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DEVELOPMENTS IN UNDERCOVER POLICING INQUIRY (UCPI) EXPOSE SECRET STATE OPERATION TO UNDERMINE 1970S ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

PROTEST & POLITICAL INTEREST
FALSELY ACCUSED OF CRIME

JUSTICE

NEWS & INSIGHTS

FEBRUARY 22, 2023

TEAM

MIKE SCHWARZ

Evidence from 50 years ago and very recent admissions from State bodies show undercover police officers (UCOs) operating within the framework of Government-approved and Security Services-led strategy for undermining perceived opponents including leading anti-racism campaigners such as Lord Peter Hain and the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

At the very top of Government, an operation was set up, using the Special Demonstration Squad ('SDS', the UCO team being examined by the UCPI), to identify and undermine supposedly 'subversive' individuals and organisations in the UK and abroad. The operation had the blessing of Prime Ministers at the time, the active involvement of the Cabinet Office, the permanent secretary to no 10 Downing Street and cabinet ministers.

Among a multiplicity of overlapping committees operating in the 1970s, set up for these purposes, one unit, in which the Home Office was involved, was responsible for 'home' subversives ('the Official Committee on Subversion at Home'). Another unit, in which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was involved, was responsible for the 'foreign' subversives with links to the UK.

The units appeared to work in tandem, with many common features and participants. They were serviced by the Security Services (MI5 and MI6) and relied, in part at least, on the Metropolitan Police Service, its Special Branch ('SB') in particular. SB was responsible for the SDS.

The operation's strategy relied on the SDS to infiltrate target groups, spy on leading individuals and use that so called 'intelligence' in a concerted effort to undermine their credibility and effectiveness. It was designed to be top secret and deniable.

See notes below to some of the relevant documents now published by the UCPI. For just one example view [here](#).

Key activists and campaigns from the 1970s, also core participants and witnesses in the inquiry, were targeted.

Recently disclosed evidence shows that Peter Hain was recorded (in SB reports) as having communist connections in South Africa (SA), a falsehood which was typical of the smears that SA intelligence services employed against those trying to end apartheid and which must only have sprung from close cooperation between the UK intelligence services and their SA equivalent, BOSS. This in turn betrayed the Cold War prism through which his activism was, wrongly, interpreted. Peter Hain was active at that time, in campaigns against racism such as Stop the Seventies Tour which campaigned against sporting links to apartheid South Africa, as well as the Anti-Nazi League.

Similarly, Christabel Gurney OBE, a leading member of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM), gave evidence to UCPI, of her own experiences campaigning in the UK, from the post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Committee report and from SB and other records. She illustrated clear parallels between the targets identified by the UK authorities and those identified by the apartheid South Africa security services, including leading ANC campaigners, some of whom were attacked and killed by the SA security forces. These included leading anti-apartheid campaigner, Ruth First who was murdered by the SA security forces.

Professor Jonathan Rosenhead was active in, among other campaigns, Stop the Seventies Tour. He appears also to have been targeted through his work, as an academic, at the London School of Economics. This in turn, reflected the State's operation's professed strategy of targeting perceived subversion among students and in higher education.

Ernest Rodker, another core participant in UCPI, is a veteran peace campaigner in the 1950s and was active in race and community campaigns in subsequent decades. He too was targeted by the SDS in the 1970s, as a result, among other factors, of his activism, alongside the likes of the philosopher Bertrand Russell, in the post-war Committee of 100, against weapons and war.

Commenting on these revelations, Jonathan Rosenhead and Christabel Gurney said:

“Our principled actions of 50 years ago were in opposition to the negation of human rights that was South African apartheid and the complicity of the British establishment. We now know that our group was infiltrated by the undercover police squad, and that it reported to the highest levels of the UK government of the time which was itself complicit with the South African regime. The Special Demonstrations Squad's infiltration of our entirely non-violent group was an early illegitimate interference with legitimate political activity. This disregard for limits and principle was to become still more blatant later as the SDS developed its wholesale surveillance of radical groups.”

Their lawyer, Mike Schwarz of Hodge Jones & Allen said:

“I am confident that only a small proportion of the truth has come out. It has only been exposed now because of the tireless sacrifices of campaigners such as Peter, Jonathan, Christabel and Ernest. It has come out despite, rather than because of, the secret State's, wishes. If this was happening secretly 50 years ago, one shivers to think what similar sorts of operations have been done since and what is happening now.”

Notes and references from the UCPI

- Today's closing statement by counsel, Owen Greenhall, on behalf of Mike Schwarz of Hodge Jones & Allen's clients can be found [here](#), written version and oral version delivered.
- See also counsel to the inquiry (CTI) (David Barr KC) [opening statement to module 2b and 2c of tranche 1 of the inquiry](#).
- See also his [closing statement on 20th February](#).
- Peter Hain's evidence – [statement](#) and [oral testimony](#):
- Christabel Gurney's evidence – [statement](#) and [oral testimony](#):
- Jonathan Rosenhead's evidence – [statement](#) and [oral testimony](#):
- Ernest Rodker's evidence – [statement](#)

Some of the relevant documents published by UCPI

- <https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/UCPI0000035238.pdf>
- <https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/UCPI0000035228.pdf>
- <https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/UCPI0000035275.pdf>
- <https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/UCPI0000035277.pdf>
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- <https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/UCPI0000035242.pdf>



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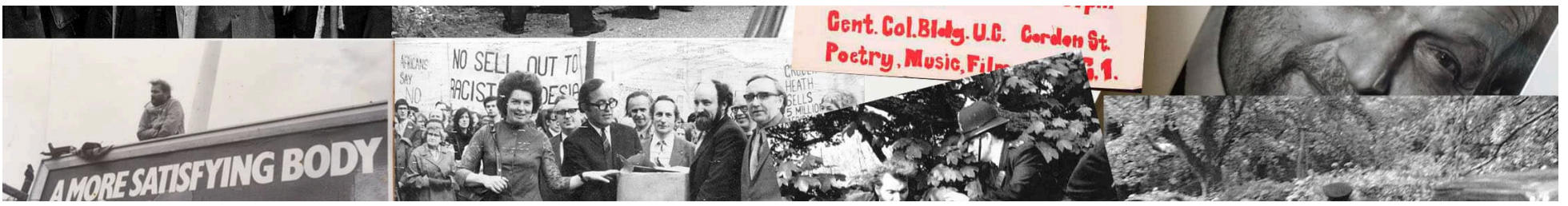


PRESS RELEASES

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UNDERCOVER POLICING INQUIRY - PETER HAIN STATEMENT ON "SOUTH AFRICAN TERRORIST" DESCRIPTION





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UNDERCOVER POLICING INQUIRY – JONATHAN ROSENHEAD’S STATEMENT



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