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## Duncan Campbell: Rees on Terror Sales

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The government has now replied to back-bench questions about the open sale of detailed US military manuals on home made boobytraps and other terrorist devices. In the meantime, the Anti-terrorist Squad of Scotland Yard has not been idle.

In recent weeks, they have carried out about fifteen dawn raids on assorted libertarians in the London area, in pursuit of further arrests in a case of 'conspiracy to cause explosions'. They have not made any relevant arrests or secured important new evidence. The squad, however, have not visited the London bookshop identified in last week's *New Statesman* which has been offering terror manuals for sale.

Home Secretary Rees, although 'consulting the police' on the issue of his 'powers to censor publications', does not feel that the widespread dissemination of such bomb-making instructions is an obvious case for im-

mediate action. (The manuals - originally classified and produced by British or US Army departments - are being reprinted by right-wing US mercenary groups.) No such difficulties apparently faced the Home Office or police in March 1972 when a Mr Tony Soares was prosecuted on charges of 'incitement of readers to possess and make explosive substances', and of incitement to arson and murder in unspecified circumstances. Soares was the assistant editor of the black community newspaper *Grass Roots*, which had reprinted from an existing book a diagram for the assembly of crude Molotov cocktails. He received a five-year suspended prison sentence.

It is hard not to draw the conclusion that police prefer to continue harassment of minority political or racial groups rather than deal with a serious threat to public order. The owner of one bookshop selling these publications says openly 'I would sell them to sixteen year olds' - and, indeed, he has.

The wealth of detail in the manuals currently on sale contrasts strongly with the crude diagram reproduced in *Grass Roots* in 1972, or the police statements of evidence against the three alleged conspirators currently remanded - so far, two packets of weedkiller.

The manuals give full details for home manufacture of plastic explosives, and their use in boobytraps or terror bombs.

This week the Home Secretary had doubts about taking 'broad powers to censor publications unless I were advised that it would make an effective practical contribution to the prevention of terrorism'. Meanwhile the Anti-terrorist squad has staged a further dawn raid, this time on a Methodist lay preacher and former full-time Labour Party agent. No evidence of conspiracy or conspirators has resulted from the raid.

Robin Cook MP who last week asked a parliamentary question on the official policy on commercial sale of the manuals, will be questioning the Home Secretary further. In particular he is concerned that Special Branch appear to have been aware for some time that various mercenary and other groups were importing and distributing the manuals.

The manuals are solely directed to the furtherance of terror. Their explicit easy-to-follow instructions are the clearest possible incitement. The government should make it clear that the commercial sale of information of direct value to the aspirant terrorist is unacceptable in a civilised society.