Police spying on early '70s Maoists

First Published: Woodsmokeblog March 28th 2026,
https://woodsmokeblog.wordpress.com/2026/03/28/police-spying-on-early-70s-maoists/

Transcription, Editing and Markup: Sam Richards and Paul Saba
Copyright: This work is in the Public Domain under the Creative Commons Common Deed. You can freely copy, distribute and display this work; as well as make derivative and commercial works. Please credit the Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line as your source, include the url to this work, and note any of the transcribers, editors & proofreaders above.

August 8th 1970, a "grand rally" at Conway Hall organised by English Communist Movement (ML) was attended by about 120 according to a police report from detective constable HN45. Paul Rowe spoke for the English Communist Movement (ML) and John Buckle represented the English Students Movement. Other speakers were from the Internationalists' constellation: Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Movement. American Communist Workers Movement, Communist Party of Ireland (ML) , Communist party of Quebec (ML), Free Communist Party (ML) , Indian Students Progressive Thinking Groups and Iran Students in Britain. Many of these speakers, the police spy remarked, "spoke in very general terms of the upsurge of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tsetung thought throughout the world and denounced in strong terms "American and British imperialism". Nothing of particular interest to Special Branch was mentioned." UCPI **UCPI0000014373/1**

Roy Cramer's report on the "Grand rally" noted that the ECM's newspaper *Advance*'s main article "*Tasks of Revolutionary Youth*" dealt with another meeting of the 'Internationalists' which is said to have taken place on 16th August, 1969, but no venue is given nor are the names of the speakers. The report says, "Revolutionary music was playing as the hall, filled up with anti-imperialists not only but from countries all over the world..." The account of that meeting noted criticism of the reactionary view put by some members of the Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Britain present and attempted to inflict their own views (pro Liu Shao Chi and anti-Mao) on the conference.

The police comment: As far as is known this meeting did not take place in London. Suggesting likely that this was the Conference referred to in Box 500 [MI5] letter dated 10.6.69 . It could possibly refer to events around the anniversary of the Necessity for Change conference of 1967.

At Conway Hall the speaker from the, London branch of the Internationalists is reported at length. He said that it was the intention to hold a series of public meetings in London – and elsewhere to put forward the Internationalists policy. He indicated that there

were two main tasks, first, to work among youth and 'students and bring them to an anti-imperialist view, 'and 'secondly to work for and to form the basis of a 'Marxist-Leninist Party. The group founded the Communist Party of England (Marxist-Leninist) (CPE (ML)) in March 1972. The CPEml were subjected to infiltration by anonymous clandestine undercover police spy, assigned the designation HN13 [as explored in *Spying on the CPEml*]

Given the content of the spycop's report, Special Branch and MI5 would have been equally informed of the details of the grand rally as those readers of ECM (ML) literature. While "Nothing in the publication appears TO BE ACTIONABLE", after reviewing a copy of the ECM(ML) broadsheet, *Advance* Vol 2 No.1, the opinion of Roy Creamer, (officer HN3093 , a Special Branch officer since 1958) was that *Advance* may be a useful source of information on developments among Maoists. He advised that copies will be available from Banner Books, 90 Camden High Street NWI.

Source: UCPI disclosure 400/67/124. November 10th 1969

Creamer was never undercover, more a political policeman befitting a special branch veteran openly engaging with Anarchist booksellers asking what do you think. He read the literature hence the memo on *Advance.* Seemingly interested in the politics, his testimony in May 2022 to the Undercover Policing Inquiry hearings contained a remark that the problem was that finding a plot for violence or pre-planned assignation, the problem was that they didn't exist. Even hostile observers noted that he did not tell obvious lies, but that is not saying he did not tell any untruths. Although there was an awful lot he said he did not remember like (unbelievable) the Red Lion Square clash that resulted in the death of student Kevin Gately in 1972.

The scathing general assessment of the activities of the spycops drawn by Paul Heron, the Legal Director at the Public Interest Law Centre was, highlighting one deployment, out of 35 different officers dispatched to infiltrate into the Socialist Workers Party, was.

> "After spending five years embedded within the SWP, Colin Clarke underwent a thorough debriefing by MI5. He admitted that although the SWP strongly opposed government policies, they did not seek to subvert state institutions. None of the individuals under surveillance posed a threat to national security. The initial assessment by Roy Creamer, a detective sergeant in the SDS, still holds true to this day: "While we were in search of information, there was simply nothing substantial to report... There were no hidden conspiracies or covert activities taking place."

https://www.haldane.org/news/2023/8/15/update-on-the-undercover-policing-inquiry

There were some remarkable penetration of organisation's that lay bare its internal operations and processes, like with police spy 'Rick Gibson' (real name Richard Clark),who in 1975 skilfully positioned his way onto the Organising Committee of the Troops Out Movement, a national position, and eventually secured a place on the National Secretariat. The initial police officer to penetrate the TOM was HN298, known as 'Mike Scott.' However, Scott concluded that the organisation had no subversive intentions and did not endorse or employ violence to achieve its goals.

The scope of the reporting and the scale of individuals subjected to surveillance is truly astonishing. Even the smaller Maoist groups in London were subject to surveillance and reports filed for Special Branch (and MI5 the Security Service).

An example was a Special Branch report on a meeting of Friends of China. By 1970 Friends of China was inactive, dormant organisation whose name was use for padding support statements or at the convenience of the much diminished RMLL. There were eight people (including Manchanda) mainly discussing the affairs of the WLM a group identified with Manchanda and the RMLL. [Report UCPI 0000026997]

Elsewhere in state records are reports on personal physical, domestic and family details of a member of the Revolutionary Women's Union, meetings discussing nursery campaign in north London. All in the name of being informed about subversives.

So much of the released material from the UCPI was inconsequential and added little not disclosed through careful reading of a group's public literature. A Special Branch report on a joint meeting attended by 25 held in June 1969 at the "Union Tavern", Kings Cross Road, between the BVSF and Friends of China to discuss the 9th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party concludes,

"The entire meeting was taken up with the reading by Al MANCHANDA of the 1st Communique of the 9th Congress and. discussion on "the more important issues raised by this historic document". Nothing of particular interest to Special Branch was said."

Among the Maoist groups referenced in Special Branch files (at https://www.ucpi.org.uk) were:

Banner Books (Bijur)

Communist Party of Britain (M-L)

Communist Unity Association (Marxist-Leninist),

English Communist Movement (Marxist-Leninist) – [Internationalists] - Communist Party of England (M-L) -Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

- East London People's Front - Progressive Cultural Association

Friends of China

Irish National Liberation Solidarity Front (Irish Liberation Press) - Communist Workers' League of Britain (People's Voice)

Joint Committee of Communists - Communist Federation of Britain (Marxist- Leninist) -

Revolutionary Communist League of Britain [New Era Books]

Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Britain

Marxist-Leninist Workers Association

North London Alliance in Defence of Workers' Rights - London Alliance in Defence of Workers Rights- East London Marxist-Leninist Association

- Artists Liberation Front

Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation,

Schools Action Union

Revolutionary Marxist Leninist League (Manchanda)

- Britain-Vietnam Solidarity Front
- the October 27th Committee for Solidarity with Vietnam
- [the Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Movement]
- Women's Liberation Front
- Revolutionary Women's Union

For a fuller explanation of these groups click here.