

State Research

An independent group of investigators collecting and publishing information from public sources on developments in state policy, particularly in the fields of the law, policing, internal security, espionage and the military. It also examines the links between the agencies in these fields and business, the Right and paramilitary organisations.

State Research Bulletin

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The Review of Security and the State

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Back issues

Issues no 1-4 were produced in a duplicated format, but they are in short supply and are currently only available to subscribers. These and Issue No 5 cost 45p (each. p&p). Issues 1-4 included the following Background Papers (which are available separately at 20p each, inc. p&p):

no 1: *The Institute for the Study of Conflict*; no 2: *The Special Branch*; no 3: *Secrecy and Security*: the background to the Official Secrets Acts and their use; no 4: *The Politics of Public Order*.

CONTENTS

News and developments 99-110

The Growth of the Special Branch
Royal Commission on Police Procedure
Security Exercises
Calling in the troops
Undercover Police
Vanishing Vehicles
Police Complaints
Police in Scotland
The Automated Detective
D Notices

Reviews 112-114

Secrecy in America: *The Politics of Lying*, by David Wise.
A Reply to the Gould Report, by The Council for Academic Freedom

Background Paper 115-121

The Defence Sales Organisation

An examination of the history and practice of the export side of Britain's arms industry.

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STATE RESEARCH

BULLETIN
No. 6

THE DEFENCE SALES ORGANISATION — ANTI-TERRORIST
EXERCISES — D NOTICES — POLICE COMPLAINTS BOARD
VANISHING VEHICLES — THE AUTOMATED DETECTIVE

NEWS &
DEVELOPMENTS

THE SPECIAL BRANCH

For the first time the Home Secretary has officially announced the number of officers in the Special Branch thereby confirming that there has been nearly a seven-fold increase in the size of the Special Branch in the past 20 years (*Hansard* 24.5.78). The figures show that the number of Special Branch officers has risen from 200 in the early sixties to 1,259 in England in Wales today.

This figure does not include the Special Branch officers in the eight Scottish police forces estimated to be well over a 100. In the Strathclyde force there are known to be 61 officers, and in the Lothian and

Borders force 21 officers.

Mr Rees gave this information in reply to an adjournment debate on May 24th requested by Mr Robin Cook MP. This was the second annual debate on the Special Branch's accountability and activities, the first being in May 1977 following the arrest of Aubrey, Berry and Campbell and a series of break ins on members of the Agee-Hosenball Defence Committee.

Mr Rees said that there are now 409 Special Branch officers at Scotland Yard, and 850 officers engaged on Special Branch work in the 41 provincial forces in England and Wales. Of these 850, about 300 are employed at ports and airports, and a proportion of these (unstated) are CID officers seconded to the Special Branch.

The figure of 409 officers given for the Special Branch at Scotland Yard represents a drop from 550 in 1975. In part this is because of the recent growth of the Special Branches outside of London and also because the job of watching all the

ports and airports in Britain (with the exception of Heathrow) has now been handed over to the regional Special Branches.

The further implication of these figures is that the size of the Special Branches outside London are much larger than had been thought. It had been estimated, on the basis of previous parliamentary answers, that there were 550 officers in the other police forces in England and Wales whereas there are in fact 850 (see Bulletin No 2).

Subversion and the political police

In the debate Mr Cook said that in the last 12 months there had been many instances of increased Special Branch activity which included three cases where the Special Branch tried to get political information on student activities — at Paisley College of Education, Keele University, and the WEA college at Blackwood in Wales. On the industrial front, workers occupying their factory at Greenwich Reinforcement Steel Services in London, had discovered files which showed that the works manager had been visited by a Special Branch officer from Scotland Yard and given highly inaccurate, and improper, information on two union activists.

The growth in the size of the Special Branch, Mr Cook said, had been paralleled by an expansion in the scope of its activities. This stemmed from the wider brief given to the Special Branch under the heading of 'subversion'.

In 1963, Lord Denning, in his report on the Profumo case, spelt out what was at that time the official definition of those considered 'subversives' (and therefore possible subjects for surveillance). They were people who: 'would contemplate the *overthrow* of government by *unlawful means*' (Cmnd 2152, HMSO, 1963, para. 230, our emphasis).

But in April this year Mr Rees confirmed in the Commons that he agreed with a new definition of subversion given by Lord Harris, the Minister of State at

the Home Office, in 1975. This was that subversion was defined as — and Mr Rees repeated it in answer to a question — 'activities which threaten the safety or wellbeing of the State, and are intended to *undermine* or *overthrow* parliamentary democracy by *political, industrial* or *violent means*' (Hansard, 6.4.78, our emphasis).

The critical distinction between these two definitions, Mr Cook pointed out, was that Lord Denning's definition based on unlawful means was: 'capable of clear, precise and narrow interpretation based on statute and common law', whereas that given by Mr Rees 'is in no way restricted to unlawful activities', and was 'an invitation to the police forces who police this concept of subversion to stick their nose into any form of political or industrial activity'.

Mr Cook said it was quite improper for Mr Rees, by 'executive decision', to create a new class of quasi-crimes such as subversion 'which would not in themselves lead to conviction in any court in the land but render the suspect liable to police surveillance and being placed on police records. That is the road to the Thought Police and the closed society'.

Mr Rees replied that he was personally satisfied with the brief given to the Special Branch, and with the way they discharged their responsibilities. The information they collected 'relates entirely and solely to the proper purposes of protecting the security of the State and public order'. This is precisely the official brief given to the Special Branch (and M15) for the past 100 years, one within which they have kept political and trade union groups under surveillance. This brief, now officially widened by Mr Rees' definition of subversion, places few if any limits on Special Branch activities.

Accountability

Mr Cook placed on record that the regional Special Branches were not accountable to their local police

authorities (comprised two-thirds of local councillors and one-third of local magistrates). Only one Chief Constable's annual report (Durham), out of 36 examined in a survey, carried a report on the Special Branch — contrary to the position as stated by Dr Shirley Summer-skill in May 1977 (Bulletin No 2).

Mr Cook said it was quite unsatisfactory to run a system on 'the basis of the judgement and integrity of the man at the top' with the Home Secretary being the only person ever, on rare occasions, to be answerable to a democratic institution. The dilemma had been summed up by Mr Rees himself, Mr Cook continued, when he told the Commons in March that: 'The Special Branch collects information on those who I think cause problems for the State' (Hansard, 2.3.78). To run a system on the basis of 'one man at the top keeping control is not a safe or democratic system' Mr Cook concluded.

Mr Rees turned down Mr Cook's call for an inquiry into the Special Branch. He said: 'The Special Branch is not attacking democracy; it is playing its part in defending it'. This comment certainly raises questions about Mr Rees' concept of democracy.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON CRIMINAL PROCEDURE

Royal Commissions can often serve as a delaying tactic, frustrating the possibility of reform for the period that they are sitting. Such doubts have been raised recently about the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, which met for the first time in February.

The Commission has a wide remit and one that is likely to set the terms of debate and legislation in this field for some years to come. The terms of reference cover two central areas: all the circumstances surrounding the police investigation of a criminal offence, and the prosecution system.

These include *police powers* of

stopping and searching persons or vehicles, powers of entry and search, powers to seize property, powers of arrest and of detention for questioning, the administration of the caution, taking of statements and confessions, the possibility of tape-recording of questioning, the right of silence, access to legal advice, photographing, fingerprinting, medical examination procedure, the particular rights of juveniles, identification procedures, police bail and the means of enforcement of both police powers and suspects' rights.

On the *prosecution system*, the terms of reference include: the criteria for prosecution, the decision to prosecute, how the case is prosecuted and who should be responsible for it, the role and function of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Attorney General, prosecuting solicitor's departments, other prosecuting bodies, the right of private prosecution and trial preparation (including mutual disclosure of evidence and proposed lines of argument).

The Commission, which is chaired by Sir Cyril Philips, Principal of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, includes among its members Jack Jones, Lord Justice Eveleigh, Dianne Hayter, Secretary of the Fabian Society, Sir Douglas Osmond, Chief Constable of Hampshire, and Sir Arthur Peterson of the Home Office.

Research in police stations

One virtue of such a Commission is that it provides a rare opportunity and incentive for proper research into police stations. It will therefore be interesting to see how determined the Commission will be in attempting to mount Britain's first major monitoring of police interrogation techniques. A pilot study is planned for the summer in the Metropolitan and Greater Manchester police areas and the police cannot afford to oppose these plans outright. Nevertheless, research on interrogation which is carried out by a third person' and which ignores the vital

earlier exchanges and interactions between the police and the 'suspect' is open to very serious methodological criticism.

This Royal Commission faces heavy police and right-wing pressures to recommend reductions in suspects' rights such as the abolition of the caution. There is also a danger that public understanding of the importance of such rights may be eroded by a renewed 'law and order' campaign. By the time the Commission reports there will have been one General Election, possibly two. A weak-willed or equivocal report might well deliver, possibly into Mrs Thatcher's hands, the sort of respectable justification for further erosion of rights that would make Sir Robert Mark's views on the legal system appear acceptably broad-minded and even liberal.

Fuller details are available from the Secretary of the Royal Commission, 8 Cleveland Row, London SW1A 1DH (01-930 0334/8). The Commission has asked for written evidence to be submitted, if possible, by 1 September 1978. All the major groups active in the field, like NCCL and Release, are preparing detailed evidence but there is a need for anyone with any personal experience or views on any of these topics to submit evidence on their own behalf or through their local organisations. Any readers who think that they might be able to do this and would like advice in preparing it, should contact the NCCL, 186 King's Cross Road, London WC1 (01-278 4575).

SECURITY EXERCISES

Two 'anti-terrorist' exercises were held in Scotland in April. On April 14 a joint police, army and RAF exercise was carried out at Edinburgh Airport amidst a tight clamp on security, so tight that even British Airports Authority staff were kept in ignorance of what was happening.

Special Air Services troops armed with automatic weapons flew into the old

terminal (now only used for air freight) aboard a RAC Hercules transport aircraft in an 'Entebbe-style' raid, while another RAF aircraft equipped with night search stroboscopic lights circled the airport.

While it is known that the SAS are familiarising themselves with the layouts of British airports in the event of future hijackings, the only official admission of the exercise was a brief statement from Lothian and Borders Police which said "An exercise to test certain aspects of the major incident contingency plan of the Lothian and Borders Police is now being held. The exercise will not interfere with the normal operations of the airport and inconvenience cause to the general public will be minimal". The incident appeared to arouse little media interest with the only report appearing in *The Scotsman*.

More publicity was given on April 17, to a joint-service anti-terrorist operation aboard a gas platform in the North Sea with photographs appearing in the *Guardian*, the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*, and a lengthy article (seemingly from a press statement) appearing in the *Glasgow Herald*. As *Time Out* pointed out (April 28th) all the papers carefully avoided saying when the exercise took place, which is understandable, as the photo was actually taken in 1975'. A spokesperson for the Ministry of Defence (MOD) said that it was 'highly unlikely' that an exercise had taken place that weekend. Such exercises were routine and occurred several times each year but the Ministry did not give the exact dates.

According to the MOD the most plausible threat to oil and gas installations would come from a group who infiltrated a platform crew as cooks or unskilled workers and then lay dormant until the planned moment of surprise attack. The Ministry would then launch one of their secret contingency plans.

One of these involves the flying out by helicopter of Royal Marines from the

45 Commando Group from their HMS Condor base at Arbroath, who are specially trained for this work. The actual reaction time is classified but was quoted by the *Glasgow Herald* as being pretty smart' and the operation is regularly rehearsed by the army, RAF, Navy together with the police. The army would, say the MOD, act under the general direction of the local chief officer of police although firing orders would remain with the military commander. 'Immediately any firing ended and the threat was eliminated, the situation would immediately revert to the civilians. Interrogation, for example, would be handled by the police.'

It has also been reported in *The Oilman*, a trade paper, that in addition to police-military contingency planning, the oil companies with interests in the North Sea are drawing up plans to combat terrorism with MI5, the Security Service (13.5.78). These plans are thought to relate to sabotage by members of the oil rig crews, and the possibility that crews could be held to ransom.

CALLING IN THE TROOPS

It is now known that the political decision to use the 1964 Emergency Powers Act, rather than the 1920 Act, to authorise the use of troops in the firemen's strike was taken by Mr Rees, the Home Secretary, after consultation with some senior Cabinet colleagues. Once this decision had been taken at the political level, the actual orders to the troops were issued by the Defence Council (of the Ministry of Defence) under S. 2. of the 1964 Act. This was the first time this Act had been used in a national, as distinct from a local, strike and enabled Britain's 32,000 firemen to be replaced by 21,000 soldiers (see Bulletin No 4).

The reluctance of the Labour government to use the 1920 Emergency Powers Act in major industrial disputes stemmed from its extensive use by the Heath government.

Since the Act was passed in 1920 there have only been eleven proclamations of a state of emergency, and give of these were issued under Mr Heath in just three years.

The 1920 Act involves following a strict statutory procedure for the use of troops in strikes. The government has to formally declare that a state of emergency exists, which has to receive the positive assent of parliament in the first instance. Regulations drawn up for the emergency have to be passed by parliament, and renewed by them every months.

The decision to use the 1964 Act instead, which few people realised was happening, required a high level decision to use an Act that had not been passed to deal with this kind of situation. When the Act was introduced to parliament by the Conservative Home Secretary, Mr Henry Brooke, it was on the grounds that while government had powers to use troops in industrial disputes under the 1920 Act it did not have them for other contingencies — such as floods, severe winters or bad harvests. On this basis the Act was passed with little debate, and without a vote being taken.

Contradictions for Army Regulations

In line with the 1964 Act the directives laid down in the Queen's Regulations for the Army state that the Defence Council can authorise the temporary employment of troops when there is no proclamation (under the 1920 Act) and 'the emergency is limited and local'. (Reg.J11.004b) The use of troops in the firemen's strike was clearly national and extensive. The Ministry of Defence has stated that it now intends to change the Regulations so as to remove this contradiction and thereby allow the use of troops in national strikes (*Guardian*, 20.3.78). Such a change will have to be agreed by the Defence Council, which has yet to meet to consider the question.

The combination of the political decision by Mr Rees and his Cabinet

to use the 1964 Act — which allows for no parliamentary accountability — and the consequent decision by the MOD to recommend that the Defence Council — over which there is also no parliamentary control — change the Regulations, will place formidable powers in the hands of future governments.

1964 Act used at West Drayton

The 1964 Act has been used on four occasions in 'limited' and 'local' situations to authorise the use of troops. Three were recorded in Bulletin No 5: the 1970 dustmens strike in Tower Hamlets, London; the 1973 firemens strike in Glasgow, and the 1975 dustmens strike, also in Glasgow. The fourth was on October 13th, 1977, just one month before the threatened firemens strike, when S. 2. of the 1964 Act was used to authorise RAF fuel tankers to break picket lines of air traffic control assistants (members of the Civil and Public Services Association) at West Drayton Air Traffic Control Centre.

Seven weeks after the strike started 12 RAF tankers (escorted by 60 police officers) delivered fuel for a generator which supplied power to *both* the civilian air traffic control centre and to a computer used by the RAF at West Drayton. The fuel was normally delivered by Esso but their tanker drivers, members of the Transport and General Workers' Union, refused to cross the picket lines. At the time Mr Ken Thomas, General Secretary of the CPSA, strongly disputed the suggestion that 'a civilian computer is an essential part of the defence of this country' (*Times*, 14.10.77). He added:

'I accuse the Ministry of Defence of strike-breaking. There has been a military intervention in a purely industrial dispute'.

Such examples show that intervention in industrial disputes is increasingly being accepted as a normal military practice, both by the MOD and the Government.

UNDERCOVER POLICE INFILTRATE UNION

Two policemen in plain clothes, using student union cards with false names, gained access over a period of several weeks to the City of London's Polytechnic's premises at Fairholt House, Whitechapel High Street (where the Student Union offices are based) before being exposed. Three separate sources informed Student Union officers that the policemen had intended to work undercover for a period of eighteen months — a similar operation, over a similar period, having just finished at Queen Mary College, London.

The policemen obtained the student union cards from the Union's buildings administrator, whose responsibilities included the issuing of the cards. One of the officers who was recognised by one student to be a policeman was asked not to mention it to anyone as they were working undercover.

They were noticed on the premises on three different occasions over a two week period, including hanging around the bar and even acting as bouncers at a union election count on March 13th. When their presence was discovered by members of the union the buildings administrator was sacked, and the two undercover policemen have not been seen since. Afterwards they were recognised as members of the local Bethnal Green police force.

Neither the Students Union or the Polytechnic's administration were officially approached by the police. Paul Whittaker, Vice-President of the City of London Polytechnic Student Union, said:

'We are now keeping a watchful eye for any other infiltrators. We think they were interested in information on students. There are a number of Iranian students here, for example'.

VANISHING VEHICLES

Information collected by one government department for a specific purpose, and used by another department or agency for a different purpose, has been causing disquiet for some time to many people concerned with the privacy of the individual and abuses in the use of state information. The widespread introduction of computers at national and local level has strengthened these fears.

However, there are indications that this practice of transferring information can cause difficulties for the departments or agencies themselves. One such instance was reported in *Police*, the magazine of the Police Federation, in March this year.

Police information about drivers and vehicle owners, which is now stored on the Police National Computer (PNC), originates from data collected by the Department of Environment (DOE). The DOE's information is stored on computer at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre (DVLC) at Swansea, and new information is transferred daily to the PNC at Hendon.

On the grounds of cost, lack of space and because the information is only of limited use to the DOE, the DVLC decided to destroy the file on any vehicle which is not taxed for a period of 12 months. The police have since found that some enquiries about vehicles involved in crime, accidents or considered 'suspicious' are receiving the answer from the PNC that 'no such vehicle exists'. Clearly, not everyone taxes their car!

For the police, this means that there is no starting point for tracing a vehicle or its owner, as the former precomputerised system no longer operates. The Police Federation proposed to the Home Secretary that the needs of the police could be met if the names and addresses of the last registered owners of vehicles were put on the PNC before the DVLC files were destroyed.

Rees has replied that the Assistant Chief Police Officers Committee

reluctantly agreed to the destruction of the DVLC files, and that there are no resources available anyway for putting this information on to the PNC.

POLICE COMPLAINTS

The first annual report of the Police Complaints Board published in May states that it had received fewer than a quarter of the number of complaints cases it had been led to expect. (*Report of the Police Complaints Board*, HMSO, May, 50p).

The Board was set up under the 1976 Police Act which sought to introduce an independent element into dealing with complaints against the police. Its report covers the period June 1, 1977 to the end of that year. Other evidence, however, suggests that the number of complaints against the police in England and Wales rose during 1977; so too did the number of complaints withdrawn before being investigated.

The report also reveals that during that period, the number of complaints substantiated (i.e. upheld as valid after investigation) actually fell.

In the seven months covered by the report, a total of 1,997 complaints cases were referred to the Board. The Board completed action on 1,379 of these cases by the end of the year, which covered 2,249 'matters of complaint' (a 'complaints case' often contains a number of individual 'matters of complaint' from one or more complainants). The report states that the number of cases being forwarded to them from local police forces was 'much lower than might have been expected'. Moreover, they 'had been led to expect about 8,500 cases in a period of seven months'.

The Board has no control over the rate of flow of cases reaching it, but the information made available to them gave no explanation for the low number of cases. The Board suggests that perhaps 'the total number of complaints was less than it had been expected', or 'that a

higher proportion were withdrawn' (para a 27).

The Board's role

The brief of the 20-member Board, chaired by Lord Plowden, is to confirm or reject the conclusions reached *after* an investigation by local police forces of complaints laid against their officers by the public (dealing only with those made against officers up to the rank of superintendent).

Complaints against the police are still dealt with under the procedure laid down in S. 49 of the 1964 Police Act, whereby the local police investigate a complaint (unless they think disciplinary or criminal charges may be involved when an officer from an outside force is brought in). The responsibility for dealing with complaints lies with the Deputy Chief Constable of each police force, who receives a report of the investigation on all complaints made. If they consider a criminal offence may be involved, a report must be sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), who decides whether or not to prosecute.

Only after this process under the 1964 Act has been completed does the Police Complaints Board become involved. The Board has to be sent copies of all reports on complaints including the original complaint, the investigating officer's report and the reasons for the decision taken by the Deputy Chief Constable. Although cases originally submitted to the DPP are also sent to the Board, a decision by the DPP not to prosecute is taken in practice to mean that no other action should be taken.

Although, on the face of it, the Board has quite wide powers — to order further local investigations or direct that a case be sent to the DPP, for example — its report indicates that these have been little used.

Of the 2,249 matters of complaint dealt with, the majority (2,086) were submitted under S. 2(1) of the 1976 Act. In all but one of these 2,086 complaints,

the decisions reached by the local force was affirmed by the Board. In 12 of these cases, disciplinary charges had been preferred and the Board recommended that a similar charge should be brought in one other case (which the local force agreed to).

In respect of its other powers, the Board made six requests for further information (as distinct from further investigation); made no requests for a case to be referred to the DPP; gave no direction that disciplinary charges be heard by a tribunal (this occurs when there is a failure to agree between the Board and the local force).

Big rise in complaints

A different picture emerges from the limited information already available on complaints against the police in 1977 (the full figures have not been published yet).

In answer to a parliamentary question Dr Shirley Summerskill, Under Secretary of State at the Home Office, said that complaints from the public in London had led to 11,978 Metropolitan police officers being subject to investigations completed in 1977. In overall terms this represents 1 in 2 of the 22,000-strong force (*Hansard* 1.3.78).

Over the year, 8,697 complaints cases were made by 5,394 members of the public. This represents an increase of 14 per cent over the previous year, though only 4 per cent were upheld — exactly the same as in 1976 (*Sunday Telegraph*, 2.4.78).

The findings of a survey of the new complaints system funded by the Nuffield Foundation, confirmed this trend (*Sunday Times*, 23.4.78). The survey covered 15 out of the 43 police forces in England and Wales. It showed that 1) cases were now taking longer to process, 2) more complaints were being withdrawn, 3) 'most serious of all perhaps, fewer complaints were actually being substantiated'.

The number of complaints withdrawn

shows some dramatic increases. In Dyfed-Powys force in Wales, the proportion rose from 30 to 53% of the total made; Dorset (19 to 34%); West Yorkshire (8 to 25%); and Merseyside (20 to 30%). The percentage of complaints upheld, after investigation by the local police, fell in 13 of the 15 forces covered (the other two remaining constant). In Humberside, the number upheld fell from 14% (1976) to 4% (1977); Bedfordshire 20% (1976) to 9% (1977) and Essex 6% (1976) to 3% (1977).

The fact that more complaints are being withdrawn is due to two factors. Under the new procedure laid down in a Home Office circular, all complaints now have to be formally recorded. Previously this did not happen until the person had been seen by a senior officer and often persuaded not to proceed (sometimes with the assurance that the matter would be dealt with without going through the formal procedure).

In addition, all complaints related to one incident were recorded as a single complaint whereas each is now recorded separately. An article on the new procedure in *Police*, the magazine of the Police Federation, commented that it would 'leave others to calculate the cost of the whole silly business to the rate and tax payers' (*Police*, April 1978). Conversely, it is possible to argue that for the first time — when the full figures expected in July, are published — the true level of complaints about police behaviour will be known.

The second factor concerns the Home Office leaflet *Police and Public — Complaints Against the Police*, which is given to complainants after the complaint has been recorded. This positively discourages people from pursuing their complaints. It says at the end: 'A false and malicious complaint against a police officer may lead to be bringing legal proceedings for defamation'. This has added force because Mr Rees, the Home Secretary, by using his discretionary powers, re-interpreted the intent of a section of the 1964 Police Act to allow

the Police Federation to use its funds to sue complainants (see *State Research Bulletin No. 1*).

A rubber-stamp?

Prior to the creation of the Board, it was argued that the public did not have any confidence in a system where the police investigated complaints against themselves.

The purpose of setting up the Board, against strong police opposition, was to introduce an independent element into the process. The higher level of complaints in 1977 suggested by current evidence may reflect not just the publicity surrounding the new body — as Sir Robert Mark argued would happen — but an initial confidence by the public in the new complaints mechanism. This confidence may, however, be found in the long-run to be misplaced.

The crux of the matter is that on the ground the relationship between the police and public remains the same. The recording of complaints, their investigation, and the decision about what action to take still lies in the hands of the local police. It is possible that more serious cases are taking longer to reach the Board, but, at the moment, the Board, far from representing an 'independent' element, is simply rubber-stamping the decisions made by the police at local level.

POLICE IN SCOTLAND

Last autumn, the government shelved proposals to introduce a police complaints system similar to that covering England and Wales in Scotland. In 1976, they introduced a Police (Scotland) Bill which was intended to introduce a Police Complaints Panel. This did not proceed beyond its first reading. The decision to shelve the Bill is thought in part to be due to opposition by the police who were already simmering over pay and conditions (although the same could be said of the forces in England and Wales).

In Scotland therefore, the previous system is still in force. When criminal conduct is alleged, cases are referred to the Procurator Fiscal to decide whether or not to proceed. The figures for Scotland, given in the Nuffield Foundation survey, provide an interesting contrast to the picture emerging in England and Wales. The number of complaints has risen only 1.2% in 1977 (compared to 1976), and the number of cases withdrawn had dropped slightly (from 30 to 28%).

In an article comparing the two systems, the *Scottish Legal Action Group Bulletin* commented that a change to the new English system 'might well be a retrograde step in purporting to do something but leaving things fundamentally the same.'

THE AUTOMATED DETECTIVE

According to the *Police Review* (21.4.78), 'unchecked bunkum' is being fed into a police intelligence computer serving the Thames Valley police force. The wife of a local policeman heard another woman remark in the local shop that 'X fancies little boys'. The officer noted this in the occurrence book at his station; it was selected by the collator and fed into the computer memory. The information was not true.

The computer, a £500,000 Honeywell 6025 system, was installed in 1975 at the Thames Valley Police HQ in Kidlington, Oxfordshire, and recently became operational. It is part of a project funded by the Home Office which began in 1972 when Slough police station was linked by terminal to a London computer.

At the time, *Police Review* explained that

'The automated detective will be making logical deductions by piecing together scraps of information gathered over months of painstaking investigation. Such a fact as a suspect having lunch with a man with no

criminal record may lead to the build-up of a picture that no detective could hope to piece together'.

The Thames Valley experiment, an extension of this, links police stations in the area to the Kidlington computer by visual display units which give direct access.

The aim of the project is to computerise the police notebook by storing scraps of information picked up by the police in the course of everyday work. It is based on the 'collator', the officer in every large station throughout the country who is responsible for recording information and distributing it among the different police units.

The information is not related to a particular investigation, and may often refer to people without any criminal record. The collator tries to see links between different pieces of information and to establish patterns which can assist pre-emptive policing.

The use of the computer extends this system in several ways. Firstly, it allows a much greater volume of information to be stored and obtained much faster than with manual files. Secondly, it has the capacity to link large numbers of apparently disparate details. The Los Angeles Police Department use a computer to correlate the components of various crimes to isolate those appearing to have been committed by the same person, and to identify possible suspects. Thirdly, it can make information available to specialist squads such as the Special Branch, the Anti-Terrorist Squad and the CID.

The danger of computerising the collator system is that information which would previously have been discarded because it could not be handled manually can not be kept in store. Some collators probably do log gossip of the kind discovered at Thames Valley, but the computer will further encourage this. The more information it is fed, the more links it will establish, thus rationalising large-scale police intelligence-gathering.

Both *Police Review* and the National

Council for Civil Liberties are concerned that unverified information about individuals is being stored on a police computer. *Police Review* (21.4.78) said that two American experts invited by the Home Office to admire the Thames Valley experiment were horrified, and explained that 'such a system would be totally unacceptable in the USA'. *Police Review* is also worried that people would come to mistrust local police if they learnt that casual conversation could end up in a computer file.

The NCCL has pointed out that there are no legal controls or public debates about these sophisticated police systems. The Thames Valley experiment, although funded by the Home Office, is not under its control. In other areas where trials to computerise the collator system are being carried out, the police force shares local government computers and there are fears that their information could be illegally obtained. There is no guarantee that employers checking job applicants with the police will not be given information such as that kept at Thames Valley.

The collators have in effect replaced the station sergeants who, in the image of Dixon of Dock Green, acted as local repositories of gossip and knowledge picked up by the officers on the beat. The post of station sergeants was finally phased out in 1977 ending 150 years of policing practice. When the idea of creating the post of collator was first mooted, there was strong resistance in some forces because it was felt that an officer's contacts, associations, and knowledge were in part a measure of his efficiency, and that standardisation would detract from individual effort.

The outcome of the Thames Valley experiment will not be known for another year. The present collator system has been suggested as the basis for a nationwide police intelligence network by which local information could be fed to regional offices and thence to a national centre. Initially, it may concentrate on drugs, large-scale fraud, terrorism and mobile gangs.

The committee considering this proposal, headed by Leslie Pearce, Chief Inspector of Constabulary, may suggest that this system is tied to the regional crime squads. If the automated detective in Kidlington proves successful, its application to a nationwide intelligence system could be the next step.

D NOTICES

A few weeks ago the Prime Minister's press secretary wrote a confidential letter to newspaper and broadcasting editors advising them of imminent changes in personnel at the top of Britain's security services. Editors were asked not to publish their names or the fact that the changes were to take place. This information is an official secret.

The Downing Street letter is one of several ways in which the government seeks to control information "in the interests of national security". The bulwark of the system is the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee, commonly known as the D notice committee. It was set up in 1912, one year after the first Official Secrets Act was passed. It was intended to warn editors what information might contradict that new law.

Politicians and newspaper editors have claimed that it has frequently been used to cover-up Whitehall inefficiency or politically embarrassing information, and, certainly backed by the sanctions of the all-embracing Official Secrets Acts, it is a formidable weapon both for manipulation and concealment.

During the Second World War the committee was replaced by the official chief press censor, Rear Admiral Sir George Thomson. In 1945, when the committee was reconstituted, he became the Secretary.

During the 1950's and 60's 16 notices were issued and in 1971 these were consolidated into 12 and re-issued in a loose-bound book, which is sent to all national, regional and local, press, radio

and television concerns. They are purely advisory and carry no legal power but editors can be — and occasionally are — threatened with prosecution if they are ignored.

The committee is made up of four representatives from the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the Home Office and the Foreign Office, and eleven from the press and television. It rarely meets and the subjects of the notices, chosen and framed by the MOD, are simply rubber-stamped. Advice to individual journalists and editors is given by the committee secretary. The present secretary is Rear Admiral Kenneth Farnhill, who was formerly Director of Management and Support Intelligence at the MOD.

D notices 1-7 indicate the kind of information about the Armed Forces that is 'always of great interest to a potential enemy'. (*D Notice 1*). These include defence plans, data on weapons, warships and aircraft, etc. Number 7 headed 'Prisoners of War and Evaders', deals with the training of servicemen and security officers to resist interrogation if captured. Number 8 seeks to prevent the identification of civil defence and national emergency sites, such as regional seats of government, oil storage depots, etc.

Radio and radar transmissions are protected under number 9, and number 10 requests secrecy for the personnel and functions of the two main intelligence services M15 and M16. Curiously, it does not cover members of other intelligence outfits, so the naming of Colonel B, the chief prosecution witness in the Aubrey-Berry Campbell Case, did not contravene a D notice (*Guardian* May 5 1978).

Number 11 covers cyphers and communication and number 12, adopted from the Australian D notice committee, asks that the whereabouts of a Russian defector and his wife (Mr. and Mrs. Petrov) be kept secret.

Journalists and book publishers normally claim to have a good relationship with the D notice secretary and his advice is usually accepted. There are exceptions. Julian Friedmann, the publisher, refused

to submit an advance copy of Tony Bunyan's book 'The Political Police in Britain' despite a personal request and a visit to his office by Rear Admiral Farnhill. The former editor of *The Guardian* ignored a D notice in the early sixties by publishing the location of a regional seat of government when CND demonstrated at the site. Neither were prosecuted.

It is instructive to see how the state has used D notices. Time and again the doctrine of "in the interests of national security" appears to have been replaced by "in the interests of internal political expediency."

Official secrets remain secret until their publication is authorised by the responsible senior civil servant or Minister. So the *Daily Express* was able to take and print the first picture of the H-bomb — only because in return Julian Amery, then Air Minister, wanted a glowing story about the RAF's nuclear deterrent capability to counter criticism from the Labour Opposition.

In 1973 the German magazine *Stern* revealed for the first time the head of M16 as Sir John Rennie and the British press, who knew this all along, were able to follow suit. Publication abroad meant that the strictures of D notice 10 covering the intelligence services were automatically inapplicable.

Repeated attempts have been made under D notice 9 to protect the location, function and overseas operations of the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) at Cheltenham. The latest attempt to protect this information, this time using the Act itself, is the prosecution of two *Time Out* journalists and a former corporal in the Signals Regiment. Yet details of the site are published in Whitackers Almanac, the Cheltenham telephone book and the Civil Service handbook and the operations of Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) have been extensively reported, most recently from information in the Royal Signals Corps journal *The Wire*, in *The Leveller*.

SAVAK IN BRITAIN

The last four years have seen disturbing evidence of surveillance of Iranian students in Britain by the Iranian Secret Police SAVAK, (formed in 1957, with approximately 65,000 agents, and responsible directly to the Shah). Initial evidence of these activities emerged in 1974 after Abdul Jahanbin, a first secretary at the London Iranian Consulate, approached Mrs Eli Povey asking her to supply details about activities and discussions involving Iranian students. Mrs Povey, wife of Terry Povey (then on the National Executive of the NUS) has been a British citizen since her marriage in 1972. Aided by Sunday Times reporters, Jahanbin's proposition (which revealed SAVAK's knowledge of the Povey's private life) was taped. (12.5.74).

In 1977 a lecturer at Kent University, Mr Chris Hale, undertook a survey for the Iranian Embassy of Iranian students in Britain. A 'consultancy' contract with the Iranian Embassy had been arranged by an Iranian lecturer at the university. Mr Hale took over the project in the early part of 1977, and a letter to him from the Educational Department of the Embassy (dated 1.7.77) confirmed the arrangements for the survey to go ahead. In October 1977 1,000 colleges and schools throughout the country were circulated with a questionnaire requesting details on the names, ages, sex, previous education, courses being studied and their duration, of Iranian students. From this survey alone information was received on 3,000 students. The case became public in December last year when Mr Hale gave details of the survey to the press. Kent University later stated that the survey was a "private affair" and it was not their policy to participate "in such surveys in any way".

Evidence of SAVAK's European operations came this January at a Press Conference given by the Campaign Against Repression in Iran. Iranian students, while occupying SAVAK's Geneva Headquarters

in 1976, found documents revealing the additional use of bugging and burglary in the surveillance of emigres and students.

Other documents discovered concerned Mr Habib A Dashti, an Educational Counsellor and Hales' contact at the Iranian Embassy. Dashti, to whom at least 25 Polytechnics (Brighton, Leeds, South Bank and Huddersfield among them) had given information on students, had attended a seminar in Geneva for all SAVAK's European agents.

Later in January the NUS, concerned at the number of tutors asked by *their colleges* to supply details on Iranian students, called on all academic authorities to stop supplying names and information about foreign students to their embassies. However, there is no evidence that those authorities have taken any notice.

Close economic links

Neither has there been any indication of action or investigation by the British Government, concerning SAVAK's activities here. The Foreign Office, which cannot have been unaware of approximately 40,000 political prisoners and 2 executions per week in Iran, lamely told the NUS they "... value our close economic links with a country who supplies about a quarter of our oil ..." and a country which was "an important source of stability in the region."

Not surprisingly, the continued supply of information by education authorities to SAVAK has led to Iranian students becoming afraid to speak openly in Britain, or to allow their names to be published, even by sympathetic organisations. In 1976 a former Sussex University student was executed for "unpatriotic activities" on his return to Iran. Last year, two Bradford University students disappeared on holiday there. Amnesty International has stated that, "Iranian students studying abroad are subject to surveillance; Amnesty International is aware of instances in which students have been arrested and imprisoned upon their return to Iran."

SECRECY IN AMERICA

THE POLITICS OF LYING, by David Wise. Vintage Books, New York, 614pp. \$2.25. This is not a new book, and apart from a few references, it deals wholly with events, people and institutions particular to the United States. But it does illuminate both the parallels and the differences between the US and the British situation. Wise deals with anecdotes — stories of episodes in the history of US Government official mendacity. Some are known because they backfired like the initial Eisenhower denials of the U2 incident. Some, at least on this side of the Atlantic, are less well known.

The thesis which the stories are intended to support is that official secrecy is the obverse of the coin of the politics of lying. When a government cites 'national security' and is thus relieved of the necessity to speak the truth to its citizens, then it will lie just as much as is thought necessary to achieve policy objectives. As Wise states it, it is a peculiarly American approach. Only the Americans really believed that their government was answerable to them. Hence the national shock which followed the exposure of the systematic lying by successive administrations over Vietnam, and the domestic sequel, Watergate.

Wise traces the growth of secrecy in American Government starting with the First World War, and quotes a senior military officer as explaining that 'We caught it from the British'. Starting with purely military matters, secrecy is extended to cover all the vital operations of government. In the United States, this has been done by presidential prerogative, and the occasional attacks by congressional committees over excessive secrecy have

been easily turned back by Cabinet members who have been able to evoke reasons of 'national security' to prevent such investigations proceeding too far. Some of these excesses have been exposed by the passage of time and the activities of the press.

Wise shows how the basic secrecy classification — Classified, Secret, Top Secret — have been refined in U.S. Government so that specific code names protect information about different topics from different sources. SIGINT (Signals Intelligence) derived information is the most highly protected, because of its relatively instantaneous nature, its unimpeachable accuracy, and its basic contravention of International agreements. Just to show that anything is possible in the US, he throws in a few code words — themselves secret — which distinguished various classes of secrecy applied to SIGINT-derived information.

Government monopoly of information allows information to be used as a political weapon. The Nixon administration brought this to a peak of perfection in its use of information and disinformation to break its political opponents, but Wise traces the activity back to the days of the Cold War. Information management began then with the aim of achieving general political goals, but later it was used with the aim of destroying particular opponents.

Wise cites numbers of examples of the cynicism with which administration officials, and particularly Presidents Johnson and Nixon, 'declassified' information at the drop of a hat when it suited them, 'national security' notwithstanding. As he notes, sensitive information may be leaked to a journalist to achieve a political end — in which case, the person concerned will have no problems printing it. The investigator who gets the same information unofficially, or from a dissident state employee, runs the risk of prosecution. In Britain, the lobby system on the one hand, and the Official Secrets Act on the other, simply formalise the system.

The book makes clear the political, rather than 'national' usefulness of

'national security' and its attendant secrecy. It is full of splendid examples of cover-ups. For British readers, it should be read in conjunction with recent revelations about our own information gathering, through GCHQ and similar organisations, and our disinformation-releasing — through the Information Research Department of the Foreign Office, for example. It seems that the USA has learnt its lesson from Vietnam and Watergate. The lesson is that the centralised, systematic British approach to secrecy prevents embarrassing revelations of this nature, and is greatly to be preferred from the state's point of view. It is not possible to transfer practices from one country to another quite so simply, but the Americans are going to have a damn good try. PK.

A REPLY TO GOULD

A REPLY TO THE GOULD REPORT. Council for Academic Freedom and Democracy (CAFD), 186 Kings Cross Road, London WC1. 22pp. 25p.

The publication of 'The Attack on Higher Education: Marxist and Radical Penetration', known as the Gould Report, was neatly timed for the start of the 1977/78 academic year. It was designed to make the authorities in higher education sit up and take notice. Published by the Institute for the Study of Conflict (see, State Research Bulletin No 1), it aimed to mobilise the 'moderates' in higher education against the Marxist and radical (both terms are used to embrace progressive and liberal thought as well) influence. The author, Professor Julius Gould of Nottingham University, is supported by Professor Anthony Flew and Lord Vaizey in attempting to show that radicals and Marxists are subverting the educational process by indoctrinating students with anti-capitalist propaganda, both in higher education and in the training of teachers, probation officers, and social workers.

One of the Report's targets is the

Council for Academic Freedom and Democracy (CAFD), described in McCarthyite terms as 'a Front organisation' adopted by radicals 'to cover and protect their own activities'. CAFD, has now produced a useful reply to the Report, 'The Attack on Higher Education — Where does it come from?'. The reply includes articles by Anthony Arblaster and Steven Lukes of CAFD; Hilary Rose, Steven Rose and other academics whose work was specifically singled out by Gould; a brief account of Gould's earlier attack on one of the Open University's more radical courses, 'Schooling and Society'; and some comments on press reaction to the report, as well as a note on the Institute for the Study of Conflict. All contributors to this Reply are unanimous in concluding that the Report's research is 'tendentious and shoddy', that its allegations are based on circumstantial evidence and mis-quotation, and that its intention is to initiate a witch-hunt of left-wing academics. Anthony Arblaster points out that its compilation and publication are political rather than academic acts, based on the recognition that education is a key area of ideological struggle. The effect of naming individuals and publications is not only to isolate them, but to create a *general* climate of intimidation. Those for whom the Gould Report was intended — directors of educational institutions, heads of departments, local authority administrators and members of university Senates — could use its 'findings', by failing to appoint or promote, operating political vetting of courses and withholding funds. Such discrimination when it occurs is all the more difficult to fight because it is usually disguised.

It is clear that the Report's intention was never to engage in substantive debate with Marxist or radical positions: the CAFD reply shows that it is unable to refute the recent Marxist contribution to intellectual life. Indeed, it displays the very faults it seeks to accuse radicals of: bias in selecting evidence, implying guilt by association, distortion or arguments

and the use of terminological shifts by which, for example, all radicals become Marxists, and debates between Marxists are mere smokescreens to hide their common subversive intentions.

Why should the Institute for the Study of Conflict have given its backing to the Gould Report? It seems that this report is part of ISC's strategy to regain the initiative in the battle for the middle ground. Just as 'moderates' in industry are being called upon to take a stand against militant trade unionism, 'moderates' in education are being called upon to reclaim the terrain of ideological struggle. 'It is an appeal to vigilance, backed by black lists and ominous warnings, of the kind favoured by Lord Chalfont and the National Association for Freedom', comments Steven Lukes. Anthony Arblaster makes a sober assessment of its effect: "... an attempt is being made to create a climate in which it becomes ever more difficult and risky to put forward a dissenting or radical viewpoint... we are facing a new and serious threat to freedom and diversity in education — not from 'Radicals', but from the witch-hunters of the Right." KM.

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS RECEIVED

This listing does not preclude subsequent publication of reviews.

Armies and Politics, by Jack Woddis. Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1977. 309pp. Cloth £6.

The Iron Fist and the Velvet Glove: an analysis of the U.S. police. Centre for Research on Criminal Justice (Berkeley, USA)/Pluto Press, London, 1977 (2nd edition. 232pp. Paper £2.50.

Berufsverbote Condemned: preliminary report of the Third Russell Tribunal on Human Rights in West Germany. Spokesman, Nottingham, 1978. 16pp. Pamphlet 30p.

Burgess and Maclean: a new look at the Foreign Office spies, by John Fisher. Hale, London, 1977. 256pp. Cloth £5.25.

A History of the Police in England and Wales, by T.A. Critchley. New edition with Foreword by Sir Robert Mark. Constable, London, 1978. 360pp. Cloth £5.50.

The War and Peace Book, by David Noble, written under the auspices of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, London, 1977. 96pp. Paper £1.25.

The Foreign Policy Process in Britain, by William Wallace. The Royal Institute of International Affairs/Allen and Unwin, London, 1977. 320pp. Paper £3.95.

The Local State: management of cities and people, by Cynthia Cockburn. Pluto Press, London 1977. 207pp. Paper £2.95.

Margaret Thatcher: a Tory and her Party, by Patrick Cosgrave. Hutchinson, London, 1978. 224pp. Cloth £5.50.

'Human Rights' and American Foreign Policy, by Noam Chomsky. Spokesman, Nottingham, 1978. 90pp. Paper £1.25.

Power and the State, edited by Gary Littlejohn, Barry Smart, John Wakeford, and Nira Yuval-Davis. Croom Helm, London, 1978. 314pp. Paper £4.50.

Plutonium and Liberty: some possible consequences of nuclear reprocessing for an open society, a Report by JUSTICE (British Section of the International Commission of Jurists), London, 1978. 22pp. Pamphlet 75p.

The Growth of Crime: the international experience, by Sir Leon Radzinowicz and Joan King. Hamish Hamilton, London, 1977. 342pp. Cloth £6.95.

Hazards of Nuclear Power, by Alan Roberts and Zhores Medvedev. Spokesman, Nottingham, 1977. 73pp. Paper 95p.

BACKGROUND PAPER

'I take no pleasure in sending large arms supplies to less developed countries. No sane person would.' (Dr John Gilbert, Minister of State for Defence, in an interview with the Campaign Against the Arms Trade, June 30, 1977).

On June 19, 1978, as the five-week UN special Session on Disarmament draws to a close, the Defence Sales Organisation (DSO) of the Ministry of Defence opens, at Aldershot, its second major sales exhibition of Army equipment aimed at boosting British arms exports. This Background Paper looks at the DSO and this country's position in the international arms trade.

About ¾ of the current global arms trade, worth 10,000m dollars annually, is with the so-called 'developing countries' (75 'developing countries' imported some type of military equipment in 1976). As these countries can produce few arms themselves, arms export from countries like Britain must have been centrally important in causing the 133 wars (almost all in the Third World) which took place between 1945 and 1976.

Britain is the fourth largest arms exporting country in the world (see Note 1), ranking slightly below France, and a long way behind the USSR and the biggest dealer of all, the USA. More than £1,000m worth of arms will leave Britain this year, 60% of them going to Iran and Saudi Arabia. Iran (see Note 2) is by far Britain's biggest single arms customer, having already bought over 1,000 tanks (more than there are in service with the British Army) and with another 1200 of the latest Shir Iran battle tanks (a variation of the Chieftain tank) on order.

The Aldershot arms exhibition

The DSO is a section of the Ministry of

THE DEFENCE SALES ORGANISATION

Defence which helps Britain's private arms manufacturers sell abroad and also markets overseas arms made by the state-owned Royal Ordnance Factories. Since it was set up in 1966, it has been periodically criticised by people across the political spectrum opposed to government involvement in the 'death trade'. The first British Army Equipment Exhibition (BAEE), in 1976, became a focus for groups opposed to both the growing dependence of Britain's economy on overseas arms deals and the use of public funds to support repressive regimes abroad by selling them military supplies.

The 1976 BAEE was a showplace for all Britain's important military equipment, from tanks to CS gas, with up to 400 top military officers from 58 countries viewing the products of 125 British firms. This year 200 companies will be taking part. The BAEEs are held on alternate years to the similar Royal Navy Equipment Exhibitions (RNEE) at Greenwich, which started in 1971. The 1977 RNEE attracted less public hostility than the 1976 Army exhibition, but was in fact larger than the BAEE, with 200 firms taking part. These exhibitions are not retail counters but shop windows, where potential customers can view products and initiate discussions on purchase which are followed up in the subsequent months.

The customers come from all round the world, as Britain will sell arms to virtually any non-Warsaw Pact country, apart from South Africa and Chile, although it is believed that British arms do reach these two countries by a more circuitous route. Arms exports from Britain are controlled by the various Whitehall Ministries involved, but government policy under both Labour and Tories has been to be as 'businesslike' as possible.

This means allowing trade with any country which is not an actual or potential

enemy (this supposedly rules out all Warsaw Pact countries, but not China), providing that country is not the subject of a mandatory arms embargo by the UN (only South Africa currently) and providing also that there is not a strong movement inside the Labour Party and the trade unions to apply restrictive sanctions (as with Chile). The sanctions against South Africa and Chile, however, apply only to new contracts and do not affect spare parts negotiated for previous deals.

Britain makes strenuous efforts to export arms for a number of reasons. Firstly, Britain has a large, old-established arms industry which produces a large proportion of the British armed forces' equipment. If an export market for this same equipment can be developed, then production runs will be lengthened, thereby reducing unit costs. The export of arms therefore helps Britain's own armed forces. Secondly, arms exports help the balance of payments and probably create jobs, both important political considerations for any government.

Thirdly, arms exports can provide military support for countries important to the economic and political interests of the West. Iran (Note 2) is the classic example of this, as it is not only a major oil producer, but it also borders on the USSR and is therefore a physical buttress for the West. An arms deal between two countries also usually binds those countries together for a period of years as modern equipment needs constant servicing and an assured flow of spare parts.

Arms: a major industry

In Britain, about 600,000 people are employed, directly or indirectly, by approximately 8,000 private companies on the production of arms and related equipment worth about £3,700m last year (nearly a third of which is exported). In addition, 22,500 people are directly employed by the state in arms production in the 13 Royal Ordnance Factories

(ROFs) whose sales in 1976 were £211m, roughly half of which went overseas (ROFs manufacture armoured vehicles, small arms and munitions designed and developed by MOD research and development establishments).

One of the functions of the DSO is to sell overseas as many ROF products as possible. But its main role is assisting the large private British arms industry. It says in its publicity leaflets:

"(The DSO) can usually help the (overseas) customer to identify his requirements, operationally as well as technically, and advise on matters such as training, maintenance, and spares and equipment deliveries. In more general ways, through exhibitions, presentations, demonstrations, equipment catalogues and films the DSO . . . helps the customer to become aware of the vast range of equipment which is available in Britain. By maintaining a close liaison with industry . . . Defence Sales can give both Marketing and Sales advice. They give support to British manufacturers in Firm-to-Government sales."

The morality of selling arms to countries who clearly use them to kill people is not the political hot potato it used to be. Until the 1930s arms dealers were much hated and attacked by a wide cross-section of the public and politicians, especially the arms profiteers who made millions out of the carnage of the First World War. But after 1945, and most noticeably since the setting up of the DSO in 1966, opposition has become comparatively muted. This is partly because the state, having taken over from the pre-war private dealers, has made arms production appear synonymous with the 'national interest', particularly in providing employment. They also always call arms 'defence equipment'.

The three men (Note 3) who have headed the DSO have all shared a common attitude to their moral responsibilities, perhaps best expressed by the present

Head of Defence Sales, Ronald Ellis: 'I have no scruples about selling arms to any country with which the government says I can deal . . . I lose no sleep whatever on the moral issue. The morality lies with the user.' (*Daily Express*, August 30, 1977)

Individual members of government sometimes indicate that arms trading is not to their liking, but the collective policy of the present government (like its predecessors of both parties) is to encourage selective arms exporting as it assists the economic interests of Britain (and the West). The government does very occasionally show some concern, however, when exported British arms are clearly being used by a repressive regime to maintain itself in control of the country, rather than to resist external aggression.

British arms trade: 1945-1965

Until 1939 the international arms trade was largely in the hands of private dealers, but the vast expansion of the industry under state control during World War Two enabled the governments of all arms-producing countries to take central roles in the industry which continue today.

The period 1945-55 has been called 'the golden age' of British arms exporting, with the markets in the Third World for both jet aircraft and naval vessels dominated by the British. But in the decade after 1955 Britain's position in the league of arms exporters slumped dramatically as the USA, USSR and France began exporting large quantities of arms.

From 1945-65 there was no single government organisation in Britain responsible for supervising arms exports. The three armed services each had separate sales organisations, with the Admiralty and the Air Ministry directly controlling their organisations. The Army's sales were handled by the Munitions Sales Branch (MSB) of the Ministry of Supply, which also tried to co-ordinate to a limited extent the activities of the three organisations. The MSB sold the products of

the state Royal Ordnance Factories and also much privately manufactured equipment; 80-90% of UK munitions exports were handled by the MSB in the mid-1950's

The MSB had a staff of around 110 by the late 1950s. Selling of arms was conducted on a government-to-government basis, with the MSB contacting other governments either through those governments' embassies in London (the commonest method) or by British Military Attaches in British embassies abroad making contact there. But these Attaches had other functions as well, and were seldom trained in the niceties of selling tanks and planes, and the export of British arms continued to decline.

This caused so much concern by 1958 that the Parliamentary Select Committee on Estimates undertook an inquiry into them. This produced the first clear statement by any British government of why they should sell and assist private arms manufacturers to sell military equipment. The Tory Minister of Supply told their committee:

'First, the provision of British service equipment to Commonwealth and allied Governments is of direct military advantage through the benefits that follow standardisation of equipment between forces that may have to fight side by side. Second, overseas sales often help to recover the cost of past research and development and, by spreading overhead charges, to reduce the cost of production to HM Government. Third, the Ministry of Supply possesses in the Royal Ordnance Factories an important national asset for the production of arms. These have to be maintained in the interest of defence, and overseas orders help to ensure that fuller use is made of them than would otherwise be possible. Fourth, overseas sales often provide outlets for equipment which has been rendered surplus by changes in the UK defence programme. Fifth, the supply of arms to overseas Governments may help to strengthen political as well as military

ties. Finally, the sale of arms brings into the country considerable earnings of foreign currency.' (Second Report from the Select Committee on Estimates, 1958-9)

The potential role of arms exports in the economy was therefore clearly understood by the government in the late 1950s, even if this potential was not realisable at the time. The first change in the arms selling machinery after 1958 came in 1964, when the Ministry of Defence was created to unify the administration of the three armed forces (see, 'Central Organisation for Defence', Cmnd 2097, HMSO, 1964). The new offices of Army Sales and Navy Sales were created in the MOD, while aircraft and guided weapons came under the Exports and International Relations division of the Ministry of Aviation, later the Ministry of Technology. But again, this was only a superficial change.

The creation of the DSO

When Labour replaced the Tories in government in 1964 they were faced with an arms industry in crisis, a crisis caused by Britain's general inability to pay for the rising costs of the technological arms race and by the specific pressures of falling exports, decreasing production runs and a declining research and development effort.

Labour decided to tackle this problem by appointing Sir Donald Stokes on July 14, 1965, to advise 'on the promotion of exports of defence equipment, and on any changes of organisation that may be necessary for this purpose.' (*Hansard*, July 21, 1965). Stokes, then Managing Director and Deputy Chairman of British Leyland (makers of military vehicles) was initially appointed for three months and was to report to Defence Secretary, Denis Healey, and Minister of Aviation, Roy Jenkins.

The day before Stokes' appointment the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, had announced in Parliament that the govern-

ment was going to appoint an arms super salesman similar to the one appointed in 1961 by the Americans to run their new government arms agency, International Logistics Negotiations (ILN).

During the 1950s intense resentment developed in military circles in Britain over the high-pressure selling techniques used by the Americans. In the early 1960s, the ILN became the symbol of American arms-exporting success, and the Labour government clearly hoped that copying the American sales organisation would go some way to rebuilding the arms industry as an export-earning, job-creating activity and not merely a by-product of the military machine.

Stokes' report was never published, but Healey reported that it recommended setting up a "closely-knit organisation within the MOD and the Ministry of Aviation to handle arms sales and to help British firms to secure overseas defence orders, under the centralised control of a Head of Defence Sales. He will be a man of high calibre with direct access to Ministers and a suitable supporting staff both at home and overseas." (*Hansard*, January 25th, 1966). The Head of Defence Sales was to be responsible jointly to Healey and Jenkins for all the arms sales work in their Departments.

Healey defended the setting up of this official arms-dealing department by saying: 'This is an international market which is worth about £1,000m a year, and British industry has the same right to a share of that market as the industry of any other country' (*ibid*). Labour at this time also had a Minister of Disarmament; Healey explained this with: 'While the Government attach the highest importance to making progress in the field of arms control and disarmament, we must also take what practical steps we can to ensure that this country does not fail to secure its rightful share of this valuable commercial market.' (*ibid*).

On May 11, 1966, Healey told the House of Commons that the Head of Defence Sales was to be Raymond Brown, co-founder and Managing Director of the

Racal group of companies, which specialise in selling electronic equipment to the military. Healey's announcement caused uproar amongst Labour MPs, with many people saying that Brown would be an official 'merchant of death'.

Brown was (and is) a forceful tycoon, and it was his aggressive and abrasive personality rather than structural changes which gave the DSO its early impetus. He spent much of his three-year term of office grappling with problems of administration rather than selling arms. There was particular confusion over who in the government was responsible for selling arms, as the Ministry of Technology, the MOD, the Treasury, the Board of Trade, the Foreign Office, the Minister of Disarmament and even the Prime Minister himself could all be separately involved in the decision-making process around a particular deal.

Under Brown, the DSO's sales organisation changed little. The DSO was initially simply a collective name for the Army Sales and Navy Sales (divisions of the MOD) and the Exports and International Relations division of the Ministry of Technology. It was staffed largely by civilians, plus a handful of senior military officers and came under the Minister of Defence for Equipment.

Raymond Brown's importance lay in the way he forced Whitehall administrators to think in terms of 'positive' arms exporting. Although his period of office saw no dramatic increase in arms exports he laid the groundwork for some future developments. In particular he strengthened the sales forces in the embassies abroad, and set up Millbank Technical Services, a large company indirectly owned by the state which handles many arms deals with the Third World. Brown was knighted in 1969 and left the DSO in September of that year to return to Racal; he was replaced by Lester Suffield (knighted in 1973), a British Leyland director like Stokes.

The DSO: 1969-1970

For its first four years the DSO was

organised as follows: The Head of Defence Sales was responsible to the Secretary of State for Defence and to the Minister of Technology for the promotion of arms exports in their respective areas. Within the MOD, the Navy and Army Departments were responsible for the production of military equipment for export: but the sales promotion staffs were brought within the central DSO.

The DSO's job was to stimulate interest in British equipment, to negotiate government-to-government sales and to give support to British manufacturers in company-to-government transactions.

At the DSO, civilian deputies to the Head of Defence Sales provided liaison, within the Ministries of Defence and Technology, between sales policy and international collaboration in research, development and production. Close contact was maintained with the service staffs by the Military Deputy at the DSO (a major-general). He was a member of the Operational Requirements and Weapons Development Committees of the MOD and ensured that, when operational requirements were being evolved, full account was taken of the sales interest and the possibility of collaborating with other countries in the development of new equipment.

Staff were also provided for the systematic collation of 'market intelligence' (ie which countries are likely to buy British arms) Overseas, the sales organisation was supported by the military attaches and advisers on the staffs of British Embassies and High Commissions.

The DSO: 1970 to the present

Much of this central structure has remained more or less the same, particularly on the liaison side. The changes that have occurred have been largely in the sales area.

In August 1970, the sections of the DSO in the MOD were reorganised. Instead of having separate directorates for Navy and Army Sales, two directorates based on geographical areas were

created, each responsible for the sale of both Navy and Army equipment in their areas. These directorates were supported by market intelligence and sales promotion staffs responsible for publicity, demonstrations and co-ordination with British military attaches overseas, and by a new Directorate of Sales (Supply) responsible for fulfilling orders and after-sales service.

The logic of this reorganisation was carried through in 1971 when the Procurement Executive was set up in the MOD. The remaining distinctions between Army and Navy equipment and aviation equipment were abolished and the new directorates dealt with sales of all types of equipment on a purely geographical basis. The Head of Defence Sales also was now responsible just to the MOD.

The structure of the DSO has changed little since then. Its 420 employees are now split into three main divisions — sales, supply and supporting services — under the Head of Defence Sales, who has overall responsibility for promoting arms exports. The present Head is Ronald Ellis, yet another British Leyland director, who succeeded Suffield in 1976.

The sales division (see Notes 4 and 5) is concerned with obtaining overseas orders. The sales machinery, located at Stuart House in London's Soho, is divided into four sections covering areas of the world, each with its own Director:

No. 1 Middle East (excluding Israel and Iran) and North Africa (inc. Sudan).

No. 2 Latin America and Africa (excluding the Arab countries)

No. 3 North America, Australia and the Far East.

No. 4 Europe, Turkey, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The supply division is concerned with the sale and supply of government manufactured arms from the Royal Ordnance Factories, overseas licensing of MOD products, technical advice and support following sales, and the sales of surplus government stores.

The supporting division of the DSO comes under the Military Deputy to the Head of Defence Sales, who provides the contact between the civilian side of the DSO and the armed forces. The Military Deputy provides military and marketing advice on arms, and arranges military assistance in aid of sales (demonstrations, etc) and other facilities for overseas visitors. The civilian Director of Marketing liaises with the Military Deputy and the four area sales directors, and is specifically responsible for publicising British arms products and for organising the arms exhibitions.

Actual selling of arms is therefore done by the four area sales directors and their staffs; or by private companies at exhibitions, etc, arranged by the DSO; or by the DSO and a private company acting together; or by the 344 people in diplomatic positions abroad whose jobs entail the promotion of British military exports.

With arms deals often being worth hundreds of millions of pounds and very little public accountability due to intense government secrecy, there is obvious potential for corruption. The British end of the international Lockheed bribes scandal has never been publicly documented, and in fact only one corruption case involving a government official has recently come before British courts.

This was the Racial bribes case, where three men were convicted in January this year of offering and accepting bribes over a £4m contract to sell military radio equipment to Iran in 1972. The £14,300 bribe was taken by a Lt-Colonel employed in the DSO, and it was given by two directors of a Racial subsidiary company. Racial group chairman Ernest Harrison was reported by the *Observer* to have had 'a close business relationship' with the then head of the DSO, Lester Suffield. (January 22, 1978).

It emerged during and after the trial that bribes (or 'commissions' as they are called officially) are an integral part of the arms business and that all major companies expect to pay out around 5%

of the selling price as a sweetener somewhere along the line.

Millbank Technical Services

One example is Millbank Technical Services (MTS), the company indirectly owned by the state which handles most of the British arms deals with Iran. Its order book at the end of 1976 was worth £1.2 billion, much of it with Iran. In accordance with its role on behalf of the MOD, MTS is the conduit for payment of commission on arms deals. In this capacity it has paid millions of pounds to Sharpshooters, their main agent for Iranian arms deals. Reporter was knighted in 1973 for his services to British exports.

But receiving a commission is not illegal, only 'corruptly accepting a bribe' is. It may be a fine point of semantics to the ordinary taxpayer, but it is a distinction which protects many of the activities of the arms industry from too close legal scrutiny.

The Racial trial also showed that many elements of the pre-war 'death trade' still exist; in particular there are still influential individuals making large personal fortunes out of dealing in arms, despite the trade having been brought under government (and therefore presumably democratic) control.

NOTE 1: No details of individual arms deals are released by the MOD, and the annual cumulative figures are known to be grossly misleading (the Head of Defence Sales, Ellis, admitted to the *Daily Express* (August 30, 1977) that the figure of £850m for that year was a considerable underestimate, and that the true sum was "way beyond the £1,000 million-a-year mark").

The official version of the total income from arms exports usually follows the figures below: 1963-4 £118m, 1964-5 £121m, 1965-6 £128m, 1966-7 £152m, 1967-8 £165m, 1968-9 £214m, 1969-70 £227m, 1970-1 £235m, 1971-2 £242m, 1972-3 £257m, 1973-4 £425m, 1974-5 £468m, 1975-6 £530m, 1976-7 £670m provisional, 1977-78 £850m estimate, 1978-9 £900m estimate (Hansard, March 14, 1977 and 1978 Defence Estimates).

NOTE 2: Iran is among the most internally repressive regimes in the world. The present Shah of Iran was installed as absolute ruler by a coup (engineered by the CIA and the British SIS) in 1953.

Opposition parties, groups and demonstrations are outlawed; and there are over 6,000 prisons and delinquent detention centres throughout the country. The maintenance of internal (and external) security rests with SAVAK, the notorious Iranian security agency, the riot police and the military. In the last six months more than half a dozen demonstrations have been ruthlessly dispersed by troops and tanks. First tear gas is used then selected people in the front row are shot. Many people have been killed and hundreds injured.

To service the many deals British contractors have with the Iranian state Millbank Technical Services (the British government supplies agency) has a full-time staff of 400 based in the capital Teheran.

NOTE 3: Heads of Defence Sales: 1966-1969 Sir Raymond Brown (co-founder and Managing Director of Racal), 1969-1976 Sir Lester Suffield (from British Leyland), 1976- Ronald Ellis (from British Leyland).

Countries buying British weapons

NOTE 4: British Sales of Major Weapons Systems in 1976. This list breaks down sales of British arms (orders and deliveries) by country for 1976, the last year for which complete figures are available. It has been extracted from *World Armaments and Disarmament: SIPRI Yearbook 1977*, published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. It is divided into two sections, sales to Third World countries and sales to industrialised countries (as defined by SIPRI). Only the sale of major weapons systems are the basis for inclusion, like aircraft, missiles, ships and armoured vehicles. It does not include countries purchasing small arms, communications systems, or weapons for riot control.

a) Third World countries (30): Middle East (11 countries), including Abu Dhabi, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Oman and Saudi Arabia. South Asia (2): India and Pakistan. Far East (3): Brunei, Malaysia and Thailand. Africa (7): including Ghana, Kenya, Morocco and Nigeria. Central America (2): Mexico and Panama. South America (5): including Argentina, Brazil and Chile.

b) Industrialised countries (10): including West Germany, Spain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA.

NOTE 5: Licensed Production of British Arms Abroad in 1976. This list has also been extracted from the *SIPRI Yearbook 1977*, and the same criteria applied (ie only major weapons systems are included). Production under licence is an additional source of income for the British arms industry paid in the form of royalties.

a) Third World countries (8): Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, India, Iran, Mexico, Philippines and Singapore.

b) Industrialised countries (3): Romania, Yugoslavia, Belgium.