

Shipley



10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister,

Another note worth
reading from Peter
Shipley.

PS

10/7/67

John Hoskins.

CONSERVATIVE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

32 SMITH SQUARE · SW1

→ AD correction

MEMORANDUM

PS/ST-R

To see below

From Peter Shipley

7.7.81

LEFT-WING EXTREMISTS AND THE RIOTS

*Tom - please
make reference to
file*

In the recent violence in London and Liverpool there has been a lot of comment, mostly unsubstantiated about left-wing involvement. This note looks at some of the evidence particularly at the part played by the Labour Left in encouraging anti-police attitudes.

My own view on the question of whether left-wingers actually organise and provoke violence is that they have no real part in the specific events which trigger off rioting. I think it is going too far to say that agitators or politically motivated groups actually start off the violence. Certainly the evidence of my own eyes did not suggest that this was so in Brixton. The Left-wing contribution is I believe threefold: first they help to intensify and rationalise existing anti-police feeling long before the riots. Local youths may be automatically opposed to the police or become so as a result of experience but the Left provides arguments and justification. It was interesting to hear stock phrases such as "police harassment" and "police brutality" coming from one teenager in Liverpool interviewed on TV about the riot.

Secondly, the Left can intervene in the course of trouble, with offers of support and guidance and thirdly, after the immediate violence has ceased, left-wing groups invariably step in with Defence Committees and all the paraphernalia of propaganda. The latter development has been most marked in Brixton, and was the case in Southall in 1979.

Brixton and Toxteth are typical of the inner-city areas in which the various left-wing groups concentrate their efforts. The Militant Tendency, the organisation of Trotskyists in the Labour Party, is conspicuous in both places.

In Liverpool the Militant Tendency supporters have been chosen as prospective Labour candidates - Terry Harrison in the Edgehill seat held by the Liberal David Alton and Tony Mulhearn in Toxteth itself, now held by Richard Crawshaw for the SDP. The leaflet produced by David Alton bears out the hallmarks of the Militant Tendency: the call for a one day general strike to bring down the Government is presently featuring in Militant newspaper (eg. 5th June 1981).

On 20th January 1980 the Sunday Times said Liverpool was Militant's "strongest base outside London". At that time there were five of its supporters on the City Council.

In Brixton Militant supporters organised a mass meeting on the

Wednesday following the April riots in the name of the Labour Party Young Socialists, which adopted a declaration demanding: an end to police harrassment; withdrawal of the massive police presence; immediate release of all those arrested and the dropping of all charges, disbandment of the SpA; a People's Enquiry by the labour movement and more government funds for the area.

This was followed by the formation of the Labour Committee for the Defence of Brixton to pursue the arm of the declaration. Militant newspapers and the LCDB have also campaigned for a boycott of the Scarman Enquiry. The LCDB operates from an address in Railton Road and does not have the official recognition of Labour Party HQ.

Militant has been able to draw on supporters in the area for these initiatives. And it is equally clear that many other left-wing groups were active in Brixton before the riots for example:

- (a) the Workers' Revolutionary Party has a bookshop in Atlantic Road, and a Youth Training Centre in Stockwell. In the first three months of this year the WRP held a series of meetings in Brixton; it has supported the policies of Ted Knight.
- (b) the Trotskyist Group, the Revolutionary Communist Group has its headquarters in Railton Road. It is anti-police and pro IRA.
- (c) Another Trotskyist group, the Revolutionary Communist Party set up a Lambeth Unemployed Workers' Group shortly before the Riots, and has since formed a South London Workers Against Racism group, similar to the East London Worker Against Racism which attracted some notoriety for organising vigilante patrols.
- (d) the Race Today collective has offices in Brixton. The edition of its magazine is Darkus Howe, who has been associated with campaigning in support of the H-block hunger strikes, the New Cross Massacre Action Committee (concerned with the fire in which 13 young blacks died) and has spoken at a meeting of the Revolutionary Communist Group.

After the riot the Socialist Workers' Party circulated a leaflet in Brixton in which it said "It was a magnificent way for Brixton to fight back. For three days the black and white youth of Brixton took its revenge for all those years of police brutality. They took their revenge for the lost jobs and lousy housing ... The solution is to burn down the system the same way we burned down the Winsor Castle (pub)". The SWP, working through the Anti Nazi League has been very active in Southall since 1979. It also has a branch in Central Liverpool and a NALGO/CPSA branch in Liverpool.

The various statements of Mr. Knight and Mr. Livingstone which represent the view of the GLC and the Labour Party in London have on the whole been well reported. In a recent interview published in Newsline, the daily newspaper of the WRP, Livingstone said: "the army is being trained for a role against the working class people of Britain ... if we elected a Left Government the army and police could be turned into the arms of the Tory Party and capital". (26th June 1981).

One further point: I wonder to what extent any organised element in the Toxteth riots might have been and inspired by the city's Irish contingent. The balaclava masks were very reminiscent of Northern Ireland.

From the pattern following the Brixton riot a burst of propaganda from the Left can be expected. This has already begun with a meeting in Liverpool last night which was addressed by Clare Doyle described as a member of the Labour Committee for the defence of Brixton; she is a leading member of the Militant Tendency.

A large, stylized handwritten mark, possibly a signature or initials, consisting of a vertical line that loops back to the top and then curves to the right.

cc. Alan Howarth
The Chairman
Sir Harry Boyne
John Hoskyns ✓
Peter Utley
Tony Greenland
David Nicholson
Nick True

Prime Minister



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I think this is worth
reading.


7/7/81