referred to in this and the preceding paragraph are set out in Part II of this document).

