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'Implacable Enemies'? The Labour Party and the intelligence community in 1920s Britain

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ABSTRACT

The 1920s marked the first decade in which the Labour Party and the British intelligence community had to work closely together. Their relations during this period, which were often strained, have come to be defined by the Zinoviev letter affair. Allegations that intelligence officials leaked the Zinoviev letter to bring down the Labour government in 1924 have persisted for the last century. Using documents that have been largely unexplored, this article argues that the Zinoviev affair was not an isolated incident. It uses two specific case studies to show that a small number of intelligence officials also leaked sensitive information, in the years before and after 1924, in an attempt to undermine and discredit prominent Labour Party figures. By analysing events in the years before and after the Zinoviev affair, the article illustrates how relations between the British state and the Labour Party fluctuated providing a fresh understanding of Labour Party-intelligence relations during the interwar years.


KEYWORDS

Labour Party; intelligence; MacDonald; Zinoviev

Introduction

In the autumn of 1924, days after his Labour Party had been heavily defeated in a General Election, the outgoing British Prime Minister, James Ramsay MacDonald, arranged a meeting with the head of the Secret Intelligence Service's (SIS/MI6) political section, Major Malcolm 'Woolly' Woollcombe. He sought answers to questions he had about the Zinoviev letter affair but did not want to discuss it with intelligence officials face-to-face. MacDonald had a deep aversion to intelligence-related matters and is said to have 'not knowingly' ever met an officer from MI5, MI6 or the Government Code and Cypher School (GC&CS). His 'meeting' with Woollcombe was semi-comedic—the two men sat in separate rooms in the Foreign Office and the department's Permanent Secretary, Sir Eyre Crowe, acted as a go-between relaying questions and answers between the two men.¹

MacDonald may have had a peculiar dislike of the secret world of intelligence but, in many ways, the episode epitomised the dysfunctional relationship between the Labour Party and the intelligence community that existed for much of the 1920s. This relationship was one of mutual mistrust and bordered on antipathy. At its worst, intelligence officials believed that the Labour Party consisted of extremely radical individuals who did not have

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Britain's best interests at heart, whilst some Labour Party figures categorised the intelligence community as conservative-minded establishment figures who sought to undermine the party, especially when it was in government.

Four days before the 1924 General Election, on 25 October, the *Daily Mail* published a letter purporting to be from the head of the Comintern, Grigori Zinoviev, to the CPGB. The letter talked of how 'the proletariat of Great Britain, which ... compelled the Government of MacDonald to conclude the [Anglo-Soviet] treaty' had urged 'the group in the Labour Party sympathising with the Treaty' to 'bring increased pressure to bear upon the Government and parliamentary circles in favour of the ratification of the Treaty'. It also stated that 'a settlement of relations between the two countries will assist in the revolutionising of the international and British proletariat'.²

The letter was extremely damaging to Labour, appearing to suggest that the government had been coerced by communists and radicals into normalising relations with the Bolshevik government. It was, MacDonald later said, a 'political bomb' designed to influence the election campaign. Although there is a consensus among many historians that the leak was not a part of an orchestrated establishment plot, it does appear that rogue elements of both MI5 and MI6 did leak the letter in an attempt to damage the Labour Party's electoral prospects. As the intelligence historian Christopher Andrew has argued, 'those responsible intended ... to sabotage Labour's prospects of [electoral] victory'.³

Although the affair has dominated discussion of Labour-intelligence relations during the interwar period, this article argues that the Zinoviev letter was not an isolated incident and that intelligence officials leaked sensitive information in an attempt to undermine and discredit the Labour Party throughout the decade. Using documents that have been largely unexplored, the article uses two case studies—one from 1920 and one from 1928—to show the way in which a small number of intelligence officials disclosed information to the press to undermine senior Labour Party figures, George Lansbury and James Ramsay MacDonald and, ultimately, the Party itself.

A mutual distrust between the Labour Party and the intelligence community existed before the party took power in 1924 and had developed during the previous decade. In the early 1920s, intelligence officials were chiefly concerned about the threat posed by the possible spread of communism across Europe. Such concerns originated with the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 which had alarmed not only the government in Britain but governments around the world.⁴ The emergence of a Communist Party in Britain, the CPGB, made intelligence officials particularly suspicious of the Labour Party. Although the CPGB, founded in 1920, was never sufficiently large or popular to achieve significant electoral success, members of the intelligence community worried that communists would use the Labour Party as a vehicle to gain political power.⁵ Such fears were not baseless. In 1920, Lenin urged the CPGB to support the Labour Party 'in the same way a rope supports a hanged man', and, ahead of the 1922 General Election, the Comintern issued a message to the British working men and women urging them to vote for Labour to force it into becoming a more radical and revolutionary party.⁶

In the immediate post-war years, the Labour Party found itself repeatedly linked to Bolshevism by both the press and Conservative politicians.⁷ Although Labour consistently disassociated itself from communism—rejecting attempts by the CPGB to affiliate with it during the early 1920s—communists were allowed to stand as official Labour Party

candidates in elections until 1924. They were not banned from attending the party conference until 1928.⁸ Indeed, many believed at the time that socialism was not much different from communism. As Winston Churchill stated, 'behind socialism stands communism; behind communism stands Moscow, that dark, sinister, evil power which has made its appearance in the world'.⁹ Labour's radical policies such as mass nationalisation of major industries and a capital levy on wealth, combined with its increasing potential to gain power in the foreseeable future, meant that, by the 1920s, the party was considered a growing threat.¹⁰

Members of the intelligence establishment did not see the Labour Party as a constitutional party advocating democratic socialism. Indeed, in 1922, the head of Special Branch, Wyndham Childs, wrote that the differences between the Labour Party and the CPGB were 'in regard to methods rather than aims'.¹¹ For many working in intelligence and the wider British establishment in the early inter-war years, left-wing political opinions and policies were regarded as dubious and somewhat threatening. As the wartime Director of Naval Intelligence, Admiral Sir William Reginald 'Blinker' Hall, stated 'everyone who is not a Tory is either a German, a Sinn Féiner or a Bolshevik'.¹² Misgivings about left-wing politics were undoubtedly exacerbated by the fact that several prominent Labour politicians had been of security interest to MI5 and Special Branch as a result of their anti-war activities. This appears, therefore, to have led a small minority of intelligence officials to conclude that the Labour Party was potentially so dangerous that it needed to be, in some way, thwarted.

The current literature examining Labour Party-intelligence relations during the interwar years has, inevitably, been dominated by a focus on the Zinoviev letter. Most works have tended not to look beyond that.¹³ Indeed, there have been only a few academic works which examine the relations between the Labour Party and the intelligence community during the twentieth century.¹⁴ The 1920s was the decade in which Labour and intelligence officials were required to work alongside each another for the first time. This article, therefore, seeks to further examine the Labour-intelligence relations during the 1920s, demonstrating how they fluctuated. The two case studies utilised aim to illustrate this by detailing the difference between 1920 – when there appeared to be no qualms about leaking intelligence on the Labour Party—and 1928 – when establishment figures expressed concern about anti-Labour activity. Some intelligence officials still sought to undermine Labour at the end of the decade but, as the article will discuss, Whitehall officials were aware of allegations of anti-Labour bias and worked to ensure that this was not the case. With the Labour Party seemingly becoming established as a force in British politics, officials acknowledged that they needed to be assiduously neutral.

Although relations between Labour and intelligence slightly improved during the 1920s, the mutual suspicion still lingered. The article helps to chart this development but also provides a wider context to one of the greatest intelligence-related scandals of the twentieth century, the Zinoviev letter. It further adds to the understanding of both the intelligence community and the Labour Party in the 1920s, providing an insight into a topic that has long been neglected.

Unpatriotic revolutionaries?

The Labour Party was founded in 1900 and it is likely that British security officials held some concerns about it from its very inception. The first Labour leader, Keir Hardie, a man who once said of himself, 'I am an agitator. My work has consisted of trying to stir up divine discontent with wrong', was likely to have been under scrutiny for many years.¹⁵ In 1907, he toured India and was placed under close surveillance by the colonial intelligence agency, the Department of Criminal Intelligence (DCI).¹⁶

Although very few files, which would reveal how Hardie was perceived by British authorities, appear to have survived, a report on a speech he made in 1912 endures. Although the speech was not considered to be sufficiently provocative to warrant criminal proceedings, a Home Office official, having reviewed its text, wrote that Hardie had sought,

not only to raise discontent or disaffection amongst H.M.'s subjects and promote feelings of ill-will & hostility between different classes, but also to incite H.M. subjects to a disturbance of the peace & to excite them to attempt to bring about changes in the law otherwise than by lawful means.¹⁷

At the time of the speech, Hardie was no longer the leader of the Labour Party, which was then led by James Ramsay MacDonald. MacDonald's time as leader was brought to an abrupt end in August 1914 when the First World War broke out. Despite opposing the war himself, the majority of the Labour Party voted to support the war effort.¹⁸ After being replaced as leader by Arthur Henderson, MacDonald became a prominent part of the anti-war movement in the years and months that followed. He helped to form the Union of Democratic Control which, although not decisively pacifist, sought to oppose the British government's involvement in the war.¹⁹

The UDC, which was characterised by the head of Special Branch, Sir Basil Thomson, as 'pro-German' and full of 'peace-cranks', was supported by several Labour MPs. Indeed, in 1914, six Labour parliamentarians opposed the war.²⁰ Although security officials were not unduly concerned with the British peace movement during the first two years of the conflict, records were kept of anti-war speeches. Ramsay MacDonald was observed making numerous such speeches. Although no action was taken against him, MI5 had considered recommending his prosecution for seditious oratory. The Director of Public Prosecutions believed that one speech made by MacDonald in Birmingham 'was one for which he richly deserved prosecution'.²¹ Notice was also taken of the wartime activities of Philip Snowden MP due to his links to the pacifist movement. The Home Office held a large file detailing the 'pacifist activities' of both Snowden and his wife; reports were routinely produced on his speeches and the authorities discussed prosecuting him under the Defence of the Realm Act, believing his declarations to be 'deliberately mischievous'.²² The Home Office also held a file on the pacifist activities of Charles Philips Trevelyan, who joined the Labour Party in 1918.²³

MacDonald and Snowden represented the anti-war position of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and were amongst those who wrote regularly for the ILP's publication, *Labour Leader*, during the war. This publication, which was frequently reported on by intelligence officials, was described in one MI5 file as being 'consistently unpatriotic' with 'a strong pacifist tendency'. The same report even stated that 'the graver charge of pro-

Germanism might almost be brought against the paper as well'.²⁴ Despite the prominent anti-war advocacy of individuals like MacDonald and Snowden, their views did not represent those held by the majority of the parliamentary Labour Party or even those of the wider membership of the Labour Party itself. In 1916, however, things began to change as conscription was introduced for men between the ages of 18 and 41. Although Labour MPs were divided on the issue, a great majority of members opposed it, and a Labour Party conference was said to have 'denounced it by an overwhelming majority'.²⁵

If the anti-war position of some Labour members may have strengthened security officials' existing concerns about the Party, the reaction of left-wingers to the first Russian revolution of February 1917 would undoubtedly have led to even greater alarm within the intelligence community. A minority of Labour opinion greeted the revolution warmly and celebrated the fall of Tsar Nicholas II and, at the beginning of June, the ILP and the British Socialist Party convened a conference in Leeds to celebrate the revolution.²⁶ Attended by 1,150 delegates who included Labour MPs, representatives from unions, members of local parties and pacifists, the conference was seen by the War Cabinet as having 'revolutionary character'.²⁷ It was remarked upon by security officials as having a 'pro-German and anti-British tone'. The same report stated that the 'pacifist MPs' attending the conference, who included MacDonald and Snowden, 'make comparatively mild speeches in Parliament, but when they get outside they become extreme and revolutionary'.²⁸

The delegates passed resolutions congratulating the Russian people on their revolution, advocating an immediate peace and, most strikingly, the establishment of workers' and soldiers' councils or 'Soviets' in Britain.²⁹ It was the latter which was most concerning to security officials, and almost certainly led the Whitehall report on the conference to state,

There can be no doubt on the part of anyone who is familiar with the aims and desires of the persons responsible for the Leeds Conference that it is intended to lead, if possible, to a revolution in this country.³⁰

The Labour Party disassociated itself from events in Leeds shortly after the conference, and its national executive reaffirmed the Party's commitment to the war effort.³¹ The workers' and soldiers' councils were nothing more than an idea and came to nothing. Within a few months, the Bolsheviks had taken power in Russia; their revolution gained less support from the labour movement and was opposed by most senior ILP figures.³² The perception of extreme radicalism that clung to the Labour Party was not, however, easy to discard. The very fact that Labour MPs had played a prominent part in the Leeds conference and had been involved in radicalism during the war meant, however, that by the time of the Armistice in 1918, the British press, public and intelligence agencies all held a degree of suspicion about the Labour Party.

A 'traitor to Britain'?

During the war, those within the Labour Party who had taken radical positions were always a minority. The majority supported the war effort, and a number of Labour MPs—most notably the leader of the parliamentary party, Arthur Henderson—had been

members of the wartime coalition government. Despite all of this, at the start of the 1920s, the Party was considered by many to be somewhat dangerous.³³

During the war, MacDonald had 'openly questioned' the funding of Britain's intelligence agencies, whilst Trevelyan argued that the security and intelligence services, which he opposed, should be dismantled.³⁴ These were not isolated opinions within the Labour Party and intelligence officials inevitably had serious concerns about the way in which prominent Labour figures perceived their work. In 1919, Sir Vernon Kell, MI5's director general, felt moved to remark on the matter at a private meeting on the future of the intelligence services. He stated, 'Parliamentary opposition to the Secret Service vote would be greatly reduced if [we] were to take the Labour Members into our confidence to the extent of showing the most prominent of them a little of the work which had been done during the War'. This would, Kell believed, 'help ... to dispel the feeling which appeared to be prevalent in many quarters that Secret Service funds were used to spy upon Labour in this country'.³⁵

It is unclear whether Kell's suggestion was ever followed up. Ironically, however, it does appear that in 1919 Secret Service funds were still being used to spy on Labour figures, most notably Ramsay MacDonald. His name was amongst those included in several weekly reports on 'revolutionaries' sent to the cabinet by Sir Basil Thomson. In June and July 1919 Thomson, who was principally responsible for collecting intelligence on domestic subversion, wrote that MacDonald had attempted to organise general strikes in France, Italy and Britain as 'a mark of sympathy with the Soviet form of government'.³⁶ It appears that at this time, MacDonald's movements were tracked extensively, and his correspondence was regularly intercepted.³⁷ The politician was seemingly aware of this. In August Thomson reported the account of 'a Frenchman who met Mr Ramsay MacDonald at Lucerne'. MacDonald was quoted as having told the source that 'he was under strict surveillance' and 'that the English government was seeking for the flimsiest pretext on which to accuse him'.³⁸ In 1919, MacDonald was not a member of parliament. His anti-war position was relentlessly used against him during the 1918 General Election campaign, and he failed to hold on to his seat. Although no longer in parliament, his actions continued to concern intelligence officials and he was still subject to scrutiny.³⁹

MacDonald was far from being the only prominent Labour Party figure who failed to win a seat at the 1918 General Election. Voters also decided not to re-elect Snowden, Trevelyan and George Lansbury on account of their anti-war positions.⁴⁰ The fact that he had failed to retain his parliamentary seat did not, however, greatly affect Lansbury. By 1920 he was one of the most prominent Labour Party figures: the mayor of Poplar and editor of the socialist *Daily Herald* newspaper.⁴¹ Positioned on the left of the Party, his editorship of the *Herald* gave him a real voice and was said to have made him 'a tribune of the left in Britain'.⁴² He often expressed positive opinions about Bolsheviks in Russia and communists in Britain. At a time in which the Labour leadership was attempting to disassociate the Party from communists, Lansbury stated that they were 'not our enemies but our friends because they agreed on replacing capitalism'.⁴³

In early 1920, Lansbury visited Russia and reported back, in the *Herald*, his thoughts about the country. Upon his return to Britain, he wrote that Lenin, whom he had met during his trip, was 'a great man in every sense of the word'.⁴⁴ Although he acknowledged that atrocities had been committed by the Bolsheviks, Lansbury was largely supportive of the Russian leadership and stated that they 'had done more to put down terrorism and

keep down murder than any other Government in similar circumstances could be expected to do'.⁴⁵

Such were the political positions Lansbury espoused, he inevitably attracted the attention of the British intelligence community. On one occasion, MI5 described him as 'a supporter of any kind of anti-Government crank'.⁴⁶ His trip to Russia meant that he attracted more attention than ever. Shortly after Lansbury had returned to Britain, Sir Basil Thomson reported to the Cabinet that, during his trip, Lansbury had 'arranged with the Soviet Government to supply him with 500 tons of paper free of charge, presumably for the *Daily Herald*'. Thomson described this as 'the first time in the history of journalism that a daily newspaper in England has been subsidised by a foreign government'.⁴⁷ After the story was reported in the press, Lansbury strongly denied the claims stating that 'neither directly or indirectly had the *Daily Herald*, himself, or anyone connected with it, received a single penny or an ounce of paper, from anybody outside of this country or from anyone connected directly or indirectly with the Bolshevik or any other government'.⁴⁸

In May 1920, GC&CS began to intercept the communications of the Soviet Trading Delegation, which was based in London as trade negotiations between Britain and the Soviet Union were initiated. In July, this enabled intelligence officials to discover that the trading delegation was providing the *Herald* with a subsidy funded by money raised from the sale of diamonds by the Soviets.⁴⁹ Shortly afterwards, Basil Thomson wrote that the 'question of making public that the "*Daily Herald*" has ... accepted a subsidy from the Soviet Government ... is now under consideration'.⁵⁰ A decision was subsequently made to leak the information to the press, to undermine both Lansbury and the *Herald*, on the condition that newspapers described the messages as having been received from a 'neutral country'. On the 19 August, *The Times* printed the intercepts under the headline 'The *Daily Herald*. Bolshevik Help Sought' but stated 'the following messages have been intercepted by the British government'. Fortunately for the government, the Russians did not appear to notice.⁵¹ Less fortunately for Lansbury, his and the *Herald's* subsequent denials were not believed. Both his own reputation and that of his newspaper were greatly damaged. It was impossible to maintain that that the *Herald* was independent of Moscow.⁵²

In the summer of 1920, Lansbury was also under investigation by MI5 after British soldiers, who had returned from Moscow, had spoken when being debriefed about Lansbury's behaviour during his trip to Russia earlier in the year. At the time, some British officers were being held in Moscow as prisoners of war. A report on the matter, written in early June 1920, stated,

Mr Lansbury took the opportunity of his visit to Moscow to endeavour to convert the few British soldiers who he met, to Bolshevism ... Mr Lansbury was disgusted at finding them free and said that the best way of making His Majesty's Government recognise the [Bolsheviks] was to keep the prisoners in prison and to treat them as prisoners.⁵³

Statements were subsequently collected from numerous British soldiers who had been in Moscow at the time. Whilst several corroborated the original story, some declined to comment with others claiming they had not heard Lansbury say what had been alleged. Summing up the case in late August 1920, MI5's Major Joseph Ball wrote that while 'there can be no doubt' that Lansbury had made such comments 'we could not very well publish [statements] unfavourable to Lansbury and suppress those which

are favourable'. Ball did, however, suggest that there was another way of publicising the story,

It would otherwise if it were possible to arrange for one or two popular newspapers to interview the men who actually heard what Lansbury said. Such a paper as 'John Bull' would probably reach the right class of person but, I understand, there are serious objections to making use of this organ at the present time.⁵⁴

John Bull was edited at the time by Horatio Bottomley, Independent MP for Hackney South. The publication, which stated it was written 'without fear or favour, rancour or rant', took on a sensationalist tone but had been hugely successful during the first world war, tapping into the public mood by taking a ferociously anti-German stance.⁵⁵

By 1920, *John Bull* had turned its fire on pro-Bolsheviks in Britain, making it a useful conduit for Ball and MI5 to report the story on Lansbury.⁵⁶ The 'serious objections' Ball referred to about using *John Bull* at that time were most likely due to the reputation of Bottomley. His career had been littered with financial scandals—having to resign as an MP in 1912 after being found bankrupt and being charged, but not convicted, with fraud on more than one occasion.⁵⁷ Despite concerns about Bottomley's chequered background, however, MI5 did decide to pass information to him about Lansbury. On 4 September, *John Bull* published a story headlined 'George Lansbury Exposed'. In the article Bottomley stated that he was 'in possession of irrefutable evidence that ... [Lansbury] devoted his activities whilst in Russia to anti-British purposes'. The subsequent story quoted verbatim from witness statements which British officers present in Moscow had given to the police and were subsequently passed to MI5. He concluded by stating,

I have proved Mr. Lansbury to be not only a traitor to Britain, but a cruel and callous brute towards the gallant fellows who fought for him and you and me. And I call for his prosecution - for abusing his passport and endeavouring to suborn members of His Majesty's forces from their allegiance. Come, Mr. Prime Minister, do your duty!⁵⁸

By using Bottomley, MI5 had someone who would not only sensationalise the story but who would also keep it in the headlines for several weeks. The following week, he published another story which 'publicly indicted' Lansbury and called for him to reply to the allegations.⁵⁹ Subsequent editions of *John Bull* challenged Lansbury to respond.⁶⁰ The last of these was on October 23 and, since Lansbury had not responded, Bottomley raised the matter in Parliament just days later. He asked the new Conservative Prime Minister, Andrew Bonar Law, whether Lansbury had 'endeavoured to suborn British military prisoners of war from their allegiance to the King'. Bonar Law replied by stating that whilst there had been reports of Lansbury praising the Bolshevik regime to the prisoners there was 'no evidence' he had suborned or sought to suborn the prisoners.⁶¹ A little over a month later, Bottomley raised the matter again, asking whether Lansbury should be prosecuted. Bonar Law replied by stating that from the available evidence 'we could not prosecute'.⁶² In their desire to further damage Lansbury's reputation, MI5 and, in particular, Joseph Ball had very few qualms about leaking private information to friendly journalists. The ease with which they did so surely helped to influence their actions in the following years.

Labour in power

Lansbury was never prosecuted over the allegations released to Bottomley. He was, however, prosecuted and jailed alongside twenty-nine other Poplar councillors in 1921 after rebelling against what they believed to be unfair tax rates. After being released from prison, Lansbury was elected Labour MP for Poplar, Bow and Bromley at the November 1922 General Election. Having been re-elected at the December 1923 General Election, he was offered, but declined, a junior ministerial post as Ramsay MacDonald's Labour Party entered office for the first time.⁶³

In his first audience with his new Prime Minister, King George V voiced concerns to MacDonald about a speech Lansbury had made weeks earlier whereby he had 'expressed a threat' to the sovereign'.⁶⁴ Despite this, the King was not overly concerned about the Labour Party taking power.⁶⁵ Other members of the establishment were, however, less sanguine. The Cabinet Secretary, Sir Maurice Hankey, worried that the new government would 'cut the throat' of the committee of imperial defence, whilst the permanent secretary in the Foreign Office, Sir Eyre Crowe, was said to have feared for the future of the intelligence services.⁶⁶ Although the Labour leadership expressed its opposition to communism, intelligence officials would still have had grave concerns, not least because the occupants of Numbers 10 and 11 Downing Street, MacDonald and his chancellor, Phillip Snowden, had long been on the radar of MI5 and Special Branch. Both organisations not only held security files on the Prime Minister and Chancellor but also on other members of the incoming government.⁶⁷

Intelligence officials had long been concerned about the prospect of a Labour government. As early as late 1918, Sir Basil Thomson and the wartime Director of Naval Intelligence, Admiral Sir Reginald 'Blinker' Hall, developed a plan for an alternative funding system for a new intelligence agency. They proposed obtaining £1 million through a secret War Loan investment to finance the work of the intelligence community. 'It is very doubtful whether parliament will continue to vote an adequate sum for Secret Services after the war, more especially if a Labour Government comes into power', Thomson wrote. The proposal would have enabled intelligence officials to continue their work without being reliant on approval of government, enabling them to circumvent any future Labour government. The plan did not come to fruition, but such an act would have undermined democratic links between government and intelligence.⁶⁸

In early 1924, unsure about the new men in power, the intelligence community would not have been reassured by some of the government's initial actions. MacDonald's relationship with the head of Special Branch, Wyndham Childs, was fraught and he saw his request to view his own Special Branch file refused.⁶⁹ MacDonald made clear to Childs his scepticism of the need for weekly intelligence reports, suggested that they should include reference of fascism as well as Communism and declined to circulate them to the Cabinet.⁷⁰ The new government created further reason for intelligence officials to be alarmed when it provided *de jure* recognition of the Bolshevik regime, becoming the first government in the West to do so. The Foreign Office was so concerned about the new government that they initially declined to notify MacDonald of GC&CS intercepts of Soviet traffic.⁷¹ MacDonald's deputy in the Foreign Office, Arthur Ponsonby MP, was refused all access to intercepts and SIS reports due to his 'subordinate position'. 'I was not allowed to

know', he later said, 'I was never allowed to come in'. Yet Ponsonby did not mind, 'I am glad it was so'. He regarded intelligence work as a 'dirty' business.⁷²

Despite fears to the contrary, the first Labour government proved to be moderate and capable of holding high office. The government respected and continued traditions, whilst ministers worked well with Civil Servants.⁷³ After Childs had included evidence of Communist attempts to subvert the Labour Party, the Prime Minister eventually took notice of weekly intelligence reports.⁷⁴ The Home Secretary, Arthur Henderson, defended Special Branch in the Commons and, 'to MI5's relief', continued to authorise Home Office Warrants on leading Communists.⁷⁵ He was also given access to information Special Branch held on the most left-wing Cabinet member, John Wheatley, in order to help him to decide 'whether or not he should have access to the Cabinet Report'.⁷⁶ The government even responded to industrial action in a way which differed little from the manner in which previous governments would have responded.⁷⁷ The Cabinet set up a committee on Industrial Unrest to consider the Communist influence on a wave of strikes, during which it viewed and accepted the legitimacy of MI5 and Special Branch reports which included correspondence from the CPGB, the minutes of its meetings and reports from informers within the CPGB and Trade Unions.⁷⁸

Despite the moderate nature of MacDonald's government, some establishment figures still believed that Labour was radical and dangerous. They were particularly concerned by the government's desire to pursue Anglo-Soviet relations; such concerns would have been exacerbated by the signing of two Anglo-Soviet treaties in early August 1924. In one of the treaties, the British government agreed to provide the Soviets with a loan in exchange for the Soviets settling pre-revolutionary Russian debts. This was portrayed by the press as providing 'money for murderers' and appeared to show that the government was not sufficiently firm in dealing with the Bolsheviks.⁷⁹ At the same time as the treaties were being signed, the government decided to withdraw charges, issued under the Incitement to Mutiny Act, against a Communist journalist, John Ross Campbell, who had encouraged insubordination amongst the armed forces.⁸⁰ The government was accused of intervening in the law, and many Conservatives suggested that the real reason the prosecution was dropped was due to pressure from the Communists.⁸¹ The so-called 'Campbell case' caused the government to fall; MacDonald's administration lost a vote of confidence in the Commons and a general election was called for 29 October 1924.

The Zinoviev Letter

The Labour Party lost 1924 General Election, with Stanley Baldwin's Conservative Party winning 412 seats and a large majority in the House of Commons. For many politicians on both right and left, the Zinoviev letter had played a crucial role in the result. The proprietor of the *Daily Mail*, Lord Rothermere, who had published the letter, believed it had cost Labour 'something like 100 seats'.⁸² Yet, this may not have been quite the case. Although they lost seats, the Labour vote actually increased by over one million. It was the decline of the Liberal Party, which lost 118 of 158 seats, which ensured a strong Conservative victory.⁸³

Although the impact of the Zinoviev letter may, therefore, be overstated in deciding the results of the general election, it was still important. Not only was there a consensus at the time that its impact was significant, but the letter appears to have been leaked in an

effort to damage Labour in the election. In 1998, after decades of speculation, the then Chief Historian of the Foreign Office, Gill Bennett, was commissioned to investigate the case. In her report Bennett concluded that the letter was almost certainly a forgery and stated that it was almost certainly deliberately leaked,⁸⁴

it is clear that there were a number of people, official and unofficial, who may have thought it their duty to ensure that a copy of what was considered a seditious document received proper publicity through the press; equally clearly, they felt that they could not rely upon its being made public by the government through official channels – that is the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, or the Foreign Office itself.⁸⁵

Although there is no definitive evidence, it is possible that members of the intelligence services who were suspicious of the Labour Party deliberately leaked the letter to ensure damage to the Party and the government. Christopher Andrew raises this in his authorised history of the Security Service, stating that those responsible ‘convinced themselves that they were acting in the national interest—to remove from power a government whose susceptibility to Soviet and pro-Soviet pressure made it a threat to national security’.⁸⁶

Despite the allegations, the lack of documentation means that it is not possible to prove who did actually leak the letter to the *Mail*. Bennett states that there were certain members of the intelligence community who had a clear allegiance to the Conservative Party and may have leaked the letter to the Conservatives and names Joseph Ball of MI5 and Desmond Morton of SIS.⁸⁷ The reference to Ball is particularly striking as he had previously advocated leaking information on Lansbury, and it seems unlikely that he would have had any qualms about leaking other information. Ball is also mentioned by Andrew as a prime candidate for the leak. He states that Ball’s ‘subsequent lack of scruples for using intelligence for party political advantage ... in the later 1920s strongly suggests, but does not prove, that he was willing to do so’ in 1924.⁸⁸ His possible involvement is further bolstered by the fact that, as early as July 1924, he and Morton appear to have discussed the possibility of leaking correspondence to undermine the Labour government.⁸⁹ Ball seems a particularly plausible candidate for the Zinoviev leak because of his association with the Lansbury leak and his allegiance to the Conservative Party; he went on to work for the Conservatives as director of publicity. It has been argued that whilst there was no definitive evidence to suggest that Ball leaked the letter, ‘such an action would have suited his *modus operandi*’.⁹⁰ When later working for the Conservatives, Ball was said to have sought to ‘control the narrative’ of the Zinoviev affair which, as Bennett argues, ‘suggests that he knew a lot about what actually happened’.⁹¹

Whatever the motives for leaking the Zinoviev letter, there was a distinct fear amongst establishment members, particularly those working in the intelligence community, about the Labour Party. The Labour government’s desire to normalise relations with the Soviets was viewed as deeply disturbing. However, the Zinoviev affair was not part of an orchestrated campaign by the British establishment to bring down a Labour government. If intelligence officials were involved, they are most likely to have been a small number of rogue individuals working without approval from highest echelons. Many intelligence officials may not have felt entirely comfortable about Labour being in office, but it seems unlikely that the majority would have believed in plotting to

bring the government down. Whether or not they would have mourned the collapse of the government is, however, another story. As one Whitehall official, Kenneth Lyon, wrote in a letter to Lord Derby, a former Conservative Secretary for War, in November 1924, 'as you know the civil service has no politics, but I fancy they would contribute heavily to a statue to Zinovieff and Mr Campbell, for the effect they had on the election'.⁹²

'A confidential report by Scotland yard'

The Zinoviev affair led, inevitably, to a backlash against the British state and, in particular, the intelligence community, from the Labour Party. In 1925, the Labour Party advisory committee on international affairs wrote a memorandum which spoke of the 'profound distrust of the personnel of the Foreign Office entertained by the Labour Party'. The advisory committee later advocated the 'suspension . . . of all secret service activities'.⁹³ In a later Parliamentary debate, MacDonald described the Zinoviev letter as a 'political weapon' which had been 'a deliberately planned and devised concoction of deceit, fitted artfully for the purpose of deceiving the public and to influence the Election'.⁹⁴

In the years after the Zinoviev affair, Whitehall officials expressed concerns that the Labour Party could portray intelligence officials as having political bias.⁹⁵ During a meeting of the Prime Minister's Secret Service Committee in March 1927, Sir William Tyrrell, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, recalled a recent conversation he had had with Stanley Baldwin, the Conservative Prime Minister at the time. He stated that Baldwin was fearful that the work of Special Branch 'might at any moment give rise to a scandal, owing to the Labour Party obtaining some plausible pretext to complain that a government department was being employed for party politics'. Tyrrell went on to say that 'Home politics were tending more to a contest between Conservatives and Socialists and there was a grave danger that the government of the day might sooner or later turn to [Special Branch] for information needed in the party struggle'.⁹⁶

The concern that officials held about accusations of bias against the Labour Party has been used in some quarters to explain why, in 1928, two Special Branch officers found to be providing intelligence to a Soviet espionage ring were not prosecuted. The two men, Inspector Hubertus van Ginhoven and Sergeant Charles Jane, had been recruited in the early 1920s by William Norman Ewer to provide 'inside information'. Ewer, an avowed communist and foreign editor of the *Daily Herald*, ran a network of communist agents and had been introduced to Ginhoven by the Labour MP, Jack Hayes. Hayes had, himself, run a detective service for Ewer and it was felt that, had this been made public during a trial of Ginhoven and Jane, accusations would abound about 'Another Zinoviev letter'. It was, one MI5 official wrote, 'felt generally that another Zinoviev letter incident should be avoided'.⁹⁷

Whitehall officials were, by the late 1920s, very concerned about the way in which the Labour Party would view the intelligence community's work. In the autumn of 1928, they had further reason to worry when a newspaper story alleged that Ramsay MacDonald had been investigated and placed under surveillance by Special Branch between 1916 and 1921. A note from a Home Office official in September 1928 stated 'the article is certain to lead to Questions when the House meets and the Labour Party will probably allege that it appears evident that the police are being used for spying on their legitimate activities'.⁹⁸

The article in question, headlined 'The "Yard's" Secret Report on Ex-Premier', was published on 29 September 1928 in *John Blunt* and written by Horatio Bottomley. By 1928 Bottomley was a disgraced figure and had spent several years in prison after being convicted for fraud in 1922.⁹⁹ He was released in 1927 and began writing in a new, thinly-veiled imitation of *John Bull* which he named *John Blunt*.¹⁰⁰ Bottomley's article alleged that he had seen a copy of a 'confidential Report by Scotland Yard dealing with the activities of Mr Ramsay MacDonald from the year 1916 down to 1921'. It is likely that the document was leaked to Bottomley, and the article detailed a number of times in which MacDonald had come to Special Branch attention. One section of the article, detailing MacDonald's movements in 1919 bears a striking resemblance to a report, which has subsequently been declassified, written by Sir Basil Thomson as part of his weekly reports to the cabinet.¹⁰¹ Although potentially damaging to MacDonald, Bottomley reported that the file was closed in 1921, with the conclusion from an intelligence officer that,

Events in 1920, and more particularly the divisions in the Independent Labour Party, have proved MacDonald to be a Constitutional Socialist, and not a Bolshevik. He has opposed, actively and successfully the Reds in the ranks of his own Party, and it is largely due to his leadership that the Independent Labour Party has not become affiliated to the Third International.¹⁰²

The publication of the article prompted an immediate internal investigation by the Home Office to determine both the veracity of the information in Bottomley's account and the source of the leak. Although the exact referenced file was never found during the investigation, officials thought that one had existed. One wrote, 'in view of the nature of R. MacDonald's activities during the war a dossier must have been compiled'. Those investigating the case within the Home Office did discover very similar documents. One Home Office official wrote on 1 October 1928,

I have been shown a book of biographies of persons who came into prominence during the war largely on account of their pacifist tendencies. There is a biography of the Rt. Hon. J. Ramsay Macdonald in this book from which this article is undoubtedly taken ... It seems extremely probable that when Sir Basil Thomson left Scotland Yard he took with him extracts from this book which would be, of course, invaluable for anybody desiring to write a history of the activities of prominent men during the war.¹⁰³

Another official from the Home Office wrote on 4 October 1928,

I have been carefully through the Sp. Br. files and can find nothing at all which might have been the source for John Blunt's article. The 'Book of Biographies' is another matter. There are 31 half foolscap sheets in single spaced typing about Mr MacDonald ending in Jan. 1921. With the exception of three paragraphs ... the whole of the alleged extracts are almost word for word with entries in the 'Book' ... there can be no doubt whatsoever that article and book have a common origin¹⁰⁴

After initially deciding that an offence had been committed under the Official Secrets Act, Home Office officials and the Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson-Hicks, decided not to take the matter further. They believed that any criminal investigation would gain Bottomley publicity that he was desperately seeking. Despite the obscurity of *John Blunt* as a publication, Bottomley's article did gain some traction. Having been published days before the Labour Party held its annual conference, the article was said to have caused the 'greatest sensation' during the gathering.¹⁰⁵ Although it was not publicly

discussed, in private the revelation that MacDonald had been under surveillance in the past caused a 'good deal of indignation' and a 'good many of the MPs present expressed their determination to demand a Government enquiry' into the surveillance.¹⁰⁶

Although information from Bottomley's story was subsequently reported in both the *Daily Express* and *Reynold's News*, it was not sensationalised in the way he may have wished. In an editorial, the *Express* questioned what Bottomley intended to achieve by publishing such information and argued 'if it was thought to repeat in another form the incident of the Zinovieff letter, the plot has completely miscarried'. In the autumn of 1928, a General Election was looming within the next year. It was this, the *Express* seemed to believe, that had motivated Bottomley, although it felt that his tactics were very wrong.

This is 1928 . . . There may be a hundred good reasons for voting against Mr MacDonald for what he is doing and saying now. There are very few reasons – and none of them good – for voting against him for what he said and did from ten to fourteen years ago. The general election that is coming upon us will be fierce and momentous. Let us at least keep it clear of personalities, red herrings, Red letters, and all other irrelevant distinctions. We want an election of issues, not of scandal; of present day programmes, not of reminiscences; of realism, not of old wives' tales.¹⁰⁷

MacDonald's own reaction to the article is unknown; there does not appear to be any reference to it in his personal papers. At the time, it was suggested by journalists that he had asked for the Home Office to conduct an inquiry. Although an enquiry did take place, it does not appear to have been prompted by MacDonald. Indeed, when later asked by journalists for a response to the *John Blunt* article, he denied having read it and said that 'it is a lie and a ridiculous one to say that I have protested'.¹⁰⁸

It is unclear how Bottomley acquired such information or what motivated him to write such a story. Bottomley was certainly no fan of MacDonald and had heavily criticised him and other Labour Party figures who opposed the war.¹⁰⁹ In one article he referred to MacDonald as a 'traitor', whilst in another he went as far as to write, 'we demand his trial by Court Martial, his condemnation as an aider and abettor of the King's enemies—and that he be taken to the Tower and shot at dawn'.¹¹⁰ In 1928, however, Bottomley strongly denied that he still sought to target MacDonald, and dismissed the accusation that he was intending to undermine the Labour leader ahead of the 1929 General Election. He wrote, 'In days gone by I have attacked him, and attacked him fiercely—not, as I have since felt, always fairly; but, though I do not, and cannot, ever forgive the part he played during the war, his conduct as Prime Minister and his stand against the "Reds" – whose ideals are not for *this* world—convinced me that, as I wrote five years ago, the advent of a Labour Government, under his leadership, "need cause none of us a sleepless night"'.¹¹¹

Bottomley's previous difficulties with the truth mean that he cannot be taken at his word. As he did not leave any personal papers, having destroyed them before his death, it will never be known how he obtained the information.¹¹² The Home Office inquiry did not discover how this occurred, although officials privately acknowledged that information had been leaked to Bottomley on several occasions in the past.¹¹³ This was made clear by the Lansbury case in 1920 and was also confirmed by Bottomley himself in another *John*

Bull article in which he referred to ‘the intimate link which exists between Fleet-street and “the Yard”’. In the article he stated that he had ‘been rather fortunate in the course of my journalistic career’ in receiving good information.¹¹⁴ Only a small minority of intelligence officials believed in leaking information and the practice was not widespread. By the late 1920s, however, a few intelligence officials clearly still felt deeply uneasy about the Labour Party and its leadership and considered press leaks as one of the best ways to undermine the party.

Spying on the ‘enemy’

Due to his previous actions, Joseph Ball may initially appear to have been a prime suspect for leaking the information on MacDonald to Bottomley. By 1928, however, he no longer worked for state intelligence and was, instead, working for the Conservative Party. It may have been the case that Ball still had access to old documents and could have leaked them, but it is impossible to know if he had any involvement because, like Bottomley, he destroyed most of his private papers before his death.¹¹⁵ The extent of Ball and Bottomley’s relationship and whether it extended to this particular incident will, therefore, never be known.

Ball’s purposeful wiping of the historical record means that he will forever be an enigmatic figure about whom little can be certain. Some information is known, however, about his work with the Conservative Party. In 1927, he was appointed by the Conservative Party chairman, JCC Davidson, as the Party’s director of publicity.¹¹⁶ Davidson and Ball had first met during the first world war and developed a close relationship in the years that followed, occasionally exchanging letters, although the contents of these were often vague.¹¹⁷ In November 1924, shortly after the Zinoviev letter and the Conservative General Election victory, Davidson wrote to Ball, ‘Many thanks for your note of congratulation for which I am very grateful, and also for the other thing which you sent along’.¹¹⁸ What Ball had ‘sent along’ and why he had congratulated Davidson is unclear—was he congratulating a friend on winning his seat and his appointment as parliamentary secretary at the Admiralty in the new government or was he congratulating the whole Conservative Party for defeating the Labour Party? Exactly what he meant will never be known, but he does not seem to have been displaying the political neutrality that would have been expected from an MI5 officer.

The outline of some of Ball’s work for the Conservative Party after 1927 was later revealed by Davidson,

With Joseph Ball I ran a little intelligence service of our own, quite separate from the Party organisation. We had agents in certain key centres and we also had agents actually in the Labour Party Headquarters, with the result that we got their reports on political feeling in the country as well as our own.¹¹⁹

When Davidson was Party Chairman, he sought to gain any information in order to defeat the Labour Party politically. For Ball, however, the motivation to defeat Labour was much more visceral. To him, the Labour Party was the ‘enemy’, and he once wrote that the ‘revolutionary tail wags the Labour dog’.¹²⁰ Working for the Conservative Party enabled

him to pursue his anti-Labour views much more unambiguously. Ball and Davidson's work extended beyond placing agents into the Labour Party. According to Davidson,

We also got advance 'pulls' of [Labour] literature. This we arranged with Odhams Press, who did most of the Labour Party printing, with the result that we frequently received copies of their leaflets and pamphlets before they had reached Transport House. This was of enormous value to us because we were able to study Labour Party policy in advance, and in the case of leaflets we could produce a reply to appear simultaneously with their production.¹²¹

The arrangement was said to be informal; individuals within the printing works were paid by Conservative Central Office to remove 'pulls' of proofs and send them to Ball. From early 1929, Ball also began to receive 'priority copies of all pamphlets and circulars' of the Liberal Party as soon as they were printed.¹²²

Ball's few surviving personal papers provide a small insight into the information he managed to obtain on the Labour Party from informers. Whilst some reports merely included gossip on the internal politics of the party,¹²³ others detailed more personal information on MacDonald's health and personal finances—'there is no change of note in Mac's private banking account'.¹²⁴ Sources regularly sent Ball political information which would have been very useful ahead of the 1929 General Election. These reports included detailed information on the Labour Party finances, the constituencies Labour would particularly be targeting with propaganda during the election and even detailed financial policies of a prospective Labour government.¹²⁵

Due to the limited number of papers available, much is unknown about Ball's intelligence operations for the Conservative Party. One report does, however, give some insight into both what he sought from his informants and how far the sources went to find such information. In December 1928, one correspondent wrote,

Here I must digress in order to answer another of the queries made by you. So far I have been unable to trace anything of the nature of manuscript in Mr. H's possession likely to fit the bill i.e. for future pamphleteering. Only two drawers are kept locked and in neither is there anything of the nature mentioned by you. The righthand drawer appears to be a receptacle for nothing more interesting than tobacco tin and odds and ends of a private nature. That on the left hand side private letters and a few books of reference – including the one published by your own office!¹²⁶

Despite Ball's efforts, the Labour Party defeated the Conservative Party at the 1929 General Election. Just weeks after the election a source wrote to Ball extensively detailing gossip about the goings-on within the new government. The source included within his report the line—'if there are any points that you would like me to try and obtain clearer information—then just send same along and I will obtain same'.¹²⁷

Ball's importance to the Conservative Party meant that when MacDonald returned to government for the second time following the 1929 General Election, relations between the intelligence community and the new government remained uneasy. Although tensions were not as they had been in 1924, MacDonald had concerns about Ball working for the Conservative Party and suspected further 'dirty tricks' from intelligence officials.¹²⁸ The Prime Minister appeared apprehensive about the apparent closeness of elements of Whitehall and the Conservative Party. This was exacerbated by the fact that Ball was joined at Conservative Central Office by Sir Patrick Gower who had been Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. MacDonald subsequently wrote a newspaper article

describing it as 'regrettable'. His new chancellor, Philip Snowden, went further and spoke of 'the impropriety, if not indecency' of Gower's decision to move. Despite such dismay, Gower 'firmly kept the curtain down over his previous service' and did not betray confidences.¹²⁹

MacDonald's new Foreign Secretary, Arthur Henderson, felt uneasy about British espionage and codebreaking and sought to have little contact with SIS or GC&CS. Despite having worked closely with domestic intelligence officials as Home Secretary in the 1924 Labour Government, Henderson viewed foreign intelligence as a very different matter. Sir Robert Vansittart, Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Office, later stated that Henderson 'rated Secret Service like hard liquor, because he knew, and wanted to know, nothing of it'. The junior minister in the Foreign Office, Hugh Dalton, was also far from enthusiastic about intelligence matters. He believed that there was an 'excessive' number of people employed by the 'secret service' and argued in favour of cutting its budget.¹³⁰

In 1930 Ball became Director of the newly-formed Conservative Research Department. He still continued to infiltrate the Labour Party and is said to have 'maintained informal links with his former intelligence colleagues'.¹³¹ He reportedly asked the MI5 officer Maxwell Knight 'for internal political information regarding the Liberal and Labour Parties'. Knight declined to help, believing that such actions were 'totally outside [his] scope and a matter in which he was not interested'.¹³² Later in the 1930s, Ball became a key ally of Neville Chamberlain, and he began to spy on opponents of Chamberlain's policy of appeasement. He was said to have even tapped the telephones of anti-appeasers within the Conservative Party.¹³³

Despite initial setbacks, the 1929–31 Labour government and intelligence agencies eventually worked well together. Ministers regularly made use of intelligence and MacDonald sought to increase funding for the 'secret service'. A crucial part of the improvement in relations came in 1929 when the head of SIS, Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair, appointed the Labour Party member, Lieutenant Commander Reginald Fletcher, as a senior officer of the service. Sinclair is said to have seen the move as a way to improve relations with Labour, offering an olive branch to the new government.¹³⁴

In 1930, the government hosted a Naval Conference in London, convened by MacDonald who sought to encourage global naval disarmament. It was attended by delegations from the USA, Japan, France, Italy and Britain. During the conference, GC&CS, which was able to intercept traffic to and from American, French, Italian and Japanese delegations, provided the government with tailored reports, helping ministers and officials to achieve a negotiated settlement. The official history of GC&CS states that the organisation may have deliberately focused their reports in such a way 'which [they] knew would please a Labour government'. By providing such a service, GC&CS proved its worth to the government and helped to quell any potential threat from the Labour Party to cut the intelligence services.¹³⁵

In addition to working closely with intelligence, the Labour government was very keen to avoid being viewed as soft on communism, having been damaged by such accusations so badly in 1924. In March 1929, prior to Labour's return to power, the colonial government in India initiated criminal proceedings against several communists (including British nationals) after consulting the Conservative government in London. Communist influence was believed to be increasing in India and the colonial government had argued that successfully prosecuting

communist leaders for conspiracy would strike 'a most effective blow' against the movement.¹³⁶ The case was controversial and some on the British left, as well as unionists, protested strongly against it.

Once Labour had come to power, MacDonald's Secretary of State for India, William Wedgwood Benn, was inundated with calls to abandon the proposed prosecutions. The government, however, decided not to intervene.¹³⁷ The CPGB later asked for permission to send British Counsel for the defence in the case and a communist adviser to assist Counsel. Both requests were granted by the colonial government in India. The CPGB, however, nominated John Ross Campbell (from the 'Campbell Case') as the adviser, leaving Wedgwood Benn to withdraw permission.¹³⁸ 'It was', Benn said in his justification, 'an incident with this same Campbell that brought down the Labour Government in 1924'.¹³⁹

It is possible that the government also decided against intervening in the case for fear it could damage relationships again with the intelligence services; MI5 provided evidence during the trial 'of the Comintern's attempts to use communist agents in India to incite labour unrest there'. In August 1929, MI5 Deputy Director General, Sir Eric Holt-Wilson, was part of a delegation from London that travelled to India both to give evidence and to confirm the authenticity of intercepted documents, which helped to play a role in the successful prosecution of the defendants.¹⁴⁰

The trial lasted for several years, and before it had concluded, Labour was out of office. In August 1931, disagreements within MacDonald's cabinet over cuts to public expenditure led the government to fall. Intending to resign, MacDonald was instead asked by King George V to lead a National Government which included Conservative and Liberal members. Very few Labour ministers joined the Prime Minister as part of the new administration, and MacDonald became something of a hate figure within the Labour Party. At a subsequent General Election, in October 1931, MacDonald's Conservative-dominated National Government won a landslide victory with 554 seats in the Commons. The Labour Party was reduced to a mere 52 MPs.¹⁴¹

For the rest of the 1930s, the Labour Party did not come close to power and sought to rebuild its parliamentary base. Despite the difficulties it faced, the Party leadership continued to take a strong line against communism. Towards the end of the decade, some on the left of the Party argued in favour of forming a United Front against fascism with communists, but the idea was rejected by the NEC.¹⁴² In 1940, decisive action was also taken to prevent Krishna Menon, an Indian nationalist, from standing as a Labour parliamentary candidate after it was discovered that he had been working closely with communists. Menon, who served as a Labour Party councillor in St. Pancras, London in the 1930s, was selected as the Labour Parliamentary candidate for Dundee in late 1939. MI5, who held a file on Menon, noted 'it is really rather remarkable that he was accepted in view of his Communist associations, which, however, he is at great pains to keep well under cover'.¹⁴³ Within a year, however, Menon was dropped as a Labour candidate after making a speech at a conference organised by the communist publication *Labour Monthly* and writing an article in the communist newspaper, the *Daily Worker*. He was generally said to have been 'in sympathy with Communist Party activities'.¹⁴⁴

'Better equipped'

Both the actions of the 1929–31 Labour government and the discarding of Menon as a Labour candidate helped to show the Party's aversion to communism in the strongest possible way. Whilst it cannot be said for certain, it seems likely that, following the events of the 1920s, Labour wanted to prove to both the country and the intelligence services that it was not soft on communism. The events of 1929–40 may have helped, but the transformative period for the Labour Party in demonstrating its fitness for office to both the British people and the intelligence community was, undoubtedly, the Second World War.

The wartime coalition government had contained several Labour members who were able to develop a good knowledge of the world of intelligence. Clement Attlee, the Labour leader, served under Churchill as Deputy Prime Minister which, he said, gave him 'full experience of high and responsible office', notably allowing him to work closely with MI5.¹⁴⁵ Herbert Morrison, Labour MP for Hackney South, also frequently interacted with the Security Service as wartime Home Secretary and regularly read their reports on fascism and communism.¹⁴⁶ Most notably, Bishop Auckland MP, Hugh Dalton, was appointed by Churchill to run the Special Operations Executive (SOE), leaving him responsible for sabotage and propaganda work in occupied Europe. Churchill told him to 'set Europe ablaze'. Dalton, who would later serve as Chancellor of the Exchequer under Attlee, effectively became the Labour member of the coalition most closely involved with intelligence on a day-to-day basis.¹⁴⁷

In July 1945, Attlee formed the first majority Labour government following his victory in the General Election. Despite the collaboration of Labour ministers with officials during wartime, there was a degree of scepticism in the corridors of Whitehall about the new administration. Upon hearing the news of Attlee's victory, the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, Orme Sargent, was said to have predicted a 'Communist avalanche over Europe, a weak foreign policy, a private revolution at home and the reduction of England [sic] to a second class power'.¹⁴⁸ One GCHQ official, William Clarke, stated that a Labour Government posed a 'potential danger' to Britain's ability to read overseas traffic. 'Members of this party are very averse to anything of this sort', he wrote, 'our first Director had grave trouble ... when the last Labour government was in power'.¹⁴⁹ Within weeks, the new administration had allayed any potential Whitehall fears. The Foreign Office official, Patrick Reilly, made this clear in a letter. 'I don't think you need to worry', he wrote to his parents, 'These chaps have proved their worth these last five years and I truly think they are better equipped to bring us through the exceedingly difficult period that lies ahead'.¹⁵⁰

Attlee and his government displayed an uncompromising attitude to communism and the Soviet Union. To Attlee, communists were the 'enemy within', whilst his Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, believed Stalin and the Soviet Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, to be 'evil men'.¹⁵¹ The government was also strongly committed to both the defence of Britain and the defence of Europe, commissioning the development of a British atomic bomb and playing a key role in the formation of NATO.¹⁵² Both Attlee and Bevin made clear, in their meetings with intelligence officials, their belief in the need to tackle communism. In the summer of 1945, shortly after taking office, Bevin met with Nicholas Elliott of MI6. During their

lunch, the new Foreign Secretary stated, 'Communists and communism are vile. It is the duty of all members of the service to stamp upon them at every opportunity'.¹⁵³

Attlee worked particularly closely with Sir Percy Sillitoe, MI5's post-war Director General. Sillitoe was said to 'inspire greater confidence in Number Ten than in his own staff' and they met more times than any subsequent Prime Minister and Director General. Indeed, such was Attlee's commitment to MI5 that, during his term in office, he became the first Prime Minister to visit MI5's headquarters.¹⁵⁴ According to the MI5 Deputy Director General, Guy Liddell, the Labour government was 'far more interested to make use of our services' than previous Conservative administrations had ever been.¹⁵⁵ This was to the extent that, in 1946, Attlee asked to 'be informed in every case where we had positive information that a Member of Parliament was a member of a subversive organisation' no matter which party the MP belonged to.¹⁵⁶ He also asked Sillitoe to notify him about 'signs of subversion among Ministers' families'.¹⁵⁷ The Prime Minister and the Security Service exchanged names of crypto-communists in the Labour Parliamentary Party.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, the Attlee years established a tradition that continues to this day whereby MI5 informs any new Prime Minister if they have evidence that any potential minister is a security risk.¹⁵⁹ Under Attlee's leadership, the whole Labour Party showed a desire to combat radical left-wingers; senior Party officials conducted their own investigations into MPs and members, and the General Secretary, Morgan Phillips, compiled dossiers on those believed to be pro-Soviet.¹⁶⁰ The Party took strong disciplinary action against several MPs, eventually expelling four left-wing Labour parliamentarians in 1949.¹⁶¹

After the Attlee government left office following the October 1951 General Election, the Labour Party began to develop stronger relations with the Information Research Department (IRD)—a secret unit within the Foreign Office designed to expose the 'true nature' of Soviet communism and eventually unify worldwide opinion against the Soviet Government—in order to tackle those within the Party who were believed to be subversive. IRD files state that the department was 'in regular touch with officers at the Labour Party at Transport House [from] at least 1952', whilst an IRD member was also invited, as a private visitor, to the Party's annual conference every year between 1953 and 1967.¹⁶² The IRD provided the Labour Party with information that helped the Party to proscribe several radical left-wing organisations.¹⁶³ It was even asked by the Labour MP for Islington North, Gerry Reynolds, to help with an investigation into his Constituency Party (CLP) as he believed it 'was slowly passing into the grip of a well-organised group of extreme left-wing malcontents'. The IRD passed a limited amount of material on to Reynolds about a number of members of the CLP.¹⁶⁴ IRD files show that information was widely circulated to people involved with the Labour Party, including Transport House Staff, MPs, members of the National Executive Committee (NEC) and Labour members of the House of Lords.¹⁶⁵

Through the IRD, it appears that the Labour Party was provided with a small amount of Security Service information. The IRD helped the Party to build up evidence about a number of Labour MPs; it had a strong relationship with Herbert Bowden, Labour's Chief Whip in opposition, and appears to have often supplied him with material.¹⁶⁶ At one IRD meeting, attended by a member of MI5, it was made clear that,

any additional information which the Security Service might wish to pass indirectly to [Bowden] on this subject would, of course, be welcomed, and the English Section would ensure that it reached its destination.¹⁶⁷

Although this suggests that senior Labour Party officials may have been covertly sent material on Party members and MPs by MI5, as no further files mention the passing of information, it is impossible to say how extensive such practices were.

The Labour Party returned to power in 1964 after thirteen years in opposition.¹⁶⁸ The incoming Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, displayed an aversion to some of MI5's surveillance activities and was particularly opposed to the surveillance of MPs.¹⁶⁹ In 1966, he went as far as announcing in Parliament that he would not permit the tapping of the telephones of members of the House of Commons or the House of Lords in future.¹⁷⁰ The notion that parliamentarians' phones are not tapped has since become a custom known as the 'Wilson Doctrine', and survives to this day.¹⁷¹

Despite his apparent initial scepticism about some areas of the Security Service's work, Wilson was a keen consumer of intelligence and was particularly interested in information on industrial disputes. During the 1966 strike by the National Union of Seamen, he received regular reports from the Security Service. It has been said that 'no previous Prime Minister had shown such enthusiasm for regular up-to-the-minute Service reports during an industrial dispute'.¹⁷² MI5 surveillance had revealed that the strike had communist involvement. This led Wilson to denounce the strike leaders in the Commons and reveal that 'a few individuals have brought pressure to bear on a select few on the Executive Council of the National Union of Seamen, who in turn have been able to dominate the majority of that otherwise sturdy union'.¹⁷³ Whilst MI5 was usually reticent about a public disclosure of information based on their intelligence, the statement 'was made with the full knowledge and agreement of the Security Services'.¹⁷⁴ The strike was called off within weeks.

Wilson displayed an uncompromising attitude to what he perceived to be subversive activity in industrial relations. Indeed, he has been described as 'more security minded than MI5 on union politics and left-wing entryism'.¹⁷⁵ In 1969, Wilson's Home Secretary, James Callaghan, asked MI5 DG, Martin Furnival Jones for damaging information on the left-wing union leader, Hugh Scanlon, to help unseat him. Both Furnival Jones and the Permanent Undersecretary in the Home Office, Sir Phillip Allen, later agreed that such a 'ploy' was 'rather alarming'. Wilson and Callaghan may have been keen recipients of intelligence about pro-Communist Union leaders, but they refused to sign HOWs on such people, as they were aware of the political fallout if ever it became known that a Labour Government was endorsing the surveillance of Union leaders.¹⁷⁶

Wilson left office after losing the 1970 General Election but returned to Downing Street in March 1974 as head of a minority Labour government. Although he had worked relatively well with the intelligence community during his first spell in office, some security officials felt uneasy about his return.¹⁷⁷ The feeling was mutual. By 1975 the Prime Minister had become 'convinced that there was a plot to destroy him and his government'. He worried that MI5 was 'conducting some sort of vendetta against him' and that he was 'being watched or monitored, observed by both hostile and some friendly intelligence services'.¹⁷⁸ Wilson's insistence that there were people in the shadows plotting against him was often written off as the rantings of a man who had become

extremely paranoid.¹⁷⁹ This may have been the case, but some evidence suggests that Wilson's concerns were not without basis.

During the Wilson years, treacherous remarks often passed the lips of establishment members. Some London-based CIA officers were said to have expressed shock at the 'openly scurrilous and disloyal remarks' made by MI5 officers about Wilson.¹⁸⁰ Certain other members of the British establishment with connections to the intelligence community even went as far as to talk casually about mounting a military coup.¹⁸¹ Some members of the Security Service, such as Peter Wright, believed Wilson was very possibly a Soviet agent. In his memoir, *Spycatcher*, Wright wrote that some in MI5 thought Wilson to be 'a menace' and that a plan had been devised where 'MI5 would arrange for selective details of the intelligence about leading Labour Party figures, especially Wilson, to be leaked to sympathetic pressmen'. The information was intended to show 'that Wilson was considered a security risk'. Wright stated that 'it was a carbon copy of the Zinoviev letter'.¹⁸²

It is unclear whether there was a genuine, well-organised 'plot' was against Wilson. In an interview he gave after the publication of *Spycatcher*, Wright admitted that in his memoir he had exaggerated the numbers of MI5 officers who approved of the plot, stating that 'the maximum number was eight or nine. Very often it was only three'. When asked how many would have joined him in plotting 'when all the talking had died down', he replied 'one, I should say'.¹⁸³ There may not have been many, but there does appear to have been some individuals within the Security Service who sought to undermine the Prime Minister. John Hunt, who served as Cabinet Secretary during Wilson's second spell in office, said many years later that there were 'a few, very few, malcontents in MI5 ... a lot of them like Peter Wright who were right-wing, malicious and had serious personal grudges—gave vent to these and spread damaging malicious stories about the Labour government'.¹⁸⁴ Discussing the matter on another occasion he stated, 'I don't think the group [in MI5] were in any sense evil. They were people on the whole who followed a train of thought: the Russians used to try and entrap everybody, they must have tried with [Wilson], they must have succeeded'.¹⁸⁵ A small number of 'malcontents' undoubtedly existed within MI5 at the time; the head of MI6, Maurice Oldfield, personally told Wilson that there was an 'unreliable section' in MI5.¹⁸⁶

Although the truth about what went on is unlikely ever to be known, there appears to have been no organised MI5 plot against the Prime Minister. A small number of rogue individuals existed within MI5 but they were unrepresentative of the wider Security Service at the time. In 1987 MI5's Director General, Sir Anthony Duff, ordered an internal inquiry in an attempt to investigate rumours of a plot against Wilson. After examining all the evidence possible, and interviewing all relevant MI5 people, it 'concluded unequivocally that no member of the Service had been involved in the surveillance of Wilson, still less in any attempt to destabilise his government'.¹⁸⁷ By the 1970s, most within MI5 fully accepted the legitimacy of the Labour Party, although a small faction still saw it as a subversive threat.

Wilson was succeeded as Prime Minister by James Callaghan in 1976. By this stage, MI5 had concerns about Trotskyist infiltration within the Labour Party. Although Callaghan and his government were said to have 'fully seized the importance of subversive penetration of the Labour Party', not all of the wider Party did. Splits emerged within the Labour NEC and left-wing members tended to dismiss the issue. Although the Party's National

Agent, Reg Underhill, had produced a report which warned of Trotskyist infiltration in 1975, the left-dominated NEC refused to allow its publication.¹⁸⁸ Those on the left believed that allegations of infiltration were exaggerated; in 1980, the left-wing MP Tony Benn, commenting on the Underhill report, went as far as to say, 'as far as I can make out it came in plain envelopes from the Intelligence Service'.¹⁸⁹

By the time Benn made such comments, the Labour Party was at the beginning of a long period in opposition. The Party did not return to government until 1997 under the leadership of Tony Blair. Very few members of the new administration had previously held ministerial office and relations between intelligence officials and the new government did not start perfectly. Blair was said to have displayed a 'lack of interest in the intelligence community on taking office', whilst his Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam, asked MI5's Director General during their first meeting 'Why should I believe a word you say?'.¹⁹⁰ Within time, however, the government and the intelligence agencies began to work closely together, firstly as the conflict in Northern Ireland came to an end and then, most notably, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York in 2001. The events of 9/11 are said to have 'produced an overnight transformation' of the Prime Minister's attitude to MI5.¹⁹¹ Indeed, in December 2001, Blair had become so convinced about the value of Britain's intelligence agencies that he wrote a letter of thanks to them. It included the following paragraph,

The Government and the British people are fortunate to be served by security and intelligence organisations whose professionalism is admired, and by our enemies feared, throughout the world. My thanks on behalf of the Government for all you are doing.¹⁹²

Just over a year later, however, Labour-intelligence relations became a little less convivial after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Blair government was accused of having 'sexed up' an intelligence dossier to justify the war. In June 2003, the Leader of the House of Commons, John Reid, told *The Times* that, 'there have been uncorroborated briefings by a potentially rogue element—or indeed rogue elements—in the intelligence services' about the government exaggerating the case for war.¹⁹³ *The Times* also reported that the Chief Whip, Hilary Armstrong, had told colleagues that 'the Government was the victim of "skulduggery" in the intelligence services, which, like other organisations, have "political manoeuvring" within them'.¹⁹⁴ In the days that followed, Downing Street Director of Communications, Alastair Campbell, privately explained to intelligence officials that Reid 'would not have meant to attack [the intelligence services] as a whole'. He did, however, make clear his belief that some individuals within the intelligence world were 'stirring' and told governmental colleagues that intelligence officials 'needed to grip it'.¹⁹⁵ Blair's Labour Party, or 'New Labour', defined itself on being different from the Labour of the past. It seems, however, that his Party had at least one thing in common with those who had gone before. Regardless of how much Labour-intelligence relations improved during the Party's first century, there was always the potential for the old antipathies to return.

Conclusion

In January 1930, Ramsay MacDonald wrote in his diary, 'we have implacable enemies who sleeplessly lie in wait to damage our reputation'.¹⁹⁶ The events of the previous decade had given him every reason to believe this was the case. The Zinoviev letter affair was not

a one-off and was merely the most prominent of a number of leaks to the press from intelligence officials which were designed to undermine the Labour Party in the 1920s. Writing about the Zinoviev affair, Christopher Andrew has argued that the intelligence officials who conspired in the leak 'convinced themselves that they were acting in the national interest'.¹⁹⁷ This kind of reasoning can almost certainly be used to explain why information on both Lansbury and MacDonald was disclosed to Horatio Bottomley. A few intelligence officials believed that Lansbury, MacDonald and the Labour Party as a whole represented a considerable threat to Britain. They believed it their public duty to inform the public of this supposed danger.

Whilst there was not an organised plot against Labour by the whole intelligence community during the 1920s, certain individuals within intelligence circles clearly believed that something needed to be done to damage the Party. Although they may have represented a tiny minority of those employed in British intelligence at the time, their actions had huge consequences for intelligence-Labour Party relations. Press leaks were a very effective way of undermining the Labour Party, allowing intelligence officials to publicise the perceived danger of Labour in a completely unattributable way. Intelligence officials were, by the 1920s, well-practised in leaking information to the press; during the 1910s this was routine practice for some Whitehall officials, including those working for the intelligence services. Sir Basil Thomson frequently disclosed secrets to journalists, whilst, according to the historians John Ferris and Uri Bar-Joseph, 'many officers of SIS and most members of MI5 came from military services which regarded press leaks, especially those conducted through MPs, as appropriate behaviour'.¹⁹⁸ In 1920, 1924 and 1928, however, these leaks did not merely reveal secrets but deliberately sought to damage one political party.

J.R. Clynes, a minister in MacDonald's governments, once described the meeting between King George V and the first Labour government in 1924 as the moment 'when the British sovereign entrust[ed] the affairs of the Empire to the hands of the people's own representatives'.¹⁹⁹ Some security officials were much less willing to entrust the people's own representatives with the secrets of empire during the 1920s. In many ways, the friction between the Labour Party and intelligence community was inevitable. In the post-war years some members of the British establishment were genuinely fearful about communism and the possibility of the Bolshevik revolution spreading to Britain. This fear was so extensive that, in 1921, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson, questioned whether the Liberal Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, was a 'traitor' as he was not sufficiently robust in his dealings with the Soviets.²⁰⁰ In this light, it is understandable that they were so concerned about the Labour Party. Many officials simply could not distinguish between communism and democratic socialism and thus saw Labour as something that needed to be countered. The great majority of the men working in intelligence, politics, and as mandarins in the civil service came from similar social backgrounds, had been brought up with similar values, and often attended the same schools. Not having been used to different political opinions, they therefore considered alternative views as somewhat suspicious.²⁰¹

Many working within Whitehall during the 1920s were undoubtedly suspicious about left-wing politics and the Labour Party. As the decade progressed, however, many civil servants, recognised that Labour was establishing itself as a clear second party in British politics and needed to work with them and treat them fairly. Officials became increasingly

aware of the need to avoid any accusations of an anti-Labour bias and worried about the way in which intelligence operations could be perceived. The changes that occurred throughout the decade were perhaps typified by the fact that by 1928, Joseph Ball had moved to work for the Conservative Party. From this position he was able to attack the Labour Party in a more overtly partisan way. By the end of the decade, with Labour having been more exposed to the public gaze, accusations that it was an extreme and radical organisation simply did not gain the traction they once had. It is impossible to know quite how the intelligence community felt about the Labour Party by this stage and there does appear to have been at least some malcontents present when information was leaked about MacDonald in 1928. It does seem clear, however, that intelligence officials, like their civil service counterparts, acknowledged and accepted the fact that the Labour Party had a permanent position in British politics and recognised the need to work with them collaboratively. The appointment by MI6 of the Labour Party member, Reginald Fletcher, was undoubtedly a symbolic act designed to recognise this. They also personalised intelligence reports to help the government achieve its aims, particularly during the London Naval Conference of 1930. This not only helped the government, but also demonstrated the value of the intelligence services to Labour leadership and put an end to any Labour threats to cut intelligence budgets.

If the Second Labour government helped to normalise Labour-intelligence relations, then the era of Clement Attlee transformed relations to one of mutual trust and collaboration. Attlee and MI5's DG Sir Percy Sillitoe worked so well together that their relationship became more than one of colleagues—Attlee later wrote the foreword for Sillitoe's memoirs.²⁰²

The very fact that during Attlee's time in power, the government was said to have used MI5 more than any previous Conservative administration showed the degree of change in relations between the Party and the intelligence community. It could be seen as an era that put an end to the mutual mistrust between the two. Despite this, the ghosts of suspicion never truly went away. During Harold Wilson's time in office, trust was such that he allowed the Security Service to write part of a speech he gave to Parliament; MI5 officials were happy for him to effectively quote from intelligence reports.²⁰³ A small minority within the intelligence services seemingly sought to plot against him. Those who did, such as Peter Wright, had become obsessed by the possibility of their own bosses being Soviet agents. If they believed that, it is not surprising that they would have been willing to believe the same about a Labour Prime Minister.²⁰⁴

Although Tony Blair's Labour Party sought to dissociate itself from those of the past, the fact that one of his most senior aides remarked 'since when do the intelligence services ever support a Labour government' - at the height of controversy over the Iraq war—shows that old antipathies never entirely went away.²⁰⁵ For some on the left of the Labour Party, suspicion of the intelligence services abounds to this very day.²⁰⁶ In order to understand why, the 1920s are a good place to start.

Notes

1. Andrew, *The Secret World*, 582; Jeffery, *MI6*, 219.
2. Phillips, *Secret Twenties*, 184–86; Jeffery, *MI6*, 217.
3. Andrew, *Secret World*, 581.

4. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 139; Gerwarth, *The Vanquished*, 96–8. See also Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear*.
5. The National Archives (hereafter TNA), CAB 24/96/62, "Survey of Revolutionary Feeling during the Year 1919," 18.
6. MacFarlane, *The British Communist Party*, 277–79; Worley, *Labour inside the Gate*, 103; TNA, CAB 24/140/2, Report on Revolution Organisations in the UK, 9 November 1922.
7. Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 67; Beers, *Your Britain*, 52–7.
8. Beckett, *Enemy Within*, 22–23; Worley, *Labour inside the Gate*, 103–4.
9. Carlton, *Churchill and the Soviet Union*, 35.
10. Beers, *Your Britain*, 53–59.
11. TNA, CAB 24/132/86, Report on Revolution Organisations in the UK, 2 February 1922.
12. Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear*, 9.
13. The work on the Zinoviev letter affair is best covered by Gill Bennett in her report for the Foreign Office "A Most Extraordinary and Mysterious Business": *The Zinoviev Letter of 1924* and subsequent book, *The Zinoviev Letter: The Conspiracy that Never Dies*. The major histories of the Labour Party, most notably Andrew Thorpe's *A History of the British Labour Party* and Martin Pugh's *Speak for Britain: A New History of the Labour Party*, do not tend to place much focus on intelligence matters. The two major biographies of James Ramsay MacDonald, Labour Party leader and Prime Minister during the 1920s, by David Marquand and Austen Morgan, barely touch on his relations with intelligence at all. Labour Party-intelligence relations are covered by Christopher Andrew in his authorised history of MI5, *The Defence of the Realm*, but are only a very small part of a much wider piece of work. Similarly, Richard Aldrich and Rory Cormac include a discussion on MacDonald's dealings with the intelligence community in *The Black Door* - their extensive analysis of the relationship between British Prime Ministers and the intelligence community.
14. One of the few studies which focuses solely on the relationship between the Labour Party and the intelligence community during the twentieth century is Daniel W.B. Lomas' *Intelligence, security and the Attlee governments* which focuses on the relations during the 1945–51 Clement Attlee government.
15. Benn, *Keir Hardie*, 236.
16. Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence*, 75.
17. TNA, HO 144/1163/213549, "Disturbances: Seditious language and Incitement to mutiny," 8.8.12.
18. Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 101.
19. Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, 183–85; Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 103.
20. Thurlow, *Secret State*, 60–61. For more on perceptions of pacifists and those opposed to the war in 1914 and 1915 see, Andrew, *Secret Service*, 192–95.
21. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, p.146; TNA, HO 45/10741/263275, DPP to Under Secretary of State, 11 September 1914.
22. See, TNA, HO 45/10814/312987.
23. See, TNA, HO 144/1459/316786.
24. TNA, KV 2/1917, "MEMO," V.F., 31/12/16.
25. Andrew, *Secret Service*, 193–4; Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 112–13.
26. White, "Soviets in Britain," 166–68.
27. TNA, CAB 23/2/65, Cabinet Conclusion, No. 11, 25 May 1917.
28. TNA, CAB 23/16/49, "Report on the Russian Revolution Conference at Leeds," 12 June 1917.
29. White, "Soviets in Britain," 173–74; Andrew, *Secret Service*, 198.
30. TNA, CAB 23/16/49, "Report on the Russian Revolution Conference at Leeds," 12 June 1917.
31. White, "Soviets in Britain," 192.
32. Andrew, *Secret Service*, 225.
33. Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 108–9; Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 42–3; Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 66.
34. Lomas, "Party politics and intelligence," 412; Jeffery, *MI6*, 215.
35. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 116.

36. TNA, CAB 24/81/63, Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, 12 June 1919; TNA, CAB 24/83/71, Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, 10 July 1919.
37. TNA, CAB 24/93/26, Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, 13 November 1919. Thomson's report quotes from a "recent letter" from MacDonald.
38. TNA, CAB 24/87/37, Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, 21 August 1919.
39. Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 123–27; Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, 234–6.
40. Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 123–27.
41. Shepherd, *George Lansbury*, 175.
Despite his prominence at the time, Lansbury was "out of favour" with the Labour leadership. He declined to attend three consecutive party conferences in 1914, 1916 and 1917.
42. *Ibid.*, 175–7, 179.
43. Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 132. In 1928, Lansbury described the Bolshevik Revolution as "the greatest and best thing that has ever happened in the history of the world".
44. Davenport-Hines, *Enemies Within*, 88–9.
45. "Mr Lansbury on Russia," *The Times*, 22 March 1920.
46. TNA, KV 2/566, "M. PHILIPS PRICE," List of Philips PRICE's associates mentioned in the following precis.
47. TNA, CAB 24/101/2, Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, Report No. 46, 18 March 1920.
48. "Mr Lansbury on Russia," *The Times*, 22 March 1920.
49. Jeffery, *M16*, 211–12; TNA, CAB 24/109/76, Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, Report No. 64, 22 July 1920; Andrew, *Secret Service*, 263–4.
50. TNA, CAB 24/110/72, Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, Report No. 67, 12 August 1920.
51. "Daily Herald: Bolshevik Help Sought," *The Times*, 19 August 1920; Andrew, *Secret World*, 578.
52. TNA CAB 24/111/88, Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the UK, 23 September 1920; Shepherd, *George Lansbury*, 187–88.
53. TNA, WO 32/5719, "Note on Interviews with three returned British officers from Moscow".
54. TNA, WO 32/5719, memo by Major Joseph Ball, MI5 B, 23 August 1920.
55. Symons, *Horatio Bottomley*, 77–8, Chapter XI, XII; Hyman, *The Rise and Fall*, 160. Shortly before war broke out, *John Bull* had opposed Britain's involvement. (Hyman, *The Rise and Fall*, 144–5, 155–6; Symons, *Horatio Bottomley*, 160–62).
56. Symons, *Horatio Bottomley*, 218.
57. Hyman, *The Rise and Fall*, 131–3.
58. "George Lansbury Exposed," *John Bull*, 4 September 1920, 10–11.
59. "Roger Casement Lansbury," *John Bull*, 11 September 1920, 10–11.
60. "Lansbury the Liar," *John Bull*, 25 September 1920, 1; "Lansbury and British soldiers," *John Bull*, 23 October 1920, 1.
61. HC Hansard Deb, 28 October 1920, vol 133, c1924. See also, FO 371/5445, "Allegation that Mr. G. Lansbury endeavoured to suborn British soldiers from their allegiance to the King".
62. HC Hansard Deb, 2 December 1920, vol 135, cc1425–6.
63. Shepherd, *George Lansbury*, 210–11.
64. Shepherd, *George Lansbury*, 210; TNA, PRO 30/69/1753/1, Diary Entry 22 Jan 1924. In the speech, Lansbury, referring to rumours that the King may prevent the formation of a Labour government, stated "a few centuries ago one King who stood up against the common people of that day lost his head—lost it really . . . Since that day kings and queens . . . never interfered with ordinary politics and George V would be well advised to keep his finger out of the pie now".
65. Phillips, *Secret Twenties*, 166–68; Bennett, *Churchill's Man of Mystery*, 79.
66. Andrew, *Secret Service*, 298.
67. *Ibid.*
68. Andrew, *Secret Service*, 231–2; Jeffreys-Jones, *We Know All About You*, 67; Porter, *Plots and Paranoia*, 150.

69. Andrew, *Secret Service*, 300; Porter, *Plots and Paranoia*, 159.
70. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 146; TNA, PRO 30/69/221, Gower to Childs, 30 January 1924; Childs to Gower, 2 February 1924.
71. Northedge and Wells, *Britain and Soviet Communism*, 38; Andrew *Defence of the Realm*, 146–7.
72. Andrew, *Secret World*, 580–81.
73. Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, 312–14; Perkins, *A Very British Strike*, 39–40; Northedge and Wells, *Britain and Soviet Communism*, 38–9; Rose, *King George V*, 331–3; Jeffery, *MI6*, 215.
74. Porter, *Plots and Paranoia*, 159–60.
See, for example—PRO 30/69/220, Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, Report No. 253, May 1st 1924.
75. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 147.
76. TNA, HO 144/20985, New Scotland Yard to Sir John Anderson, 2 October 1928. Wheatley is described as the “most socialist member” of the MacDonald cabinet in Andrew, *Secret Service*, 300.
77. Desmarais, “Strikebreaking and the Labour Government of 1924,” 169–70; Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, 318–19; Morgan, *Conflict and Order*, 114.
78. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 147–8.
79. Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, 361–64; Andrew, *Secret Service*, 303.
80. Perkins, *A Very British Strike*, 45–6; Davenport-Hines, *Enemies Within*, 98–9; Udy, *Labour and the Gulag*, 100–104.
81. Wish, “Anglo-Soviet Relations,” 400.
82. Andrew, *Secret World*, 582; Bennett, *The Zinoviev Letter*, 78.
83. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 900, footnote 58; Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 183; Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear*, 127.
84. Bennett, “A Most Extraordinary and Mysterious Business,” 87–8, 91–92.
85. *Ibid.*, 47.
86. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 149–50.
87. Bennett, “A Most Extraordinary and Mysterious Business,” 45.
88. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 150.
89. Bennett, *Zinoviev Letter*, 52–3.
90. Ferris and Bar-Joseph, “Getting Marlowe to Hold His Tongue,” 126–28.
91. Bennett, *Zinoviev Letter*, 253.
92. Jeffery, *MI6*, 221.
93. Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, 416; Bennett, *The Zinoviev Letter*, 133–36; Lomas, *Intelligence security and the Attlee governments*, 10; Andrew, “The British Secret Service and Anglo-Soviet Relations,” 705.
94. Lomas, *Intelligence security and the Attlee governments*, 10–11.
95. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 158–9.
96. TNA, HO 532/10, Prime Minister’s Secret Service Committee, Friday 11 March 1927.
97. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 158–9; Jeffery, *MI6*, 230–31.
98. TNA, HO 144/20985, minute dated 27/9/28.
99. Hyman, *The Rise and Fall*, 254–5; Symons, *Horatio Bottomley*, 273–4.
100. Hyman, *The Rise and Fall*, 232, 286–7; Symons, *Horatio Bottomley*, 231, 266–7.
101. TNA, CAB 24/80/68 Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, 28 May 1919.
102. “The ‘Yard’s’ Secret Report on Ex-Premier,” *John Blunt*, September 29, 1928, p.6 (Cutting included in TNA, HO 144/20985).
103. TNA, HO 144/20985, minute dated 1st Oct 1928.
104. TNA, HO 144/20985, minute dated 4.10.28.
105. “Secret Document Disclosed,” *Daily Express*, 6 October 1928, 1.
106. ‘Secrets of the shadowing of Mr Ramsay MacDonald,’ *Reynolds Illustrated News*, 7 October 1928, 3.
107. “Another Zinovieff Herring?,” *Daily Express*, 6 October 1928, 10.
108. “Mr MacDonald’s View,” *Reynolds Illustrated News*, 7 October 1928, 3.
109. Symons, *Horatio Bottomley*, 168–9.

110. "To Ramsay Macdonald, MP, House of Commons', *John Bull*, 20 March 1915, 18; "Ramsay Macdonald—To the Tower!," *John Bull*, 19 June 1915, 6–7. On another occasion, Bottomley published MacDonald's birth certificate in *John Bull* and revealed that he was 'the illegitimate son of a Scotch servant girl'. (Symons, *Horatio Bottomley*, 168; "James McDonald Ramsay," *John Bull*, 4 September 1915, 9).
111. "The Police and Ex-Premier," *John Blunt*, 20 October 1928.
112. Holmes, *John Bull's Island*, 417, footnote 220.
113. TNA, HO 144/20985, minute dated "5/10," minute "John Blunt 27 Oct 1928".
114. "The Police and the Press," *John Blunt*, 27 October 1928.
115. Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 74.
116. Blake R, 'Ball, Sir (George) Joseph (1885–1961)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Accessed at : <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30564> While working for the Conservative Party, Ball was one of a number of people who briefed the then Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, ahead of a Commons debate on the Zinoviev letter in 1928. (Bennett, *The Zinoviev Letter*, 132–35).
117. PARLIAMENTARY ARCHIVES, DAV/125, Ball to Davidson, 13.XI.21.
In 1921, for example, Ball wrote to Davidson enclosing 'the note about which I spoke to you over the telephone'.
118. Beichman, "Hugger-Mugger in Old Queen Street," 679. PARLIAMENTARY ARCHIVES, DAV/170, Davidson to Ball, 18 November 1924.
119. James, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, 272.
120. Pinto-Duschinsky, *British Political Finance 1830–1980*, 97. Prior to the formation of the first Labour Government, Davidson does not appear to have been as concerned as many Conservatives were. He did not believe in any of the schemes proposed by colleagues to prevent Labour taking office, opening that such actions would "deprive Labour of their constitutional rights". (James, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, 189)
121. James, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, 272
122. Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Papers of Sir George Joseph Ball, MS Eng C 6653, fol. 94, "Liberal Party Headquarters," 13.2.29. James, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, 272, footnote 2. Ball was, by this stage, already receiving information from sources within the Liberal Party. Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Papers of Sir George Joseph Ball, MS Eng C 6653, fols. 19–26, 9.9.1928, 'Liberal Organisation'.
123. Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Papers of Sir George Joseph Ball, MS Eng C 6653, fols. 45–49, 16 October 1928; fols. 61–65, "Confidential," 10.11.1928; fols. 68–73, 21.11.28.
124. Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Papers of Sir George Joseph Ball, MS Eng C 6653, fols. 5–7, "Labour Party," 15 May 1928; fol. 10, "Labour 'Fighting Fund'", 22.5.1928; fols. 68–73, 21.11.28; fol. 85, "Labour Party," 3 February 1929; fols. 90–93, "Labour Party," 14.2.1929; fol. 97, "Mr. J.R. MacDonald's health," 22.2.1929; fols. 45–49, 16 October 1928.
125. Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Papers of Sir George Joseph Ball, MS Eng C 6653, fols. 34–42, "Socialist Party," 6.10.1928; fols. 51–56, "Confidential," 24.10.1928.
126. Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Papers of Sir George Joseph Ball, MS Eng C 6653, fols. 74–79, 17.12.1928.
127. Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Papers of Sir George Joseph Ball, MS Eng C 6653, fols. 102–108, "Confidential," 24 June 1929.
128. Bennett, *Churchill's Man of Mystery*, 126–7.
129. James, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, 271–2.
130. Andrew, *Secret Service*, 342.
131. *Ibid.*, 340.
132. Bennett, *Churchill's Man of Mystery*, 132.
133. Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 74–6. See, Cockett, 'Ball, Chamberlain and Truth', for a fascinating account of Ball's relationship with Chamberlain.
134. Andrew, *Secret Service*, 345, 350–51. Fletcher was appointed as MI6's chief 'G officer', responsible for operations in Europe and the Near East. He had previously been a Liberal MP between 1923 and 1924 and was elected as a Labour MP at the 1935 General Election. He

- appears to have been involved in a somewhat opaque operation in 1931 whereby SIS sought to purchase and retrieve letters, from a woman to whom MacDonald had written 'compromising' letters, which revealed an affair.
135. Ferris, *Behind the Enigma*, 123. For more on the naval conference see, "British SIGINT Decrypts on the London Naval Conference, 1930" in, Hughes, Jackson and Scott (eds.), *Exploring Intelligence Archives*, 41–55.
 136. TNA, CAB 24/201/12, The Political Situation in India, Lord Peel, 23 January 1929; TNA, CAB 23/60/3, Cabinet Conclusion, No.1, 30 January 1929.
 137. TNA, CAB 23/61/2, Cabinet Conclusion, No. 2, 21 June 1929; Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement*, 203–4. For more on the reaction of the left towards the trial see, Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich*, 167–76.
 138. TNA, CAB 23/62/17, Cabinet Conclusion, No. 4, 11 December 1929.
 139. Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement*, 204.
 140. Walton, *Empire of Secrets*, 20–1; Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 137–8.
 141. Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 213–16.
 142. Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 246–47; Beckett, *Enemy Within*, 64–5 Implementing the policy was not without its difficulties, however, as some within Labour sought to pursue a 'Popular Front' anyway. See, Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 247–58.
 143. TNA, KV 2/2509, serial 32a, "Report from I.P.I. re MENON"., 16.12.39.
 144. Labour History Archive & Study Centre, Manchester, Labour Party, International Department Papers on India, LP/ID/IND/1/13, NEC Confidential Memorandum of Cancellation of candidature of Krishna Menon for one of the Dundee Seats, 27 November 1940.
 145. Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 138–9.
 146. Lomas, *Intelligence, Security and the Attlee Government*, 42–5.
 147. Jeffery, *MI6*, 352–3; Lomas, *Intelligence, Security and the Attlee Government*, 37. This was later identified as a crucial moment for the Labour Party by the historian M.R.D. Foot. He stated that placing 'one secret service [SOE] under a Labour Minister' laid to rest the ghost of Zinoviev.
 148. Dorril, *MI6*, 35.
 149. Lomas, *Intelligence, Security and the Attlee Governments*, 55; Aldrich, *GCHQ*, 66.
 150. Lomas, *Intelligence, Security and the Attlee Governments*, 55.
 151. Vincent, *Culture of Secrecy*, p.199; Defty, *Britain, America and Anti-Communist Propaganda*, 34; Hennessy P, *Never Again*, 245; Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand*, 130–31.
 152. For information on the atomic bomb see, Bew, *Citizen Clem*, 369, 376–79; Hennessy, *Secret State*, 50–51; Adonis, *Labour's Churchill*, 263–4. For more on their role in the formation of NATO see, Adonis, *Labour's Churchill*, 290–92; Bew, *Citizen Clem*, 461–64.
 153. Macintyre, *A Spy Amongst Friends*, 92–3.
 154. Lomas, *Intelligence, Security and the Attlee Governments*, 189; Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 321. It has been alleged that Attlee appointed Sillitoe as DG to have his own man in MI5, an organisation he was supposedly suspicious of. This has, however, been proven to be untrue. See, Lomas, *Intelligence, Security and the Attlee Governments*, 187.
 155. TNA, KV 4/196, Guy Liddell Diary, 29 May 1945.
 156. TNA, KV 4/468, Guy Liddell Diary, 19 November 1946. Following Attlee's request for information on MPs, Guy Liddell remarked in his diary, 'I gathered he felt that he had a responsibility to the House and the country to see that such members did not get into positions where they might constitute a danger to the state. They might either be members as members of the Government, or if they were in the Opposition as members of Royal Commissions or Parliamentary Delegations'.
 157. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 322. Sillitoe told Churchill in 1952 that he had regularly informed Attlee about "certain delicate matters which came to the notice of the Security Service from time to time and which concerned the personal affairs of Ministers". He

mentioned that there had been one case where the son of a Minister 'had become involved with certain people under investigation by the Security Service and who had given information to these people in return for some kind of reward'.

158. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 411; TNA, KV 2/3812, serial 333a, "Extracts from Mins between B.1.a. & the D.G. re passing information to the P.M. re BING," 21.5.47.
159. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 847. This taking place in practice can be seen in a memo sent to Margaret Thatcher shortly after she became Prime Minister in 1979. See, TNA, PREM 19/2845, John Hunt to Prime Minister, 4 May 1979.
160. The file was known as the "Lost Sheep" file. See, Labour History Archive & Study Centre, Manchester, Labour Party General Secretary's Papers, LP/GS/LS.
 Very little of the intelligence material collated by the Labour Party appears to have survived. Many of the files were said to have been burned by Ron Hayward when he became General Secretary in the 1970s. See, Mikardo, *Back-Bencher*, 131.
161. Hopkins, "Herbert Morrison, the Cold War and Anglo-American Relations," 23; Schmeer, *Labour's Conscience*, 110–18; Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 411–12.
162. TNA, FCO 168/2724, Labour Party Annual Conference 1967, minute JE Tyrer, 22 September 1967. For IRD reports on a number of Labour Party Conferences see, TNA, FCO 168/73, FCO 168/786, FCO 168/787, FCO 168/1190, FCO 168/2724.
 It may well have been the case that IRD officials attended in the years following 1967, but from the evidence that is currently available, it is not possible to say so.
163. TNA, FCO 168/426, note JET Egg, 26 October 1961; TNA, FCO 168/1190, Labour Party Conference December 1964.
164. TNA, FCO 168/520, J.E.T. Egg, 29 January 1962; "North Islington Constituency Labour Party," 31 January 1962. The file shows that the IRD asked the Security Service for information about some members of the North Islington Labour Party, but were only given limited information, described by one IRD official as "a bit stingy".
165. TNA, FCO 168/426, Labour Party Contacts Receiving IRD Material Regularly or in Personal Contact.
166. TNA, FCO 168/1184, Note, JE Tyrer, 30 June 1964. One IRD official noted that the relationship with Bowden 'is direct and on a completely informal basis ... the etiquette is that, except in exceptional circumstances, we wait until Mr Bowden has something to ask us and do not normally raise matters with him off our own bat'. On one occasion, for example, Bowden asked for information on the former MP, John Platts-Mills, who had applied to be readmitted to the Party. See, TNA, FCO 168/1183, Home Regional Meeting, 111th Meeting, June 18 1964.
167. TNA, FCO 168/1183, Home Regional Meeting, 111th Meeting, June 18 1964
168. A generational change had occurred between Attlee's defeat in 1951 and Wilson's victory in 1964, meaning that very few of the new government had experience of the intelligence services. See, Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 412–15.
169. In March 1965, Wilson discovered that his Home Secretary, Frank Soskice, had authorised a Home Office Warrant (HOW) on the Labour MP Bob Edwards. The Prime Minister decided that it should be immediately cancelled. Edwards was later revealed to have been a KGB agent, and Christopher Andrew argues, in MI5's authorised history, that Wilson's actions "probably delayed Edwards's discovery by over a decade". See, Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 527.
170. HC Hansard Deb, 17 Nov 1966, vol 736, cc634–41; Defty, Bochel and Kirkpatrick, "Tapping the Telephones of Members of Parliament," 676.
171. For more on the Wilson Doctrine see, Strickland P, Dawson J and Godec S, *The Wilson Doctrine* (House of Commons Library Briefing Paper No 4258) 12 June 2017 The custom was most recently reaffirmed by Boris Johnson in October 2019. HC Hansard, Written Question UIN 5440, 25 October 2019.
172. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 528. For the reports provided to Wilson by MI5 on the strike see, TNA, CAB 301/233.

173. HC Hansard Deb, 20 June 1966, vol. 730, c42.
174. TNA, CAB 301/234, note of meeting between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, 21 June 1966. Parts of the speech were drafted by F1A of MI5, who was present in the Commons during the speech, "occupying one of the three seats below the Speaker's chair reserved for civil servants who may be needed to brief ministers". See, Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 530.
175. Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 278.
176. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 534–5. He also mentioned to the Director General that the London Cooperative Society had been taken over by communists and was "mis-appropriating some of the £80,000 p.a. that the society was supposed to provide the Labour party with for political purposes," therefore "a body of members ... was manoeuvring to unseat the present governing body and take over control". Callaghan asked if "the Security Service could help with information about this". Furnival Jones told the Home Secretary he believed this "was getting perilously near the field of politics," and nothing appears to have resulted from the request. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 960 footnote 81.
177. Lashmar and Oliver, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War*, 166–7; Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 627–32.
178. Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 315; Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out*, 166–9.
179. Porter, *Plots and Paranoia*, 210–11; Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 635–38; Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, 66–8.
180. Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 277.
181. See, Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, 135–41; Moran, "Conspiracy and Contemporary History: Revisiting MI5 and the Wilson Plot[s]," 169–71; Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 325–7. The existence of a plot against Wilson was also alleged by a former army press officer, Colin Wallace. See, Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, 71; Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 323–4.
182. Wright, *Spycatcher*, 369. MI5 actually held a file on Wilson which had been opened in 1945 after they became concerned about his contacts with Soviets. They did not, however, believe him to be a crypto-communist or fellow traveller. See, Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 415–17.
183. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, p.642
184. Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, p.323
185. Moran, "Conspiracy and Contemporary History," 172.
186. Corraera, *MI6*, 214; Pearce, *Spymaster*, 342.
187. Moran, "Conspiracy and Contemporary History," 166–67; Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 642–3. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher revealed the conclusions of the enquiry in a statement to the Commons on May 6 1987.
188. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 660–61, 663–4.
189. Bennett, *The Zinoviev Letter*, 205. Some Labour MPs on the left of the Party did speak somewhat conspiratorially of the intelligence and security services in the 1980s and early 1990s. See Bennett, *The Zinoviev Letter*, 210–12; Lomas, "Party politics and intelligence," 420–22.
190. Bennett, *The Zinoviev Letter*, 216; Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 797.
191. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 797, 809.
192. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 811; "Blair thanks spies for war role," BBC News, 2 December 2001 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/1688449.stm.
193. Baldwin T, "Rogue spies out to get us: Labour," *The Times*, 4 June 2003.
194. Ibid.
195. Campbell and Hagerty (eds.), *Campbell Diaries*, 595–97. Ironically, days before Reid made his comments, Campbell had privately said to the Head of the JIC, John Scarlett, "before long, once the left was bored with WMD they would be on to the idea that we were victims of what security services have always done to Labour governments". Campbell and Hagerty (eds.), *Campbell Diaries*, 593. For more information on the whole incident see, Campbell and Hagerty (eds.), *Campbell Diaries*, 585–605.
196. TNA, PRO 30/69/1753/1, Diary Entry 16 Jan 1930.

197. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 150. There is one key difference between the three prime examples used in the article—whilst the Zinoviev letter was a forgery, the information released about Lansbury and MacDonald came from genuine intelligence documents.
198. Ferris and Bar-Joseph, “Getting Marlowe to Hold His Tongue,” 115–18. For more on specific leaks see, Bar-Joseph, *Intelligence Intervention in the Politics of Democratic States*, Chapter 8, especially 263–91.
199. Barnes, “Special Branch” 950–51.
200. Jeffery, *MI6*, 211–2; Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 37–8; Bar-Joseph, *Intelligence Intervention in the Politics of Democratic States*, 265–67.
201. Victor Madeira addresses this point well in his study of the era and uses statistics which emphasise the similar backgrounds of men within the Establishment at the time. See, Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear*, 17–18.
202. Lomas, *Intelligence, security and the Attlee governments*, 189
203. Jeffery and Hennessy, *States of Emergency*, 229. In doing so, Wilson became the first Prime Minister to quote so directly from intelligence reports in the Commons since Stanley Baldwin during debates over the so-called “ARCOS raid” in 1927. Baldwin did not, however, do so with the express permission of the intelligence services. See, Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 155–56.
204. For the bigger picture of the atmosphere at the time see, Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 503–21; Corra, *MI6*, 192–218.
205. Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 429.
206. Ahead of the 2017 General Election, the former Labour MP, Chris Mullin wrote a piece for *The Spectator* where he stated, “even moderate Labour governments have traditionally faced attempts to destabilise them by elements in the political and security establishment”. See, Bennett, *Zinoviev Letter*, 259–61.

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