

[Home](#) > [News & Insights](#) > [Press Releases](#) > [Undercover Policing Inquiry: Lord Peter Hain's Statement](#)

ALL POSTS



UNDERCOVER POLICING INQUIRY: LORD PETER HAIN'S STATEMENT

ACTIONS AGAINST THE POLICE

JUSTICE

PRESS RELEASES

APRIL 30, 2021

TEAM

CORMAC MCDONOUGH

JOCELYN COCKBURN

GUY MITCHELL

MIKE SCHWARZ

Lord Peter Hain today delivered his witness statement, as part of the Undercover Policing Inquiry. See below for a summary of the key points, and his biography.

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

About Right Honourable Lord Peter Hain, 71

From **anti-apartheid** protester to Right Honourable Lord, from Pretoria childhood to senior Cabinet Minister and over thirty years in Britain's Parliament, Peter Hain has led a colourful life:

- Brought up in South Africa where his **anti-apartheid** parents were jailed, banned and forced into exile when he was aged 16
- From 1969-70, led British **anti-apartheid** campaigns to stop all-white South African sports tours
- Went on to become MP for Neath, 1991-2015, and served in the UK Government for 12 years
- UK Cabinet positions: Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; Work and Pensions; and for Wales; Leader of the House of Commons; Energy Minister; Foreign Minister with successive responsibilities for Africa, the Middle East and Europe
- Negotiated the 2007 settlement to end the conflict in Northern Ireland
- Chaired the United Nations Security Council and negotiated international treaties

Peter Hain has been provided with 70 documents, mainly 'intelligence reports' of Special Branch ('SB') and its undercover police unit, the Special Demonstration Squad ('SDS').

They relate to 'intelligence' gathered on him by six undercover police officers including during his campaigning with the **Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM)**, Stop the Seventy Tour (STST), the Anti-Nazi League (ANL), Young Liberals (YL). They span many years, principally the 70s.

They do not include important and hitherto secret intelligence gathered on him by a seventh undercover police officer, in the 2000s, while he was an MP, in the Cabinet and a Privy Councillor.

Key points:

"Before [becoming an MP] I was a political activist, involved in non-violent activities and organising against some of the most abhorrent and appalling manifestations of racism and prejudice that existed during the 20th century, in particular the apartheid regime in South Africa. I believe history has vindicated the position that many of us took in protesting against apartheid, but with the passage of time it may be easy for some to forget the depth and strength of support that existed for the South African apartheid regime at that time, including amongst very senior members of the British Government."

"I am grateful to the Chair of this Inquiry for the disclosure I have received thus far. However I believe more should be forthcoming . **It is important that there should be full disclosure to the victims and subjects of undercover policing. From the senior political position I now hold it is clear that this inquiry is uncovering a particularly unpleasant and often hidden chapter in the history of this country and our democracy and this can only be fully revealed if those affected are provided with as much disclosure as possible.**"

"It is my view that these documents show an inaccurate, exaggerated, misjudged and wholly disproportionate use of intelligence and undercover policing at that time. **It is hard not to be struck by the sense that such activity was out of control.** Worse, it shows the UK police had entirely the wrong focus – preoccupied with gathering information on peaceful non-violent activists through inappropriate covert means, while sharing information with and showing far less concern about the activities of those who supported racist and far right ideologies."

"It reveals how undercover policing can become politicised, and be carried out in an uncontrolled way. It reminds all the public authorities engaged how easily this can happen and how it must be avoided for the future. It is also a salutary lesson in how we should approach non-violent protestors who are organising to uphold the principles of human rights and democracy. Regarding them as the enemy and taking disproportionate, unjustified steps against them takes our society down a dangerous path and, as happened in this case, on the wrong side of history."

" I would like to emphasise that I am proud of the activities in which I took part. I also think those who supported the apartheid regime and the racism that we were protesting against should reflect on how they feel about their own activities."

" Stop the Seventy Tour [STST] had clear principles, mainly a commitment to truly non-racial sports teams from South Africa which for generations had been selected from whites only. It was committed to non-violent direct action (NVDA) – in the tradition of the Suffragettes and Gandhi's struggle for India's independence – to oppose apartheid and stop all-white sports tours. As STST's leader I was always completely open about that."

"STST's aim was to stop the planned cricket tour by the all-white South African team, to England in summer 1970. As part of this, we sought heavily to disrupt the all-white Springbok rugby tour of the UK in winter 1969/70 in order to make clear that the much more vulnerable cricket tour would be rendered impossible and should therefore be cancelled. I was pleased to learn many years later, when I first met Nelson Mandela in 1991, that our campaign – including my own actions – became known to all the political prisoners in Robben Island in South Africa and provided them with an enormous morale boost . The wider objective was to isolate white South Africa from international sport and so help defeat apartheid itself . All these objectives were eventually achieved."

" I have been through quite a lot in my political life. I supported my parents, and was myself active in the **anti-apartheid** movement in South Africa. I had a knife pulled on me in a Putney pub by an NF member. I received a letter bomb . I have been threatened with assassination and faced other threats of violence and assault . Three meetings of mine were broken up by the NF and the BNP. . At the height of the ANL rocks were thrown through the front windows of my terraced home in Putney, narrowly missing my toddler son Sam."

"It should not be forgotten that at the time of my activism, a large section of the police held racist views and/or behaved in a racist way. **Racism affected the approach taken by uniformed officers at demonstrations and it would be naïve to think that the same approach may not have influenced the work of undercover police officers infiltrating political activists and their superiors responsible for processing the intelligence, managing these UCOs and setting the unit's priorities generally.**"

"I am concerned about reports that UCOs conducted spying operations on MPs, such as me, even after their election to Parliament. I would like to know whether this is true, and if so what has been recorded and kept on me while I was an MP and then in the House of Lords."

"I feel that I have been living in a parallel universe, learning, now, that the public authorities, operating as part of the British state, retained reports on me from the past while I was carrying out sensitive and significant security work for the Government of that state in my capacity as a Minister of State and then as Secretary of State."

"The campaign against apartheid occurred at [a] time when [the] Cold War [was] at its height and had an international element. It seems that many involved in policing activity viewed our activity through a distorted and completely misconceived 'Cold War' lens."

" The SA secret services wanted to portray us as communists. They spread this lie, slur, to their UK counter-parts. These counter-parts included, it appears, not only Special Branch but also their undercover police. Those UCOs were, at every opportunity bent on finding, wrongly, connections between **anti-apartheid** activists and communists."

"Was the State maintaining the same sort of vigilant watch on the agents of apartheid active in Britain of which there were many or of right wing groups linked to them? These individuals and groups were much more prone to resort to violence and covert action – in contrast to the publicly open methods of the groups I was associated with."

"It is my clear view that the UK's undercover policing toward me cannot and should not be seen in isolation. It ran in parallel with apartheid South African State's attacks on me and other **anti-apartheid** activists."

“The question which needs to be answered is the degree of collusion, cooperation and intelligence sharing, between the UK and South African authorities. The anti-apartheid movement had concerns about this question at the time and this concern appears to have been discussed between SB and the Home Office at the time. I hope that this Inquiry will consider this issue in its modules.”

“Today, I read with alarm, but no surprise, of the recent revelations of the placing of the likes of Extinction Rebellion and Greenpeace on its terrorist watch list. This illustrates why the issues raised in this Inquiry about surveillance on non-violent activity decades ago is so relevant. It reveals just how easy it is for the state to drift into wholly inappropriate surveillance.”

For further information, please contact:

Yellow Jersey PR:

Emma Becirovic

Emma@yellowjerseypr.com

T: [0808 239 8378](tel:08082398378) | [0808 239 5975](tel:08082395975)

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 gave 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>

