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REVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
COUNTER SUBVERSION COMMITTEE

1961 - 1964

Historical

1. In October 1961, at the suggestion of the Foreign Office, (stemming from a suggestion by the Committee on Intelligence Expenditure), a review was made of the field of operations of the Foreign Office Information Research Department and the Special Political element of M.I.6 with a view to stepping it up to obtain maximum impetus behind the British Cold War effort.

Formation of the Counter Subversion Committee

2. In January 1962 a committee entitled "The Counter Subversion Committee" (C.S.C.) was formed, under the chairmanship of Mr. L.C. Glass of the Foreign Office, with representatives from the Foreign Office, Colonial Office, Commonwealth Relations Office, Ministry of Defence, M.I.5., and M.I.6. with further departmental representatives co-opted as required.

3. The terms of reference laid down were:-

"In the light of such priorities as are required by departmental policies, to initiate and co-ordinate plans for projects in territories overseas, designed to counter hostile propaganda, subversion, and penetration; to allocate the responsibility for their execution, and to review the progress and effectiveness of the consequent operations".

It was proposed that the committee should meet once a month, and the first meeting was held on the 9th January 1962. At this meeting it was agreed that priority studies should be made of certain selected countries prone to infiltration by communist bloc subversion.

4. During the period January 1962 to December 1963, thirteen ordinary and two special meetings of the Counter Subversion Committee took place. At these meetings discussion centred on

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the following countries:-

Zanzibar, Malaysia and Indonesia, British Guiana, Libya, Malta, Somalia, Aden, Mauritius, Kenya, Uganda, Cambodia, Kuwait and Cyprus.

At the 8th meeting held on 29th January 1963, it was decided to set up an Intelligence Sub-Committee, for the purpose of making assessments from available intelligence of the communist (or other) threat to any particular country.

5. In June 1963, after 18 months experience, the committee found that it was not able to operate on its terms of reference - it had hardly dealt at all with specific projects. It was more suited to discussing the need for projects. The committee believed there was a clear case for revising the terms of reference, to bring them into line with the actual activities of the committee, and with what the committee could realistically do in the future. At the same time, as a result of enquiry and recommendation by Lord Strang in 1963, the committee was elevated on 1st January 1964 to an official interdepartmental committee.

The Revised Counter Subversion Committee

6. The committee was formally reconstituted in January 1964 to operate the following terms of reference:

"To keep under review threats and potential threats by subversion, to British interests overseas, and, where necessary, to recommend and co-ordinate action to combat such threats."

The committee would, when necessary, report to and carry out tasks given to it by the Defence and Overseas Policy (Official) Committee. The new committee was to be chaired by a deputy under secretary of the Foreign Office. It was further strengthened by the addition of a permanent secretary.

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7. The first meeting of the reconstituted committee was on 10th January 1964, and during the ensuing year, seven meetings have been held.

8. After two months operating in its new form, it clearly emerged that the setting up of "ad hoc working groups" to deal with particular regions or countries became the rule. Additionally, an improved liaison with the Joint Intelligence Committee, and the circulation of J.I.C. "threat" papers, provided a firm basis for the work of the working groups, and assisted the main committee to decide when a working group should be established. As the working groups multiplied, the main committee itself became less and less concerned with the working out of counter-subversion plans. Nevertheless, the Counter Subversion Committee would be unable to meet its responsibilities to the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee (Official), if it was inadequately informed of the work being undertaken by its own working groups. To avert this danger, two points were agreed:

(a) That the establishment of a working group, should, as a general rule, be decided by the committee;

(b) that the working groups should submit regular progress reports to the committee.

To date, working groups have been set up to examine subversion in the following countries, and have met on an "as required" basis:

Aden, East Africa, Mauritius, Malta, Indonesia/Malaysia, Libya, British Guiana, and the Persian Gulf.

Formation of the Joint Malaysia/Indonesia Department

9. On 5th October, 1964, a special department, being an amalgam of the Foreign Office and Commonwealth Relations Office' departments concerned, was formed to "formulate a joint political view on all matters within its competence, and to provide political co-ordination to the work of other Government departments in Whitehall who are concerned with any aspect of Indonesian Confrontation". This department was called the Joint Malaysia/Indonesia Department (J.M.I.D.).



10. The Head of the Joint Malaysia/Indonesia Department was asked whether his department would take over the responsibility of the Counter Subversion Committee working group on Indonesian/Malaysian Confrontation. The Head of the Joint Malaysia/Indonesia Department advised that he would be better able to answer this question at a later date, after his new department had been in operation for a few weeks.

Ministry of Defence Participation

Community Relations

In June 1962 the counter subversion value of Services Community Relations activities and the need for supporting funds was recognised by the Counter Subversion Committee. The three Service departments were requested to take financial responsibility for these programmes. From a beginning in 1960 in the Far East with Operation CONCORD, Services' community relations programmes have now been extended to Aden, Cyprus, Germany, East Africa, British Guiana, Malta, Mauritius and Libya. From a financial expenditure in 1960 of £9,000, expenditure has increased to a total of £55,000 in the financial year 1964/65.

Counter Subversion Committee Planning Staff

In March 1964, the Ministry of Defence suggested to the Counter Subversion Committee, through the Chiefs of Staff Committee, that the former committee should be supported by, and best be served by, a small full time planning staff, to plan counter subversion. The Chairman of the Counter Subversion Committee's view was that such a staff would not be appropriate in this field. But it was agreed after further discussion in June 1964, that an increase in the size of the secretariat serving the Counter Subversion Committee would ease its work. Accordingly, the suggestion that the secretariat be increased by two members was put forward to the Defence and Overseas Policy (Official) Committee, supported by the Chiefs of Staff.

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Summary

The results achieved by the Counter Subversion Committee in sponsoring world-wide measures to counter communist and other subversion are difficult to measure in positive terms. Its main advantage lies in the co-ordination of effort of, and pooling suggestions made by all Government departments involved in promoting and directing counter subversion activities, to ensure maximum effect, in those areas overseas vital to British interests.

During the period under review, and as a direct result of the activities and recommendations made by the Counter Subversion Committee, disbursements have been made to deserving countries (notably Aden and Malaysia) requiring emergency aid, in their efforts to counter subversion from within and without. Technical, training, advisory and other material assistance has been given to Commonwealth and other countries, for a variety of purposes. Some delays have occurred generally due to lack of definition of H.M.G.'s policy.

The Services for their part, have made a valuable contribution in the operation of community relations programmes, including the "Hearts and Minds" campaign, in those areas of the world where British bases or garrisons exist.

Some of the Working Groups have not been in existence for a long enough period to adequately assess their effectiveness. A notable failure was the case of Zanzibar, this was recognised by the Committee as regrettable, but the matter is now dead and buried.

8 JAN 1965