

NEW STATESMAN

12 December 1980 45p USA \$1.50 By Air

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HONG KONG



Britain's corrupt colony

Secret Government plans to destabilise politics

A secret plan for dictatorship

This weekend a group of British MPs will help launch another attempt to start an effective political party in Hong Kong; there is still no elected government and no organised political opposition in this fag-end of British imperialism. DUNCAN CAMPBELL reports here on the comprehensive but secret plans of the Hong Kong government — which is ultimately appointed by Westminster — to destabilise and discredit virtually every organisation which dares to criticise its running of the colony.

HONG KONG is a dictatorship; and scarcely a benevolent one. The British government appoints the Governor, who appoints the Legislative Council. Together they rule the colony, making its laws, levying its taxes and appointing its officials. About half of the Legislative Council are the heads of Government Departments, the rest are outside appointees. The vast majority represent local British and Chinese property, industrial and banking interests with token representation from a retired tram inspector, a priest and a social worker. The five million or so people who live in the colony have no votes in the appointment of these people. Some of the inhabitants, with appropriate property, professional or educational qualifications can vote for the Urban Council — which has powers that scarcely extend beyond street sweeping and parks management. But not much more than one in ten of the population have these qualifications and few bother to register, with even fewer bothering to vote. The candidate who tops this poll is not, nonetheless, appointed to the law-making Legislative Council.

For the Hong Kong government, however, this is not sufficient. The *New Statesman* has recently obtained a large quantity of secret Hong Kong government papers which describe a programme organised by a new and secret body called the Standing Committee On Pressure Groups (SCOPG), which has the job of co-ordinating government surveillance of any protest or campaigning group and of mounting counter-attacks. Specifically, SCOPG aims to undermine, co-opt or coerce any of eleven target groups, and others.

Most political opposition in Hong Kong does not express itself through conventional political parties for the simple reason that these are *de facto* illegal. By law all organisations and societies are obliged to register with the Registrar of Societies. This regulation is aimed at the Triad gangs but is an effective stop on most political activity: political organisations which have sought registration have been rejected without explanation and without right of appeal. (The new initiative to launch a political party thus involves registering the Association for Democracy in Hong Kong as a limited company.) It is, therefore, not too surprising that the SCOPG files sent to us manage to brand middle class conservationist groups as threats to the government.

Complete documentation about SCOPG's campaign — classified *Confidential* in red in English and Cantonese — has been provided to the *New Statesman* by a well-placed Hong

Kong source. The files profile virtually every publicly active group in Hong Kong, with dossiers on key group members, their methods and activities. 'Continuous public criticism' which creates 'a cumulative effect damaging to government credibility' is noted with irritation. There is information about letters written to the few British MPs sympathetic to the opposition groups and details of these MPs' visits to the colony.

THE STAFF OF SCOPG consists of officials from Hong Kong's Home Affairs Department, Home Affairs Information Branch, Security Branch, the police Special Branch, and the Information Services Department. Its first chairman was Barrie Wiggham, who as head of the Home Affairs Information Branch was in



The squalor of government housing in Hong Kong. Each family gets a ten-foot-square cubicle in a high-rise block, unventilated, with communal water facilities and cooking in a hallway, and laundry suspended on a pole outside each family 8 'dwelling'.

charge of overt propaganda for the colony. But the most interesting appointment to SCOPG was that of former Lt Col Johnny Johnston, the Senior Assistant Director of the Information Services Department. Like many security officials in Hong Kong Colonel Johnston had spent a considerable period in Northern Ireland, where, at the Lisburn HQ, he was in charge of Psyops (Psychological Operations), a discipline specialising in black propaganda. In Hong Kong, as in Northern Ireland, Johnston was in charge of covert propaganda operations.

Much of SCOPG's efforts are devoted to destabilising the efforts of a wide range of pressure groups whose activities, it is continually bemoaned, have damaged government 'credibility'. In the reports, for example, the Hong Kong bureaucrats take pride in the 'Government's achievements in the housing field', lamenting the 'reduction in the amount of goodwill and credit generated' caused by protesters. The grounds of such protest are, incidentally, the fact that the average government housing provision is 100 square feet for a family — a cubicle in a high rise block with communal water facilities and long staircases. From the colony's Christian Industrial Committee to the Hong

Kong Conservancy Association and Heritage Societies, from the Professional Teachers Union to the Ecumenical Community Development Project, the secret SCOPG team have dissected and analysed the best ways of frustrating their efforts.

One particular provocation for setting up SCOPG, in February 1978, was the ongoing Golden Jubilee School affair. It was discovered that the Precious Blood Order of nuns who ran this school had been milking the school funds for the benefit of the Order. The school's teachers exposed this racket — which involved the headmistress — and were sacked. When their union protested, the school was closed but massive public demonstrations and public pressure co-ordinated by four education groups and unions forced the decision to be modified and the essential elements of the school were reconstituted elsewhere.

The education groups involved in this campaign appear on the SCOPG list, as do a community action group (the Society for Community Organisation), a Chinese middle class lobby which writes regular newspaper columns (Hong Kong Observers Ltd) and church backed industrial and commercial projects such as the 'Sau Mau Ping Young Workers' Centre'. Hong Kong specialists who have seen the list say that no important groups are excluded, save Hong Kong's legendary one-woman opposition, teacher and Urban Councillor Elsie Elliott, who always has been under heavy surveillance. When I and a *Daily Mirror* journalist met Mrs Elliott in a Hong Kong hotel earlier this year, our meeting was quite evidently under close surveillance by no less than four members of the Hong Kong police Special Branch, who paced in relay past our table in the hotel's coffee lounge.

LESS RESILIENT CAMPAIGNERS than Mrs Elliott face a different approach from SCOPG. The Heritage Society and the Conservancy Association, both middle class European environmental lobbies would not merit a place on any official problem list in Britain. In Hong Kong, however, the government makes much money by selling off a stream of tiny parcels of Crown land at enormous prices for development. Our SCOPG source explained:

Property developers are well represented on the Legislative Council and are the most powerful of all pressure groups in Hong Kong . . . Because of the extreme shortage of land, rampant speculation and exorbitant rents, no parcel of land is considered to be immune from the bulldozer and development . . .

There are hardly any old buildings left in Central District, or any buildings of artistic worth for that matter. An 'articulate' organisation such as the Heritage Society poses a threat to the development lobby, and the Government which consistently represents their views.

Even with these somewhat-less-than-radical organisations, the tinpot colonial administrators are bothered. The Conservancy Association has now been dealt with, however. The government's Environment Branch set up an Environmental Protection Committee (EPCOM) and noted smugly that this would 'accommodate Conservancy members' and

matters had been the active most notable involvement in recent educational students of the Golden Jubilee Secondary School. support given to dissident teachers and

The CIC's intervention in trade disputes not only usurps the role of the Labour Department but complicates issues, feed erroneous ideas into workers' minds, and render them less amenable to conciliation. Their criticism has always been destructive.

Secrets of the Hong Kong anti-dissident committee; the Chinese script beside 'Confidential' reads *Ji Mi*, appropriately meaning 'nearly secret'; the Standing Committee on Pressure Groups (SCOPG) dossier runs to nearly 50 pages.

'pre-empt future criticisms'. But the Heritage Society, even though it was the most trifling flea on the government's back, was still a problem to "bring in" . . . to working committee level as an equivalent to EPCOM does not exist in this particular field'.

Another somewhat unusual pressure group had considerably bothered the Hong Kong government for some time by its regular and well-reasoned critical articles in the prestigious *South China Morning Post*. The *Hong Kong Observers Ltd* (again registered as a company to evade restrictions on political organisations) was a mysterious Chinese middle class grouping — sufficiently mysterious for the Special Branch to have made a determined — and obvious and unsuccessful — attempt to infiltrate.

A 1978 Special Branch report, quoted in the secret SCOPG dossiers provided to the *New Statesman*, bemoans the lack of success of their infiltrator because 'it is not likely that covert aims would be divulged . . . unless . . . members felt confident of the sympathy and confidentiality of the listener'. The infiltrator's lack of success, so clearly indicated by the Special Branch report, left the government snoopers for once confused about the motives of the organisation, and at a loss for suitable ways to shut them up:

SCOPG considers the Hong Kong Observers one of the more difficult pressure groups to assess as there are still some uncertainties over the group's motives and objectives.

. . . the HKO does not yet have a solid enough base to really be actually subversive.

And, anyway, this wasn't a terribly large flea on the hard-pressed government's back:

Membership is small, only 51 at June 1978, to be exact.

Nevertheless, the unfathomable quality of this tiny lobby body had earned them second place on the SCOPG hit list.

THERE IS LITTLE doubt that these tactics against the only visible signs of opposition in a colony without a democratic political structure are taken seriously by the rulers there. The well-placed Hong Kong source who provided us with the documents said 'such thinking is given high credibility in the Government here.' And SCOPG is only part of a mesh of secret committees which supervise the political life of Hong Kong.

The largest arm of the security bureaucracy is the local Special Branch, whose strength is almost 20 per cent of the entire police force — an enormous army of snoopers, unparalleled even in other British colonies. However, their

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power is considerably greater than their British equivalents' as the Director of the Special Branch has a position comparable to the Director-General of Britain's MI5. Policy for this secret police force is determined by two further committees — the Governor's Security Committee, and the super-secret Local Intelligence Committee.

The LIC is the principal focus for the numerous British and American spooks with which Hong Kong abounds and whose absurdities were well described in Le Carre's *The Honourable Schoolboy*. The Political Adviser from the British Foreign Office sits at the head of the table with the bosses of Hong Kong security. (To meet the usual diplomatic customs this British Office official is in fact responsible for all dealings with the Chinese People's Republic — whose representative, equally absurdly, is not an accredited diplomat but in fact head of the local branch of the New China News Agency.)

Other members of LIC include the Commissioner of police, the Director of the Special Branch and representatives of MI5, MI6 and other bits of British intelligence. MI6 is disguised as the 'Study Group' in British Forces HQ; its Head is their station chief Barry Gane; his equivalent from MI5 is commonly and happily known as the 'Security Liaison Officer'. More powerful than these two is Government Communications Officer Terry Nelson, who is in charge of Britain's GCHQ signals intelligence monitoring station at Little Sai Wan (see NS 16 and 23 July 1980). Finally there is Lt Col Harry Sloane, head of Joint Services Intelligence Staff, whose department has recently been racked by its own corruption scandal; his staff were selling off, at a substantial price, passes for admission to Hong Kong to illegal immigrants who would otherwise have been sent back north.

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC of China are considerably to blame for Hong Kong's lack of democracy. As one local security official explained, much of the repressive effort expended by the colonial government is intended to appease 'Big Brother to the North'. Officially, Hong Kong is regarded by China as part of Guangdong province 'temporarily under foreign rule'. And the Chinese have made their views of a popular democracy quite clear; the source most often quoted by Hong Kong and Foreign Office officials is a letter written by the Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations to the UN Decolonisation

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The criminal mind

C. H. ROLPH needs no introduction to NS readers. Here he suggests that to prevent crime we must begin a different kind of research into its causes.

'ALMOST EVERYONE has a criminal lurking inside him ready to spring out,' said Dr Ronald Clarke of the Home Office Research Unit to the British Psychological Society's meeting at Nottingham last year. I believe this to be true, though mine has now been quiescent for some years. But why should any sane man want to murder, at longish intervals, 13 defenceless young women, all of them unknown to him? You and I can understand, perhaps, the usual kind of murder, even if we regard it with revulsion. It will have some kind of brutal or desperate logic about it, plus the killer's belief (usually unsound) that he will escape detection.

Although the Yorkshire Ripper may not be sane by popular standards, the police have to credit him with a brain, a consistency of motive, and the capacity to work out a behaviour pattern and stick to it. He has to be sane enough to be artful. He leaves some kind of trademark at the scene of all his killings. The police know what this is and we don't. They have allowed us to know that more than half of his victims have been prostitutes, which may mean no more than that prostitutes always live dangerously. We can assume that the killer might have supposed, wrongly, that even the non-prostitutes were in fact prostitutes and thus eligible for some bizarre anti-prostitute campaign of vengeance or elimination. It has all happened before.

In the London area it last happened in 1967/9. The killer was never caught. The late Dr Peter Scott, who was a much respected forensic psychiatrist, told me at the time: 'I have an uneasy feeling that all this is the work of So-and-so,' naming an ex-mental patient well known to both of us. In fact he was well known to a great number of people, and today is completely stable and holding an important public position. Even at that time I would have said he was completely harmless. I was deeply shocked, for it allowed me to see, pitting my own empirical judgment against Peter Scott's, that for once he didn't know what he was talking about.

THE POLICE believe (to judge by some of their public statements) that they are looking for a 'psychopath'. What's that? The dictionaries don't seem to know, and the word has been loosely used since it was coined about a century ago. I once wrote a London Diary note for Kingsley Martin suggesting that certain kinds of potential offenders should be regularly seen by psychiatrists, and he altered psychiatrists to psychopaths, no doubt equating them with osteopaths and seeing them as some kind of cerebral bone-setters. 'Psychopath,' today, has come to mean a mentally deranged person 'to whom nothing is sacred but his own person and his own interests'. That fits a lot of people?

And yet in 1890, says the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a psychopath was 'a being whom Russian laws refused to punish even for murder.' He is today a chronic, incurable nut-case, unaware of his condition, not suffering in any way because of it (until he's caught), and so

normal in his general demeanour that if he did no wrong his mental health would never be questioned. This is what the Yorkshire Ripper may be. What he almost certainly is not is a 'split personality', a schizophrenic. That terrible disease, spoiling the lives of thousands of families, produces mainly harmless and pathetic sufferers and is being treated with rapidly growing success.

Many psychiatrists, and most laymen who think about the problem, believe that an 'aggressive psychopath' (one of several kinds) is merely a person who 'exhibits normal characteristics in an extreme degree'. In other words, we all lose our patience and our tempers, but the aggressive psychopath does it in a big way, sometimes a horrifying way. Yet though he may be mad, the doctors can't really see how. He may be in Broadmoor, Rampton or Moss Side entirely because of what he has done, not because of what made him do it, and because no one can know when he is 'cured' he may be experimentally let out and do the same thing again.

THIS WAS THOUGHT to be the condition of the 'Boston Strangler', Albert de Salvo, who in 1962/4 killed 13 women (at least) and assaulted hundreds of others in and around Boston, Massachusetts. He confessed his crimes in 1973 in a hospital for the criminally insane, where he happened to be detained for armed robbery and sex offences involving four more women. 'It's something inside you,' he told his attorney. 'I feel it started from my childhood and erupted more violently during the later stages'. (His childhood was a violent one.) He was never tried for any murders because there was never enough evidence, and on 26 November 1973 he was found stabbed to death in his prison cell at Walpole, Massachusetts.

No one suggested in 1931 at the trial of Peter Kurten, the 'Düsseldorf Vampire', that he was mad, though he had atrociously killed a large number of women and little girls (drinking their blood), committed many burglaries, and — he said — got sexual gratification from setting fire

Colonialism

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Committee. This states that the 'introduction of any element of self-rule in Hong Kong' (meaning democracy or a meaningful franchise) would be construed by the Chinese government as an 'unfriendly act'; diplomatically tantamount to opening hostilities.

According to well placed officials who have spoken to the *New Statesman*, Hong Kong is prohibited by an axis between Whitehall and Peking from any extension of democracy. The Security Branch of the Hong Kong government maintains Top Secret files which discuss the finer points of introducing greater democracy in various areas of the administration; a large part of their contents is taken up with the problems of Chinese government reaction. 'We don't want three Chinas' is a common watch-cry. One official acknowledged that 'the limitations of democracy are accepted by the British Government under pressure from Peking'.

to buildings and mingling with the crowds to watch them burn down. After his execution at Cologne, for nine murders and seven attempted murders, he was considered to provide good material for psychiatric study, but that was a bit late, and he remains unclassified except, emotively, as a 'monster'. His neighbours, by the way, knew him only as a sedate, modest man with possibly an occasional girlfriend outside his marriage. Modern psychiatry could perhaps have learned a lot from him too, but you can't put a man to death and have him for medico-legal research.

Much the same can be said about the Frenchman Désiré Landru, alias Georges Cuchet, who by the time he was caught in 1922 had murdered more than 300 women (I quote from French police records). Except for the numbers, he was a run-of-the-mill charmer, seducer and swindler, trapping lonely and gullible women by matrimonial advertisement. He got rid of their bodies in his kitchen stove. No one suggested he was mad, and once he was guillotined there was no way of finding out. If he wasn't, what kind of a life would his conscience have allowed him, if conscience is the ability to tell right from wrong? Should we not face the possibility that some men, such men as these, may just simply be thoroughly evil? That their conduct no more calls for explanation or rationalisation than that of someone who is thoroughly good? No one has ever mounted a research programme to find out why people abstain from murder, rape, burglary, or even shoplifting. It might turn up some interesting material.

When we imported from Scotland, in 1957, the legal notion of 'diminished responsibility', for use in murder cases only, there was much more discussion in open court about 'the mind of the murderer'. It increased the murderer's chances of staying alive when we were still hanging murderers. After 1964, when we stopped, there was less concern about their minds because most of them prefer prison to Broadmoor. Now that there are more than 200 murderers serving life sentences, hasn't the time come to study them and study a broadly comparable selection of non-murderers who might have been expected to murder, to see what differences emerge? We might then, finally, be doing something to ensure that these thirteen girls have not met their lonely Yorkshire deaths in vain.

Left wing activity is particularly disliked by Peking; this was so even under Mao. A demonstration by students outside the New China News Agency office which the police did not put down had the Director of the Agency round to see the colonial governor Sir Murray MacLehose, the same night.

MacLehose is one of Hong Kong's big problems. Although his rule put an end to a succession of graft-takers, he has now ruled for nine years — turning, in effect, autocracy into dictatorship. As former Peking *Chargé d'Affaires* his Chinese links are close, and Hong Kong is imperceptibly becoming part of the People's Republic. One of the more extraordinary moments for Hong Kong spooks occurred two years ago when the Head of the JSIS unveiled new spy aircraft photographs showing that Chinese coastal defences had been re-aligned to protect Hong Kong's approaches, instead of defending China from them. Peking is biding its time. And the time to give Hong Kong and its citizens any freedom and civil rights is — accordingly — running out.