

STATE RESEARCH

**BULLETIN
No. 2**

**THE SPECIAL BRANCH — THE POLICE COMPUTER — PLANNING
FOR STRIKES — POWERS OF SEARCH — CHANGES AT THE YARD
BRITAIN AND MERCENARIES — UNDERCOVER RESERVE FORCES**

**NEWS &
DEVELOPMENTS**

POLITICAL INFORMATION ON POLICE COMPUTER

Despite official reassurances that the Police National Computer (PNC) at Hendon would not hold information on people's political affiliations and activities it is now clear that it does. This disturbing use of the new computer — which has the capacity to hold information on every adult in the population — came to light when three members of the Hunt Saboteurs Association were arrested on the basis of information supplied by the PNC to the Lancashire police. Two police constables patrolling the M6 on January 23rd this year became suspicious of a Ford Cortina car which had been left unattended for about five hours at a

service station. In the words of the prosecuting solicitor at the Magistrates' hearing in Wigton: 'The car was checked out on the Police Computer. He (the police officer) was also told that the owner was a prominent member of the Anti-Blood Sports League'. At the time the officer took no further action, but later on the evening of the 23rd he heard on the television news that the grave of John Peel (the 18th century huntsman) had been desecrated only 62 miles from the service station. He put two and two together, contacted the police near the scene of the desecration, and three arrests followed. The Hunt Saboteurs Association say that they have been informed by the Chipping Norton police that it is standard routine for such information to be held on the PNC.

The Association was also involved in another incident when one of its committee members was stopped by the police in Gloucestershire. His name, address and car number were radioed in and checked with the computer, and the message returned by radio that the person was anti-blood sports. This resulted in the search of the

man's home and a questioning session about anti-hunt incidents in the area (which he had not committed).

Work on the Police National Computer was started in 1969 and it became operational in 1974. It consists of two Burroughs machines with the capacity to hold up to 40 million records, making it the largest police intelligence system in Europe. Once a person is on file in the computer they will remain on file until their death. The PNC is an 'immediate response system' linked to all police stations in England, Wales and Scotland. This means that the policeman on the beat can radio back to the police station requesting information on anyone or anything of which he is suspicious. The request is punched into the computer access terminal, and five seconds later, the information stored on the computer will be available to be radioed back to the policeman on the beat.

Nationwide coverage

The information held on the PNC covers the whole of Britain. Some of it was already national in scope, and the main effect of computerisation has been to make access and retrieval more efficient. The national file of stolen and suspected vehicles was transferred to the computer in 1974. The national criminal records, numbering about 3,500,000, were held in the Criminal Records Office at Scotland Yard until put on to the PNC in 1976 (space for up to 6,500,000 names has been allocated for criminal records). The index to the National Fingerprint Collection was also held at the Yard until 1976, when it was put on to the PNC. The computerisation of the Collection itself — on a system known as the 'Videofile Information System' with the capacity to store and search for fingerprints — was completed in October this year. The index has about 2,500,000 entries.

However, much of the information already on the computer or shortly to be added to it, are records that were not previously held nationally. When the

stolen property, suspended sentences and disqualified drivers files are added, it will be the first time this information has been held nationally. A crucial, and the largest, centralisation of records is that of vehicle owners and vehicle licence-holders. The Department of the Environment has recently completed the centralisation of its records on drivers and vehicles, which are held at Swansea on a DOE computer. The PNC has a duplicate set of the DOE's records on its computer, and 26,000,000 entries have been allocated for this purpose. To ensure that the police files are kept up to date, magnetic tapes are sent daily from Swansea to Hendon.

The files on people are based on name, sex, colour of skin, height and date of birth, but it is known that there is extra space available to the police to store other information of interest to them. There is an average of 150 bytes per person (a byte is a computer unit) which would give ample space for entries like 'anti-blood sports'. Information is also categorised under the following three headings: SUS (temporary suspicion of being used in a crime); POL (being used for police purposes) and INT (of long-term interest to the police). It would be interesting to know who qualifies for an entry under the third category.

Lack of accountability

Public control over the Police National Computer is seriously reduced by the confusion over who is responsible for the operation, the police or the Home Office. The Home Office has funded the PNC to the tune of £9,925,000 in capital expenditure and £5,156,000 for current expenditure on goods and services since 1969. However, a Home Office spokesperson recently said: 'What goes on the PNC is a matter for the police. The constraints we apply are solely the amount of space that can be used. There is nothing else we can tell you.'

An editorial in the *Police Review* (8/5/72) on the PNC commented: 'Much of the information is personal

details of a suspect, his family, associates and way of life, and although it may seem to trespass on the freedom of the individual it is the bread and butter of successful policing'. This cross-referencing of information is in direct contravention of the assurances given to the government working party on data protection and privacy of computer information namely that, although massive information on individuals is collated on different government computers, such information would never be cross-referenced to provide any kind of central data bank. The decision to send all the information held on millions of drivers and vehicle owners held at Swansea to the police computer at Hendon is a disturbing precedent.

SPECIAL BRANCH COMPUTER

The PNC is not the only computer on which police records are stored. In the year 1976-7 'C' Department (Criminal Investigation) of the Metropolitan Police acquired the use of a new computer (costing £935,000, paid for by the Home Office) with the capacity to store information on 1,300,000 people. Half of it, 600,000 spaces have been allocated to the Special Branch to hold part of their national records. The other half will be used for the intelligence records from the Fraud Squad, the Serious Crimes Squad, Criminal Intelligence, and the Drugs and Illegal Immigration Intelligence Units. The Special Branch will have access to all the information on the computer, but their records will only be made available to other policemen with their express permission. It is not known which section of the three million names held by the Special Branch is going into the system, but it is likely to be either that on political activists with criminal records or the main files on key people (ranging from political and union activists to prominent figures whose job or position opens them to blackmail or disaffection including MPs,

civil servants, and top businessmen), or both. (See Background Paper on Special Branch.)

CABINET OFFICE: PLANNING FOR STRIKES

Little is known about the work of the Cabinet Office Secretariat whose overall responsibility is to service the meetings of the Cabinet and those of Cabinet committees. The Secretariat, which was created by Lloyd George in 1916, is run by civil servants with the rank of Deputy Secretary. One of the six is Sir Clive Rose, who chairs the Civil Contingencies Committee (CCC). Sir Clive Rose joined the Secretariat in 1976 from the Foreign Office (where for two years, 1971-3, he was a member of the Joint Intelligence Committee which co-ordinates British overseas policy and intelligence matters). In addition to chairing the CCC he also services the Overseas Policy and Defence Committee of the Cabinet.

The CCC is an interdepartmental committee charged with drawing up contingency plans to deal with emergency situations inside Britain. Its brief ranges from terrorism and hijacking, to flood disasters and maintaining essential services during a strike, and the use of the military in all civil situations short of civil war (when the military would take over under martial law). On the committee are representatives of the Home Office, the Ministry of Defence, Department of the Environment, Department of Employment, together with others from industry, transport, health, social security, and the treasury.

Tory committee re-named

The CCC grew out of the National Security Committee, chaired by Lord Jellicoe, which was set up by Heath after the first miners' strike in 1972. Wilson re-named the committee in 1975. Initially the National Security Committee was given two jobs: to take over from the Home Office Emergencies Committee the co-ordination of maintaining essential

services during a strike (police, military, fire services, and health and welfare services); secondly, to re-draw the internal 'War Plan' to cope with an internal 'enemy'. The latter involved a nation-wide operation carried out by military personnel in absolute secrecy — every motorway, high street, bridge and port throughout the country was measured and plotted. This was completed by 1975, and the re-named CCC continued to work on contingency planning for terrorism, disasters, and industrial disputes. One of the jobs it undertook was to draw up guidelines for the use of the military inside Britain for each of the above situations. The use of the military in the firemen's strike comes under the heading 'Military Aid to the Civil Ministries' (MACM). The constitutional position governing the use of troops in civil situations — barring war — is far from clear. The only statutory provision is given under the 1920 Emergency Powers Act, which places specific limits on the use of troops and parliament has to agree to declare a 'state of emergency' — which has not been done in the case of the firemen's strike.

In coming to an assessment of what plans need to be made in the case say of the firemen's strike the CCC is briefed by the security service (MI5) on the strengths and weaknesses of the union's determination and the police provide reports of public order requirements. These briefings, the result of political surveillance provide the basis on which other services and ministries make their contingency plans.

CABINET OFFICE: SECURITY CO-ORDINATION

Another of the six top members of the Secretariat is Sir Leonard Hooper, the Co-ordinator of Security and Intelligence in the Cabinet Office. He became the Co-ordinator in 1974 after having been the Director of the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) at Cheltenham for many years (he was succeeded as Director by Sir Wilfrid Bonsall). The job of the Co-ordinator is to

present assessments to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet from the security and intelligence agencies. The post of Co-ordinator was created in 1970 and first held by Sir Dick Goldsmith White (ex-head of MI5, 1953-56, and MI6, 1956-69). He was followed in 1972 by Sir Peter Wilkinson, a career diplomat from the Foreign Office.

POLICE POWERS OF SEARCH

A decision in the Queen's Bench Division by the Lord Chief Justice Lord Widgery in July has made it possible that the police may now feel encouraged to make illegal searches of premises. Lord Widgery, giving judgement in the case of *Jeffery v. Black* (*Times Law Reports*, 15 July 1977), said even though the police had conducted an illegal search they were still entitled to use the evidence they obtained in doing so.

The case arose when Christopher Black was arrested for stealing a sandwich from a pub. After he had been charged at the police station, but before he was bailed, the police decided they wanted to search his house. Black refused his permission. Normally in such circumstances the police must then get a warrant from a magistrate — and doubtless one would have been granted in spite of the inherent unlikelihood of there being more sandwiches in the house. This time they just went round, searched the place and found some cannabis. Black's lawyers argued that the illegal search meant that the charges under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 should be dismissed because the evidence was inadmissible. The magistrate agreed and threw them out. But the police appealed and Lord Widgery overruled the dismissal, ruling that the evidence, even though obtained 'without proper authority' was still admissible.

Increased powers?

This decision does not alter the police's extensive legal powers to enter and search

property, but it *does* mean that courts will find it much harder to penalise them for illegal search and entry. Guardian legal correspondent, Professor Michael Zander, wrote following the case: 'In recent years the courts, led by Lord Denning, have been gradually dismantling the long-established doctrine that the police may not ransack a man's house looking for evidence against him, unless they have a search warrant identifying what they are looking for. Lord Chief Justice Widgery has now added the authority of his great office to this trend . . . It would be remarkable if this latest judicial pronouncement did not increase the level of illegal conduct by the police' (*Guardian* 18/7/77).

UNDERCOVER RESERVE FORCES

A paramilitary committee of former high-ranking service officers has, for the past six years, been receiving official government support to set up an undercover, anti-communist resistance movement in Britain (*Daily Express* 18/7/77). The Resistance and Psychological Operations Committee (RPOC) is a covert group within the government-funded Reserve Forces Association (RFA). The RFA is the representative body of British military reservists, and the British component of the NATO-supported Confederation Inter-Allies des Officers de Reserve (CIOR). The RFA was formed in 1970 and is formally an independent organisation, but its 214 individual and 90 corporate members represent all the reserve units of the armed forces and the government treats it as the spokesman of Britain's reserve forces.

Since 1971 the RPOC has been setting up the nucleus of an underground resistance organisation which could rapidly be expanded in the event of a Russian occupation of any part of NATO, including Britain. Close links have been formed with similar units in several

European countries, which are actively recruiting 'anti-communist resistance fighters', according to Chapman Pincher. They are also said to have established an intelligence network which NATO chiefs regard as being of great value.

The RPOC was set up by a group of World War Two defence chiefs who thought that the need has arisen again for an organisation like the underground wartime Special Operations Executive (SOE), but this time directed against communism. Amongst the group were: General Sir Richard Gale, former NATO Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and founder of the 1st Parachute Brigade; Sir Collin Gubbins, founder of the SOE and the Commandos; Sir John Slessor; Marshal of the Royal Air Force, and former Chief of the Air Staff; and Sir Algernon Willis, Admiral of the Fleet.

Under the then Tory government RPOC was given access to Ministry of Defence Departments, including the Joint Warfare Establishment near Salisbury — commanded by Maj. Gen. Patrick Ovens, a former Commando. The committee also formed close links with the Special Air Services (SAS), and secured access to the Foreign Office's Information and Research Department, which has historically been used as a cover Department for MI6 agents. The MOD gave the RFA a grant to pass on to RPOC. Now, Pincher claims, the Labour government are worried that their supporters will find out that the government has been encouraging a rightwing para-military group, and they have therefore been quietly trying to stifle the committee over the past months. RPOC has been deprived of its grant (and thereby its official status), access to Whitehall information has ended, and attendance at NATO meetings forbidden. The committee still exists, however, with General Gale leading the fight for its survival.

Role of reservists and TAVR

Even if the government succeeds and the

covert committee disappears, the Reserve Forces Association itself is growing in strength and importance as reservists generally become more significant in defence policy. Since NATO's policy of 'flexible response' to external aggression was developed in the late 1960s, national defence plans within NATO have laid greater emphasis on the mobilisation of reserve forces. The British reservists that the RFA aims to represent total 214,000. Army reservists comprise 170,100 of these, outnumbering the total personnel strength of the full-time army itself by nearly 4,000. The Army reservists, as with the Royal Navy and the RAF, are made up of former service personnel (who are obliged to stay in the reserves as part of their conditions of service), and of volunteers. Former Army service personnel constitute the Regular Army Reserves, numbering 110,000, and the 60,100 volunteer civilians form the Territorial and Army Volunteer Reserve (TAVR).

In 1974, the formerly moribund TAVR was revitalised, re-equipped, and given a new status. In wartime, 30,000 of its members would be sent to Germany to reinforce the British Army on the Rhine, and the other 30,000 would 'secure the home base' (Britain). The government can also call up the TAVR in a national emergency which does not include armed attack from abroad.

The importance now being attached to the reservists is reflected in the recognition and support being given to the RFA and CIOR, both at national and NATO level. CIOR itself was given formal recognition by the NATO Military Committee earlier this year, and steps are now being taken to involve CIOR in NATO military activities.

CHANGES AT THE YARD

In the five months since Mr. David McNee became Commissioner of the Metropolitan

Police in March, 1977, there have been a large number of changes in the top personnel at Scotland Yard. In June Mr. Patrick Kavanagh became Deputy Commissioner to McNee, replacing Mr. Colin Woods. Beneath these two the Yard is divided into Departments, each headed by an Assistant Commissioner. Each Department is then divided into sections under a Deputy Assistant Commissioner, and each section is split into branches headed by a Commander. The three main Departments at the Yard are 'A' Department (Administration and Operations); 'B' Department (Traffic); and 'C' Department (Criminal Investigation, usually referred to as the CID). The recent changes affect the top officers in these Departments as follows:

In 'A' Department the Assistant Commissioner is Mr. W.H. Gibson

- A.3 Commander Daphne Skiller (Obscene Publications Squad)
- A.8 Commander E. Maybanks (Public order and Special Patrol Group)
- CIB(2) Commander John Cass (Complaints and Investigation Bureau)

The re-organisation of the mechanism for investigating complaints against the police into the Complaints and Investigation Bureau is the only recent structural change.

A.10 branch, which was set up by Robert Mark to deal with complaints, has been amalgamated with four other branches including complaints against CID detectives, and police traffic offences to form CIB(2). The changes are as follows:

In 'B' Department, the new Assistant Commissioner is Mr. John 'Jock' Wilson.

In 'C' Department, the new Assistant Commissioner is Mr. Gilbert Kelland. Deputy Assistant Commissioner (Admin) Ray Anning

- C.5 Commander Frank McGuinness (crime legislation; liaison with the Police National Computer Unit)
- Deputy Assistant Commissioner (Support Services) Ron Steventon

- C.4 Commander George Collins (Criminal Records Office)

- C.3 Commander Gerry Lambourne (fingerprints)

- C.7 Commander Gerry Lambourne
(tech. support, inc. explosives
officers)
- C.11 Commander Ron Harvey
(Criminal Intelligence; Drugs and
Illegal Immigration Intelligence
Units)

Deputy Assistant Commissioner
(Operations) David Powis

C.1 Commander Arthur Howard
(Serious crimes squad)

C.8 Commander Don Neesham
(Flying Squad)

C.13 Commander Jim Nevill (Anti-
Terrorist Squad)

Deputy Assistant Commissioner (Special
Branch) Bob Bryan

Ports: Commander Kenneth Pendered

Operations: Commander Rollo Watts

Admin: Commander Philip Saunders

(Although formally under 'C' Department
the Special Branch reports to and liaises
directly with the Commissioner, the
Home Office Police Department and MI5).

The overall importance of these changes
is that the officers who were prominent in
the anti-corruption drive initiated by
Robert Mark have now been moved into
top posts in 'C' Department — Kelland,
Anning and Powis.

BRITAIN AND MERCENARIES

Recent press reports of British mercenary
involvement in a plot to kill Togo's
President Eyadema again raises the two
main myths about the British govern-
ment's position on mercenaries — that
they have no official support, and that
the government is legally powerless to
stop them. A recent book by Wilfred
Burchett and Derek Roebuck 'The Whores
of War' (Pelican, 1977, 75p) exposes the
official position.

The government has the power to act
against mercenaries by prosecution under
the Foreign Enlistment Act 1870 — which
prohibits recruiting in this country for a
foreign army at war with another state

'friendly' to this country, and also makes
unlawful the preparation here of an
expedition. An 1887 court ruling declared
that *any* act of preparation constituted a
criminal offence (this would have been
sufficient grounds for prosecuting the
mercenary recruiter, John Banks, if the
government had so chosen). Professor
Glanville Williams, an eminent legal
authority, has commented on the law that
'the Foreign Enlistment Act 1870 is a
model of draughtsmanship', and that the
existing law is perfectly adequate to stop
mercenaries — if there was the motiv-
ation to enforce it.

The Wilson government, however,
declared that the law was inadequate and
set up the Diplock Committee in
January 1976 to review the state of the
law. The committee, chaired by Lord
Diplock, comprised two conservative MPs,
Sir Derek Walker-Smith (Tory) and Sir
Geoffrey de Freitas (Labour). They
recommended that the law should be
changed to make recruiting illegal only in
the case of those foreign wars proscribed
by the government, and that each
individual's right to be a mercenary
should be maintained.

Britain and Angola

The first part of the 'Whores of War' details
details the role of mercenaries in Angola
and the assistance of British and American
governments including their intelligence
services. There were substantial mercenary
contingents in the UNITA and FLNA
forces, who were involved in the
unsuccessful two-pronged attack on the
MPLA in the capital, Luanda — this was
an attempt to install a pro-Western
government before independence day.
A British mercenary, 'Colonel Callan',
took control of the remaining FLNA
troops, and continued after independence
to fight on in northern Angola until
February 1976. This was after South
African and Zaire troops had withdrawn,
and the US Senate had banned further
CIA action against the Marxist MPLA.
Despite Callan's infamous 'disciplinary

executions', the mercenaries effort in Angola was ineffective. However, the incompetence and lack of planning in Angola was not the result of the use of mercenaries, but the collapse of the FLNA forces they were supporting. The trial of mercenaries in Angola was in part aimed at preventing a repetition of the use of mercenaries elsewhere in Southern Africa in the future.

In Oman a small group of British mercenaries were able to provide counter-revolutionary expertise for the Sultan's armed forces, following the British-backed coup in 1970. In 'Mercenaries: Counter-insurgency in the Gulf' (Spokesman Books, 1977, 95p) Fred Halliday argues that in effect the 'soldier of fortune' type of mercenary is only one kind. Soldiers who join foreign armed forces, officers 'seconded' to such forces (like the British in Oman), the large number of people working on arms contracts in the area, and the poor of neighbouring countries (like the Baluchis in Oman) also fall into this category.

The resurgence of mercenaries reflects the fact that Western governments can no longer employ their regular forces in Third World countries, especially since Vietnam, the CIA inquiries in the Senate and Congress, and British de-colonisation. The use of mercenaries is one of the options left open to Western governments and multinational interests, to ensure the continued dominance of pro-Western regimes. Meanwhile, work is underway to get political support for a Convention, to define mercenaries as forces fighting against self-determination for Third World countries, in the Organisation of African States and the U.N.

REPRESSION IN WEST GERMANY

The Third Bertrand Russell International Tribunal Concerning Alleged Violation of Human Rights in the Federal Republic of Germany, initiated by the Bertrand

Russell Foundation, was launched on October 28th. At press conferences throughout Western Europe, including ones in London and West Germany, the questions to be answered by the Tribunal were announced: 1) Are the citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany being denied the right to exercise their professions on account of their political views? 2) Is censorship being exercised through provisions of the Criminal and Civil Law and through extra-legal measures? 3) Are constitutional and human rights being eroded or eliminated in the context of Criminal Court proceedings? This list is not exclusive, and the denial of human and legal rights to those arrested for terrorist offences will also be examined.

The Tribunal will consist of thirty-two leading politicians, academics, lawyers and writers drawn from many European countries, including Yugoslavia and West Germany itself, as well as from the USA. The British members are Lord Gifford, Professor Ruth Glass, Trevor Griffiths, Jo Richardson MP, Steven Lukes, and Howard Brenton. The Tribunal has already started work and will be holding a public session in West Germany at Easter. The First Bertrand Russell International Tribunal was formed in 1966 to investigate War Crimes in Vietnam, and the second, in 1973, investigated violation of human rights in Latin America. Copies of the opening statement, and a list of Tribunal members, can be obtained from: The Bertrand Russell Foundation, Bertrand Russell House, Gamble Street, Nottingham.

The British-based Campaign Against Repression in West Germany held a successful meeting on 'Prison murders and the threat to Europe' at Camden Town Hall in November. The Campaign is preparing the third issue of its journal, 'Verboten', and also has a video-tape available for hire on the mass movement against nuclear power stations in West Germany and the authorities' violent reactions to it. They can in addition offer speakers on various aspects of the attack

on civil liberties in West Germany. The contact address is: CARWG, c/o 35 Wellington Street, London WC2.

REVIEWS

KILLING NO MURDER: A Report by the Liddle Towers Committee. Liddle Towers died on February 9th, 1976, from injuries received during and after his arrest by the police two and a half weeks earlier. At the inquest the jury returned a verdict of 'justifiable homicide'. Towers' death, and the subsequent handling of the inquest raises important questions about police brutality and the reluctance of the police authorities to examine or criticise police conduct, or (in practice) for the law to be used.

The history of Liddle Towers and the attempts by the committee to get an independent inquiry have strong similarities with that of Stephen McCarthy, who died in January 1971 from injuries caused by his arrest. Stephen's friends, family and supporters failed to get an inquiry about his treatment at police and prison officers' hands, despite years of campaigning. It is important that the committee get sufficient support this time. Copies of the pamphlet, 16pp, 10p, from the Liddle Towers Committee, 42 Cherryburn Gardens, Fenham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

THE COUNTY WARBOOK: All local authorities have an obligation to plan for war under the Civil Defence (Planning) Regulations of 1974. It is called Emergency Planning and grew out of civil defence organisation against an external enemy, especially the threat of nuclear attack in

in the Cold War period. Since 1972 Emergency Planning has had a double function: its original one of civil defence, and a new one — planning for internal 'problems' such as disasters, strikes, terrorism and all situations short of civil war. Andy Thomas' pamphlet reprints documents from several councils showing how they are planning for emergencies. 12pp, 15p, from Mole Express, 178 Oxford Road, Manchester.

WORKERS RESEARCH UNIT (Belfast): produces a quarterly bulletin (30p per issue; £1.50 sub pa), examining issues around the Northern Ireland economy, the underdevelopment of Derry, the health service in N. Ireland, and the role of the UDR. Issue no. 2. (winter '77) carries a major article on 'Repression in Northern Ireland'. This looks at how far the theories of the Army's counter-insurgency manual have been applied on the streets of Northern Ireland, and with what success. Both elements of repression, 'the velvet glove' and 'the iron fist' are looked at in considerable detail. W.R.U., c/o Workers' Resource Centre, 52 Broadway, Belfast 12.

NATIONAL FRONT IS A SOCIALIST FRONT: Stephen Eyres, the author of this pamphlet (which is published by Aims for Freedom and Enterprise), is on the editorial staff of 'Free Nation', the paper of the National Association for Freedom. He argues that the National Front's position on all issues places it firmly on the 'collectivist left'. Eyres invents for the left a general unifying policy, which is in fact an amalgam of elements of policy from groups as different as the Socialist Workers Party, the Tribune Group and Russian Stalinists. The National Front's overt racism does not divide it from socialists as 'Where is there greater racialism in the world today than in the Soviet Union?' While the NAFF and the National Front are both on the right wing of the political spectrum, this pamphlet should remove any doubts that their politics are the same, and clarify

some of the differences. 17pp, 45p from Aims for Freedom and Enterprise, 5 Plough Place, Fetter Lane, London EC4.

MUTINIES 1917-1920: David Lamb gives an account of mutinies which occurred among the UK and Commonwealth troops in this period. Many of the World's most disciplined armies including the British

French, Italian and German 'suffered' mutinous outbreaks. These mutinies have been ignored by historians, including those on the left. Lamb's account makes no attempt to deduce motives of the mutineers, but sticks to those put forward at the time by the participants themselves. 32pp, 50p, from Solidarity, c/o 123 Lathom Road, London E6.

THE SPECIAL BRANCH

BACKGROUND PAPER

A detailed examination by State Research of over two-thirds of the Annual Reports from the Chief Constables of England, Wales and Scotland shows that only one police force issued a report on its local Special Branch in 1976. This contradicts the official position that they are accountable to local and national democratic institutions.

In theory the Special Branch are accountable in exactly the same way as the uniformed police to the local Chief Constable, who in turn issues an Annual Report to the police authority of the local council (in London the Commissioner of Police reports directly to the Home Secretary). The survey arose out of questions raised in parliament by Robin Cook MP in May concerning the surveillance of the Agee-Hosenball Defence Committee and the arrest of Aubrey, Berry and Campbell. Replying for the Home Secretary, Dr. Shirley Summerskill said that in addition to the Special Branch at Scotland Yard:

'Other forces in England and Wales now have their own Special Branches. There is no national Special Branch. Only in the annual reports of each Chief Constable can there be annual reports on individual branches'

(*Hansard*, 5/5/77, our emphasis).

In the light of increasing evidence of surveillance of political activity this Background Paper looks at the accountability of the Special Branch to parliament and to local councils; its origin and growth; recent instances of political surveillance; and finally, at the concepts that underlie its practice.

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When Robin Cook raised the role of the Special Branch in an adjournment debate in May he expressed concern at the large increase in the size of the Special Branch since the 1960s, which had taken place 'without a single scrap of public debate in the House of Commons or outside of it'. Why, he asked, were the Special Branch not publicly accountable? Reports on the work of the uniformed police and the CID were given annually by Chief Constables. These included details on the number of staff assigned to specific duties together with a summary of the kind of work undertaken, and nobody 'suggests that such information handicaps the fight of the police forces against crime in an area, so why should the Special Branch be treated differently?' Dr. Summerskill

rejected the assertion that the Special Branch were not accountable saying that they were ordinary police officers and were accountable in the same way to the Chief Constables.

However, as this survey shows, there is no report on the work of local Special Branches in 35 out of 36 Annual Reports examined (see pp35-6). The survey covered 36 out of the 51 police forces in England, Wales and Scotland.

In London, the Annual Report of the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police for 1976, which is presented by the Home Secretary to parliament, did not mention the activities of the 550 Special Branch officers at Scotland Yard. Outside of London the Chief Constables of the 41 provincial police forces in England and Wales issue their Annual Reports to the local Police Authority (the police committee comprised of two-thirds local councillors, one-third local magistrates; formerly known as 'Watch Committees'). In only one of the twenty-eight reports received was an account given of the local Special Branch. Nor was there any mention in the 1976 Annual Report from the Inspector of Constabulary to parliament (this gives an overall report on all the provincial police forces in England and Wales). Similarly in Scotland, there is no mention at all of the Special Branch in the reports of the eight police forces covering the country.

The one police force, Durham, which included a short section on the local Special Branch had 14 fulltime Special Branch officers to cover an area with a total population of 610,000 people. Three officers are based at Durham Police Headquarters — a Det. Chief Inspector, a Det. Inspector, and a Civilian Clerk. Six more officers (two Det. Sgts and four Det. Constables) carry out surveillance work in the community. Three are assigned to the Durham and Chester-le-Street divisions, and three more to Darlington and Bishop Auckland. Finally, a Det. Sgt. and four Det. Constables form the local Special Branch Ports Unit, which keeps watch on the ports and airports.

Its origin and growth

The 'Special Irish Branch' was formed in 1883 in response to a series of Fenian bombings, and when these ended in 1888 it was retained as a separate unit within Scotland Yard's CID (and the word 'Irish' was dropped from its title). Today the overall role of the Special Branch is to protect the security of the state against 'subversive' organisations, and to aid the police in maintaining public order. They are, in effect, the political arm of the police.

Their main responsibilities are:

- 1) Watching ports and airports for undesirable entrants and noting the movements of British people.
- 2) Carrying out surveillance of political and trade union activity (by collecting information and literature on groups, leading activists, meetings, and marches).
- 3) Assisting MI5 by making arrest and appearing in court; also forwarding all their information to MI5 for their files.
- 4) Monitoring the whereabouts of aliens and vetting applications for naturalisation for the Home Office.
- 5) Dealing with offences committed under the Official Secrets Acts, and since 1973, with offences in relation to the conduct of local and parliamentary elections.

The Special Branch at Scotland Yard has three additional jobs: to provide guards for Cabinet Ministers and visiting dignitaries; to guard and keep under surveillance foreign embassies; and lastly, a special responsibility for Irish affairs. The Special Branch's 'Registry' at the Yard holds some three million names in a national records system. The files on key people (from political activists to MPs and businessmen), estimated to hold 600,000 names, are being transferred on to a new computer (this is being shared with Criminal Intelligence and other specialist units; the Home Office has provided £935,000 to pay for the computer, which has a total capacity of 1.3 million names). It should be emphasised that most of the people held in these files do not have criminal records. They are in them because

of their political ideas and actions or their positions.

The present head of the Special Branch in London is Deputy Assistant Commissioner Bob Bryan, who has spent most of his police career in the Special Branch (1952-1974). Operational responsibility is divided between Commander Kenneth Pendered (ports), Commander Rollo Watts (Operations), and Commander Philip Saunders (Administration).

Size of the Special Branch

The size of the Special Branch has always been the subject of official mystification. The original Special Branch at the Yard of a dozen men grew to between 100 and 150 officers by the late 1940s, 225 in the early 1960s, 300 by 1968, and today there are 550 officers based in London. Prior to the 1960s there were no Special Branch officers outside London, CID detectives being seconded temporarily for Special Branch work as and when required. In 1961 a major internal reorganisation was undertaken, which was prompted by the countrywide CND campaign and the Radcliffe inquiry into the efficiency of the security services, including the Special Branch. Special Branches were to be set up outside London in each of the local police forces, with a minimum of six officers.

Today there are 550 Special Branch officers in the forty-one local police forces in England and Wales, and a further 80 in Scotland. These figures are confirmed by parliamentary answers by the Home Secretary that the size of the Special Branch overall is 1% of the total size of the police force (*Hansard*, 20.6.74 and 5.5.77). This gives a total Special Branch strength of 1,180 officers compared with just over 200 in the early 1960s.

The increase in the size of the Special Branch is often justified by referring to terrorism and the IRA's activities, but this only accounts for part of the increase. The London-based Anti-Terrorist Squad (formerly the Bomb Squad) has just over

200 officers; however, these are jointly drawn from the Special Branch and CID officers (usually from Criminal Intelligence). There is also the 70-strong 'Irish Squad' in the London Special Branch. Outside of London, some of the local Special Branches carry out similar duties although this is concentrated in a number of key cities (like Merseyside, and Dumfries and Galloway where there are major ports from Ireland). The other side of the Special Branch's increased size become evident in the growth of instances of the surveillance of political and trade union activities throughout the country.

The Special Branch at work

If the Special Branch is secretive about its numbers it is even more so about what it actually does. A rare glimpse into its work was given by the publication of extracts from the 'General Orders' (which details the operational practice of all branches of the force) for the Metropolitan Police in 1974, and are indicative of their practice throughout the country (*Time Out*, 20.9.74). Under Section 49, 'Public and other events', the orders make clear that the local police in London have to inform the Special Branch of *all* known political and industrial meetings and demonstrations — the only meetings excluded seem to be the proceedings of parliament and local councils.

Early notification of all meetings to both the Special Branch and A.8 (the public order and Special Patrol Group branch at the Yard) is required of the local police stations; shorthand writers-for major meetings are provided by the Special Branch; 'Reports after meetings' ask for notes on violent or inflammatory speeches, and immediate notification, by teleprinter, where 'disorder of any kind or arrests' occurs; whenever people are arrested in connection with political activities 'enquiry is always to be made of Special Branch to ascertain whether anything is known about the accused *before the case* (our emphasis) is deal with at Court'; the results of all political court

cases must be notified to the Special Branch; where the Special Branch does not attend a meeting or march and no disorder occurs, 'the Special Branch is to be informed in all cases . . .'

As the Special Branch does not present an annual account of its work its operations only come to light occasionally, and often sensationally. Perhaps the best known cases in recent years have been those where the Special Branch has employed agent-provocateurs in connection with Ireland. Four people were charged with conspiracy to possess firearms in 1971 in the Soar Eire case. The charges against them were withdrawn after four days of the Old Bailey trial when the central role played by a Special Branch agent provocateur became evident (and a statement implicating the four by a man held in Northern Ireland was shown to have been obtained 'under duress').

And in April 1974 Kenneth Lennon walked into the offices of the National Council for Civil Liberties and claimed that he had been recruited and paid by the Special Branch to infiltrate Irish groups in Britain. Two days later he was found shot in the back of the head in Surrey. The consequent internal police inquiry left many questions unanswered (see, *Reluctant Judas*, by Geoff Robertson). These cases apart, it is the surveillance of everyday political activity which provides disturbing evidence of increased Special Branch activity, and underlines the need for proper accountability to democratic institutions.

One of the most recent cases that came to public attention was the claim by Maurice Jones, the editor of the *Yorkshire Miner*, that he was questioned by 'two plainclothes gentlemen' after his arrest on the Grunwick picket lines in North London. 'He produced a file on me from which he quoted extensively. He knew so much about me that I expected him to tell me when I bought my last pair of socks' (*Morning Star*, 18.7.77). The two men went on to say that the *Yorkshire Miner* was becoming

too effective a trade union paper, 'a luxury no sensible authority can afford'. Then came threats against his family, because his wife was not British 'it would not be too difficult to terminate her stay in Britain'. Finally, Maurice Jones was told: 'You have a very delightful little girl, Mr. Jones. The roads become very busy at this time of year' (Arthur Scargill, President of the Yorkshire miners, has called for an inquiry into the affair). Two other cases of Special Branch surveillance of trade union activity occurred when workers opposed to the closure of their factories decided to sit-in.

Spying on workers

At the Strachans factory in Eastleigh, Hampshire, the workers sat-in in March, 1974 and discovered papers showing that the management had been in touch with the local Special Branch in Southampton during a strike in 1973. In parliament the Home Secretary said that the Chief Constable of Hampshire 'had reason to believe that public disorder might have resulted from the incident (the strike) . . .' (*Hansard*, 20.6.74). More recently in May this year came evidence of the Special Branch supplying information to Reinforcement Steel Services at Greenwich, London, part of the state-owned British Steel Corporation. Secret files were found during the sit-in which had been prepared by the Works Manager Mr. Roebuck (dated 16 September, 1975). The management alleged that two trade union activists, Mr. Duffin and Mr. Lutener, had been involved in 'sabotage' at the factory — which they both denied.

The local police put the management in touch with the Special Branch at Scotland Yard and, on the above date, a Mr. Meynard from the Special Branch visited Mr. Roebuck. 'He told me (Roebuck) he had already checked on the most likely persons responsible', Mr. Duffin and Mr. Lutener. Meynard said that Duffin had been bound over for two years, for breaking and entering, in 1954 — when he was 17 years old. And of

Mr. Lutener, Mr. Roebuck records: 'The Special Branch have a file on this man for his political activities. 1. Distributing National Socialist literature (presumably this means International Socialist — ed) 2. Disturbing the peace during demonstrations (Paul Lutener has never been arrested — ed) 3. Taking part in illegal demonstrations (there is no such thing in Britain — ed)'. Later, in 1977, Paul Lutener was sacked along with five others for taking part (as did the whole workforce) in a one-day demonstration against local hospital cuts organised by NUPE.

Spying on mothers' march

At a May Day march in 1976, organised by Bletchley Mothers' Action Group and Bletchley Trades Council in Milton Keynes, to protest against education cuts a local officer dressed in blue denim photographed the march with a telephoto 'zoom' lens camera. He was spotted by one of the marchers, and the local police admitted it was one of their men. After protests the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, David Holdsworth, announced that the negatives and prints had been destroyed. Later, in a BBC 'Horizon' programme on surveillance, one of the mothers said that the reactions of friends and their husbands had been that they must have been doing something wrong or the police would not have been interested.

In September 1976 it was reported that after a National Abortion Campaign picket of a meeting held by the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) in Braintree, Essex the editor of the local paper — the Braintree and Witham Times — received a request from a journalist on a neighbouring paper for all the unpublished pictures of the NAC picket. He explained that they were wanted by a Special Branch officer in Colchester (the request was refused).

In April, 1977 the youth section of the the Workers Revolutionary Party held their annual conference at Llandudno in North Wales. The local Special Branch

posted a photographer opposite the station to snap all those arriving, and the local hotels and boarding houses were all visited. Landlords were asked to note down the names and addresses of all those attending for collection later.

In March, 1977 it was reported that the Sussex Special Branch had visited two schools, in Eastbourne and Boxhill, making inquiries about the political views and activities of teachers — in neither case was it suggested that any crime had been committed. In one case they asked about named teachers, and in the other visit about the political affiliations of the staff in general. In both cases the headmasters refused to help. The Chief Constable of Sussex, George Terry, replied to a letter from the Sussex branch of the NCCL. His reply did not deny that the visits had taken place, and he went on to say that general police inquiries related to maintain the Queen's Peace were 'a fact of life', and that the action of the police in the area 'has always been necessary and appropriate'. And the Secretary of State for Education replied blandly that the action of the Special Branch had been pursuant of their duty to maintain law and order.

After the arrest of Aubrey, Berry and Campbell, on February 18th this year the Special Branch made a number of visits on friends of the three. One of these was Stephen Wright, a post-graduate student at Lancaster University, who was doing a thesis on the social implications of police technology, and had corresponded with one of the defendants. Six Special Branch officers, including three from London, raided his home and removed most of his research material and the research proposal made to the university. They also demanded access to his office within the university precincts. When his professor objected and demanded to see their search warrant, they replied that issues of national security were at stake and they would if necessary break the door down. They were given access but took nothing away. No charges were made against Stephen

Wright, and after a long delay his material was returned. The Vice-Chancellor of Lancaster University, Mr. Charles Carter commented: 'Those who work in universities cannot expect to be exempt from the law, but they can reasonably ask for sympathetic understanding of their duty to seek access to all evidence relevant to their studies. Truth is not something to be determined by the State'.

'Subversion' and public order

Bombings and terrorism are always emphasised when the Special Branch comes under question. Yet, this forms only part of their work today (and historically) and serves to divert attention from their surveillance of legitimate political and trade union activity. The paucity of Ministerial responsibility for the Special Branch has been determined time and again by the generalisations used by Home Secretaries to defend instances of Special Branch interventions. The involvement of the Special Branch at the Strachans factory in 1974 and of the Sussex school teachers in 1977 were both justified on the grounds that the local Chief Constables thought that a question of public order might arise. These are grounds for holding information on almost anything and anyone. In a debate on the police in 1974 Mr. John Prescott, MP asked: 'Who decides what organisation — the nurses, the seamen or other industrial workers — shall be brought to the attention of the Special Branch? Who decides what constitutes a threat to the security of the state...?' (*Hansard*, 4/12/74). The answer is clear, the Special Branch, the police and MI5 decide.

Questioned on the Strachans dispute Home Secretary Roy Jenkins replied that the Special Branch had no interest in trade unions as such, 'it is only interested in subversion and possible subversion. Subversion can come from a variety of quarters' (*Hansard*, 20/6/74). They are concerned, he went on to say, with 'the activities of individuals who undermine the democratic party regime'. Quite

what this means is not clear, but nowhere is what is considered 'legitimate' or 'subversive' defined. In 1963 Lord Denning, reporting on the Profumo affair, described a 'subversive' as someone who 'would contemplate the overthrow of government by unlawful means'. Are a groups of mothers demonstrating against the cuts, or nurses wanting more pay now considered 'subversive'?

The concept of 'subversion' moves with the general political climate, within which the Special Branch (like the other state security agencies) provides its own definitions. What this means today is that every active person in politics or trade union work to the left of the Tory Party constitutes a 'subversive' in Britain, the internal enemy. In some ways this has always been so, but what has changed over the past five years is the resources and personnel now engaged on this work, and the nature of their work: which seeks to pre-empt effective political action. By its very essence Special Branch files on political and trade union activities are based on the *ideas* held by people and not on their 'criminal' activity. This, in itself, constitutes a threat to democratic politics — and the more so when the social and political conditions encourage them to take a more aggressive role without fear of effective censure.

**Survey of the Special Branch in the
Annual Reports of the Chief Constables
of the police forces in England, Wales and
Scotland for the year 1976**

This survey covered the Metropolitan Police, the City of London Police, twenty-six out of forty-one provincial forces in England and Wales, and all eight forces in Scotland, giving a total of 36 out of 51 police forces.

Col. (a) Annual Report received.

Col. (b) Report on the Special Branch given.

Col. (c) Estimated number of Special Branch officers in each force. This is based on information given in parliament by the Home Secretary that the size of the Special Branch is '1% of the total size of the police force' (*Hansard*, June 1974, and confirmed by Dr. Summerskill for the Home Secretary in May, 1977).

This gives a total Special Branch strength of 1,100 in England and Wales, with a further 80 in Scotland. It is known that 550 of the officers in England and Wales operate from Scotland Yard in London, the remainder have therefore been distributed in proportion to the total strength of each local police force. In the one case where the size of the local Special Branch is known, Durham, the estimated size is 9 officers but the actual figure is 14. This suggests either that the overall figure is an under-estimate, or that Special Branch officers are concentrated more in urban and industrial areas in Britain.

Force	(a)	(b)	(c)
Metropolitan Police	Yes	No	550
City of London Police	Yes	No	6
Avon & Somerset	Yes	No	18
Bedfordshire	-	-	6
Cambridgeshire	Yes	No	7
Cheshire	Yes	No	11
Cleveland	Yes	No ¹	6
Cumbria	-	-	6
Derbyshire	Yes	No	10
Devon & Cornwall	Yes	No	17
Dorset	Yes	No	7
Durham	Yes	No	9
Essex	Yes	No	15
Gloucestershire	Yes	No	7
Greater Manchester	Yes	No	40
Hampshire	-	-	18
Hertfordshire	-	-	9
Humberside	Yes	No	11
Kent	Yes	No	17
Lancashire	Yes	No	20
Leicestershire	-	-	11
Lincolnshire	-	-	7
Merseyside	Yes	No	28
Norfolk	-	-	8
Northamptonshire	-	-	6
Northumbria	Yes	No	21
North Yorkshire	Yes	No	9
Nottinghamshire	-	-	14
South Yorkshire	Yes	No	17
Staffordshire	-	-	13
Suffolk	-	-	7
Surrey	-	-	9
Sussex	Yes	No ²	18
Thames Valley	Yes	No	19
Warwickshire	Yes	No	5
West Mercia	Yes	No	10
West Midlands	Yes	No	38
West Yorkshire	-	-	31
Wiltshire	-	-	6
Wales			
Dyfed-Powys	Yes	No	6

Force	(a)	(b)	(c)
Gwent	Yes	No	6
North Wales	-	-	8
South Wales	Yes	No	19
Scotland			
Central Scotland	Yes	No	3
Dumfries & Galloway	Yes	No ³	2
Fife	Yes	No	4
Grampian	Yes	No	5
Lothian & Borders	Yes	No	14
Northern Constabulary	Yes	No	4
Strathclyde	Yes	No	41
Tayside	Yes	No	6

¹ Cleveland: although there is a section headed 'Special Branch' this solely refers to aliens.

² Sussex: under a list of officers undertaking training courses there are 2 sergeants and 8 constables who did a 'Special Branch' course.

³ Dumfries & Galloway: this force covers the port of Stranraer a major joint of entry from Ireland and its Special Branch strength is more of the order of a dozen.

Some useful books on the Special Branch

Reluctant Judas, Geoff Robertson (Temple Smith, 1976). The life and death of the Special Branch informer, Kenneth Lennon. See also 'Agent Provocateurs' (*Police Review*, 26/4/74, p523).

Report to the Home Secretary from the Commissioner of Police on the actions of police officers concerned with the case of Kenneth Joseph Lennon, HMSO, 31 July 1976. (The Starritt Report).

The Technology of Political Control, Ackroyd, Margolis, Rosenhead and Shallice (Penguin, 1977). See especially pp124-132 for further information about the activities of the Special Branch in industrial disputes and among the Irish community, together with information about the Irish Squad and the Personal Protection Squad. Special Branch surveillance methods are included in Chapter 13, 'Watching and Waiting'.

The Political Police in Britain, Tony Bunyan (Friedmann, 1976; Quartet, 1977). See Chapter 3, 'The Special Branch'; for more information about the Special Branch and the Left (pp134, 142); information-gathering methods (pp135-9); and examples of Special Branch activities connected with industrial disputes (pp143-150).

Scotland Yard, Peter Laurie (Penguin, 1972). See pp197-204 for further details on surveillance, especially of foreigners and Left groups.

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