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UNDERCOVER POLICING INQUIRY – JONATHAN ROSENHEAD’S STATEMENT

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APRIL 29, 2021

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Professor Jonathan Rosenhead today delivered his witness statement, as part of the Undercover Policing Inquiry. See below for his biography and a summary of the key points.

You can find the full statement [here](#), and a link to the timings of the Inquiry [here](#).

Prof. Jonathan Rosenhead, 82, is an operational researcher and Labour Party activist. He was a member of the Anti-Apartheid Movement Executive Committee in the late 1960s, and has been active in his political work ever since:

- Stood as a Labour Parliamentary Candidate for South Kensington in 1966
- Executive Committee Member of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in 1968
- Involved in the Stop the Seventies Tour (1969-72)
- Involved in the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science for nearly 25 years (1969-92), which included campaigning against the use of rubber and plastic bullets
- Adviser to the Minister of Planning and Minister of Finance, Government of Venezuela (2000-2014)
- Since circa 2007 he has been Chair of the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP)

Professor Rosenhead was President of the UK Operational Research Society during 1986-8, and is a holder of the Society’s Presidents, Goodeve and Beale Medals. An Emeritus Professor of Operational Research at the London School of Economics, Jonathan was a member of staff there from 1967 and Professor from 1987.

Key points:

“The aims of STST [Stop the Seventy Tour] were to stop the apartheid South African cricket team’s planned tour of the UK in 1970, and thereby advance a general sporting boycott; the medium-term goal was to isolate apartheid South Africa; and ultimately contribute to the end of apartheid. It sought to protest during the 1969 South African Springboks’ rugby tour as a way of securing the abandonment of the planned 1970 South African cricket team’s tour.”

“The STST’s strategy was to deliver a public message, with press briefings. It sought to organise massive demonstrations, and succeed in generating an enthusiastic reception from the public. It targeted the touring rugby team’s matches around the country, and to a lesser extent venues where cricket matches would be held if that tour went ahead.”

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"The aim of SAG [the special action group, within STST] was to support STST's aims by organising activities which would create publicity."

"These activities included efforts to get on the pitch or otherwise to disrupt the smooth organisation of the tour, including the teams' activities outside the game itself."

"Both groups were committed to non-violent direct action in keeping with the tradition of peaceful civil disobedience."

"No doubt different people had different philosophical bases underpinning their non-violence: Quaker ideas, pacifism, Gandhi's Satyagraha, anarchist thought, Martin Luther King's practice as exemplified in the Montgomery bus boycott."

"It should not be overlooked that we were trying to challenge the institutionally violent and racist South African regime. The Sharpeville massacre had taken place in 1960. Our actions of accountable peaceful civil disobedience were, in my view, entirely proportionate and defensible in that context. They were also a counter example showing how politics did not need to be pursued violently."

"I am asked if I was surprised to learn that undercover officers were deployed to report on our activities. I was not surprised. I was disappointed. I felt that they should have been more understanding that what we were doing was a normal and recognised part of the democratic process. Citizens should have ways, other than through the ballot box, to express their concern about what is happening in the world."

"Having read the [intelligence] reports by SB [Special Branch], I detect a clear strand of bias against the cause we were trying to advance and, by extension, the people trying to achieve it – us."

Giving evidence about his arrest on 12.5.72 at 'the Star and Garter Hotel, Richmond':

"Broadly speaking our aim was to ...disrupt the departure of the [British rugby] team coach, so that the team would not get to the airport in time to make its flight to South Africa [and its tour of apartheid South Africa]."

"We were just sitting or lying on the ground in the car park."

"I now understand an undercover police officer, 'Michael Scott' played a full and active role in the whole incident."

"It seems that 'Michael Scott' was present during [the planning] meeting. He also seems to have been involved in the demonstration itself, later that afternoon, was arrested and charged. He then attended court hearings with me and others, as a co-defendant."

"He also attended private meetings between the defendants after charge and before the court case ended."

"I assume he was involved in and may have sought to influence discussions about our 'tactics', those 'tactics' presumably including the conduct of our defence in court. I assume that 'Michael Scott', an embedded police officer, would have taken advantage of attending that meeting and may have influenced it. He may have reported back on the agreed legal strategy to his superiors."

"Michael Scott thus had access to our confidential discussions, by virtue of being a defendant, that he would not otherwise have gained."

"I note references in the intelligence reports, which appear to show that 'Michael Scott' and those receiving the reports knew that most of those arrested were not guilty."

"There is no attempt by SB to inform anyone involved in our prosecution that any of us may have been innocent."

"Evidence from 'Michael Scott', supportive of the defendants' account (and contradicting uniformed police officers' evidence) would, coming from a serving police officer, have been more credible than had it come just from protesters."

"I note there is a reference [in intelligence documents] to the **police being conscious of the 'potential of embarrassment to police' if 'Michael Scott' were to have been involved in the protest and in the criminal prosecution in his cover name, and then for it to come out later that he was an UCO. This seems to highlight a failure to have procedures and criteria for the oversight of UCOs in this situation.**"

"There is no mention in the note of more important concerns – that the other defendants in the criminal proceedings should have a fair trial, that innocent demonstrators should not be convicted of offences they have not committed etc. **The only concerns expressed in the documentation seem to be for potential institutional damage to the police.** The failure to view activists as individuals with their own legitimate rights and interests and the decision to place those second to the unfettered gathering of information on them may be a precursor to some of the more gross abuses of activists and their rights that, I note, happened in later periods of undercover policing of campaigners.

After being asked explain the impact on him of finding out that Michael Scott was an UCO:

"The events took place a long time ago but they do raise concerns about the principles of undercover policing now and in the future."

"I am concerned, in particular, about an UCO attending confidential meetings of defendants and discussions about or even possibly with their lawyers and the implications this has for 'legal privilege'."

"I am concerned that the role and evidence of an UCO was not made known to the defence, the prosecution and the court."

“The outcome, potentially contributed to by the covering up of the UCO’s status, is that I have had this criminal conviction for over 45 years.”

“I am concerned that my conviction has not been referred to the Panel, set up under the Inquiry’s terms of reference, to consider potential miscarriages of justice.”

“I note that ‘Michael Scott’s’ and other officers’ reports on this case were escalated to senior officers within Special Branch and beyond. What use was this information put to?”

“I think it is important to record that the use of UCOs against me and the STST campaign does not appear, in any significant way, to have hindered our campaign or stopped it achieving its ends – in the short terms the cancellation of the 1970 cricket tour; in the medium term the severance of sporting ties between apartheid South Africa on the one hand and the UK and the rest of the world on the other; and in the long term, through the isolation of the white South African regime, its eventual downfall 25 years later.”

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Timings

- Ernest Rodker’s statement to the Inquiry was read out by his son, Oli Rodker, on Wednesday 28 April at 2pm-5pm.
- Professor Jonathan Rosenhead gave evidence to the Inquiry on Thursday 29 April at 10.30am-1pm.
- Christabel Gurney OBE will give evidence to the Inquiry on Thursday 29 April at 2pm-5pm.
- Lord Peter Hain will give evidence to the Inquiry on Friday 30 April from 10am-5pm.

More information on the AAM memo to the government in 1982 can be found here:

- <https://www.aamarchives.org/archive/campaigns/government/gov19-aam-memorandum-for-meeting-with-the-home-secretary.html>
- <https://www.aamarchives.org/archive/campaigns/government/gov24-memorandum-to-the-home-secretary.html>

