

1 Wednesday, 11 November 2020

2 (10.00 am)

3 MS PURSER: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the first
4 day of evidential hearings in Tranche 1, Phase 1 of
5 the Undercover Policing Inquiry.

6 My name is Jacqueline Purser and I'm the hearings
7 manager. For those of you in the virtual hearing room,
8 please can I remind you to turn off both your camera and
9 video, unless you are invited to speak by the Chairman,
10 as Zoom will pick up on all noises and you will be on
11 the screen.

12 I will now hand over to our Chairman,
13 Sir John Mitting, to formally start proceedings.

14 Chairman.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We were today going to begin with
16 the opening statement of Dave Smith. He unfortunately
17 has contracted the Coronavirus. Naturally, I wish him
18 a full and speedy recovery, but it is obviously not
19 possible for him to make his opening statement today as
20 he had intended.

21 We will accommodate him when he is fit and ready to
22 do so.

23 One other person remains to make an opening
24 statement, Helen Steel. She, too, is, for different
25 reasons, not able to make her opening statement today.

1 Likewise, the Inquiry will accommodate her when she is
2 able to do so.

3 Today is going to be devoted to the evidence of
4 the core participant Tariq Ali. At 11 o'clock, there
5 will be a two minutes' silence. Because you can hear
6 Big Ben and I can't, I may not get the timing precisely
7 right, for which I apologise.

8 At the beginning of every session of evidence,
9 a recording which I made earlier is going to be played.
10 It lasts a little over three minutes. Could I ask you,
11 because I know you're going to listen to this for
12 the first time, to listen to it carefully. By the time
13 that you have heard it two or three times, you may be
14 able to speak it without me mouthing the words. But I'm
15 afraid it is something which you will have to listen to
16 time and time again. But now I'm going to ask that it
17 be played for the first time.

18 (pause)

19 MS PURSER: Sir, apologies for the slight delay whilst we
20 try to play your video. It will be on shortly.

21 Thank you.

22 (Pause)

23 (Video played)

24 "I am conducting this Inquiry under a statute,
25 the Inquiries Act 2005, which gives me the power to make

1 orders regulating the conduct of the Inquiry, including
2 its hearings. In the exercise of that power, I have
3 made a number of orders which affect what you may and
4 may not do in the hearing rooms and after you leave
5 them. Breach of any of the orders is a serious matter
6 and may have serious consequences for you.

7 "If I am satisfied that a person may have breached
8 an order, I have the power to certify the matter to
9 the High Court, which will investigate and deal with it
10 as if it had been a contempt of that court. If
11 satisfied that a breach has occurred and merits
12 the imposition of a penalty, the High Court may impose
13 a severe sanction on the person in breach, including
14 a fine, imprisonment for up to two years and
15 sequestration of their assets.

16 "Evidence is going to be given live over screens in
17 the hearing rooms. It is strictly prohibited to
18 photograph or record what is shown on the screens or to
19 record what is said by a witness or anyone else in
20 the hearing rooms.

21 "You may bring your mobile telephone into
22 the hearings rooms, but you may not use it for any of
23 those purposes. You may use it silently for any other
24 purpose. In particular, you may transmit your account
25 of what you have seen and heard in a hearing room to any

1 other person, but only once at least 10 minutes have
2 elapsed since the event which you are describing took
3 place.

4 "This restriction has a purpose. In the course of
5 the Inquiry, I have made orders prohibiting the public
6 disclosure of information; for example, about
7 the identity of a person for a variety of reasons.
8 These order must be upheld. It is inevitable that,
9 whether by accident or design, information which I have
10 ordered should not be publicly disclosed will sometimes
11 be disclosed in a hearing.

12 "If and when that happens, I will immediately
13 suspend the hearing and make an order prohibiting
14 further disclosure of the information outside
15 the hearing rooms. The consequence will be that no
16 further disclosure of that information may be made by
17 mobile telephone or other portable electronic device
18 from within the hearing room, or by any means outside
19 it.

20 "I am sorry if you find this message alarming. It
21 is not intended to be. Its purpose is simply to ensure
22 that everyone knows the rules which must apply if I am
23 to hear the evidence which I need to enable me to get to
24 the truth about undercover policing. You, as members of
25 the public, are entitled to hear the same public

1 evidence as I will hear, and to reach your own
2 conclusions about it. The Inquiry team will do their
3 best to ensure that you can.

4 "If you have any doubt about the terms of this
5 message or what you may or may not do, you should not
6 hesitate to ask one of them and, with my help if
7 necessary, they will provide you with the answer."

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Can we now begin, please, with
9 the evidence of Mr Tariq Ali.

10 MR TARIQ ALI

11 MR BARR: Sir, good morning. As you know, our first witness
12 is Mr Ali. I'm just going to let Ms Purser take
13 the affirmation.

14 MS PURSER: Good morning, Mr Ali. Can you see and hear me?

15 A. Yes.

16 MS PURSER: I understand that you would like to affirm?

17 A. Yes, please.

18 (Witness affirmed)

19 MS PURSER: Thank you, Mr Ali.

20 A. Thank you.

21 Questions by MR BARR

22 MR BARR: Mr Ali, could you confirm to the Inquiry, please,
23 your full name?

24 A. Tariq Ali.

25 Q. You very kindly provided a witness statement to

1 the Inquiry. Are the contents of that statement true
2 and correct to the best of your knowledge and belief?

3 A. They are.

4 Q. You tell us at paragraph 16 of that witness statement
5 that you are a journalist, writer and broadcaster, and
6 that you have been all of your life and that you remain
7 politically engaged; is that right?

8 A. That is correct, yes.

9 Q. I'd like to take you back, if I may, a little more than
10 half a century to the days of the Vietnam Solidarity
11 Campaign.

12 You tell us in your witness statement that you were
13 a member of the Ad Hoc Committee, which organised
14 the March and October 1968 demonstrations.

15 Did you also have a role organising the October 1967
16 demonstration?

17 A. Yes. And I was on the National Committee of the Vietnam
18 Solidarity Campaign itself, which we created after
19 Bertrand Russell and Jean Paul Sartre's tribunal trip to
20 North Vietnam in '66. So, if my memory serves me right,
21 VSC was set up in either '66, or at least '67.

22 Q. Thank you.

23 You've helpfully in your witness statement directed
24 us to your book, "Street Fighting Years". I'm going to
25 use your helpful book and read some passages from it,

1 before putting some questions to you.

2 A. Could you give me the page number?

3 Q. Yes, of course. I'm going to start in the copy
4 (indicates), if anyone else is following, the latest
5 edition, on page 233. And I'm looking under the heading
6 "22 October 1967". And I will read the passage, your
7 account of 22 October 1967:

8 "It was a nice Sunday. No rain and not too cold.
9 We had expected a few thousand people at most, given
10 that none of the established groups, such as CND or
11 various front organisations of the Communist Party, had
12 supported our call. When I arrived in Trafalgar Square
13 for the rally, I saw a much larger crowd which had
14 virtually filled the square. A number of us spoke and
15 then, carrying NLF flags and placards proclaiming
16 'Victory for Vietnam', 'Victory to the NLF', we began
17 the march to Grosvenor Square. The plan had been to
18 picket the American Embassy, hand in a petition, chant
19 slogans, sing pro NLF songs and end the demonstration.
20 The size of the crowd grew as we marched, and by
21 the time we approached the embassy, there were about
22 10,000 people behind our banners, predominantly
23 the young and largely students. The police, on their
24 part, were equally surprised at our numbers. Their
25 intelligence, which was usually based on ours, had let

1 them down.

2 "We marched right up to the steps of the embassy
3 before a thin blue line emerged to defend the citadel."

4 Do you stand by that account?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. I'll continue:

7 "A few shoves and we were through. We actually
8 reached the doors of the embassy before police
9 reinforcements dragged us back. There were hardly any
10 arrests and very little violence.

11 "We were amazed that we had got so close to
12 the enemy fortress. On the way back, we talked about
13 what we would have done if we had managed to occupy
14 the embassy. The most popular view was to open
15 the files and embarrass the Labour government by
16 publishing the list of MPs and journalists on
17 the payroll or otherwise involved with the more sinister
18 aspects of the embassy. This was a utopian hope but it
19 was very strong at the time.

20 "We also dreamed of using the embassy telex to cable
21 the US Embassy in Saigon and inform them that
22 pro-Vietcong forces had seized the premises in
23 Grosvenor Square."

24 Do you stand by that?

25 A. I do.

1 Q. Would it be a fair assessment to say that at least in
2 your heart what you wanted to do was occupy the embassy
3 and send that telex to Saigon?

4 A. Well, I suppose. I mean, it's difficult now, looking
5 back nearly 50 years, but yeah, our aim was to try and
6 get into the embassy and occupy it. As a token gesture.
7 You know, we were not intending to stay there, or
8 anything like that. But yeah, we were thinking about
9 that, yes.

10 Q. Thank you.

11 I'll read on just a little bit further:

12 "The demonstration was judged to be a major success.
13 Both its size and militancy were reward for all the hard
14 work of VSC activists and a vindication of our political
15 approach."

16 Might I ask you in what sense you were using
17 the word "militancy" there?

18 A. Well, mainly in the political sense, because within
19 the broad left there was a disagreement. CND for
20 instance or other anti-Vietnam War organisations had
21 the view that all they were demanding was peace in
22 Vietnam. This was not our opinion at VSC. We said:
23 yeah, we want peace, but not the peace of the graveyard,
24 and the only way peace will come is if the occupying
25 armies in Vietnam are defeated by the national

1 liberation front.

2 So "militancy" referred to that. And that was quite
3 well known at the time, because this debate was pretty
4 much public, and we were denounced by quite a few,
5 you know, let me say, people close to
6 the Communist Party or their front peace organisations.

7 Q. And so just to explore that a bit further, having read
8 that account to you, that was the sort of militancy that
9 would involve shoving through a police line to get
10 closer to the embassy?

11 A. Well, that's not how I meant it, really. I mean, we
12 really meant by "militancy" giving support to
13 the National Liberation Front. It was not particularly
14 connected with entering the embassy. Because that was
15 something that was an accident anyway that happened in
16 October '67. We weren't prepared to do that; the police
17 weren't prepared for it to happen. Some of us were
18 hoping we could just take the embassy for ten minutes,
19 as a token gesture. So it wasn't the central thing in
20 our mind in October '67.

21 Q. If I'm understanding you correctly, you're saying that
22 a central element of the militancy was essentially
23 taking a partisan stance --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- and supporting the NLF?

1 A. Yeah, this was a big issue. And this was very new,
2 actually, to -- to, you know, the press in the country
3 at the moment, the radio, television, that there were
4 a group of people saying that they actually wanted what
5 was regarded by many in the British Government as
6 the enemy. And that is what created a stir, if,
7 you know, one has got clippings from that period which
8 demonstrate. And that was, of course, you know,
9 divisive on the left as well.

10 But it was at the time a very sharp point of view to
11 espouse. I mean, we were amazed that a Guardian opinion
12 poll roughly in that period showed that we were
13 supported by 25% of the British population, which was
14 huge for us. And, you know, we used to say, "Well, why
15 don't they come out? Why don't they come out?" But
16 that was -- that was the meaning of "political
17 militancy".

18 Q. Thank you.

19 I'm now going to move to the March 1968
20 demonstration, and I'm going to go to page 251 of your
21 book.

22 A. Okay, let me just get there. Okay.

23 Q. I'm going to read from the paragraph that starts about
24 a third of the way down the page with
25 the words "I had ...":

1 "I had returned from a nationwide speaking tour and
2 reported to the committee that the size of
3 the demonstration would be at least twice as big as that
4 of last October, and probably even larger. We agreed
5 a list of speakers for Trafalgar Square, and it was
6 suggested that two of these, Vanessa Redgrave and
7 myself, should hand in a letter to the American Embassy.
8 That was decreed to be the official objective of
9 the March. But what were to be our unofficial aims?
10 These were not discussed at the larger meetings, since
11 we had little doubt that informers were present and
12 active. But amongst a smaller group, we spent a very
13 long time discussing what was possible.

14 "I presented an analysis of the previous
15 demonstration. If we had been prepared, we could have
16 occupied the embassy, which would have had a tremendous
17 propaganda value. However, we had been taken by
18 surprise by the militancy and the extent of our own
19 support. This time, the militancy would be greater as
20 a result of the NLF's successors in Vietnam, and so
21 would our size. A serious attempt should therefore be
22 made to occupy the embassy.

23 "There was virtually no disagreement as to
24 the desirability of such an outcome. Then Pat Jordan
25 spoke and said that it would be extremely foolish to

1 imagine that the state would be unprepared. We were
2 taken by surprise last October, true. But so were they.
3 This time they had been able to witness all our
4 pre-activities."

5 I'm just going to stop there, Mr Ali, to ask a few
6 questions about that passage?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. First of all, is it right that the VSC had unofficial
9 aims as well as official aims at this time?

10 A. Yes. I said so at the time and publicly the day after
11 the demonstration. So it wasn't a big secret. It
12 wasn't a big secret the day after the demonstration. We
13 did not advertise it beforehand.

14 Q. I understand. And that's the secret planning, if I call
15 it that, was kept to an inner circle?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. And was that the National Committee, or was that
18 a smaller circle?

19 A. It was mainly the National Committee. To be honest with
20 you, I cannot fully recall everyone who was present.
21 But it was probably no more than 7 or 8 people. That is
22 VSC National Committee members based in London, rather
23 than the ones who were in other parts of the country;
24 because it was a National Committee, there were
25 representatives from Scotland, Wales, North of England,

1 all the big cities in the Midlands, etc. So this was
2 the London members of the VSC National Committee, as far
3 as I can remember.

4 Q. Thank you.

5 I'm going to resume reading. I'll read a little bit
6 further:

7 "He ..."

8 That's Pat Jordan:

9 "... was convinced that every single one of my
10 speeches on the recent tour had been noted and studied
11 by Special Branch. I protested. I had not discussed
12 any street fighting tactics at any of the meetings.
13 'That's not the point,' Jordan responded, 'It's your
14 tone that matters. They're not fools.' Someone else
15 asked me if I was prepared, during the course of my
16 speech in Trafalgar Square, to state loudly that
17 the objective of the demo was to storm the embassy.
18 I nodded in the affirmative. There was silence. Then
19 the plan was vetoed. I could be charged with incitement
20 or conspiracy and either locked up for a few years or,
21 given that I had only been resident in Britain for
22 four-and-a-half years, they could deport me out of
23 the country.

24 "It was decided to make the decision at the last
25 possible moment when we had been able to assess

1 the balance of forces on the ground. Everyone knew that
2 this was an unsatisfactory, neither-fish-nor-fowl
3 variant, but the majority of the 12 people present had
4 been insistent that there was no other realistic
5 possibility."

6 So can we take from that that the desire to storm
7 the embassy still remained at that time?

8 A. Yeah, largely because of what I've said earlier to you
9 because of the October '67 demonstration, a number of us
10 felt it was a seriously missed opportunity, and that to
11 storm the embassy and occupy it, even for five minutes,
12 would send a message out to the world. As it was,
13 senator Eugene McCarthy, the peace candidate in
14 the United States, had publicly said, "We have reached
15 a sad state of affairs that our embassy in the country
16 of our main ally in Europe is permanently under siege."

17 And he had used this to stress the need to pull
18 the troops out of Vietnam. So that encouraged us,
19 the fact that there were lots of Americans -- mainstream
20 Americans, you know, not people from the left but
21 democrats in the main, both senators, congressmen, black
22 leaders -- arguing now favour.

23 So that gave us a sort of -- if you like, it boosted
24 our collective ego, that what we did outside the US
25 Embassy in London actually mattered in

1 the United States, not to mention Vietnam.

2 Q. And what, in the result, stopped you making a public
3 call for that to happen was the concern that others had
4 for you that you might be prosecuted or deported if you
5 did so?

6 A. Yeah, I mean, we have lots of -- this may surprise you
7 but we had lots of friendly lawyers who attended these
8 events as well, and made sure in case there were arrests
9 to go immediately with the people arrested and get bail.
10 And there were some -- there was one lawyer present at
11 this meeting who made it very clear that they -- under
12 no circumstances should I make any such appeal, because
13 of my legal situation.

14 Q. And so the conclusion was that there would be an
15 assessment of the balance of forces on the ground at
16 the last possible moment; is that right?

17 A. Yeah, on the sort of Napoleonic principle: first engage
18 and then see.

19 Q. Does that mean, then, that you were going to see on
20 the day?

21 A. Yeah, yeah. I mean, we had no idea that, you know,
22 the numbers of police who would be there, leave alone
23 mounted police, etc, etc. So it was -- the decision was
24 that clearly, if we were completely outnumbered by
25 the police, it would be stupid to do anything. I mean,

1 that was a view also expressed quite sharply. With
2 which I agreed, I have to say, that you know, we wanted
3 a token occupation of the embassy, but if we couldn't,
4 we couldn't. There was no plan to do anything else.

5 Q. I'm going to now move to page 253 of your book, to
6 the paragraph that starts near the top. And it's
7 a passage that concerns the arrival of the German SDS
8 contingent:

9 "On the day before, the German SDS contingent
10 arrived, or rather marched into Conway Hall, where we
11 were ..."

12 I think it should say:

13 "... were in the middle of preparing last-minute
14 plans, with their familiar chant of "Ho, ho Ho Chi
15 Minh". They were warmly welcomed and joined in
16 the proceedings. They had come well prepared with
17 helmets and their own banner. They had also brought me
18 an SDS helmet as a gift. They insisted on hearing our
19 battle plans. We said there were none. They expressed
20 anger and shock. Were we not planning to occupy
21 the embassy? I was chairing the meeting and spelt out
22 our official position, but the SDS came straight to
23 the point. 'We understand what you say but we now ask
24 you another question: if the masses spontaneously decide
25 to storm the American Embassy, will you stop them or

1 join in?'

2 "Feeling that this questioning was getting too close
3 for comfort, I declared the meeting closed, came down
4 from the platform and dragged the leaders of the SDS
5 contingent to another room. Here, I explained what
6 the position of VSC was and why we could not publicly
7 call for an occupation. They argued long and hard.
8 I was sympathetic to what they said, but I insisted
9 strongly that the view of the majority had to be
10 upheld."

11 Can I clarify there, please. There you explain what
12 the position of the VSC was to them when speaking to
13 them in private?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Was that the official position, the unofficial position
16 or both?

17 A. Well, the official position of the VSC you already know.
18 The unofficial position was that it would be -- what we
19 did would be determined by the relationship of forces on
20 that particular day. And that is the position I -- I
21 explained both positions to them in fact. So they were
22 aware of that.

23 Q. Did you discuss demonstration tactics with them at all
24 beyond the strategy?

25 A. No. We had no -- we said to them, in fact, pretty

1 clearly, that there was no plan, there was no particular
2 group that had been allocated to do A, B or C, in terms
3 of provoking or undertaking violence. It would either
4 happen collectively, the takeover of the embassy, or it
5 wouldn't happen at all.

6 The Germans -- SDS, were mainly from Berlin. And
7 they had had a lot of experience on street
8 demonstrations, which we hadn't. And during
9 a demonstration against the Shah of Iran,
10 Benno Ohnesorg, if I remember his name correct, one of
11 the German in SDS had been killed, shot dead. So they
12 were very organised, precisely to prevent any such
13 things happening. We weren't, because we said
14 the police here -- we did say to them, "This is not
15 the Berlin police". You know, we explained what had
16 happened in October the previous year. And that was
17 that.

18 They finally -- you know, they said, "We will accept
19 your discipline." Which they did.

20 Q. And how were you anticipating that they would behave on
21 the day?

22 A. I was, you know, pretty convinced that they would do --
23 they would accept leadership decisions, and they would
24 not act on their own.

25 Q. And does that mean, then, if the balance of forces on

1 the ground on the day favoured an attempt on
2 the embassy, they would join in --

3 A. Without any doubt.

4 Q. And otherwise they would not?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Can I now ask you about the "Come Armed" stickers. You
7 have described that -- this, I'm not referring to your
8 book here. But you've described in your witness
9 statement that they were "childish nonsense". I think
10 a number of sources describe that somebody put "Come
11 Armed" stickers on some of the flyers for
12 the demonstration.

13 Did you consider that such stickers might have
14 encouraged some hotheads to follow that advice?

15 A. Not really. That was not the mood at all. And to be
16 perfectly frank, when I first saw these stickers, I did
17 wonder whether there were agent provocateurs around,
18 because no one in the VSC, or any other of
19 the mainstream anti-war groups, behave in this way.
20 And, you know, the -- Burnett writing in The Economist,
21 the quote I gave from him in the book, accused American
22 groups of doing it. We had no evidence of that,
23 actually, whether it was -- there were groups of
24 Americans here at the time who were active in
25 the anti-war movement, which included -- who included,

1 by the way, Bill Clinton, who later became the president
2 of that country.

3 So there were a lot of Americans resisting
4 the draft, avoiding conscription, who were here. And
5 none of those groups, I'm absolutely convinced, because
6 I knew them, most the leaders of these groups, would
7 have put "Come Armed". It's just a nonsense and
8 designed to provoke. But who organised them or who put
9 these stickers on is a question which I think some of
10 the people on whose behalf you are acting might be
11 better able to answer. None of us had anything to do
12 with that.

13 Q. I think it's right to say, in your book you express
14 the concern that they may have actually put people off
15 attending the demonstration?

16 A. That is also the case, because some of the other
17 mainstream groups were saying, "Don't go on this
18 demonstration; these people are too militant," etc, etc.
19 And this was just designed to pander to that.

20 But, you know, just think about it. Even in those
21 times -- I mean, it would never happen now. But even in
22 those times in Britain, or most parts of Europe, to have
23 a sticker saying "come armed", you'd have to be pretty
24 nutty to do that. And honestly, there were a few fringe
25 types who were like that. No one would have a sticker

1 printed and then put it on. No, I'm absolutely
2 convinced about that.

3 Q. Did the VSC do anything about those stickers?

4 A. We denounced them, actually. And, you know, when we
5 were asked by the press at the time, we said we had
6 nothing to do with them and they could only be
7 provocateurs. I remember very well saying that myself
8 a number of times. Because you, know, it was far
9 removed from anything we believed in.

10 Q. Now, there were various different groups who had an
11 interest in campaigning (inaudible). I'd just like to
12 ask you about some of them.

13 First of all, the Maoist groups. What was your
14 feeling, having dealt with them, about their attitude to
15 violence at public demonstrations?

16 A. There were one or two Maoist groups, if my memory serves
17 me right. I personally didn't have too much contact
18 with them. Other members of the committee did, to try
19 and persuade them to come under a common umbrella and to
20 accept the discipline of the march as a whole. And
21 usually they refused. I think in most cases they
22 refused and said, "We'll come under our own banners."
23 So we said, "You can still come under your own banners,
24 but just accept the discipline of the march," which
25 sometimes they grudgingly did. But the big clash with

1 them was not prior to March '68, if my memory serves me
2 right, it was in October, which, you know, we will come
3 to. October '68.

4 But I had no knowledge that they were for
5 a different tactical approach, or strategic approach.
6 I never saw them being that active.

7 There were -- there was an Irish Maoist group, if my
8 memory serves my right, led by a person called Ed
9 Davoren. But I don't recall him ever saying anything
10 particularly outrageous. Maybe they did, I don't know.
11 But I'm saying I didn't have any personal encounter.

12 Q. This is very much the opportunity to hear what you know
13 and what you saw and heard, so that's --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- absolutely understood.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. You qualify -- you described that sometimes they would
18 grudgingly accept the discipline of the VSC. Can I take
19 it from that that their willingness to do so and their
20 actual commitment to doing so was something that you
21 couldn't entirely rely upon?

22 A. No, we couldn't, because, I mean, given that they
23 regarded most of the VSC National Committee as
24 revisionists and class traitors, and whatever else they
25 called us, we realised it would be difficult for them.

1 But within the VSC, and certainly on the mass
2 demonstrations, they were outnumbered. So, I mean --
3 hugely outnumbered, that they wouldn't have dreamt of
4 doing anything to challenge the discipline. We had very
5 effective stewarding. Certainly of the March
6 demonstration, and more so during the October
7 demonstration. So we made sure that nothing happened
8 that we weren't aware of within our ranks.

9 If people then left these ranks, went to
10 the pavement and decided to do something on their own,
11 that was between them and the police, it had nothing to
12 do with us. We were very clear about that.

13 Q. Okay. Can I move now, please, to the anarchist groups.
14 What can you tell us about their attitude to public
15 disorder?

16 A. It varied. Like most other groups, they were divided.
17 There were the softer anarchists who were largely
18 theoretical anarchists, I would say, who liked the ideas
19 but were not so active. And they came on the marches
20 like anyone else, like most other people.

21 There were some small anarchist groups -- I can't
22 recall their names now -- who were constantly denouncing
23 us as being lily-livered and scared of the cops, and
24 this, that and the other. And what we used to say to
25 them was, "You can do what you want, we can't stop you,

1 but this is not our policy."

2 So on many occasions they didn't even join
3 the demonstrations, they would stand at traffic islands
4 as the demonstration marched from either
5 Trafalgar Square or the Embankment and hurl abuse at us.
6 They were not that strong, it has to be said. At the
7 time they had a newspaper, an own newspaper called
8 "Freedom". But in terms of numbers, they weren't that
9 strong.

10 Q. And when they did join your marches, were you concerned
11 about how they might behave?

12 A. No, because there weren't enough of them to do anything.
13 I mean, they could be seen. They, you know, dressed
14 quite similarly and wore T-shirts proclaiming their
15 views, so it was very easy to identify them. And we
16 weren't particularly worried by them. Or if anyone was,
17 it never came to my ears, that there's a big problem
18 from anarchist group -- posed by anarchist group X or Y,
19 I never heard anything like that. That doesn't mean it
20 didn't -- you know, that something didn't happen, but
21 not to my knowledge.

22 Q. Thank you. Can we go back to your book, please. We're
23 going to go to the March demonstration itself. So I'm
24 going to go to page 254 and going to start reading at
25 the bottom paragraph of page 254:

1 "As we led the march towards Oxford Street, the main
2 VSC contingent was in the lead, with a marvellous
3 display of red flags and banners, flanked with gigantic
4 NFL emblems. Just behind us were the German SDS with
5 their banner. It was an impressive sight and the mood
6 was one of optimism. If the conversations of those who
7 came that day had been recorded, I am sure that
8 the overwhelming majority wanted more than just
9 a victory in Vietnam. We wanted a new world without
10 wars, oppression and class exploitation, based on
11 comradeship and internationalism. The wealth of
12 the first world, if properly utilised, could help
13 transform the third world.

14 "Moreover, if a meaningful socialism was successful
15 in the West, it would not just be the City of London and
16 its state that would tremble, but also the bureaucrats
17 in Moscow, who were equally scared of change from below.
18 We were aware that a new spring had arrived in Prague
19 and that many exciting discussions were taking place at
20 Charles University and in the Czech Communist Party.
21 But it was not just talk. It was also a feeling that
22 change was possible. That was what Vietnam had taught
23 all of us."

24 Now, I'll stop there and ask you first about
25 the German SDS.

- 1 A. Mm.
- 2 Q. So when the march is proceeding towards Grosvenor Square
3 but has not yet reached it, is it right that the German
4 SDS contingent was not very far behind you?
- 5 A. Yes.
- 6 Q. And during that phase of the march, are you able to
7 describe to us how they behaved?
- 8 A. They were like everyone else. What they brought to that
9 demonstration that we hadn't done ourselves before --
10 for instance in the -- before October '67, or on
11 CND marches -- was a linking of arms in solidarity.
12 This was, you know, not something violent, it was just
13 that if arms were linked, the demonstration would be
14 able to defend itself in case it was attacked by
15 whoever. And that was a sort of tactic that they had
16 brought -- you know, brought with them from Berlin. And
17 as they did it themselves, you know, we could see people
18 behind them, rows and rows of demonstrators actually
19 beginning to do that, so that was the main contribution,
20 as far as I know.
- 21 Q. Did you -- were you aware at any stage whether they
22 deliberately slowed down such that the protesters behind
23 them pressed up against them?
- 24 A. Not really, no.
- 25 Q. Were you aware -- did you ever become aware of a time

1 when they suddenly moved forwards into the marchers and
2 demonstrators in front of them?

3 A. I can't recall that, actually, no. I mean, there was
4 the attempt to break through the police lines, took
5 place, I think, twice or thrice. And it wasn't just
6 the German SDS, it was large numbers of other people as
7 well, you know, nice English students, who joined in
8 that.

9 But once that had failed, then we began to fall
10 back. And had we not done so, you know, I mean, there
11 -- there was enough police there to actually arrest
12 several hundred people. But what made a retreat
13 necessary and, you know, had to be done, was the charge
14 of the mounted police that happened, after two attempts
15 had been made to break through the police lines.

16 Q. I was going to say, I'd just like to be clear about what
17 stage we're talking about. Are we talking about
18 the stage of trying to enter Grosvenor Square, or are we
19 talking about once inside Grosvenor Square?

20 A. Well, it was, you know, our figures for
21 the demonstration were that it was anything between
22 25,000 and 30,000 people. I don't think police figures
23 were that different, but they may have been, because
24 they tended to underestimate it and the press followed
25 their lead. But it was a pretty large demonstration.

1 And the streets round the square were blocked by
2 the demonstrators trying to get in.

3 And at one point, we just decided to go into
4 the centre of the square, not just march past
5 the embassy but actually go into the square itself and
6 occupy that square as well.

7 And then, that also released more room for
8 the others to come in. And after some stoppages and
9 a few very minor scuffles, I would say, the bulk of
10 the demonstration was in Grosvenor Square. I mean,
11 there's lots of images of it. I mean, news reels and
12 programmes were made about it later, so one can judge.
13 My own memory, as you can imagine, on every single
14 detail now is a bit hazy, you know. I can't recall
15 every detail, but there's enough material there to form
16 an estimate of what was going on.

17 Q. Well, I won't press you if you're unable to assist. But
18 are you able to tell us what role the German contingent
19 played in getting into the square in the first place?

20 A. I have no memory of that, actually. They -- you know,
21 if they were caught in one of the side streets -- which
22 they wouldn't have been because they were behind us, so
23 they came probably with us. But I don't think they did
24 anything on their own as Germans. They were part of
25 a large demonstration. And lots of other people had

1 linked arms with them as well, people from, you know,
2 Britain, so to speak.

3 And there was some of the tabloid press gave a lot
4 of importance to the Germans, because, you know, they
5 weren't used to seeing Germans joining demonstrations in
6 Britain. But we joined -- in February '68 there had
7 been a big VSC contingent at the big march in Berlin,
8 where, you know, about 10,000 people had marched through
9 the streets of Berlin, you know, demanding peace in
10 Vietnam, etc, to chants of "to the gas chambers, take
11 them to the gas chambers", from the Germans who hadn't
12 learned much about the Second World War. So we had done
13 that and observed that.

14 So the Germans coming -- there was a French
15 contingent as well, led by the French National Committee
16 of Vietnam, CVN, I think, and others. No one mentioned
17 them. But the Germans, because they wore helmets and
18 arms were linked, gave this impression of a very
19 militant force. But they were really not that -- not so
20 different, and quite a few of them later became Members
21 of Parliament, leaders of the Green Party, publishers,
22 etc. I still run into them sometimes. So it's --
23 I don't totally get the point about trying to emphasise
24 their presence. We didn't feel it like that.

25 Q. Thank you.

1 I'm going to move to the second limb of the passage
2 that I read out, which was about your ultimate aims.

3 Would it be fair to say that your ultimate
4 aspirations were revolutionary?

5 A. Not in Britain, no.

6 Q. Well, in the sense that -- I mean, there are a number of
7 places where you address this issue. What I -- what
8 I wanted to understand is where -- what your ultimate
9 aims were. I was going to come to suggest that your
10 view at the time was that you were not expecting this
11 demonstration itself to precipitate a revolution; is
12 that fair?

13 A. That is absolutely accurate. I mean, you would have to
14 be slightly deranged to imagine that a VSC demonstration
15 would trigger off a revolution in Britain, where,
16 you know, a majority of the people had elected a Labour
17 government, 60%/70% of the population, whether they now
18 want to believe it or not, supported the American war in
19 Vietnam. We always knew we were a minority, a sizeable
20 one, but that we were a minority. So the notion that
21 there was any hope for a revolution here was nonsense.

22 Of course, in France it had been very different in
23 May '68. And that had added to the general hubbub, if
24 you like. Also, the Vietnamese had launched the Tet
25 Offensive in 1968. And then in August 1968, the Czechs

1 had come out for socialism with a human face, and Soviet
2 tanks had moved in to crush them. So there was talk
3 about different forms of socialism; how close were
4 the French to a revolution or not, etc, etc. But
5 I promise you, no one in Britain, no one serious on
6 the left in Britain thought that anything similar was
7 going to happen here.

8 Q. Yes, you're quite clear in your book that London was not
9 Paris.

10 A. No.

11 Q. But with that now understood, I was really directing my
12 first question to what your long-term aspirations were,
13 that ultimately what you want and wanted then was world
14 socialism; is that fair?

15 A. I suppose, yeah. But that also included the toppling of
16 the regimes in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe,
17 and their replacement with something like the Czech
18 model, which was socialism with a human face.

19 I mean, people now forget, but if you compare
20 the Czech newspaper, the Czech media, from, I would say,
21 May to August 1968, with anything in the West, anything,
22 it was much, much freer. The debates, the diversity,
23 the discussions, the confrontations on one television
24 programme in Czechoslovakia, where prisoners were
25 allowed to question those who had ordered them to be put

1 in prison who were communist party apparatchiks.

2 All this was very exciting, because the one thing
3 that the new left, our left had learned was that no
4 socialism would ever -- no serious socialism could ever
5 be possible in Western Europe without democracy. Very
6 firmly attached to it. So that was what we believed in.

7 And, I mean, the other thing is, quite honestly,
8 that some of us -- I certainly did -- that -- you know,
9 that a state like Britain or virtually every European
10 state, what defines and characterises it is a total
11 monopoly of legitimate violence within its territory.
12 And to topple that by alternative violence couldn't
13 work.

14 The only process could be -- particularly in this
15 country, was a huge Parliamentary majority in favour of
16 something close to socialism, an attempt by the elite to
17 break that down; that would then divide the police,
18 the apparatuses of the state, and something else might
19 happen. But that was so far-fetched that, you know, it
20 was foolish to even think about it as such. Not so in
21 the case of France, or in Portugal, which of all
22 the European countries came very close to a socialist
23 revolution in 1975.

24 Q. So does that mean, given the air of change that was in
25 the wind, or the possibility of change, that you saw

1 the March demonstration as not likely to cause
2 a revolution here but as a step towards a piece of
3 the jigsaw that would be put together eventually as part
4 of a worldwide revolution with the ultimate aim of
5 worldwide socialism?

6 A. Not really. Let me be frank. I mean, the whole --
7 the idea of a world revolution in itself was pretty
8 schematic, and these things never happen in any
9 particular way. But I don't -- I mean, our main purpose
10 in these demonstrations was to help the Vietnamese,
11 because we knew that during the Spanish Civil War, there
12 had been international brigades, from all over Europe,
13 to help the Spanish Republic; that Attlee, who later
14 became Britain's prime minister after the Second World
15 War, had led a delegation to the Spanish Republic; that
16 people like Orwell -- others had gone and fought; that
17 young lives of poets and young intellectuals of the left
18 had been taken.

19 And when I was in Vietnam, in North Vietnam, I had
20 a long talk with the prime minister at one point. And
21 I said, "Would you like international brigades to come
22 from all over the world?", I said, "It could be done."
23 And he answered me very bluntly. He said, "Thank you
24 very much, we appreciate the solidarity, but the answer
25 is no." So I said "why?" He said, "Because this is not

1 the Spanish Civil War, the level of technology and
2 armaments being used against us is so horrific that
3 the last thing we want is people like you to come and
4 die here, we'd have to spend more time keeping you alive
5 than actually fighting our enemy, so not that way."

6 "Secondly," he said, "allowing international
7 brigades might make the Russians and the Chinese feel
8 that we're slapping them on the face, saying that they
9 are not helping us enough."

10 "And the third thing," he said, "is, all we want
11 from you is to build movements abroad, especially," he
12 said, "this very important for us in the United States,
13 that help to bring the war to an end. That's all we ask
14 of you." And that's what we did --

15 Q. Thank you very much, Mr Ali. I'm going to stop you
16 there whilst we observe the silence for two minutes.

17 (Two minutes' silence observed)

18 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

19 MR BARR: Thank you, sir.

20 Just resuming the theme of your political philosophy
21 and your political aims -- in the long term,
22 I completely understand, not the short term.

23 You describe in your witness statement how you
24 disagreed that Parliament should survive, and that you
25 thought that Parliament should be replaced by workers'

1 councils; is that right?

2 A. Well, workers' councils is -- we did believe that at the
3 time. But, you know, our own views kept changing. We
4 wanted a more direct parliament, like the one that had
5 been demanded by the Chartists in the 19th century. And
6 one of the demands of the Chartists had been annual
7 parliaments. And at a time when there wasn't adult
8 suffrage, some of the Chartist leaders had discussed
9 the possibility of an elected parliament on the basis of
10 adult franchise, male adult franchise, electing
11 representatives to sit in a parliamentary -- alternative
12 parliament in Manchester.

13 So we were, you know, exploring all these ideas,
14 both from English history and elsewhere. Because we
15 found that the entire way Parliament was assembled,
16 the way it functioned, in Britain in particular, at that
17 time, too, I felt -- I still feel this quite strongly --
18 that the antiquated system which -- on which the British
19 rulers rested really needed drastic reform.

20 I mean, to give just one example, proportional
21 representation, which would be the best possible way of
22 mirroring the mood of the people at a particular time,
23 ie the time an election takes place. Instead,
24 the first-past-the-post system completely distorts
25 the election results. I mean, results we are now used

1 to claiming as huge triumphs, both in the case of
2 Mrs Thatcher and later in the case of Tony Blair, were
3 actually governments based on a minority of the popular
4 vote.

5 So we were thinking about all these things. And
6 that is why -- that is what expressed our
7 dissatisfaction with Parliament. Not the need to get
8 rid of Parliament, but actually to have a more
9 democratic, more direct parliament. We were certainly
10 in favour of abolishing the House of Lords; that goes
11 without saying. But Parliament we wanted, you know,
12 a better version, so to speak.

13 Q. Can I now go back to March 1968. And I'm going to
14 resume reading from paragraph -- from page 255.

15 A. Mm-hm.

16 Q. "We filled Oxford Street then turned into
17 South Audley Street and marched into the square.
18 The police tried to hold us back, but we were many and
19 they were few, and their first lines crunched,
20 permitting us to enter Grosvenor Square and occupy
21 the area directly in front of the embassy."

22 Just to stop there. I mean, it may be a statement
23 of the obvious, but it follows that essentially
24 the demonstration forced its way into Grosvenor Square
25 against the police?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. "They were not going to let us deliver a letter. And so
3 we asked stewards to escort Vanessa Redgrave to safety.
4 Then we saw the police horses. A cry went up that
5 "The Cossacks are coming," and an invisible tension
6 united everyone. Arms were linked across the square as
7 the mounted police charged through us to try and break
8 our formation. A hippy who tried to offer a mounted
9 policeman a bunch of flowers was truncheoned to
10 the ground. Marbles were thrown at the horses and a few
11 policemen fell to the ground. But none were surrounded
12 and beaten up. The fighting continued for almost two
13 hours. An attempt to arrest me was prevented by a few
14 hundred people coming to my rescue and surrounding me so
15 that no policemen could get very near. We got close to
16 the imperialist fortress, but by 7 pm we decided to
17 evacuate the square. Many comrades were badly hurt and
18 one pregnant woman had been beaten up severely."

19 So, arising from that, the use of marbles by
20 demonstrators, you say thrown at the horses. Do you
21 mean thrown directly at the horses, or thrown under
22 their feet?

23 A. Honestly, I didn't observe that myself. I was later
24 informed of it by others who were in the area where it
25 happened. But I assume they were thrown at the horses

1 to make them throw the policemen, you know, off
2 the mounts. Though, later, a sort of very aristocratic
3 lady who was quite sympathetic to us said, "I should
4 have been consulted about that, because that's not
5 the way you replace -- you displace a rider. Basically
6 you have to carry -- take a string from one side and
7 just let the string touch the horse's knee." So we
8 said, "Right".

9 There were -- you know, what -- the impression is
10 sometimes created that our support was largely
11 the young. It was, but not exclusively. We had
12 a number of people from all social classes actually, who
13 came on these demonstrations and were very supportive,
14 both by attending and giving us money to carry on.

15 So, as far as the marbles are concerned, they
16 obviously were thrown, because it was reported to --
17 you know, people were talking about it later that
18 evening, and then it was a big thing in the press. But
19 I assume they were thrown at the horses, which is why
20 I wrote that down. I mean, they weren't thrown at the
21 police.

22 Q. Did the National Committee do anything to deter people
23 bringing marbles?

24 A. It was a handful of people who did that actually, so we
25 didn't know that this was happening. You know, if -- if

1 it had been an instruction from the VSC, everyone would
2 have had marbles --

3 Q. I'm not suggesting for a moment there was any
4 instruction, I'm asking really --

5 A. No, it was a -- it was a spontaneous thing. And it --
6 we didn't even know there was going to be mounted
7 police, to be honest. So these guys -- you know,
8 I don't want to cast aspersions -- were likely to be
9 anarchists who were always better prepared. But who did
10 that, thought that there might be a mounted police
11 charge, clearly.

12 Q. Yes, but presumably that was one of the -- certainly
13 a possibility that there might be mounted police at the
14 demonstration --

15 A. Yeah, I guess. We had not thought about that, to be
16 perfectly frank.

17 Q. So, had you seen marbles used before at a demonstration
18 or not?

19 A. No, nor since.

20 Q. Can I ask you about other objects which may be brought
21 to demonstrations. First of all, fireworks.

22 A. Mm.

23 Q. Did you see any fireworks at the March demonstration?

24 A. I think there were some, yeah. But again, it was
25 a handful of people who let them off. I mean, you know,

1 it was a very small number of people, just basically to
2 increase the excitement rather than injure anyone.

3 Q. Had you seen fireworks used before at mass
4 demonstrations?

5 A. No, only on Guy Fawkes Night.

6 Q. Smoke bombs? Did you see smoke bombs in March?

7 A. I can't remember it. I really can't remember whether
8 there were any. There might have been some. But again,
9 this was not -- certainly not a national decision.

10 Q. I'm --

11 A. (inaudible) for that march, for the March '68 demo, from
12 all over the country -- there was buses and coaches
13 booked from virtually all the major cities in England,
14 Scotland and Wales. So, you know, it was impossible for
15 stewards to know who carried what in their pockets.

16 Q. Yeah, I'm not -- I'm not suggesting that there was any
17 call by the VSC to bring such objects to
18 the demonstration. What I'm asking you is whether
19 the VSC did anything to deter people from doing that.

20 A. I think, by the time the -- sort of this two-hour clash
21 was taking place, with demonstrators fighting back,
22 police dragging them away, etc, etc, no one on the VSC
23 side, stewards or non-stewards, were in a position to do
24 anything. Everyone was immersed in this battle that was
25 taking place in the centre of the square, until

1 the order was given by about 7, as I wrote, to get out,
2 enough, the demonstration's over.

3 Q. Was any thought given one way or the other to what
4 the VSC's position should be as to what to say about
5 bringing things like fireworks, smoke bombs or marbles
6 to the demonstration?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Presumably, given your balance of forces strategy, if
9 the balance of forces favoured an attempt on
10 the embassy --

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. -- it might not have been unwelcome if there were
13 the sort of devices which might -- I think you used
14 the phrase "increase the excitement"?

15 A. I don't know. I mean, why marbles, though? What would
16 they do to the embassy glass? By the way, I mean, I'm
17 pretty pleased we didn't manage to occupy the embassy
18 then, because later, in a documentary made in
19 the United States, Marines who were serving guard duty
20 at the embassy told interviewers that, "We didn't care
21 what the British police did or didn't, if they had come
22 into the embassy, we had orders to open fire."

23 So, you know, that became clear some years later
24 when people were still talking about these things.

25 Q. Yes. Thank you.

1 Would it be fair, then, to say that the VSC neither
2 encouraged nor discouraged the bringing of objects such
3 as fireworks, smoke bombs or marbles to
4 the demonstration?

5 A. I think that would be fair. It didn't occur to us that
6 people were going to bring these, to be frank. But it
7 -- it -- so it -- yeah, technically what you say is --
8 is accurate, yeah.

9 Q. And would it be fair to say that the judgment on
10 the ground at the last moment was that the balance of
11 forces did favour an attempt on the embassy?

12 A. No. That -- and on this my memory is pretty strong --
13 was not a decision taken by us, neither by me or
14 the other VSC leaders who were on the demonstration.
15 The decision to try and break through to get to
16 the embassy from the square was pretty spontaneous. And
17 that was brought about by seeing the number of police,
18 seeing there had been scuffles already. Thinking --
19 people thinking they could break through the police
20 lines decided to try it -- the three or four rows in
21 the front, and then people followed suit. At which
22 point the mounted police came into the square.

23 I'm not sure -- it certainly wasn't a decision, it
24 was a spontaneous attempt which failed, and led to
25 the scuffling and, you know, clashes that took place.

1 And that is why we decided at 7 o'clock to tell
2 the stewards the march is over and to try and take
3 people in as orderly a fashion as possible out of
4 the square.

5 Q. Can I take you back to the point when spontaneously
6 the crowd did start moving towards the embassy?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. From your point of view at that time, was that a welcome
9 move?

10 A. Yes.

11 MR BARR: Thank you.

12 I think that's probably an appropriate time to stop,
13 sir, if you agree?

14 MS PURSER: Sir, please could you unmute your microphone.

15 A. It's unmuted.

16 MS PURSER: The Chairman, sorry. The Chairman, Mr Ali.

17 A. Okay.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: This is entirely my fault. My own microphone
19 was muted. I was listening with careful attention to
20 what you had to say. All I wanted to say to you was
21 that if at any time you feel the need of a break in your
22 evidence, other than the 15 minutes we're now going to
23 have, all you need do is say so. But so far you seem to
24 me to be doing admirably.

25 15 minutes' break.

1 A. Thank you. Is that you don't need me anymore today?

2 THE CHAIRMAN: No, I'm sorry, we will need you -- I'm afraid
3 your evidence is not over --

4 A. Okay. No, no, that's fine.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: I'm grateful to you, but could you be back in
6 15 minutes.

7 A. Sure. Okay.

8 MS PURSER: Thank you, everyone. We will now take
9 a 15-minute break. We will be back at 11.30.
10 (11.17 am)

11 (A short break)

12 (11.30 am)

13 MS PURSER: Welcome back, everyone. I will now hand over to
14 the Chairman to continue proceedings.
15 Chairman.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mr Barr, Mr Ali.

17 MR BARR: Thank you, sir.

18 Mr Ali, we dealt with the March 1968 demonstration.
19 I'd now like to just ask you a question about
20 the atmosphere in the immediate aftermath of that. For
21 that we'll need to go to a document.

22 Could we have, please, MPS0733 -- sorry, wrong
23 reference.

24 Could we have {MPS-0730911/4}, please.

25 A. Are you saying this to me?

1 Q. It will be brought up on the screen for you, Mr Ali.

2 A. Okay, thank you.

3 Q. Could we have that -- thank you.

4 Now, this is, on its face, a report on a press
5 conference --

6 A. Mm.

7 Q. -- at which you were present. And it says, about
8 halfway down the page:

9 "The three spokesmen for VSC issued the following
10 statement ..."

11 And if it's an accurate document, then you were one
12 of the three people who were making that statement.

13 The passage I'd like to take you to is at the bottom
14 of the page. So could we scroll down, please.

15 So the passage that is underlined, perhaps you'd
16 like to take a moment to read the whole of that
17 paragraph, please.

18 A. Mm-hm. (Pause)

19 Yeah.

20 Q. Is that a statement to which you were associated?

21 A. I must have been. I can't remember it, but they
22 couldn't have put it out without my having seen it,
23 obviously, yeah.

24 Q. And does it accurately calibrate --

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. -- the level of militancy that you were seeking to
2 adopt?

3 A. Yes. The reference to the suffragettes in particular.
4 I mean, you know, we weren't going to go and stop horse
5 races. But we did stop, I think, before the March
6 demonstration, about -- I can't remember now, but eight
7 or nine top theatres, where we went up onto the stage in
8 the middle of the play and said, "We need to talk to you
9 about Vietnam."

10 By and large, interestingly, the actors were quite
11 hostile, as you can imagine. The audiences were
12 sympathetic. The only performance where the actors were
13 very friendly was the Black and White Minstrel Show,
14 where they all came and joined us and said, "We agree
15 with these young people; we should go on
16 the demonstration."

17 So that sort of disruption is basically what we
18 favoured.

19 And this was -- you know, that was it, really.
20 I mean, breaking windows we didn't actually carry out,
21 ever. But yes, you're right, the gist of that is an
22 accurate reflection.

23 Q. Thank you.

24 I'm going to move now to some of the -- the period
25 between the March and the October demonstration. I'd

1 like to start by taking you to a newspaper article which
2 I'll have called up, please.

3 Could we have {MPS-0738678}, please. And if you
4 could zoom into the text. Thank you very much.

5 I'll give you a moment, Mr Ali, to read that.

6 A. Why -- why -- I mean, I can't remember saying that.

7 I mean, why the hell would I -- if we decide to occupy
8 the Bank of England. Maybe it was intended as a joke
9 really. I can't see that as a serious statement.

10 Q. What I wanted to ask you about this, Mr Ali, it's an
11 article from The Guardian. It's said to be dated
12 31 May 1968.

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. So in terms of preparations for the October
15 demonstration, it's quite early on.

16 A. It's very early off, but it's after May '68 in France,
17 don't forget.

18 But we did start preparing for the October
19 demonstration many months before. I mean, I literally
20 visited almost every university in the country, speaking
21 about it and what we planned, and -- etc, etc. I mean
22 this -- and don't be surprised if people decide it is
23 a joke really.

24 Q. Whether or not you --

25 A. Maybe a bad joke, but it is that.

1 Q. Whether or not you meant it seriously, Mr Ali,
2 the question I have for you is this: would it be fair to
3 say that at the early stages of preparations for
4 the October demonstration, there was uncertainty and
5 debate about what form it would take and what its
6 objectives might be?

7 A. There wasn't uncertainty on my part. I was very clear,
8 and so were Ernie Tate and Pat Jordan and other people
9 I worked with closely, that going back to
10 Grosvenor Square was a foolish thing to attempt. There
11 would be clashes, meaningless, because the objective of
12 going there could never be achieved. And this was
13 debated. Some people -- there was a big debate about
14 the location, which actually was a cover for what going
15 to the location meant.

16 And we decided fairly early on, I think by late
17 August, early September, a decision had been made that
18 we were going to march to Hyde Park and that the aim was
19 to get as many people as possible in the park. And
20 I remember saying to a press conference and to meetings
21 all over the land that: this is not a test of strength,
22 that idea should be put out of your heads; it's a show
23 of strength, to see what -- how many people we've got,
24 what our numbers are, and to try and win more and more
25 people over to the campaigns. That was the debate.

1 Here, the Maoists and anarchists differed with us
2 and denounced us as sellouts and all that, and they did
3 go to Grosvenor Square in October, with virtually no
4 impact at all. And we had over 100,000 people, nearly
5 120,000 people in Hyde Park, which was a very large
6 assembly for its time. And for the first time, large
7 numbers of Labour Members of Parliament showed up as
8 well.

9 So, that's what the October mobilisation for
10 the October demonstration meant.

11 Q. If I may stop you there, Mr Ali.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. I mean, I was going to come to it. I think you may have
14 been referring to the decisions taken at the Sheffield
15 conference in early September?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. The article that's on the screen at the moment is from
18 some months earlier. I'm understanding you to be saying
19 that if you did say this, then you said it tongue in
20 cheek?

21 A. Without any doubt.

22 Q. Would you accept, though, that once an idea like this
23 has been published in the national press, those with
24 responsibility for policing the event might be being
25 misled or sent on a wild goose chase?

1 A. I don't think so. I think most of the, you know,
2 Special Branch people were sent to these meetings. If
3 they had reported on where I said this, at
4 Warwick University, they would have known it was tongue
5 in cheek and the students started laughing. That's --
6 you know. And it's a sort of two-paragraph report.
7 Clearly, whoever The Guardian reporter was didn't report
8 on the main speech or what was said, but picked on
9 the most sensational things, which one expects really.
10 But that's all I have to say about it.

11 Q. Thank you.

12 Could we have -- could we take that down, please.

13 I'm going to return to your book now, Mr Ali, to
14 page 293.

15 A. Mm.

16 Q. And this is a passage about the preparations for
17 October 1968.

18 A. Mm.

19 Q. I'm going to start at the second paragraph down, the one
20 that begins:

21 "Not that we were isolated ..."

22 "Not that we were isolated. There were large
23 numbers of Americans visiting Europe and from the SDS
24 militants who came to the Black Dwarf officers to
25 exchange experiences. We got a very clear idea as to

1 the intensity of the struggle against the war.
2 I remember an SDS woman who stated in a matter of fact
3 way one afternoon that the only way to defeat the war
4 machine in her own country was to emulate
5 the NLF guerillas who had attacked the US Embassy in
6 Saigon. What she was suggesting was a campaign of
7 bombings in the United States, directed at military
8 installations and the headquarters of Dow Chemicals,
9 the manufacturers of napalm, and other corporations who
10 were maximising profits at the expense of the dead in
11 Vietnam.

12 "I argued against this course very strongly.
13 Perhaps I was tougher than I might have been because we
14 were in the middle of plans for the VSC's October
15 demonstration and ideas not completely dissimilar to
16 what the SDS-er was saying had been publicly aired.
17 Such a course was not simply wrong on principle and
18 foolish, it was suicidal in every sense of the word.
19 I must confess that whenever something like this was
20 suggested, I had to think very hard whether the person
21 who wanted to embark on such a course was somewhat
22 deranged or a straightforward provocateur. This was not
23 paranoia. We knew full well that phones were tapped,
24 mail was opened, and there was Special Branch
25 infiltrators in VSC. This was part of the routine

1 functioning of a capitalist democracy. In fact, on one
2 occasion, a postman had dragged me out of the office and
3 told me that our letters were opened every day before
4 being delivered."

5 Now, what I'd like to ask you about that is, is it
6 right, as you've written there, that you were very
7 strongly against the use of violence of the magnitude
8 proposed by the SDS-er.

9 A. This was an American SDS, by the way, not a German.

10 Yeah, I was, yes.

11 Q. And now the next questions are about what you knew about
12 infiltration. What Special Branch infiltration of
13 the VSC did you know about at this stage?

14 A. Well, we had no evidence, obviously. How could we? But
15 we were not in any doubt that, especially after March --
16 it's difficult to imagine now, but after the March '68
17 clashes in Grosvenor Square, there was hysteria in
18 a bulk of the press, with all sorts of things being
19 said, etc, etc. So, if they hadn't been in there prior
20 to March, which was also unlikely, there's no doubt they
21 would have tried to get in after the March '68
22 demonstration. So one just -- I assumed this.

23 We knew we were being spied on by the Post Office,
24 the postal worker, and we knew phones were tapped
25 because occasionally mistakes were made. Sometimes even

1 in the letters we got, the wrong letter had been put
2 into the letter which we should have had, completely
3 unrelated to the VSC or the Black Dwarf. So we had
4 a pretty good idea that this was going on, yeah.

5 Q. Thank you.

6 Now, we're going to come to the decision that you
7 talked about earlier in September which cemented
8 the aims for the October demonstration. What I'd like
9 to ask you next is, in the period before that decision
10 was taken, were there meetings of the inner circle that
11 you described to -- as having met before the March
12 demonstration, discussing an unofficial aim for
13 the march?

14 A. No, we were -- there was, within the inner circle,
15 complete agreement with the view I had put forward very
16 strongly, that the October demonstration should be
17 a show of strength and not a test of strength. That
18 was -- that was accepted.

19 Q. Can we now go back to your book, please, to page 294 and
20 the bottom paragraph of 294.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. That reads:

23 "Our officers had now become a regular port of call
24 for visiting revolutionaries from all around the world.
25 One night, a group of hippy anarchists slept in our

1 distribution office. While eating lotuses that night,
2 they painted a large diagram of how to make a Molotov
3 cocktail on the wall."

4 I'm going to skip the next passage and pick up,
5 about six lines down on page 295:

6 "We covered up the offending drawing on the wall
7 with a large poster and it was agreed to paint it out as
8 soon as possible. The very next day, our offices were
9 raided by Scotland Yard. A team of Special Branch men
10 and a woman went straight to the poster covering
11 the drawing, removed it and photographed the crudely
12 drawn diagram."

13 Could you just help us, please. Which officers are
14 we talking about?

15 A. I -- I don't know. I'm not a big expert on this, but
16 I named the officer. Maybe, you know:

17 "Chief Inspector Elwyn Jones then interviewed me at
18 length and warned me that they would be preparing
19 a report for Sir Norman Skelhorn,
20 Director of Public Prosecution ..."

21 Q. Forgive me, Mr Ali, I didn't say --

22 A. That's why I'm saying that I don't know what -- whether
23 Chief Inspector Elwyn Jones was an ordinary policeman or
24 a Special Branch.

25 Q. Forgive me. That's not my question. I was asking you

1 which "offices"?

2 A. Ah, sorry, I didn't get that.

3 The offices were the offices of the Black Dwarf in
4 Soho, the newspaper I edited at the time. And,
5 you know, lots of visiting sort of foreigners of all
6 hues would often come in and not move and say, "We have
7 nowhere to say, can we stay the night?" So we were
8 rather lax on that front. We were, you know, quite
9 generous, and said, "Well, we're not going to be here at
10 night, let them use it." After that event we became
11 very strict, as you can imagine.

12 Q. On the topic of Molotov cocktails, was a Molotov
13 cocktail ever used at any VSC demonstration, to your
14 knowledge?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Did you or your colleagues in the organising committee,
17 the National Committee, ever come to know of anyone who
18 was proposing or intending to take a Molotov cocktail to
19 a VSC organised demonstration?

20 A. Not to my knowledge.

21 Q. I now would like to turn to the meeting of the National
22 Committee in Sheffield, which was held on 8 and
23 9 September 1968. You cover that in your book at
24 page 297. You describe, at the top of page 297:

25 "There was one important tactical question facing

1 the Vietnam Campaign: should we or should we not march
2 to the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square. There were
3 differences of opinion on this question and it was
4 agreed to take a decision at our National Committee
5 meeting in Sheffield on the weekend of the 8 and
6 9 September."

7 A. Mm-hm.

8 Q. You then describe how difficult it was to actually find
9 somewhere to meet, and you eventually met in a bomb
10 crater near Ringinglow, a dozen miles from Sheffield.
11 And if I pick up the narrative there, you say:

12 "The discussion commenced, and it soon became
13 obvious that an overwhelming majority was of the view
14 that 27 October should be a show rather than a test of
15 strength. We discounted the possibility of occupying
16 the US Embassy, even with 100,000 people. The police
17 were now well prepared. The Labour government had
18 engendered a national hysteria. The media were still
19 very strong on their line of subversive plans to seize
20 the Stock Exchange, and any real attempt to take
21 the embassy would, we were convinced, lead to bloodshed.
22 None of us was prepared to play with anyone else's life.
23 We did nonetheless agree to take over the streets and
24 not tolerate any heavy police presence."

25 Now, that is very much what you said a moment ago,

1 Mr Ali. What I would like to ask you is, after that
2 decision was taken --

3 A. Mm.

4 Q. -- did the strategy ever change?

5 A. No. That was the last of the big Vietnam --
6 anti-Vietnam War demonstrations in this country. There
7 were a few others when Nixon and Kissinger invaded
8 Cambodia, but not large ones. The movement -- that
9 demonstration marked both the peak of the movement and
10 the beginning of its decline.

11 Q. And so the tactic was encapsulated -- or the strategy is
12 encapsulated in a show rather than a test of strength?

13 A. Very much so.

14 Q. And that was, is it fair to say, reflected in the choice
15 of route?

16 A. Yeah, without any doubt.

17 Q. I'd like to take you now to a police report about that
18 National Committee meeting. Could we have up, please,
19 {MPS-0730063}. Could we have page 6, please
20 {MPS-0730063/6}.

21 This is a report of Chief Inspector Dixon's. It's
22 dated 10 September 1968. Mr Ali, could I ask you to
23 read the top paragraph.

24 (Pause)

25 A. It's false. It's completely false --

1 Q. -- (overspeaking) --

2 A. -- violent confrontation planned at Australia House and
3 Whitehall or anything remotely resembling that. I mean,
4 it's fantasy land.

5 Q. The assessment that the "talk about excluding militants
6 and strict stewarding", was there talk about excluding
7 militants and strict stewarding?

8 A. There was talk about excluding those who wanted to come
9 and drag demonstrators away to Grosvenor Square, yeah.
10 We never described them as "militants". We said if
11 there's an attempt to disrupt the demonstration at any
12 stage -- this is the October demonstration -- people
13 should be gently removed by our own stewards.

14 And we, you know, spoke to the police at the time,
15 saying it would be fair better if they were not seen on
16 the demonstration, that the policing was very low level
17 and low scale. And they agreed.

18 So if you look at images, I think ITV actually
19 filmed that demonstration from the Embankment to
20 Hyde Park. The whole thing was broadcast live on
21 British television. Very, very few policemen on it, and
22 very few incidents leave -- you know, there was no
23 violent confrontation at Australia House by
24 the Australians and New Zealanders against the war, who
25 were very angry because Australia had sent in troops.

1 And certainly we never discussed it. And this
2 "breakaway movements against other buildings ..." this
3 is not true. Really, this is fantasy land and trying
4 to -- I mean, I don't know what he's talking about.

5 Q. Were there any -- was there any discussion about
6 the possibility that there might be violent
7 confrontation, whether expressed as a fear, or in any
8 other respect? Can you recall that?

9 A. No, I cannot recall that at all. I mean, this is --
10 you know, we were -- once we had decided on the tactics
11 for the October '68 demonstration, we were very clear
12 and said it publicly, privately to each other, to groups
13 who disagreed with us. We said, "This is a decision
14 that's been taken and we're going to stick with it."

15 Q. Now, there's one thing that does appear to be common
16 ground is the route of the demonstration that you
17 decided upon.

18 A. Yeah. That was -- yeah, that was a route we'd agreed
19 with the police in advance, yeah.

20 Q. You anticipated my next question.

21 How quickly did that route become public, can you
22 recall?

23 A. I don't think it did become public until the week of
24 the demonstration, and then we said, "This is the route
25 we're marching on and all VSC supporters should come

1 down this route." And we made it very clear we were not
2 going to Grosvenor House. There was an attempt made --
3 where was it made now? -- as we were going down on
4 the way to Hyde Park, near Piccadilly, if my memory is
5 right, but it may be wrong, by some Maoists to come and
6 agitate and say, "Don't go down to Hyde Park, come with
7 us to Grosvenor Square." And they were gently -- very
8 gently talked to by our stewards and they left. And
9 no one followed them. The discipline on that march
10 was -- was quite amazing, actually.

11 Q. We will come to some very interesting documents to that
12 effect in a little while, Mr Ali.

13 Here -- back here in September --

14 A. Mm.

15 Q. -- it might be said from a police point of view that
16 knowing as early as September that the VSC's strategy
17 for the march and the route it was going to take was
18 valuable intelligence which enabled it better to prepare
19 to police the demonstration. What would you say to
20 that?

21 A. I don't fully understand your question. That if who
22 knew? That the police knew that --

23 Q. This is a police report. They know within -- this
24 report was written on the 10th. They know within a day
25 of the conference finishing what the decision that had

1 been taken was. You've helped explain, it wasn't made
2 public until somewhat later.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. The proposition I'm putting to you is: would you agree
5 that that might be seen, from a police point of view, as
6 valuable intelligence to help them prepare in good time
7 to police the demonstration?

8 A. Not necessarily, really, because, I mean, virtually
9 every demonstration that we had organised, we had
10 discussed -- even March '68 -- we had discussed
11 the route with the police. We always did that.
12 Whatever else happened or didn't happen, the route was
13 always known to the police. So, to infiltrate a member
14 onto the VSC National Committee just to get information
15 like this was a waste of resources, in my opinion. It's
16 not something that was necessary at all. The normal
17 police force would know and make the decisions they did,
18 which they did.

19 Q. It might be said, Mr Ali, that knowing that this was
20 a decision taken by the National Committee, which might
21 be thought to go some way to rule out there being any
22 hidden agenda, was itself valuable intelligence. Would
23 you agree with that proposition?

24 A. I wouldn't particularly refer to it as either "valuable"
25 or "intelligence" really, because the minute all these

1 National Committee members got back to their home towns
2 and discussed with local VSC committees, it would have
3 been known. And also, I'm slightly -- slightly -- I'm
4 just sort of thinking aloud now, that the actual route
5 of the march hadn't been agreed at the time that VSC
6 meeting took place. That would only be agreed with
7 Scotland Yard once we had told them that we were going
8 to march from the Embankment to Hyde Park. And often
9 the police suggested the best route, to be fair. So,
10 there wouldn't have been so much detail -- detail
11 about it, leave alone anything else.

12 So I would challenge the view that this intelligence
13 was all that vital or necessary.

14 Q. I think it's fair to say there was quite a large public
15 meeting not long after this, at which the anarchists
16 proposed a different route, and so the route was being
17 debated publicly not long after this.

18 A. Yeah. Maybe, yeah. I mean, I see the reference to
19 the -- the anarchist conference. And there were others,
20 the Maoist groups, etc, who didn't want this to happen,
21 and there were lots of people disagreed with us, because
22 what they wanted was a repeat punch-up in
23 Grosvenor Square, which we were opposed to.

24 Q. Thank you.

25 I'm going to move on to a completely different event

1 now, and that is an article that was published in
2 the publication Black Dwarf --

3 A. Mm.

4 Q. -- on 15 October 1968. Could we have up {MPS-0728406}.
5 {MPS-0728406}. This is a long document. It's a police
6 report about whether or not an offence may have been
7 committed.

8 Could we go to page 13, please.

9 A. This is after the October demonstration?

10 Q. No, this is 15 October. The report post-dates
11 the demonstration.

12 A. Okay.

13 Q. About the publication of the edition of Black Dwarf
14 which is being considered predates it.

15 Now, this is, I understand, an article that was
16 published on the back page of Black Dwarf, according to
17 your witness statement, and it's the bottom paragraph
18 that's material. I'll just give you an opportunity,
19 Mr Ali, to refresh your memory from the document.

20 A. Is this the paragraph starting:

21 "Clearly, any demonstrators ..."

22 Q. Yes, please.

23 A. Okay.

24 (Pause)

25 It's very badly written. Anyway ...

1 Yeah, I read it. I honestly have no memory
2 whatsoever of who wrote that article. And these --
3 you know, I mean, I see the reference to "razor blades"
4 and "fireworks", "under plain cover" and all this. It's
5 just stupidity. I mean ... yeah. Not something I would
6 have supported, and it's basically choosing a round
7 about way of saying: do not bring any silly things on
8 the coaches, which was a VSC instruction, that
9 the coaches -- you know, nothing should be brought which
10 could be considered as something to be used violently.

11 Q. At the time --

12 A. Black Dwarf, lots of people wrote for it. I can't
13 remember who wrote this.

14 Q. It may not matter who wrote it. Am I right in thinking
15 that you were the editor of Black Dwarf at this time?

16 A. I certainly was, yes.

17 Q. Was this something that would have crossed your desk,
18 then, before it was published?

19 A. Not necessarily, because since I was travelling a great
20 deal and the Black Dwarf's appearance was not regular,
21 because printers, under government pressure, were not
22 publishing us. We had, sort of, 400 printers refusing
23 to publish the paper. It had to go to -- that
24 particular issue, I remember, I took to a beautiful lake
25 town in Wales called Bala, where we found an old

1 printer, an old print workers, who printed that for us.
2 Either the demo issue or the one -- yeah,
3 the demonstration issue.

4 So, often, other people working in the office,
5 edited stuff that was coming in, but usually I cast an
6 eye on almost everything that went into the paper. This
7 I can't even remember, really, but it clearly was
8 printed, otherwise it wouldn't be --

9 Q. In your witness statement you describe this as being --
10 the gist of what you say is that it was lighthearted.
11 Do you stand by that?

12 A. Well, it looks to be, you know. It's a sort of way of
13 not saying "hide these things or send them in advance",
14 it is light hearted. But, you know, whether that was --
15 I can't say more than that, really. Basically,
16 the point being made is: do not bring anything with you,
17 because, you know, you'll get into trouble and that's
18 not our policy.

19 Q. Yes, I mean, the bit in -- the bit in block capitals is
20 quite obviously directed to, as it says "the coaches
21 must get through".

22 But do you agree that it suggests that bringing
23 objects such as fireworks or marbles, or possibly even
24 razor blades, to a demonstration was far from an unknown
25 occurrence amongst demonstrators?

1 A. It can't be far from unknown because it had happened in
2 March '68. And that is why whoever wrote that
3 particular diary piece was saying, "Don't do this
4 again," to those who intended to do it, which were
5 a tiny group anyway, even in March '68. The razor
6 blades surprises me, because there's no incident with
7 razor blades in March.

8 But anyway, I think it is -- basically the message
9 being given is, don't do it, really.

10 Q. It might be said that it's not unequivocal, it's
11 equivocal on the question of whether or not, however
12 they arrive at their destination, fireworks, marbles, or
13 even razor blades should be brought to
14 the demonstration; would you agree with that?

15 A. I wouldn't agree with that. I don't think anyone who
16 read it at the time would take it like that. They would
17 basically see it as a very, sort of, not as clear as it
18 should be but as an injunction saying: don't travel with
19 these things.

20 Q. You've used the phrase "not as clear as it should be".

21 A. Well, you know, that -- a previous jokey phrase "for
22 your nephew" stuff shouldn't have been in there,
23 clearly. But, you know, it wasn't totally irrelevant
24 given that these things had been brought to
25 the March '68 demonstration. So it was meant clearly in

1 a jokey way. But in hindsight, of course, it should
2 have been removed, we can say that.

3 Q. So it wasn't entirely on message, was it?

4 A. It wasn't?

5 Q. It wasn't entirely on message?

6 A. No.

7 Q. Right.

8 Can we go now to a Daily Telegraph article. That's
9 -- if we could take this document down, please. And can
10 we go to {MPS-0742224}. Thank you.

11 I'd like you just to have a look at that, please,
12 Mr Ali. And I'm particularly interested in
13 the paragraph which begins:

14 "The demonstrators also plan ..."

15 A. " ... to stage a mass Vietnam 'teach in' in Whitehall."

16 Q. The suggestion is that you've been speaking in Glasgow,
17 and essentially you are saying something to the effect
18 of: force will be used in self-defence. Can you recall
19 saying something like that?

20 A. I can't recall saying that, because our whole strategy
21 for the demonstration was the opposite of that. And
22 just looking at the telegraph report, it's in-- it's
23 inaccurate, to put it mildly. It might be worth
24 comparing that, I mean, if the demo was reported -- if
25 the talk was reported in the Scottish press -- which it

1 was, because all my talks in those days were reported,
2 to see how they -- they reported it. I have no memory
3 of saying anything remotely resembling that. "During
4 the weekend revolution". The "weekend revolution" is
5 never a phrase I would use in my life. It's sort of,
6 you know, offensive to my ears leave alone anyone else.
7 It's sort of meaningless.

8 Q. Perhaps -- I'm going to show you another article from
9 a different editorial perspective. If we take that down
10 and if we could have up now, please, {MPS-0742222}.
11 Now, it's very difficult to read. If we could -- thank
12 you very much.

13 Now, Mr Ali, you may or may not be able to read
14 that. It's from the Morning Star on 22 October, and
15 it's quoting you. The copy I've got, which I shall read
16 into the transcript, the material paragraph reads:

17 "Mr Ali, representing the Black Dwarf and speaking
18 for the October 27 Committee, added: 'We don't want
19 mindless militancy, we don't want confrontation with
20 the police.

21 "'As far as we are concerned, we want this to be
22 a politically militant demonstration of solidarity not
23 only with Vietnam but with each other.

24 "'But if someone kicked us in the crutch we would
25 defend ourselves.'"

1 So in that, the message is very strongly that you're
2 seeking a peaceful demonstration but there is still
3 a reference to what amounts to self-defence. Having
4 been reminded from two articles, might this have been
5 the line that you were taking publicly?

6 A. Well, I mean, this -- if someone kicks us in the crutch,
7 defend ourselves, yeah, I mean, it is a sort of
8 defensive thing that if you're attacked, you defend
9 yourselves. But it doesn't at all contradict what we
10 are saying. And once the police had agreed that there
11 would be very few police on the demonstration, this
12 thing became completely irrelevant anyway, since it was
13 very unlikely that the police were going to attack
14 the October 27 demonstration.

15 Q. Thank you. I'm not trying to make a wider point, I'm
16 simply trying to establish --

17 A. Yeah, yeah.

18 Q. -- what was being said?

19 A. -- (overspeaking) -- said that. I'm sure I said that,
20 as reported here.

21 Q. If we go now, please -- if that document can be taken
22 down. Can we have {MPS-0733981}. If that can be blown
23 up, please.

24 This is a telegram from Chief Inspector Dixon to
25 the chief Superintendent of Special Branch. It's dated

1 in the very early hours of 27 October, at 1.15 am. And
2 this is directly concerning information reported by two
3 SDS undercover officers known by the ciphers "HN331"
4 and "HN68".

5 A. Mm.

6 Q. It reads -- in fact, the material bit I think is about
7 you, about halfway down the page:

8 "The meeting was divided as to whether they should
9 go to Grosvenor Square during the demonstration ..."

10 That's "they" being students who were congregating
11 at the London School of Economics.

12 A. MM.

13 Q. And then it reads:

14 "... and Tariq ALI made a strong plea for that area
15 being avoided. The mood of provincial students is that
16 they do not want any violence to take place during
17 the demonstration."

18 Is it fair to take from that that you were indeed
19 maintaining strongly the VSC's line that
20 Grosvenor Square was to be avoided?

21 A. Yeah, it would appear to be the case, yeah.

22 Q. And seeking to persuade students to the peaceful show of

23 --

24 A. Strength.

25 Q. -- strength that you were committed to?

1 A. Yeah. There weren't too many people, if -- if my memory
2 is right -- it was a huge meeting at the Old Theatre at
3 the LSE -- who were in favour of going to
4 Grosvenor Square either. I mean, once I had explained
5 the official VSC position. That was also the position
6 of the LSE Socialist Society, many other groups inside
7 the LSE, and it's possible a few Maoists may have raised
8 the question of going to Grosvenor Square. But it
9 wasn't a big thing by that stage. But yeah.

10 Q. And was this a meeting that a plain-clothed officer from
11 Special Branch could have attended, or not?

12 A. The LSE meeting?

13 Q. Yes.

14 A. Yeah, obviously.

15 Q. Thank you.

16 Now, I'd like to move to the demonstration itself.

17 A. Mm.

18 Q. Would it be fair to characterise the main demonstration
19 as essentially peaceful?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. There was a flag burning outside the Australian embassy,
22 wasn't there?

23 A. Yeah, but that is still a peaceful act; it's just
24 expressing discontent in a very strong way, given
25 Australia's role in that war.

- 1 Q. And there was some use of fireworks?
- 2 A. That I can't remember, but there may have been. I mean,
3 there was a very strong contingent of Australian and
4 New Zealand citizens in Britain and they had their own
5 group. I think ANZAW, Australians and New Zealanders
6 Against the War, and they must have organised that.
- 7 Q. I'd like to ask you, from your personal experience of
8 being on that march, about the role of the stewards.
9 First of all, who provided the stewards?
- 10 A. The stewards were provided by all the organisations
11 affiliated to the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. They
12 included the Communist Party,
13 the International Socialist Group, the International
14 Marxist Group, the Transport and General Workers' Union,
15 or some of it. I remember I was always being
16 accompanied by two very burly shop stewards from the --
17 from the TNG, who were dockers, and they said, "We're
18 just going to make sure no one comes near you." I said,
19 "I'm very touched". But there were people like that.
20 And they made sure that the demonstration passed off
21 peacefully.
- 22 Q. Thank you. Could we take the document down please, now.
23 Forgive that slight interruption, Mr Ali. My fault.
24 The role of the stewards. Were they all briefed
25 together or were they each briefed separately by their

1 relevant groups?

2 A. Well, they had already been briefed, because each area,
3 like the group that came from Manchester or Birmingham
4 or Glasgow, always brought with them stewards on
5 the same coaches or trains. And they had already been
6 briefed by VSC National Committee members in their home
7 towns. But I think there was a general briefing just
8 before the demonstration, actually at the Embankment, to
9 make sure that everyone had understood, which didn't
10 last too long.

11 Q. And from what you saw on the day, what role did
12 the stewards play in maintaining order and discipline
13 during the march?

14 A. To be frank, my memory of that march is that there was
15 not much order and discipline to be maintained. I mean,
16 I think the new statesman had a piece by Mervyn Jones,
17 describing us as The New Model Army, ultra-disciplined
18 and very determined. And that was generally the mood of
19 most people.

20 So I think the only time the stewards came and
21 turfed the Maoists off the march was when they were
22 being a bit disruptive, before the march went on its
23 final lap to Hyde Park. But even that was done with
24 the minimum of force. I don't think any force was used,
25 they were just told "Go".

1 Q. There is a media article from the time -- I'm moving now
2 to the behaviour of the marchers themselves -- where you
3 spoke about the marchers' revolutionary self-discipline.
4 To what extent do you think that the marchers were
5 self-disciplined?

6 A. I think they -- 99% of them certainly were.

7 I mean, we were so relaxed that we forgot we were
8 passing downing at one point. And in fact, it was
9 a police officer who reminded me, "Aren't you going to
10 deliver a letter to the Prime Minister?" So I just
11 scribbled on a -- we had forgotten to take it. So
12 I scribbled on a piece of paper:

13 "Dear Harold, 100,000 people marched by today to
14 tell you to stop supporting the Americans in Vietnam."

15 And it was accepted as such, a scrap -- a scrap --
16 a back of an envelope in my pocket.

17 So it was a very -- there was no tension on
18 the march at all.

19 Q. Having been there, could you help us with your -- what
20 you saw about the role of the police during that
21 demonstration. What tactics did they deploy?

22 A. They were in fact excellent on that day. I said so at
23 the time. Because they had come to an agreement with us
24 that there shouldn't be a show -- even a show of
25 strength on their part, let alone a test of it. We

1 said, "The best thing you can do is stay off the main
2 streets, let us occupy the entire street as an assertion
3 of our political rights, and our stewards will -- will
4 maintain the discipline of the march." And a senior
5 police officer asked me, "Are you a hundred per cent
6 sure you can do this?" I said, "Yeah, we are, and so do
7 just accept our advice and not be seen on the march."

8 And they said, "Well, we won't be totally
9 disappeared." I said, "No, obviously, but you hear what
10 I'm saying and I hope you understand." And they said,
11 "If any acts of violence break out ..." I said, "Well,
12 you know, obviously you'll do what you have to do, but
13 we are pretty sure our demonstration is going to be very
14 self-disciplined."

15 And that is what happened. I mean, we did occupy
16 the entire Whitehall -- streets around Whitehall as we
17 marched.

18 Q. I'm going to ask you now about some of the policing
19 activity in the lead-up to the October demonstration.
20 You may or may not be aware of these documents, but
21 could we have up {MPS-0739150}, please. Thank you.

22 Now, this is a police report, dated February 1969,
23 of a trial at which a person was convicted of inciting
24 riot, and I'll read the paragraph 1:

25 "Inciting to riot in that on the 9th day of October,

1 1968, unlawfully incited certain persons whose names are
2 unknown, exceeding two in number, riotously to assemble
3 together on the 27th day of October, 1968 (against
4 the peace)."

5 And I'll read out the second charge as well of which
6 the defendant was convicted. Perhaps we could move
7 the image so the whole of paragraph 2 is showing,
8 please. Thank you:

9 "Distributing threatening writing at a public
10 meeting in that on the 9th day of October, 1968
11 unlawfully incited certain persons whose names are
12 unknown without lawful authority or reasonable excuse to
13 have with them in diverse public places on the 27th day
14 of October, 1968 certain offensive weapons, namely
15 catapults, metal ballbearings, poles, bricks, Molotov
16 cocktails and home-made grenades. (Against the peace)."

17 Now, the background to this was a Special
18 Demonstration Squad officer, Sergeant Helen Crampton,
19 had been given a leaflet at a meeting of a branch of
20 the VSC. It was one of the branches that I think had
21 been publicly distanced by the National Committee, one
22 of the Maoist influenced groups, and the document itself
23 was not a VSC document. Did you ever become aware --

24 A. (inaudible) remember this -- this episode, actually. It
25 clearly made no -- I mean, had it been in any way of

1 significance, but I didn't even know this was -- that
2 this had happened or who the guy was who did it, or
3 whatever. I mean, clear -- you know, it sounds -- it's
4 a sort of a Maoist provocation, if it was then.

5 Q. The document wasn't from Maoists, the document is said
6 by police to have come from the Black Power movement.

7 A. Ah.

8 Q. Whether that's right or not is another matter, but
9 that's where they think it came from.

10 A. Yeah. I mean, there were lots of things happening at
11 that time. You know, prior to the demonstration,
12 literally on the eve of the demonstration, an attempt
13 was made to kidnap me off Carlisle Street, not far from
14 the Black Dwarf offices. And a group of pretty
15 brutish-looking guys grabbed me and were trying to put
16 me in the car. And had not some ordinary people,
17 including some people from the office following me, seen
18 that -- the plan was to keep me away from
19 the demonstration, kidnap me and God knows, keep me.
20 I have no idea who they were.

21 We reported this to the police at the time, but they
22 didn't seem that interested. Add to that the fact that
23 The Times had published, by two of its less reliable
24 correspondents, let's put it at its mildest, horrific
25 reports saying that there were plans to occupy London,

1 capture the Ministry of Defence, that the Ministry of
2 Defence had tanks waiting on the ready in case
3 X happened or Y happened. Just building up an
4 atmosphere of fear.

5 And this -- whether this was part of that, I don't
6 know. It wouldn't totally surprise me if it were. But,
7 you know, we ignored all that really. If I mean, if you
8 look at that Times front page, it's quite shocking.

9 Q. If I could ask you, Mr Ali, about this specific event.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. It might be said that it was important for preparations
12 for the demonstration to be policed in order to catch
13 and bring to justice people like this, who were seeking
14 to incite a riot and promoting the use of offensive
15 weapons. Would you agree with that?

16 A. Well, I mean, there were some police on
17 the demonstration. We'd agreed to that. We just said
18 we didn't want them in large numbers, you know, which
19 can sometimes have the opposite effect --

20 Q. If I may stop you there, Mr Ali. I'm not talking about
21 policing of the demonstration itself, which --

22 A. Ah.

23 Q. -- you already --

24 A. Ah, I see --

25 Q. -- (overspeaking) -- I'm talking about this person who

1 was convicted as a result of giving a leaflet to an
2 undercover police officer. It might be said that that
3 shows the utility of having undercover police officers
4 inside branches of the VSC during the preparatory
5 phases.

6 A. But, you know, most branches of the VSC were open to
7 anyone really. You don't need to be too secretive
8 about it. Let's say you went -- you know, walked into
9 the Swiss Cottage or whatever, the Bermondsey branch of
10 VSC and said, "Hi, I want to support VSC," you were
11 allowed in. It wasn't a problem at all.

12 So, I personally don't feel that it was -- it was
13 that necessary. And what they happened to have
14 discovered was pretty convenient and who this guy was we
15 don't know. But there is another question, which is,
16 it's one thing to write some nonsense like this fellow
17 did, it's a completely different thing to actually carry
18 it out. And surely there is a difference between
19 the two legally as well.

20 But by and large, you know, just to be precise, even
21 though you sentence(?), it wasn't forbidden to write
22 stuff like this. I mean, we are living in a different
23 world today and I know what the laws are, etc. But at
24 that time people were writing all sorts of things.

25 Q. I don't think we need to get into a debate about

1 the precise parameters of the law.

2 Could we take that document down, please.

3 I'm going to take you to a police report now,

4 Mr Ali, about further policing relating to

5 the demonstration. Could we have {MPS-0730093}, please.

6 And can we start -- this is -- I think the document

7 we've got at the moment is 0739150. Could that be taken

8 down, please. That isn't, I don't think, the right

9 document. That's come from the open grounds folder.

10 The document I would like, please, is {MPS-0730093}.

11 If there's going to be a technical issue with this

12 document, I'll move on for the moment.

13 A. It's coming. It's coming.

14 Q. It's in tab F, if that helps.

15 I'll move on and we'll come back to that document

16 once it can be found.

17 Some overview questions about the October

18 demonstration, Mr Ali.

19 A. Mm-hm.

20 Q. In your view, had it gone to plan?

21 A. Yes, very much so. We were very pleased with the --

22 with the outcome.

23 Q. And would it be right to say that there were some within

24 your movement who were less happy with the outcome and

25 would have preferred a more militant demonstration?

1 A. Well, you know, if by "militant" you mean violent, my
2 answer is I don't know. But clearly, for some -- very
3 few to my knowledge -- I mean, given that we had planned
4 it this way, given that it had passed off peacefully
5 despite press hysteria, given that the crowd was pretty
6 large -- the theatre critic of the Observer, who was on
7 the demonstration, counted it as 120,000 people; he had
8 a group of people with him just counting the numbers --
9 we were very pleased.

10 No doubt there were some who would have preferred,
11 you know, a revisit to Grosvenor Square. But they had
12 the chance; we didn't stop people from going if they
13 wanted to go. They could have gone and then ended up
14 playing football with the police, as the Maoists did,
15 which is quite a nice ending for them, too, I guess.

16 Q. Shall we try again with the document.

17 Can we have, please {MPS-0747100}. Thank you.
18 That's fine.

19 Now, this is, Mr Ali, the document which prompted
20 that question. It's entitled "Proposals for Discussion
21 by the National Council, VSC", and under the heading
22 "Assessment of Demonstration", the second paragraph, it
23 reads:

24 "On the demonstration itself a latent power was
25 manifest but never given expression. The debate on

1 violence, which led to a simplified polarisation between
2 Grosvenor Square and passivity, resulted in
3 a demonstration well within the tolerance threshold of
4 bourgeois society, for which we were duly applauded by
5 the establishment, though not by many demonstrators."

6 I know it's very obviously not your view, but
7 the phrase "though not by many demonstrators". Is that
8 factually accurate?

9 A. No. Had it been factually accurate, many demonstrators
10 had it perfectly within their power to disregard our
11 instructions and to go and run riot. I mean, our
12 authority was a moral and political authority. There
13 was no force to prevent them doing whatever they wanted.
14 I mean, apart from the police. We couldn't have stopped
15 it. So this was a bit of moaning. I can't -- you know,
16 I don't know who did that particular assessment.

17 But -- and the other point, I mean, the only
18 demonstrations that don't fall within the tolerance
19 thresholds of bourgeois society are usually in
20 pre-revolutionary times. By and large, if you look at
21 the huge Chartists, one of the last big Chartist
22 demonstrations that took place in Hyde Park in the 19th
23 century, very similar things were said about it, whether
24 they were going to make a revolution, they were going to
25 storm X, Y and Z. And this didn't happen, and some

1 people accused the Chartist leaders of having sold out,
2 when it had not been their plan in the first place to do
3 what many assumed they wanted to do. And this sort of
4 criticism, we did get some of it and we ignored it,
5 you know?

6 Q. Thank you.

7 Let's try again with the document I was hoping to
8 display earlier. It's {MPS-0730093} from tab F. Thank
9 you very much.

10 Could we go first of all to page 11
11 {MPS-0730093/11}. This is a report by Chief
12 Superintendent Cunningham the day after the October
13 demonstration.

14 A. Which October? '68, or ...?

15 Q. October '68.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. I would like to take you to the paragraph which starts
18 right at the bottom of the page. Could that be moved up
19 slightly. It will have to be up a little bit. It's
20 the paragraph which begins "prior to ..." Thank you.

21 I'll read that into the transcript:

22 "Prior to the march, 26 persons were arrested and
23 three summoned for various offences committed on their
24 way to the demonstration. During the demonstration, 17
25 persons were arrested (all during the Maoist/anarchist

1 fracas in Grosvenor Square) and one person was arrested
2 following the demonstration for throwing a bottle at
3 the American Embassy. Apart from three fascists, none
4 had hitherto come to notice."

5 And the arrests are listed in an appendix.

6 Do you have any reason to question the accuracy of
7 those figures, Mr Ali?

8 A. I have no reason to. I mean ...

9 Q. We can see at a glance it's right that the number of
10 arrests on this occasion is vastly lower than the number
11 of arrests in March 1968, isn't it?

12 A. Yeah. And these 26 persons who were arrested and three
13 who received summonses was prior to the march --

14 Q. Yes -- (overspeaking) --

15 A. It doesn't specify which march, because it says "on
16 their way to the demonstration" --

17 Q. This is about the 27 October demonstration. If these
18 figures are correct, Mr Ali, it's suggesting that nobody
19 on the main demonstration was arrested during the course
20 of the demonstration. The only people arrested were
21 before, after or as a result of going to
22 Grosvenor Square. Is it your recollection that
23 nobody -- or to the best of your knowledge, is it right
24 that nobody on the main demonstration was arrested
25 during the march?

1 A. To the best of my knowledge, that is accurate, yeah.

2 Q. Would you accept that so far as there was disorder at
3 Grosvenor Square, that it was necessary for that
4 demonstration to be policed, and insofar as it was
5 necessary to deal with people before and after
6 the demonstration, it was necessary for
7 the demonstration to be policed?

8 A. Well, that was obvious. I mean, it's the principal
9 reason why we decided not to go to Grosvenor Square. So
10 I wasn't there, I didn't observe it. I only got
11 third-hand reports, largely from the press. So I can't
12 really comment on what exactly happened there. But
13 yeah, it was obvious that if people wanted to go and
14 have -- to Grosvenor Square, the police would be there.
15 That's not a big surprise. We said it publicly,
16 everyone knew that. So those who went, went for that,
17 yeah.

18 Q. Could we go, please, in the document to page 4,
19 {MPS-730093/4}. And if you could scroll down, please,
20 so that we can start with the paragraph that begins,
21 "During the 26th October ..." Thank you.

22 I'm going to read a passage to you about events,
23 according to the police report, the day before:

24 "During the 26th October and that part of
25 the following day prior to the start of

1 the demonstration, a number of intending demonstrators
2 were arrested for various offences in the [Metropolitan
3 Police District] (see Appendix 'E'). Most were for
4 possessing offensive weapons but the follow were of
5 particular interest:

6 "[privacy] a German national, was arrested at St
7 Pancras Railway Station when he was found in possession
8 of a gas pistol, ammunition and cannabis reference.

9 "[privacy] was arrested when he was found trying to
10 gain entry to the stables at Hammersmith Police Station.
11 It is probable that he intended tampering with
12 the police horses stabled there.

13 "On the evening of 26th October two youths why
14 stopped by police in Green Street, W1, and found to be
15 in possession of radio-jamming equipment and perspex eye
16 shields. Correspondence which they had made it clear
17 that they were Maoists from Nottingham and Derby
18 respectively and that they had intended taking part in
19 the demonstrations on the following day. Their aim
20 seemed to be the jamming of police radio communications.
21 Both were arrest and charged with conspiracy to cause
22 a public mischief."

23 So, some further details on the pre-demonstration
24 arrests we saw referred to a moment ago.

25 And would you agree that it was necessary for

1 the police to be policing to detect and deal with people
2 such as these?

3 A. Yeah, but from these reports, this was ordinary policing
4 that was responsible for this. I mean, the guy who was
5 arrested on -- the two youths arrested on Green
6 Street -- I didn't realise, by the way, there were any
7 Maoists in Nottingham, so this is an eyeopener. But
8 anyway -- yeah, I mean, what -- what -- what's your
9 exact question?

10 Q. I'm just putting the proposition that there needed to be
11 policing and seeking -- giving you an opportunity to
12 deal with that. A very straightforward proposition,
13 I recognise.

14 A. Yeah, I mean, obviously if people are carrying weapons.
15 Although I think the amount of cannabis resin hasn't
16 been specified, and that may be the real answer to that
17 question of what this guy was doing. A gas pistol with
18 ammunition.

19 Q. I think that's the more serious part of it. Righto.

20 I just want to take you, finally, to one final
21 passage of your book, please, Mr Ali; and this is going
22 to be my final question about the march itself.

23 Page 329 of your book, about halfway down.

24 A. Mm-hm?

25 Q. There's a paragraph which begins, "In Britain

1 itself ...":

2 "In Britain itself, the October 1968 demonstration
3 had represented the last big assembly of revolutionary
4 forces. The failure of the left groups to transcend
5 their own divisions and provide the levies of VSC with
6 meaningful political activities led to a certain
7 atomisation and dispersal."

8 A. Mm-hm.

9 Q. Do you stand by that description of events?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Thank you.

12 Can we move now to {MPS-0730768}.

13 This is a police report, an SDS police report, dated
14 12 November 1968, about a meeting of the VSC exactly
15 52 years ago today, at the Conway Hall. It's one of
16 the events that took place after the demonstration
17 itself. You are recorded as having chaired the meeting.
18 If we could go to page 2, please, {MPS-0730768/2}. If
19 that could be expanded. Thank you.

20 Could we look first of all at the bottom of
21 the page. From the signature block we can see that
22 a number of police officers were present, including
23 Chief Inspector Dixon and three officers who are known
24 to have been serving in the SDS at the time: HN329,
25 HN326 and HN321.

1 If we could go up, please, to the middle of that
2 page. And it's the paragraph which begins, "Tariq Ali
3 introduced ..." that I'd like to draw your attention to,
4 please.

5 Thank you.

6 Mr Ali, I'll give you a moment to read it and then
7 I will read into the transcript the key passages that
8 I wish to ask you about.

9 (Pause)

10 A. This is -- it doesn't sound like me at all. I mean,
11 there is no way I could have said that "if
12 the engineering strike had taken place, a more militant
13 demonstration could have occurred and revolution was
14 a real possibility". Honestly, that was never my
15 position. So there's no way I could have said that. At
16 the best it's a distortion and at worst an invention.

17 Nor would I have said -- used the phrase that
18 "the State had 'backed down' from a confrontation with
19 militant revolutionaries", because we knew that not
20 everyone on that march were militant revolutionaries as
21 such.

22 And so I think it's very exaggerated, that
23 particular report. I mean, it's much better these days,
24 so everything is recorded, then we can listen to it and
25 see whether it's accurate or not. But this phase of

1 policing, where people write reports down and then they
2 are typed up, was always -- it was never very
3 satisfactory; and this is exactly an example of that.

4 Q. What --

5 A. (inaudible) anyway. You know, it's not a big --
6 anything secret. But I just don't recall saying that.

7 Q. Yes, okay.

8 What was your position as to the future of the VSC
9 after --

10 A. Well, I thought that what needed to be done in Britain
11 at that time, at the end of the year '68, was that, if
12 possible, a unified left youth movement which united
13 young people belonging to all the different left
14 organisations, including some young socialists who had
15 been booted out of the Labour Party, and that that would
16 have probably been the best outcome.

17 I didn't think that, at the time or in '69, that we
18 could mobilise so many people again. In that sense,
19 it's quite interesting, the comparison with
20 the anti-Iraq War detention under the Tony Blair
21 government, which all of the figures are that there were
22 over a million people. And my attitude after that
23 demonstration was exactly the same. It was
24 a fantastically important demonstration in British
25 history; the largest political demonstration. But it

1 would be well nigh impossible to repeat that again.

2 So, you know, these are political instincts. Having
3 studied a bit of history, you know what can be repeated
4 and what can't. And so I thought it best to broaden
5 the movement rather than restricting it to a single
6 issue movement related to Vietnam.

7 Q. If you'll bear with me for a moment, I've been asked,
8 for those who are following the transcript, to read
9 the passage that we've just been considering into
10 the transcript.

11 It reads:

12 "Tariq Ali introduced [privacy], who took the line
13 that the State had 'backed down' from a confrontation
14 with militant revolutionaries, and that
15 the demonstration had been an enormous success. He was
16 followed by [privacy] who gave a historical account of
17 the Vietnam War and attempted to link Vietnam with
18 racism. Tariq Ali then said that complacency was to be
19 deplored, and that if the engineering strike had taken
20 place a more militant demonstration could have occurred
21 and revolution was a real possibility."

22 Could that document be taken down, please.

23 Could we now have {UCPI-0000005797}, please.

24 This is a report of the VSC's 1969 National
25 Conference.

1 A. It's barely readable, actually. Can you read it? It's
2 difficult on the screen.

3 Q. Yes, it's very difficult. My questioning on this is
4 very short. But the paragraph I'm interested in is
5 the second paragraph down, under the heading "Saturday
6 1st February 1969", and it reads:

7 "Admission to the conference was restricted to
8 delegates and accredited observers, and credentials were
9 checked at the door by Jess McKenzie and
10 [privacy] [privacy] who issued voting cards to
11 the delegates only."

12 Now, I think it's right that you were at this
13 conference; is that correct?

14 A. It's written here, so I must have been. I mean,
15 you know, I don't remember that conference at all. But
16 I must have been there, yeah.

17 Q. And is it right that access was restricted, as described
18 in the report?

19 A. I suppose so. I mean, if it was a closed conference,
20 that's what it would have been, but I'm just wondering
21 now why. But anyway. Yeah, it's perfectly possible.

22 Q. And would it follow that a plain-clothed police officer,
23 as opposed to an undercover police officer, would not
24 have been able to gain entry to it?

25 A. Yeah. If it was a closed conference, he or she wouldn't

1 be able to gain entry to it, no.

2 Q. Thank you.

3 Could we go to page 15 of the document, please
4 {UCPI-0000005797/15}. This is one of the documents
5 that's been submitted with the report. It's said to be
6 a paper by Geeff Richman, entitled "The State of
7 the War". I'm taking you to that just to see what
8 the document is.

9 If we now go to page 21, please
10 {UCPI-0000005797/21}. And if we could focus on
11 the paragraph that begins, "What emerges from the ...
12 account ..."

13 Mr Richman concludes his paper with the words:

14 "What emerges from the above account is the extent
15 to which power, though it grows out of the barrel of
16 a gun, depends on the unity and political consciousness
17 of the people who hold the gun. It is this which has
18 defeated the US and which makes the Vietnamese victory
19 our victory, if we can learn through it the nature
20 of our own oppression and the source of our own power."

21 A. Mm-hm.

22 Q. Now, I think it's right, isn't it, that the saying
23 "power grows out of the barrel of a gun" is one of
24 chairman Mao's --

25 A. Chairman Mao Zedong's statements, yeah.

1 Q. And so there's emphasis here on unity, political
2 consciousness, that a recognition that power grows out
3 of the barrel of a gun.

4 My question to you is how widely was this view of
5 revolution and the trinity referred to in this
6 paragraph, how widely shared was it amongst members of
7 the VSC, to your knowledge?

8 A. I don't know, is the honest answer to that. But I would
9 point out that the author of this document, Geoff
10 Richman, and his wife Marie Richman, were both doctors,
11 part of the Medical Aid to Vietnam Committee, and both,
12 if my memory is correct, were loyal members of
13 the Labour Party. So I'm -- you know, what he's saying
14 is pretty banal, to be perfectly frank. You know,
15 I mean, it's just: learn the lessons of Vietnam.
16 I mean, the situation in Britain couldn't have been more
17 different than that in Vietnam, or many other countries
18 at the time.

19 So, it's just a -- what can we call it? A bit of
20 posturing. It's a statement of fact, partially. But
21 can't attach too much importance to it. And the "power
22 grows out of the barrel of a gun" was being used by both
23 sides, you know -- MPs on both sides accusing each other
24 jokingly.

25 I mean, there's another statement of Mao which was

1 very popular at the time, "all reactionaries are paper
2 tigers", which was also used a great deal at the time.
3 I don't think one can read too much into it really.

4 Q. My final question on this topic, Mr Ali, is, in your
5 view --

6 A. Mm.

7 Q. -- how far did the United Kingdom get down
8 the revolutionary path to global socialism during 1968?

9 A. To what degree, did you say?

10 Q. Yes, how far?

11 A. Not very far at all, as was obvious even at the time and
12 is -- became even more obvious later. I mean,
13 basically, the Labour Party has held the monopoly of
14 working class representation in this country. No other
15 political party to its left, small or big, has been able
16 to dent that until very recently -- in Scotland by the
17 way. But -- so, I don't think it's even a question
18 worth asking. There was nothing like that happening at
19 all.

20 I mean, the only thing I'd say is there were more
21 left Labour MPs than there are now, and many of them
22 were extremely friendly with us, turned up on our
23 demonstrations, shared platforms, including Michael
24 Foot, Ian Mikardo, many, many others. So it was not
25 that we were hostile to the Labour Party as such. We

1 (2.05 pm)

2 MS PURSER: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to
3 the afternoon session of today's evidential hearing.
4 For those of you in the virtual hearing room, please can
5 I remind you to turn off both your camera and
6 microphone, unless you are invite to speak by
7 the Chairman.

8 I will now hand over to our Chairman,
9 Sir John Mitting, to continue proceedings.
10 Chairman.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. As I announced this morning,
12 everyone will have to listen, most of you again, to
13 the three-minute recording made earlier this year:

14 "I am conducting this Inquiry under a statute,
15 the Inquiries Act 2005, which gives me the power to make
16 orders regulating the conduct of the Inquiry, including
17 its hearings. In the exercise of that power, I have
18 made a number of orders which affect what you may and
19 may not do in the hearing rooms and after you leave
20 them. Breach of any of the orders is a serious matter
21 and may have serious consequences for you.

22 "If I am satisfied that a person may have breached
23 an order, I have the power to certify the matter to
24 the High Court, which will investigate and deal with it
25 as if it had been a contempt of that court. If

1 satisfied that a breach has occurred and merits
2 the imposition of a penalty, the High Court may impose
3 a severe sanction on the person in breach, including
4 a fine, imprisonment for up to two years and
5 sequestration of their assets.

6 "Evidence is going to be given live over screens in
7 the hearing rooms. It is strictly prohibited to
8 photograph or record what is shown on the screens, or to
9 record what is said by a witness, or anyone else in
10 the hearings rooms.

11 "You may bring your mobile telephone into
12 the hearing rooms, but you may not use it for any of
13 those purposes. You may use it silently for any other
14 purpose. In particular, you may transmit your account
15 of what you have seen and heard in a hearing room to any
16 other person, but only once at least 10 minutes have
17 elapsed since the event which you are describing took
18 place.

19 "This restriction has a purpose. In the course of
20 the Inquiry, I have made orders prohibiting the public
21 disclosure of information, for example about
22 the identity of a person, for a variety of reasons.
23 These orders must be upheld. It is inevitable that,
24 whether by accident or design, information which I have
25 ordered should not be publicly disclosed will sometimes

1 be disclosed in a hearing. If and when that happens,
2 I will immediately suspend the hearing and make an order
3 prohibiting further disclosure of the information
4 outside the hearing rooms.

5 "The consequence will be that no further disclosure
6 of that information may be made by mobile telephone or
7 other portable electronic device from within the hearing
8 room, or by any means outside it.

9 "I am sorry if you find this message alarming; it is
10 not intended to be. Its purpose is simply to ensure
11 that everyone knows the rules which must apply if I am
12 to hear the evidence which I need to enable me to get to
13 the truth about undercover policing.

14 "You, as members of the public, are entitled to hear
15 the same public evidence as I will hear and to reach
16 your own conclusions about it. The Inquiry team will do
17 their best to ensure that you can.

18 "If you have any doubt about the terms of this
19 message or what you may or may not do, you should not
20 hesitate to ask one of them and, with my help, if
21 necessary, they will provide you with the answer."

22 Thank you, Mr Barr.

23 MR BARR: Thank you, sir.

24 Mr Ali, we're going to move now to some of the other
25 capacities in which you were active and spied upon --

1 A. Sorry, there's something -- messages coming on my
2 screen. They've gone now. I didn't get your ...
3 unmuting and stuff.

4 Q. Can you hear me now?

5 A. Very well.

6 Q. Good.

7 I'm going to now explore some of your other activism
8 that was spied upon by the SDS, starting first with your
9 membership of the International Marxist Group.

10 A. Mm-hm.

11 Q. Can we have, please, {UCPI-0000015673}.

12 Mr Ali, because people are following this on
13 a transcript, I'm going to read out the material parts,
14 and then I'll ask you a question about it.

15 This is a report signed by HN321 and countersigned
16 by Acting Chief Inspector R Wilson. It's dated
17 25 August 1969. It's a special report, and the first
18 three paragraphs read:

19 "1. Submitted is a recent list of people known to be
20 members of the International Marxist Group, the total
21 membership of which now stands at about 100 people.

22 "2. The International Marxist Group has branches in
23 the following areas, although many of them consist of
24 only one person.

25 "3. Birmingham, Leicester, Canterbury,

1 Chesterfield, Crewe, Manchester, Reading, St Helens,
2 London, Nottingham, Hull, Oxford, Folkestone, Norwich,
3 Glasgow, Edinburgh and York."

4 Mr Ali, your name is one of those that was in
5 the list attached to this report. Can you tell me,
6 first of all, is it right that at about this period,
7 the IMG numbered about 100 people?

8 A. Yeah, it may be a slight exaggeration, but I think that
9 was roughly the number. And I think it's also accurate
10 to say that in some of these towns, there was just
11 a single -- a single member. It's a bit
12 Monty~Python-esque, but that's how it was.

13 Q. Thank you.

14 Could you briefly explain the scope of the IMG's
15 activities in this period.

16 A. Yeah. The IMG was essentially a section, the British
17 section, of an international organisation known as
18 "The Fourth International" that was created by Leon
19 Trotsky in 1938 after he broke completely with Stalin
20 and Stalinism.

21 And it grew slowly. It never achieved a mass status
22 anywhere in the world, except in Bolivia and Sri Lanka,
23 where they became mass parties. Elsewhere they remained
24 largely at the level of -- at its peak in France they
25 had I would guess about 50,000 members, something like

1 that, or maybe a bit under.

2 In Britain, the membership of the IMG, at its
3 maximum, grew to a thousand. But that was the maximum
4 figure.

5 And the aims were to create left-wing, Marxist
6 parties. Basically, as I said earlier, to challenge
7 Labour for working class loyalties. And even
8 the largest of these parties, the Communist Party, was
9 never able to do that. So neither the IMG or other
10 Trotskyist groups got anywhere near it.

11 And in the absence of this actually coming to
12 fruition, we did the normal activities, public meetings,
13 usually very critical of the Labour government, or
14 whatever government was in power, backing strikes,
15 helping with picketing, selling newspapers, organising
16 conferences. Very much really a propagandist
17 organisation.

18 Q. Just so we're clear, did the IMG use violence at all?

19 A. No.

20 Q. And did the IMG, through its members, commit serious
21 criminal offences to advance its aims?

22 A. Well, not to my knowledge. I mean, if the odd member
23 did, it's perfectly possible. But certainly not to my
24 knowledge. And certainly not -- it wasn't the aim of
25 the organisation in -- in any way.

1 Q. Thank you.

2 Could the document be taken down, please. Could it
3 be replaced by {UCPI000008923}, please.

4 This is a special report. It's signed by an
5 undercover police officer, HN340, countersigned by
6 the chief inspector of the time, Mr Saunders. And it is
7 a North London Red Circle -- it's about the North London
8 Red Circle.

9 Could you scroll down, please, so we can see
10 the bottom of paragraph 3.

11 It's a document reporting on a discussion of
12 the industrial dispute at the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders.
13 The material passage that I'm going read into
14 the transcript is going to be the last sentence of
15 paragraph 3, Mr Ali, but I'm going to let you
16 familiarise yourself with the whole of paragraph 3.

17 The last sentence reads:

18 "To that end, it was important that IMG activity
19 within the unions ensured that they could better exploit
20 any future potential revolutionary situation."

21 A. Well, so, according to this report, the IMG's position
22 is that a strike now is not in the interests of
23 the workers, that it would be won by the capitalists and
24 appear as a defeat for the UCS workers. Right, okay.

25 Q. Yes, I think --

- 1 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 2 Q. The background is that there had been a -- unusually,
3 there had been a work-in at the Upper Clyde
4 Shipbuilders.
- 5 A. A very famous one, yeah.
- 6 Q. And as you say, the discussion is about where it's all
7 going to go and the feeling at the meeting was
8 pessimistic.
- 9 A. Yeah. I wasn't at that meeting, since I never -- I very
10 rarely went to Red Circle meetings. These Red Circles
11 were initially discussion groups set up by the Red Mole
12 newspaper, to attract support for the ideas of
13 the paper. And they were the very first contact which
14 people made with the IMG. And it's -- it would be --
15 would have been very unusual for me to attend them.
16 It's possible I was there, but I can't remember it --
- 17 Q. Well, Mr Ali, I do appreciate I'm asking you to recall
18 something from half a century ago, but if you read on
19 a little bit to paragraph 4, that might help refresh
20 your memory.
- 21 A. Yeah.
- 22 I honestly -- I mean, I read it, but it -- it rings
23 no bells for me. My memory by and large is not bad, as
24 even you'll agree. I mean, I do remember -- but this --
25 attending this particular meeting of the Red Circle

1 I can't remember. You know, as I said, I may well have
2 attended it and I may well have been doing what
3 the report says, but I can't -- I can't recall it.

4 Q. Thank you.

5 For the transcript, the material part of paragraph 4
6 is:

7 "A short discussion followed which Tariq Ali kept
8 brief."

9 But I don't think that matters too much, Mr Ali,
10 because the purpose of me showing you this document is
11 to ask you about how the IMG related to trade unions and
12 how it saw the trade unions as a means of advancing its
13 aims and spreading its ideas.

14 A. Well, that was the case with all the left groups at the
15 time; the IMG was no different from them. I mean, all
16 the groups to the left of the Labour Party which took
17 trade union support for granted. But -- so it's nothing
18 unusual there, really, it's a sort of everyday
19 banalities, to be honest -- (inaudible) you know,
20 writing it.

21 Q. Was the -- was the involvement of IMG members in trade
22 unions done openly or covertly?

23 A. Totally openly.

24 Q. Thank you.

25 Could we now look, please -- could we take that

1 document down and can we have, please, {UCPI0000017347}.

2 Now, this is a Special Report dated 18 April 1977.

3 The subject is the International Marxist Group, and

4 there are various respects in which it may be of

5 interest and which I'm going to take you to.

6 I'll read, first of all, the opening paragraph:

7 "The following information has been received from

8 a secret and reliable source:

9 "As part of their GLC election campaign, the IMG
10 held a public meeting at Southall Town Hall on Thursday
11 14th April between 8 and 10.30 pm. The Chairman was
12 Bob ..."

13 I think it says "Singh". I may be wrong about that:

14 "... an AUEW member and thought to work at
15 the Trico factory, Brentford. The speakers were
16 Tariq Ali of the IMG Political Committee, Gerry Hedley
17 the IMG candidate for Ealing and Southall, who is well
18 known in West London ultra-left circles, he works as
19 a lecturer at the Courtaulds Institute, and Ahmed Shuja
20 described as editor of 'Jio-o-Jehad'. About 50 persons
21 attended the meeting, of whom about 16 were Asians.
22 The impression was gained that the majority of the white
23 persons present were not from the immediate vicinity of
24 Southall."

25 So in that paragraph, Mr Ali, we have reporting on

1 you apparently at an election campaign event. Can you
2 recall taking part in the event?

3 A. Yeah, I can.

4 Q. What is your reaction to the police attending, recording
5 and filing away a report about your work in support of
6 a democratic election campaign?

7 A. Unnecessary. I mean, there was no big secret about it.
8 The secret and reliable source didn't have to be so
9 hush-hush. It's a public meeting; anyone could come and
10 go.

11 I mean, obviously, for a long, long time, there have
12 been informers present at political meetings of one sort
13 or another, from the 18th century onwards. So there's
14 no big surprise there. But I would have thought it was
15 sort of, you know, totally unnecessary. And to write up
16 a completely trivial thing, a waste of time and energy.
17 But that's all I have to say about that. I mean, what
18 else can one say? It's ...

19 Q. I'm going to read another passage from the middle of
20 the second paragraph:

21 "Tariq Ali tended to concentrate on the anti-racial
22 aspects ..."

23 A. I can't see that myself, but you know ...

24 Q. It's halfway down the second paragraph, and it's in
25 the context of what you are recorded as having said at

1 the meeting. Thank you very much for zooming in on
2 that:

3 "Tariq Ali tended to concentrate on the anti-racial
4 aspects, such as a spirited attack on the careerist
5 blacks and Asians within the race relations industry,
6 and the presence of strong National Front groups in
7 almost all areas surrounding Southall."

8 Is it right that you spoke against racism at this
9 meeting?

10 A. Very likely.

11 Q. And what is your reaction to your campaigning against
12 racism being recorded and filed away by the police?

13 A. Again, I would say unnecessary. It's hardly the most
14 dramatic thing. I wasn't the only person who said it.
15 It's just a bit incomprehensible why they bothered with
16 this really. But anyway ...

17 Q. There are -- I'm going to move now from IMG and
18 Red Circle to the Irish Civil Rights Solidarity
19 Campaign. Could we take the document, down, please.

20 We may be able to do this without calling
21 the documents up, Mr Ali, but if you want to see them --

22 A. No, no, that's fine, that's fine.

23 Q. -- we can call them up.

24 There are two reports in the bundle, each of which
25 submit leaflets about events at which you are recorded

1 as being one of the people who are going to speak at an
2 event organised by the Irish Civil Rights Solidarity
3 Campaign.

4 A. Mm-hm.

5 Q. Would it be right to understand that you were not
6 a member of that organisation but you were a speaker at
7 their events?

8 A. Yes. I would have been a member if I'd been asked to
9 join, but, I mean, I wasn't. But whenever Irish groups
10 asked me to speak, I did, for political reasons. And
11 also the fact that, when I was growing up in Lahore in
12 Pakistan, the school I went to was a school run by Irish
13 Catholic brothers, some of whom were incredibly
14 intelligent and very stimulating to engage in debate and
15 conversation. And I first learnt about Irish history
16 from not all of them, but one or two. And the principal
17 himself, Brother Henderson, had been badly beaten up
18 during the Black and Tan period in Ireland. So I had
19 a natural affinity for Irish affairs and knew quite
20 a bit about it even before I came to this country.

21 Q. Thank you.

22 Now, you've set out more about your political
23 beliefs on the Irish question in your witness statement,
24 so I don't need to ask you about that. But what I would
25 like to ask you about is your activities in relation to

1 your political views on the Irish question.

2 Did they go any wider than speaking and/or attending
3 demonstrations?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Can we move now to the Anti-Nazi League. And perhaps we
6 can start -- it would be helpful if you could just
7 explain briefly what the Anti-Nazi League was and how it
8 advanced its cause.

9 A. Well, the Anti-Nazi League was essentially not set up by
10 the IMG, it was set up by the Socialist Workers' Party,
11 and it was a united front which invited all people --
12 all sorts of different people to join, liberals, Labour
13 supporters, anyone who was hostile to what was thought
14 at that time to be a growing threat from fascist
15 organisations in this country, of which
16 the National Front was the most prominent.

17 And as such, you know, most people who were
18 interested in anti-fascist activities, or took them
19 seriously, felt it was a useful thing to do.

20 More important than the Anti-Nazi League in this
21 aspect was a sort of sister organisation called Rock
22 Against Racism, which brought in large numbers of rock
23 bands and famous stars, to organise concerts in
24 different parts of the country for young people in
25 particular, to wean them away from any attraction to

1 fascist notions. And that did have an impact, I have to
2 say.

3 Q. Thank you.

4 We're going to come back to that in just a moment.
5 But first of all, can we call up, please,
6 {UCPI0000016579}.

7 This is a report on the Anti-Nazi League, in
8 particular on the Anti-Nazi League's 1981 National
9 Conference.

10 A. Mm-hm.

11 Q. There is -- if we start, please, at paragraph 3, it
12 says:

13 "The pre-lunch session was chaired by Ernie Roberts,
14 MP, who, after a brief welcoming address, introduced
15 [privacy] from Birmingham ANL who spoke about
16 the fire-bomb attack on the Socialist Workers' Party
17 bookshop in that city on the previous evening."

18 That is the first mention in this document of
19 a Member of Parliament. There are other references to
20 John Tilley MP and Martin Flannery MP. You are also
21 recorded as present. Do you recall attending the 1981
22 ANL National Conference?

23 A. I don't, actually. I mean, I'm sure I did if the report
24 says I did, but I can't remember -- I can't remember
25 the event at all.

1 I remember speaking, talking about Labour MPs, with
2 Neil Kinnock at an Anti-Nazi League meeting in Cardiff,
3 in which he made a very good and strong speech. But
4 I don't remember the conference at all.

5 Q. Yes. Strictly speaking, you're listed under
6 the words "the undermentioned were elected to the new
7 steering committee", and as people who had either been
8 mentioned or who had attended. So it's possible you
9 weren't there.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. But what is -- you certainly are -- you're recorded in
12 the report, though, at a number of places, including
13 being elected to the steering committee.

14 What is your reaction to a report which records your
15 election to the steering committee of
16 the Anti-Nazi League at a conference attended by
17 democratically elected Members of Parliament for
18 the purposes of policing?

19 A. I can't see the relevance at all, quite honestly. It's
20 a sort of unnecessary, time-consuming, money-wasting
21 exercise.

22 Q. Could we now move, please, to page {UCPI0000016579/9} of
23 this document. I'd just like to focus on
24 the penultimate paragraph, please. This is, Mr Ali,
25 part of the 1981 National Conference Declaration. It

1 reads:

2 "In engaging in 'defence' activity it is important
3 to remember two things. Firstly, all activity should be
4 located within the general framework of going on
5 the offensive against the Nazis, isolating them publicly
6 and developing mass opposition on the streets.
7 Secondly, 'tit-for-tat' exercises should be avoided, as
8 they are rarely effective, often increase the spiral of
9 violence, and always make it more difficult to wage open
10 public activity with mass mobilisation."

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Could I ask you how representative that was of the ANL's
13 strategy in combating racism?

14 A. Pretty accurate, I think. Obviously, when black and
15 Asian people were attacked, the Anti-Nazi League's
16 position was that they had -- that they had the right to
17 defend themselves. And the ANL often harked back to
18 the big battles that had taken place in the East End of
19 London during the 30s and the Battle of Cable Street,
20 where there had been violence on quite an astonishing
21 scale compared to later, for instance.

22 So, yeah, it's -- it's perfectly in keeping with
23 that.

24 Q. Thank you.

25 Could that document be taken down, please. Could we

1 have up instead {UCPI0000021653}, please.

2 This is a police Special Branch Special Report.

3 Could we zoom in. It's dated 17 May 1978. It's from --

4 it's an SDS report. Could we zoom in, please, on

5 paragraph 2 and the text immediately below that.

6 Paragraph 2 reads:

7 "The undermentioned persons were identified as being

8 present on Sunday 30 April 1978 at the Anti-Nazi League

9 carnival."

10 Then there's a gist:

11 "A list of 229 names, including Tariq Ali,

12 Peter Hain, Dave Morris and Colin Clark."

13 Is this the carnival to which you were referring

14 earlier in your evidence?

15 A. Yes, I was. And I remember going to it. But what is

16 there to say about it? Nothing much really.

17 Q. Well, can I ask you this. As far as you are aware, was

18 there any violence at that carnival?

19 A. I can't remember. None from our side. I don't think

20 the fascists attacked it, or anything like that. But

21 it's -- it's -- if they did, I can't recall it.

22 Q. Can you recall there being any crime?

23 A. At that carnival?

24 Q. Yes.

25 A. No.

1 Q. Was it disordered?

2 A. No. I -- what I remember of it, if it is the same one

3 -- and I think it is -- it was very well attended.

4 Does it give the location of it? That would help clear

5 my mind a bit. Is it in one of -- is it in Victoria

6 Park in the East End?

7 Q. I'm afraid the report doesn't disclose that.

8 A. Okay, I mean, why hide the location?

9 Anyway, it's -- if it is the one I'm thinking of,

10 the atmosphere was very pleasant and relaxed, people

11 enjoyed the music. Lots and children and families were

12 on that demonstration from the localities.

13 Q. What is your reaction to the knowledge that the police

14 recorded your attendance at that carnival along with

15 that of hundreds of other people?

16 A. Unnecessary, irrelevant, of no use whatsoever to anyone.

17 Q. Thank you.

18 In similar vein, could we take down this document

19 and put up, please, {UCPI0000021699}.

20 This is an SDS report dated 24 May 1978.

21 Paragraph 1 reads:

22 "The following persons were identified as having

23 attended the Anti-Nazi League rally and march from

24 Aldgate to Hyde Park, on Sunday, 14 May 1978."

25 A list of 69 names follows, and that list includes

1 your name and that of Dave Morris. This report does
2 include a location.

3 Can you recall this event, Mr Ali?

4 A. I can't really. You know, I -- it happened, I probably
5 was on it, but I have no memory of it whatsoever.

6 Q. I'm going to move on now to another event which I know
7 that you will recall. Could we replace that document
8 with the one numbered {UCPI0000021699} -- sorry, I beg
9 your pardon. Could we replace it with {MPS-0733404}.

10 This is entitled "Index of Appendices to Report of
11 the Protest Demonstration Against the National Front
12 Meeting in Southall on 23 April 1979". And
13 the appendices include appendix "A", "Persons
14 identified" at that. You appear in appendix "A" as
15 a person identified at that meeting.

16 You also appear in appendix "B", "Persons arrested
17 who had previously come to notice in Special Branch
18 records".

19 You deal with this event, I believe, in your witness
20 statement; is that right, Mr Ali?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. And you remember it well?

23 A. Yes, very well.

24 Q. And for the record, although you were arrested, and
25 although the document records a public order charge,

1 your evidence is that you never were in fact charged?

2 A. No. And not only that, I was the Parliamentary
3 candidate for Socialist Unity in that constituency in --
4 for the '79 elections. And I was doing a lot of
5 constituency work at the time. I mean, we knew we were
6 not going to win. For left groups fighting in these
7 elections against Labour is really like ploughing
8 the sea. But we did it nonetheless.

9 And during that day when the National Front were in
10 Southall, the local organisers in Southall said they
11 might attack us, there might be clashes; and they'd got
12 a special house to keep some of us. And me as
13 the Parliamentary candidate of the left was taken to
14 that safe house just to be out of the way of any action.
15 And so was a group -- a rock group, a reggae group,
16 "Misty". And we were there, as was some women and
17 children.

18 And I recall very clearly at some stage in
19 the proceedings -- that was the same day that
20 Blair Peach was killed -- that the police charged into
21 this house, dragged us out, made us go run a gauntlet.
22 And as we were running the gauntlet, they were belting
23 us with batons. It was like a baton charge. Hitting
24 one on the head mainly. It seemed like a leaf taken out
25 of a colonial police manual in India during the days of

1 the British Raj. That's what it seemed like. And I was
2 basically knocked unconscious.

3 When I came to, I was sitting in a police bus with
4 others, and we were taken to a prison I think somewhere
5 in Victoria, in that region. And not charged at all,
6 but at 3 am in the morning put out on the street. That
7 is my memory of that event. And people -- and put out
8 from the back door of the police station so lawyers and
9 others who were waiting to try and find me in the front
10 of the police station couldn't be in touch. And I --
11 God knows how I made my way back home that day, but
12 I did. I think I walked all the way back from Victoria
13 to North London. But that is my clear memory of -- of
14 that event.

15 Q. And what is your reaction to your presence at that event
16 being reported and filed away since 1979?

17 A. Well, you know, I'm tired of repeating myself really.
18 It's bizarre. This was a public thing. What the police
19 did was in public view, in public gaze. I mean, what
20 exactly was the point of sending a special report back
21 when they could have got one from the police force that
22 was active that day?

23 Q. Thank you.

24 Could we take that down, please. Could we have
25 {UCPI0000020990}. Thank you.

1 This is an SDS report dated 22 June 1979 about
2 a meeting of the Camden Anti-Nazi League. It was
3 a public meeting attended, according to the report, by
4 about 45 persons.

5 Could we go to paragraph 4, please, and could we
6 scroll down so we can see paragraph 3 as well.

7 From paragraph 3 -- I'll read it -- we can see:

8 "The meeting was entitled, 'Who killed Blair Peach?'
9 and began with an emotional speech from Joe Leonard of
10 the East London Teachers Association, who had been
11 a personal friend of peach. He spent some time in
12 highlighting the virtues of his dead comrade."

13 Paragraph 4:

14 "Tariq Ali then called for support for
15 the 'independent enquiry' into the circumstances of
16 Peach's death. This enquiry was to be made by a team of
17 left-wing experts specially chosen for the job and he
18 disclosed that a full page advertisement in an edition
19 of the 'Guardian' newspaper would give details."

20 Can you recall this meeting, Mr Ali?

21 A. Vaguely. I can recall attending a meeting for
22 Blair Peach, and there was a big demand for an
23 independent inquiry. And I think we -- there was
24 a full-page ad which went into The Guardian. But
25 I think -- I mean, Blair Peach's death really shocked

1 people, because, as the evidence emerged, it was clear
2 he was cornered on a small street in Southall after
3 the demo and beaten to death by a group of Special
4 Patrol Group officers. That's what happened. No one --
5 I mean, that was reported in all the press without
6 exception, since a death on these demos is very
7 uncommon. And that's what did send a shock wave down,
8 everyone saying, "What the hell is going on? Why
9 did they do this?" etc, etc, "He's a New Zealander."

10 Q. And to the best of your knowledge, the justice campaign
11 that followed Blair Peach's death used what methods to
12 advance its cause?

13 A. Who used?

14 Q. There was a campaign following Blair Peach's death.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. What methods did it use to advance its cause?

17 A. I honestly don't know. I think the main activities were
18 carried out by the Anti-Nazi League, even though it
19 wasn't the fascists who'd caused his death. But there
20 were lots of support groups and committees on local
21 levels set up. The National Council of Civil Liberties
22 took up the case. It was taken up at quite a high
23 level.

24 Q. And so far as your role is concerned, you've explained
25 that you spoke. Did your role go any further than that?

1 A. Not really.

2 Q. I'm sorry I'm being very repetitive but I feel I do need
3 to ask you.

4 What is your reaction to the fact you were speaking
5 at an event following the death of a man at
6 the demonstration in circumstances where there was
7 a campaign about the police role in that death?

8 A. I don't know. I mean, what is the point of having
9 a report like this, except to keep people in work, which
10 I'm all in favour of, and to make my file heftier than
11 it was, for absolutely no rhyme or reason? I can't
12 think of any other real purpose.

13 Q. Could we take that document down, please.

14 Could we have now {UCPI0000013868}. Thank you.

15 This is an SDS report dated 24 March --

16 A. Ah.

17 Q. -- of 1980. On the left-hand margin, the subject is
18 recorded as the "Labour Coordinating Committee 'Debate
19 of the Decade'". Paragraph 1 reads:

20 "On Monday, 17th March 1980 at 7 pm at the Methodist
21 Central Hall, Westminster, SW1, the Labour Coordinating
22 Committee held a 'Debate of the Decade' on
23 the subject 'The Crisis and the Future of the Left',
24 chaired by Peter Hain. About 2,500 persons were
25 present. The debate never materialised as a discussion

1 and comprised six speakers explaining their personal
2 politics and dissecting the politics of their fellow
3 speakers."

4 Mr Ali, could you help us first of all with what
5 the Labour Coordinating Committee was.

6 A. It was a grouping inside the Labour Party, a left-wing
7 grouping, that basically backed Tony Benn. It was
8 a Bennite group, demanding, apart from other things,
9 more democracy inside the Labour Party, etc, etc. And
10 it included quite a few Members of Parliament, Audrey
11 Wise was one, Eric Heffer was one. I think both of them
12 spoke at that debate as well, and others. And
13 the debate was their -- and Peter Hain was very involved
14 with it. And the debate was their initiative. And they
15 approached me and others to speak and, you know, we
16 agreed.

17 It wasn't our personal politics we were explaining,
18 it was -- basically, the aim of the discussion was that
19 Labour had been defeated in the '79 elections,
20 Mrs Thatcher was now the new prime minister, and what
21 was the left going to do. I mean, my own memory of that
22 debate, including my own speech, is that Mrs Thatcher
23 was barely mentioned. And there was no real
24 understanding of what this change meant for Britain and
25 British politics in the future. It was largely a debate

1 within the left really.

2 Q. The document itself records Tony Benn and Stuart Holland
3 as being the Members of Parliament --

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. -- amongst the speakers on that occasion, along with you
6 and a number of other prominent left-wing activists.

7 But the long and the short of it was this was an
8 occasion -- a large public event at which you were
9 sharing a platform with Members of Parliament.

10 A. Mm-hm.

11 Q. Thank you.

12 Could we now take that document down and could we
13 have, please, {UCPI0000014082}. This is an SDS report
14 dated 2 July 1980. The subject heading is "Anti-Cruise
15 Missile Demonstration". Paragraph 1 reads:

16 "The undermentioned persons were identified
17 participants in the Anti-Cruise Missile demonstration,
18 organised by the Labour Party, which was held in Central
19 London on 22.6.80."

20 Amongst the list of names recorded underneath that
21 paragraph is your name. Can you recall the event,
22 Mr Ali?

23 A. I can't recall it. I can't remember speaking at it.

24 I probably did attend it. That's about it really.

25 Q. Thank you.

1 Could we take that down, please, and could we have
2 up next {MPS-0018070}.

3 This is a document which bears only the title "Hog"
4 and then the subheading, "Intelligence -- Stop the War
5 -- Stop the War Coalition Steering Committee". It then
6 reads:

7 "There has been an amount of movement in recent
8 weeks on the national Stop the War Coalition steering
9 committee. The newly updated list of the entire
10 committee as of Saturday 15th March 03 is as follows."

11 There's then a list of names. Your name appears in
12 that list, along with a number of others, including
13 those of Jeremy Corbyn MP and George Galloway MP.

14 Is it right, Mr Ali, that you were a member of
15 the steering committee of the Stop the War Coalition?

16 A. Yeah, I was one of the founder members of the Stop the
17 War Coalition, together with Jeremy, Lindsey German and
18 others. And so it's perfectly normal that my name
19 should appear there.

20 Q. And then the document continues recording some of
21 the details of people's positions, and so on.

22 Many of us will recall 2003, Mr Ali, but could you
23 please, just in a nutshell, explain what the purpose of
24 the Stop the War Coalition was and what methods it used
25 to advance its aims.

1 A. The Stop the War Coalition was a very broad coalition.
2 It didn't -- not simply restricted to the left. Its aim
3 was to oppose the new wars that the United States were
4 launching in Afghanistan and subsequently in Iraq as
5 being unjust wars and that could only lead to further
6 disasters on every level.

7 And in particular, in the run-up to the Iraq War,
8 there was a general feeling, not by any means confined
9 to the left but I would say to the country at large,
10 including many former British ambassadors to
11 the Middle East, many people who had worked at a very
12 high level in the intelligence services, that we were
13 being lied to, that the politicians were concocting
14 facts to suit their needs, and the fear was that Britain
15 would be rushed into an American war on -- based on
16 total false propaganda. This, as we know -- I mean,
17 the famous case of the "weapons of mass destruction" was
18 the most famous aspect on this. But there were lies
19 told on many a level, including the preparation of dodgy
20 dossiers inside the Foreign Office.

21 I mean, at that time, just for the record, I was
22 invited to go and speak at the Foreign Office to its
23 employees and, you know, officers, civil servants, which
24 I did, pointing out what this war was likely to lead to,
25 that it was going to be a disaster for this region, etc,

1 etc.

2 And I was also asked to speak at -- I think just
3 after the war I was invited by the British Council to
4 give an address in Damascus, which I did. And during
5 that period in Damascus I received an invitation from
6 the British ambassador, who asked me for lunch. And at
7 lunch he explained to me that it wasn't a free lunch,
8 that he'd invited every representative of Syrian civil
9 society and government to hear a discussion on Iraq.

10 And at that lunch, in public, the ambassador said to
11 me, "I heard you reported somewhere or the other saying
12 that Blair should be arrested as a war criminal." It
13 wasn't a subject I was myself going to introduce in
14 the British embassy, but since he asked me, I replied,
15 "Yeah, I did, because this war was illegal, it was
16 wrong, it was criminal." And to my astonishment,
17 the ambassador said, "I couldn't agree with you more."

18 Now, when you have that degree of hostility to
19 a war, what is the point of reporting on who was
20 attending which meeting, when there's nothing that's
21 a big secret.

22 Q. And what was the result of the Stop the War
23 Coalition's --

24 A. Stop the War then organised the largest demonstration in
25 British history, as everyone admitted. A million-plus

1 people. And what was quite amazing about that
2 demonstration, I have never been to such a broad-based
3 demonstration in my life. I mean, every sphere of
4 society, including many Conservatives who I ran into on
5 that demonstration, including senior police officers who
6 came up and chatted to me and said, "It's just wrong,
7 isn't it, this war," and I said, "I think it is," they
8 said, "You're not alone." There was a gut feeling that
9 something rotten had happened.

10 So the only purpose was to try and stop the war.

11 What we couldn't, because Blair had set his -- these
12 are all demonstrations that took place just before
13 the war -- then people got very demoralised and
14 depressed and, you know, went their ways. The Stop
15 the War carried on, you know, with quite large
16 demonstrations subsequently. But nothing on that scale
17 again. Nor was this confined to Britain. Every big
18 city in the United States, despite 9/11, had huge
19 demonstrations. Every big city. New York, LA, Chicago.
20 I spoke at some of these events. Europe, apart from
21 France. You had a quarter of a million people out on
22 the streets in Madrid. Nearly a million in Rome. It
23 was just a big revulsion against the politicians having
24 dragged the West into these wars in the Middle East.

25 And as we see today, these wars are still going on

1 in one way or the other; and they have lasted longer
2 than the First and Second World Wars put together. That
3 is the aim of trying to bring this to an end and to stop
4 it.

5 Q. Some might think there's a continuity between what
6 happened in October 1968 and March 2003. Would you
7 regard this as another show of strength not a show of
8 force?

9 A. Yeah, very much so. I don't think anyone, no current at
10 all within Stop the War even thought of force. I mean
11 to get a -- I mean, what could be more forceful than
12 a million people congregating in London to try and stop
13 an illegal, evil war that the government was about to
14 take us into?

15 So, very much so. Though I don't think most of
16 the people on the demonstration, apart from a few of us
17 grey-haireds, could have linked it to October '68,
18 because most of the people on the demonstration were
19 young people. But you're right, there is a continuity,
20 yeah.

21 Q. The final three reports I want to show this afternoon
22 all have something of a personal thread to them.
23 The first one is {UCPI0000013736}.

24 This is an SDS report dated 23 January 1980.

25 A. Okay.

1 Q. It's a report about a person called "Phil Evans", and it
2 reads:

3 "The following information has been received from
4 a reliable source."

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. "Phil Evans, a long-standing member of
7 the Socialist Workers Party, lives at ..."

8 Address redacted:

9 "A single man, he is employed as a sub-editor by
10 a publishing firm called Engineering Today Ltd ..."

11 The address is given.

12 Paragraph 3 goes on to say:

13 "Although a committed revolutionary socialist, Evans
14 rarely plays an active part in SWP activities, but
15 conveys his politics by means of cartoons submitted to
16 left wing publications. He has recently completed
17 a series of cartoons to be included in a book written by
18 Tariq Ali, entitled 'Trotsky for Beginners'."

19 Paragraph 4:

20 "The subject's girlfriend remains ..."

21 Name redacted:

22 "... also a member of the SWP, who is a primary
23 school teacher employed by the London Borough of
24 Newham ..."

25 That person" lives at" details redacted:

1 "... in the house owned by [privacy] and [privacy]."

2 Name redacted. Paragraph 5:

3 "The photograph of Evans on file remains a very good
4 likeness, although he is now clean-shaven.

5 "6. Enquiries made of the voters register for ..."

6 Privacy redactions:

7 "... show [privacy] and [privacy] to reside at
8 the address."

9 And then there are a list of file names and file
10 references. Is it right that Mr Evans helped to
11 illustrate your book "Trotsky for Beginners"?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And at the risk of labouring the question, what is your
14 reaction to the SDS submitting a report about a man on
15 the basis that he has illustrated a cartoon
16 book "Trotsky for Beginners"?

17 A. It's grotesque. And mentioning his girlfriend, which is
18 equally irrelevant, is just improper. I mean, so what?

19 Q. Can we go -- can we take that down, please, and can we
20 go to {UCPI0000011089}

21 This is a report dated 27 July 1977. It's signed by
22 a person who was a chief inspector of the SDS. Its
23 subject is the "International Marxist Group", and it
24 reads:

25 "The following information has been received from

1 a reliable source:

2 "2. 'In 1972, Tariq Ali lent the IMG bookshop £3,000
3 in the form of a three-year interest-free loan, in order
4 to cover its 'temporary' trading deficit. To date this
5 sum has not been repaid.'"

6 There's then a reference to your Special Branch
7 file?

8 A. What can one say? How could that be relevant to
9 anything? It's perfectly accurate. The IMG bookshop
10 was in trouble, I'd got some royalties from book sales,
11 etc, and I gave them a loan. Full stop. And it was --
12 I mean, maybe it hadn't been repaid by 7 -- 1977, but it
13 was paid back in full by 1980 or '81.

14 Q. Could we take that document down, please.

15 This is the final document I wish to show today.
16 It's {MPS-0734594}.

17 Mr Ali, I'm grateful to you for consenting to us
18 showing this document today.

19 A. Okay.

20 Q. This is a Special Branch Special Report dated
21 18 October 1968. The subject is recorded as,
22 "Tariq Ali". It's signed by a Sergeant Fisher, who was
23 a member of the SDS, countersigned by Conrad Dixon,
24 the chief inspector of the SDS. It's marked that a copy
25 should be sent to box 500, which is

1 the Security Service, and that a copy should be put on
2 a file reference, with which you are familiar.

3 Can we go to the top of the report. It reads:

4 "On 25th September, 1968 information was received in
5 Special Branch from Superintendent 'TD' to the effect
6 that Tariq Ali had an intimate contact at [privacy]
7 Teachers Training College, [privacy]. Chief
8 Superintendent minute dated 29.9.1968 directs that
9 enquiries be made to establish the identity of this
10 person.

11 "Enquiries show that this person is [privacy],
12 a second-year student at the college, who lives at
13 [privacy], [privacy]. He was until recently
14 the President of the college Students Union but it is
15 understood that he has now resigned this position.

16 "He has not previously come to the notice of
17 Special Branch."

18 May I ask, Mr Ali, for your reaction to this
19 document?

20 A. It is total fiction. I can't -- I can't even believe
21 it. I spoke at lots of teachers training colleges, but
22 to suggest that I had intimate contact with a students
23 union -- male students union president is completely
24 false. I have never been gay or bisexual. Though I do
25 admit that if this information were released today, it

1 would increase my popularity given the current change in
2 climate. But, I mean, it's bizarre. There is no truth
3 to it whatsoever.

4 So why on earth did they put this out? Possible use
5 for blackmail? But why? I wouldn't -- if I was gay,
6 I wouldn't have been worried about it. It had been
7 legalised, I think, in any case, homosexuality by
8 Roy Jenkins in '67. So what's the big deal?

9 But, I mean, leaving that aside, it's completely
10 false. Completely false. And you know, it's -- either
11 Fisher made it up and sent it to Dixon, or God knows
12 what, what happened? These people should be writing
13 collections of bad short stories. I mean, it really
14 doesn't make any sense at all.

15 Q. Thank you.

16 Could we take the document down, please.

17 Mr Ali, my final question to you this afternoon is
18 that I know when you made your witness statement you had
19 only those documents which named you.

20 A. Mm.

21 Q. But you've now had sight of a much larger bundle of
22 documents prepared for our Phase 1 hearings.

23 A. Mm-hm.

24 Q. Is there anything else that you would like to add,
25 having had access to those documents?

1 A. No, but what I -- what I would like to say, to be
2 perfectly frank with you, I haven't -- I'm working on
3 a book at the moment and I haven't been able to go
4 through them all as thoroughly as I would like, because
5 as you've already demonstrated, a lot of them are quite
6 repetitive or irrelevant.

7 But what I would like to just share with you is
8 a strange event that happened which dates to '80/'81, is
9 that many years later, in I think the -- '95 or '96,
10 I was going for a jog round Hampstead Heath and I was
11 stopped by a person, a male, younger than me, and he
12 said, "Are you so and so?", and I said, "I am", and he
13 said, "I'm sorry to interrupt your running, but can I --
14 I have something important to say to you." So I said,
15 "Say it". And he said, "My wife used to work at GCHQ,
16 and can I just ask you two questions to confirm you are
17 the person? Did you, in 1980, break up with your then
18 partner and you had a young daughter, six years old?"
19 I said, "I did, why?"

20 And he said, "It is you. My wife was detailed to
21 listen to all your phone conversations. And she
22 listened quite a few days to your daughter crying, you
23 crying, you reading stories to her, your daughter
24 pleading with you to come back to the -- to your old
25 apartment," etc. "And she finally couldn't take it and

1 said, 'I didn't join GCHQ to spy on people,' and gave in
2 her resignation." So I said, "Well, give her a big hug
3 from me." I had no idea that I was still being --
4 you know, under -- under surveillance.

5 MR BARR: Thank you. Those are all my questions.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: We will break for 15 minutes.

7 Mr Ali, your own counsel is entitled to ask you
8 questions arising out of your questioning, and I think
9 he has some questions for you. I have one or two that
10 I'd like to ask you.

11 A. Certainly.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Could we do that in about quarter of an hour.

13 A. Fine. In 15 minutes, yeah.

14 MS PURSER: Thank you, everyone. We will now take a break
15 and we will resume at 3.30.

16 (3.16 pm)

17 (A short break)

18 (3.30 pm)

19 MS PURSER: Welcome back, everyone. I will now hand over to
20 the Chairman to continue proceedings.

21 Chairman.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

23 Mr Menon, do you have any questions of Mr Ali?

24 Questions by MR MENON

25 MR MENON: Yes, please.

1 Mr Ali, can you hear me and see me?

2 A. Yeah, I can hear you very well.

3 Q. Thank you.

4 Did the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign have its own
5 office?

6 A. Yes, it did.

7 Q. To the best of your knowledge, was that office ever
8 raided by the police?

9 A. No, it wouldn't be raided by the police if they had
10 infiltrators working inside. And if these infiltrators,
11 as was made clear to me in a BBC television interview by
12 Peter Hennessy, one of the police -- undercover police
13 had keys to the office, so they wouldn't need to raid
14 it.

15 Q. I'll come back to the keys in a minute, Mr Ali. But can
16 I just ask you this: thinking back to 1968, was there
17 any suspicion amongst those of you in leadership
18 positions in the VSC about the office being secretly
19 searched by either the police or MI5?

20 A. No.

21 Q. You were taken by Counsel to the Inquiry to your
22 autobiography, "Street Fighting Years", where you spoke
23 about the raid on the officers of Black Dwarf in or
24 about September 1968; do you recall?

25 A. I didn't get that properly.

1 Q. I'm saying that you were taken by
2 Counsel to the Inquiry --

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. -- to a section of your autobiography where you spoke
5 about the raid on the Black Dwarf offices in or about
6 September 1968?

7 A. Ah yes, yes, yes.

8 Q. Were you present at the offices at the time of that
9 raid?

10 A. No, I think I wasn't. I was out of the office when
11 the raid took place, but I came in soon afterwards, so
12 the police were still there.

13 Q. Can you remember whether the police had a search warrant
14 for that raid?

15 A. I think they did, yeah.

16 Q. Did they tell you why they were raiding the offices of
17 Black Dwarf?

18 A. They said it had been reported to them that the offices
19 were being used for violent purposes. And at which
20 point they tore down the poster on the wall and revealed
21 the Molotov cocktail that had been painted on it.

22 Q. And how far was the search of the office?

23 A. They did go through quite a lot of stuff. I mean, we
24 stood aside. But, I mean, it was -- it's -- they didn't
25 go into every single nook and corner, they just opened

1 desks, looked at a few sheafs, opened a few files. It
2 didn't last that long.

3 Q. And did they seize anything?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Turning, then, to the "True Spies" documentary that you
6 just mentioned. You were interviewed by
7 the journalist -- it was Peter Taylor by the way?

8 A. Peter Taylor.

9 Q. In 2002. And do you remember in that documentary
10 a Special Branch officer who used the pseudonym "Wilf"
11 saying the following -- and I quote:

12 "There was a government building not far from
13 the House of Commons. It was called "the bunker". It
14 was the most miserable place on earth. It was
15 the nearest thing to a subterranean, underground car
16 park you've ever seen. And that's where we sat, with
17 just banks and banks of tape recorders running all
18 the time. And that's all you did. You just tapped
19 those kinds of people, people high up who were
20 the organisers. 'The brains' I suppose you would call
21 them. Tariq Ali was tapped for a long time."

22 So did you know in 1968, or did you suspect in 1968
23 that your phone was tapped?

24 A. Yeah. I remember we did a few things to prove that.

25 And one of them was as follows. They're just to ensure

1 -- I mean to find out. We had a fake phone conversation
2 and said, "Let's go to place X" or "Y at 12.30 tonight,
3 to just recce the area in case we need to do something
4 drastic later," that's all. And we did go, on
5 a motorbike, I remember -- a friend of mine who had
6 a motorbike, circled. And as you can guess, there was
7 a police car there.

8 So, I mean, it was a stupid test, but we did it.
9 And later on it was sort of more or less public
10 knowledge that our phones were -- our phones were being
11 tapped.

12 Q. So in 1968, you suspected your phone was being tapped,
13 you suspected that your post was being opened and
14 the police had raided your workplace, namely
15 the Black Dwarf office. Is that a fair summation of
16 the position?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Turning then to the keys incident. You were told by
19 Peter Taylor during the "True Spies" documentary that an
20 undercover spy had copied the office keys to the IMG and
21 you were asked about that. I hope it's fair to say that
22 you looked visibly stunned when you were told that, and
23 you said the following, you said, "It's quite amazing,
24 it's quite amazing".

25 Did you have any idea, before you were told by

1 Peter Taylor --

2 A. No, I had no idea that the keys to the IMG office had
3 been copied, and, you know, anyone could go and come in.
4 Not that we were hiding anything, but it was just such
5 an invasion of privacy really.

6 Q. Well, Peter Taylor then said to you, "Why do you think
7 it's amazing?", and this is what you said -- and
8 I quote:

9 "Well, it's always a bit awful when someone who you
10 trust completely -- and he must have been trusted to
11 have had a key to that office and to have been allowed
12 access to it -- and the person is completely betraying
13 you all the time. It's a -- it's a big distressing,
14 especially as obviously he must have been liked, he must
15 have made friends. So I'm wondering now who it was,
16 because one's memory fades about who the people were."

17 Now, my question is this. Given that you were
18 aware, as an activist, about the state regarding anyone
19 who was opposed to it as an enemy, what was particularly
20 shocking about this undercover spy copying the keys of
21 the IMG office and the inevitable burglary at that
22 office, that must have followed, by MI5?

23 A. It was shocking in the sense that, you know, there are
24 some obvious things which one's read about: phone
25 tapping, opening of post, sometimes, you know, being

1 followed places, to meetings, etc. But to have that
2 much access to what was after all a totally legitimate
3 office of a democratic organisation, it's --"shocking"
4 may have been, you know, a slightly wrong word that
5 I was taken by surprise when they told me this, but
6 certainly you feel invaded and it leaves an unpleasant
7 feeling.

8 Q. And you went on to describe in that interview
9 the undercover spies' inability to regard what he had
10 done as a betrayal as "a form of fundamentalism", you
11 called it, "the subordination of everything to your
12 political aim". What did you mean by that?

13 A. Can you repeat that? Because -- I mean, your sound is
14 not so good.

15 Q. I'm so sorry. I'll repeat it.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. When you were told by Peter Taylor that the undercover
18 spy didn't regard what he had done as an act of
19 betrayal, you described that as "a form of
20 fundamentalism", "the subordination of everything to
21 your political aim". What did you mean by that, that it
22 was a form of fundamentalism?

23 A. I suppose what I meant was that it's something I could
24 never do, and so to find people who were prepared to do
25 it and still justify it in the name of something or

1 the other was a bit disturbing, that still had to be
2 justified, even though it was obvious that what they
3 were trying to -- what they were imagining or fantasying
4 about never took place and never happened.

5 I mean, what could they have seen in our offices?
6 Nothing really. I mean, there was no big secret.

7 I mean, were we a terrorist group preparing bombs, okay,
8 I would understand. But this was not the case.

9 Q. We now know, Mr Ali, that the officer who copied
10 the keys used the cover name "Dick Epps". Does that
11 name ring any bells?

12 A. No, it doesn't to me. My own feeling is that if he was
13 working closely with full-time workers in that office,
14 either print workers who were printing the newspaper, or
15 others, he might not have mingled too much with people
16 who were more involved in the sort of political work of
17 the organisation, speaking on its behalf. He doesn't --
18 I haven't seen a photograph of him, and --

19 Q. That was my next question. Might a photograph of
20 "Dick Epps" at the time, in terms of what he looked like
21 at the time, might that help you, and others who were in
22 the IMG --

23 A. It might -- it might help to recognise him, but the name
24 certainly doesn't ring a bell.

25 Q. Can I go back to the Vietnam War -- and forgive this

1 question, it's rather a silly question, but I do think
2 it's important that we hear what you have to say
3 about it. Why were you opposed to the American war on
4 Vietnam? What specifically about that war made you so
5 strongly opposed to it?

6 A. Well, the first answer is that though it was a war being
7 fought a long way away, we saw it on television every
8 single evening. The American networks covered that war
9 like no other war had ever been covered on television,
10 and a lot of their journalists working for CBS, NBC,
11 were used by the BBC, so often what was being seen on
12 American television screens was being repeated here.
13 And of course the BBC also had its own correspondents
14 some very distinguished ones reporting from Vietnam.
15 And what we saw every day was non-stop bombing, use
16 of napalm, use of chemical weapons, the burning out of
17 whole villages, with women and children rushing out
18 screaming in agony. And I remember one CBS reporter
19 Morley Safer describing and filming Marines burning a
20 village, killing people, and he couldn't resist it --
21 and it was broadcast -- saying, "And this is what we are
22 fighting for: freedom".

23 So, that, you know, mobilised not just me but
24 others. I, don't forget, had been to Vietnam, and
25 been -- you know, seen the bombing. They had been in --

1 underground in a shelter while places like hospitals
2 were being bombed, so we were very worked up about it.

3 And the scale of violence and torture was
4 astonishing, really. At that time. When people moaned
5 about to be tortured in Abu Ghraib, in Iraq, many years
6 later, it was awful, but it was as if they were
7 imagining this is the first time this has happened and
8 not that it was part of a routine: when you occupy
9 a country, this is what happens.

10 Q. Thank you, sir.

11 Returning to the March 1968 march, had the route
12 that the march took that day been agreed with the police
13 in advance?

14 A. The route had been agreed with the police in advance.

15 Q. And did the pre-agreed route include entry into
16 Grosvenor Square?

17 A. Yeah, the agreed route had us entering Grosvenor Square
18 from just one of the streets -- I think
19 South Audley Street, possibly. But the demonstration
20 was very large; we hadn't expected such a huge number.
21 So we tried to convince the police to let you march down
22 the other way, they said no. There were scuffles and
23 demonstration -- the demonstrators finally pushed
24 through.

25 Q. We watched, during the opening statement of

1 Counsel to the Inquiry, some footage of that March 1968
2 demonstration, which included a police line across
3 the bottom of -- in fact it was North Audley Street,
4 just before --

5 A. Right.

6 Q. -- one entered Grosvenor Square. Were you at the front
7 of that demonstration?

8 A. I was.

9 Q. And can you describe what happened when the front of
10 that demonstration reached that police line that was --

11 A. Well, there was a spontaneous push forward, really, that
12 people said, "We're not going to be stopped now, we're
13 not going to wait in a queue". No orders were given or
14 anything. I was surprised at being pushed so hard. And
15 before we knew, just the weight of the demonstration had
16 pushed the police line apart.

17 Q. And then people entered the central space --

18 A. The central space, yeah. It was entered and occupied.

19 Q. But did you remain in Grosvenor Square for an hour or
20 more afterwards?

21 A. Pardon?

22 Q. Did you remain in Grosvenor Square --

23 A. In the centre space?

24 Q. Yes.

25 A. I did.

- 1 Q. In terms of any violence that you saw, who was
2 committing it?
- 3 A. Well, the mounted -- well, it depends. The -- without
4 any doubt, the demonstrators in the centre space,
5 the actual square, pushed on the police lines in front
6 of them, who were guarding the Embassy. There's no
7 doubt about that. We pushed first. They then pushed
8 back, but then as more and more demonstrators kept
9 entering the square, I think they were fearful that they
10 might not be able to contain the demonstration and they
11 sent in the mounted police. Once that happened, then
12 there was chaos, and that's -- the worst violence was
13 when the mounted police came into the square. And then
14 the arrests began, snatch squads -- squads were sent in
15 to pick up people, etc.
- 16 Q. From your experience, having, I assume, attended many
17 previous demonstrations, what was different about what
18 happened in Grosvenor Square in March 1968 in comparison
19 with those earlier demonstrations?
- 20 A. Well, I guess what was different was -- you know, by
21 "earlier", let's talk about the 50s and 60s, where there
22 had been clashes between the police and some of
23 the CND people who had penetrated the underground
24 shelters -- atomic shelters called the RSGs, but not
25 much.

1 There had been some violence, before I came to
2 Britain, which I read about, when student demonstrators
3 attacked the visiting Greek Royal Family, accusing them
4 of having been fascists during the Second World War and
5 people were arrested.

6 But what was new about the March '68 demonstration
7 was that a very large number of people were insistent on
8 determining their own agenda and not being pushed
9 around. And the violence was actually minimal, to be --
10 compared to what happened later in the poll tax riots,
11 or the black ghettos. But that was enough to create
12 shock waves, that this was actually happening in
13 Grosvenor Square outside the US Embassy. That's
14 about it.

15 I mean, lots of police, people I ran into who had
16 been at that demonstration, years later, they would say,
17 "Oh, that was nothing compared to what we had to face
18 later in X or Y; ours seemed very dignified".

19 "Dignified" is not the word I would have used, but
20 I know what they meant.

21 Q. You were asked this morning by Counsel to the Inquiry --
22 again taking you to your autobiography -- about there
23 having been talk about potentially, if possible,
24 entering the US Embassy and engaging there in
25 non-violent civil disobedience and direct action, a few

1 minutes or so until you were inevitably thrown out of
2 the Embassy. Why did you believe at the time, Mr Ali,
3 that that was legitimate protest against
4 the Vietnam War?

5 A. Well, (a) because the Vietnamese had done the same
6 things themselves in Saigon in February 1968, (b) to
7 show politicians and citizens in the United States, as
8 well as our own Labour government, that there was real
9 anger at this war continuing. That was the only aim.

10 Q. Thank you.

11 Can I have on the screen, please, the following
12 document {MPS-0739150}. Thank you.

13 Mr Ali, you were shown this document earlier by
14 Counsel to the Inquiry, and it concerns a man whose name
15 is [name redacted on privacy grounds] -- I don't think
16 if that rings any bells -- who was handing out a leaflet
17 outside the meeting of the Notting Hill Vietnam
18 Solidarity Campaign and was subsequently charged, as you
19 can see from this page, with incitement to riot. Does
20 that name ring any bells?

21 A. What was his name again?

22 Q. [name redacted on privacy grounds]?

23 A. The name means absolutely nothing to me.

24 Q. It's spelled [name redacted on privacy ground] in case
25 I'm mispronouncing it.

1 A. [name redacted on privacy grounds]?

2 Q. [name redacted on privacy grounds].

3 A. [name redacted on privacy grounds].

4 Q. Yes.

5 A. Ah, now that makes it a bit different, because the name
6 wasn't given. He's vaguely familiar -- his name. He
7 was active in the Black Power Movement, used to wear
8 a beret and dark glasses, if my memory is right. I'm
9 really amazed he was distributing this sort of stuff.
10 I knew him, but not very well.

11 Q. I don't think there's any suggestion that he was
12 involved in the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign.

13 A. Right. No, he certainly wasn't. He was -- I think he
14 was in a Maoist group, yeah. And some Black Power group
15 as well.

16 Q. Turning then to the October 1968 demonstration, Mr Ali.
17 Was the route, as far as that demonstration was
18 concerned, also agreed in advance with the police?

19 A. Yes, very much so.

20 Q. You were asked some questions this morning about, well,
21 the gathering in Sheffield where the final decision was
22 made about that route. Was there anything secret about
23 that route?

24 A. Well, no, as far as we were concerned it was, you know,
25 a normal route to take.

1 Q. I'm just going to show you the Vietnam Solidarity
2 Campaign bulletin that was released before
3 the demonstration. The reference is {UCPI0000034085}.
4 Does this look familiar?

5 A. Yeah, it does, yeah. Very much so.

6 Q. Could we turn to page 12, please, of this bulletin.

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Menon, forgive me for interrupting you.
8 You mentioned a name which was redacted on privacy
9 grounds. The Inquiry has no knowledge of the individual
10 concerned other than what is recorded in the by now
11 rather ancient papers. Is there a reason for mentioning
12 his name publicly?

13 MR MENON: Well, firstly, I don't believe there's any
14 restriction order in relation to his name, otherwise
15 I wouldn't have named it.

16 And secondly, without naming him I wouldn't have
17 been able to ask Mr Ali any questions about it. And
18 sir, I believe he's deceased.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Well, if he is deceased, then no conceivable
20 question of privacy rights can arise, or data protection
21 rights can arise. If your belief is correct, then no
22 harm has been done.

23 I don't propose to do any more about it at this
24 stage, but could those, including yourself, who ask
25 about people whose names have been redacted from

1 documents please bear in mind that where they're said to
2 be redacted on privacy grounds, they're redacted to
3 protect the rights of the individuals and nothing at all
4 to do with secrecy or the state.

5 MR MENON: I'm sorry, sir, if I was not supposed to do that.

6 I thought I was entitled to do that, because there's no
7 restriction order, he's deceased and his name is in
8 the public domain. It's all over the internet.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: That's not known to me.

10 If he's deceased, no problem arises, but could I ask
11 you and, by raising this example with you, others who
12 have to ask questions about living individuals whose
13 names have been redacted from documents to exercise
14 caution about it lest their data protection and privacy
15 rights are infringed by the question.

16 MR MENON: Message received and understood, sir.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Please continue.

18 MR MENON: I was asking for page 12 {UCPI0000034085/12},
19 please, of this bulletin to be put on the screen, if
20 possible. Thank you.

21 Mr Ali, you'll see here reproduced the press
22 statement of the VSC about 25 days before
23 the demonstration. Do you see that at the top?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. And you can see here that it set out, just looking down,

1 what has been agreed by the ad hoc committees, the route
2 of the demonstration, etc; do you see that?

3 A. Yeah -- no, I can't see that. I can't see the route --
4 oh yes, no, no, I can. I can, yeah.

5 Q. If you just scroll down a bit further, you'll be able to
6 see more descriptions about that.

7 The reason I've shown you this is to ask you this
8 question. In your opinion, given the VSC was completely
9 open, upfront and transparent about the route that it
10 was seeking to march down that day, in your opinion,
11 was there any need for police spies to be attending VSC
12 meetings to determine what was being discussed and
13 decided as far as the route is concerned?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Thank you.

16 A. I already said that. No, most of this information was
17 handed out publicly, and often the newspapers published
18 partial reports from the VSC, just as information.

19 Q. Thank you.

20 Jumping ahead then to 1979, you were asked some
21 questions not long ago about the anti-fascist
22 demonstration in Southall in April 1979 and your
23 attendance there. I just want to read you what you say
24 in your witness statement about this. I'll give
25 the reference, but there's no need to put it up on

1 the screen. The reference of your witness statement is
2 {UCPI0000034187} and this is what you say at
3 paragraph 179 of that statement:

4 "The killing of Blair Peach, an East London school
5 teacher, by police officers from the Commissioner's
6 'Special Patrol Group' ... and the subsequent cover up
7 is one of the most despicable events in the history of
8 the Metropolitan Police."

9 Do you stand by that observation?

10 A. Well, it was at that time, in '69, certainly. I mean,
11 a lot more has happened since then. But yeah, at
12 that -- at the time it happened, not just me but many,
13 many other people who were not even supportive of us
14 were shocked by that.

15 Q. Are you speaking about the brutality of his murder, or
16 are you talking about something else?

17 A. No, no, the brutality of Blair Peach's killing by
18 the SPG.

19 Q. You mentioned, when asked questions about this by
20 Counsel to the Inquiry, how you were actually in a house
21 at some stage --

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. -- with members of the Misty In Roots band when that
24 house was raided by the police. Were you ever told why
25 that house was raided by the police?

- 1 A. Was I ever told?
- 2 Q. Why that house was raided by the police.
- 3 A. Well, no, we were never told that, and no one -- no
- 4 police officer felt the need to inform us. I don't
- 5 think anyone knew. Basically, I think that they had
- 6 decided that they had to make an example of
- 7 the anti-fascist demonstrators. Why they decided to
- 8 come into that house -- to punish the band, or myself,
- 9 or both -- I don't know, but that's what they did.
- 10 Q. Thank you.
- 11 Finally on this topic, could we have on the screen,
- 12 please, the following document {UCPI0000020990}. We
- 13 just looked at this a few minutes ago, Mr Ali. Can we
- 14 just go down, please. Just pausing there for a minute.
- 15 At paragraph 5, you are one of two persons
- 16 unredacted who were identified as being present at this
- 17 meeting in Camden after Blair Peach's murder. Do you
- 18 see that?
- 19 A. Mm-hm.
- 20 Q. And we can see there, after your name, a reference.
- 21 "RF" stands for registry file, which means that there
- 22 was a Special Branch or MI5 file opened on you, and we
- 23 can see the number "65", which suggests that that file
- 24 was opened in 1965; do you see that?
- 25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. I think, in 1965, you were still a student at Oxford; is
2 that right?

3 A. I was.

4 Q. And then at paragraph 6 we can see that Blair Peach is
5 the subject of, and he too seems to have had a registry
6 file opened in 1978; do you see that?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And it says:

9 "The East London Teachers Association has come to
10 the notice of Special Branch on numerous occasions."

11 Do you see that?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Do you have any comment to make on the fact that
14 apparently Special Branch were spying on school
15 teachers?

16 A. Yeah, I mean, I have no idea what they hoped to gain
17 from that. Whether the East London Teachers Association
18 had some special activities they'd engaged in ...
19 I don't think so. I mean, there were lots of -- I mean,
20 the teachers in that period were quite active and
21 militant as a trade union, so I have no idea what
22 the Special Branch decided to spy on them.

23 Q. Thank you.

24 Jumping ahead then to 2003, could we have
25 the following document on the screen, please

- 1 {MPS-0018070}. We looked at this earlier.
- 2 A. Yeah.
- 3 Q. It seems to be a police report on a meeting of the Stop
4 the War Coalition Steering Committee in March 2003, in
5 other words after the outbreak of the war; do you see
6 that?
- 7 A. Yeah.
- 8 Q. And just scrolling down there we can see your name, and
9 then the redacted names of various other people who were
10 elected onto that steering committee.
- 11 A. Mm-hm.
- 12 Q. Do you have an independent recollection of that meeting,
13 Mr Ali?
- 14 A. No, none whatsoever. I mean, it was a fairly standard
15 issue meeting, probably, which is why I don't remember
16 it, and we must have discussed normal routine matters.
17 There's nothing significant about it.
- 18 Q. Were the steering committee meetings of the Stop the War
19 Coalition open meetings, or were they meetings only of
20 those who were actually members of that steering
21 committee?
- 22 A. They were meetings restricted to those who were actually
23 on the -- on the committee.
- 24 Q. Well, that must mean that this police report was
25 obtained either from somebody on that steering

1 committee, or more likely from an electronic covert
2 device of some kind, spying on this meeting.

3 A. Yeah, I mean, this is just an account of the --

4 THE CHAIRMAN: (inaudible) interrupting, but I must ask you
5 to pause a moment.

6 Mr Menon, as you well know,
7 the Investigatory Powers Act, section 56, prohibits any
8 reference to the use of intercept -- or prohibits any
9 reference to intercept-related activity unless I, as
10 Chairman, deem it exceptionally necessary to permit
11 the reference to be made. You haven't raised this
12 question with me. You will be committing an offence if
13 you persist. I would warn you not to.

14 MR MENON: Sir, I'm not asking about an intercept. I mean,
15 this is clearly not an intercept. This is, it appears,
16 a recording device at this meeting. It's a covert
17 recording device, it's not an intercept, and I am
18 entitled to ask questions about that under
19 the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act. It's not --

20 THE CHAIRMAN: I interrupted too quickly. I had
21 misunderstood the purpose of your question. Of course
22 you may ask about a planted recording device.

23 MR MENON: Thank you.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: There's no prohibition on that --

25 MR MENON: I'm not suggesting that there was an

1 interception, I make it clear. I'm asking about
2 the possibility of there having been a covert recording
3 device wherever the Stop the War Coalition Steering
4 Committee was meeting, and no further than that.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: You're perfectly entitled to do that --

6 MR MENON: (Overspeaking)

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Pause a moment, please. I apologise for
8 using you, as it were, as the template for a lot of
9 these difficulties, but I'm afraid that you've raised
10 two of them in the course of your questions. Please
11 proceed.

12 MR MENON: No offence taken. Thank you very much.

13 Mr Ali, if this meeting was being covertly recorded
14 by the Special Branch or MI5, what do you have to say
15 about that?

16 A. You know, it puzzles me really why they need to do this.
17 I mean, the Stop the War Coalition has been completely
18 open in what it's doing, what its aims are. It was set
19 up in the open after a big public meeting at -- at
20 the Quakers Hall in -- on Euston Road, Friends Meeting
21 House, and we announced it at that time, "To anyone
22 who's interested in joining, please ..." etc, etc. So
23 I don't see any need for having it infiltrated. It --
24 there's -- no one has accused it of planning any acts of
25 violence, or anything remotely connected to that.

1 Q. Thank you, Mr Ali.

2 Final question. Could we please have on the screen
3 your witness statement {UCPI0000034187}. Thank you.
4 And could we have the second page, please
5 {UCPI0000034187/2}.

6 Mr Ali, you will see there paragraph 3 -- I'm just
7 going to read it out:

8 "Having now considered the very precisely
9 targeted Rule 9 questions asked of me by this Inquiry,
10 my strong feeling is that this Inquiry is likely to be
11 a monumental waste of time. This is because
12 the direction of travel is clear from the questions --
13 to dissect the politics of the victims of police spying,
14 and therefore to turn the spotlight away from
15 the actions of the police. This is the politics
16 of 'blame the victim'. And no doubt I and others will
17 be declared guilty. Even 50 years on, the State is
18 fighting exactly the same battle it was engaged in in
19 1968. This comes as not the least surprise."

20 Can I ask you this: given the questions that you've
21 been asked today, have you changed your view that
22 the state and the Inquiry are seeking to, to use your
23 words "dissect the politics of the victims of police
24 spying", "turn the spot slight away from the actions of
25 the police", and "fighting exactly the same battle" in

1 which the state was engaged in 1968"?

2 A. Well, I think, given the questions I was asked earlier,
3 I would say that some of these questions posed were
4 quite relevant in -- in fact, which is positive, as far
5 as I'm concerned.

6 And, you know, when I said "is likely to be
7 a monumental waste of time", I should have added "for
8 me", not for any of the other participants. But I don't
9 think it has been a waste of time for me, I think it's
10 been quite important, and I hope that the final report
11 reflects, you know, the balance as was -- as we
12 discussed today, that much of the spying and
13 infiltration, in my opinion, was totally unnecessary.

14 MR MENON: Mr Ali, thank you very much. That's all I ask.

15 A. Thank you.

16 Questions by THE CHAIRMAN

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr Menon.

18 Mr Ali, would you bear with me, please, for no more
19 than 10, and I hope not much more than five minutes?

20 A. Certainly. Let me just put the light on.

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, of course.

22 A. Right.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: First of all, may I explain the purpose of
24 Mr Barr's questioning. First of all, it is to ask
25 questions that the Inquiry wish to have your answer to.

1 Secondly, it is to raise topics which other
2 participants, in this case obviously police
3 participants, wish to have canvassed with the witness,
4 and hence some of the questions that Mr Barr asked you
5 were on topics that he had been asked to raise by
6 the police side.

7 A. Right.

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Lest you think that the Inquiry is
9 investigating the victim rather than the police, can
10 I remind you of what The Times said that you said on
11 23 October 1968 -- and I quote:

12 "We are avoiding Grosvenor Square because it
13 inevitably leads to a punch up. We do not want
14 a confrontation with the police. What we want to see is
15 a peaceful demonstration."

16 Are those words accurately quoted?

17 A. Yeah, completely accurate.

18 THE CHAIRMAN: And from the questions that you were asked by
19 Mr Barr and the documents that you were taken through,
20 you may take it that I accept that that was a true
21 statement when made.

22 A. Thank you.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Can I turn now to an utterly different topic
24 and seek your assistance. You have probably, amongst
25 academic and semi-academic historians, the greatest

1 knowledge of contemporary and recent Trotskyism of
2 anyone in England. My own knowledge of Trotskyism is
3 far and away -- second, third, fourth or even further
4 away -- from yours, but correct me if I'm wrong, and
5 I ask for your help on one or two questions.

6 First of all, my understanding is that the last time
7 that Trotsky had any influence on a government was 1926,
8 the year in which he was effectively removed from any
9 exercise of power in the Soviet Union.

10 A. Yeah, that is absolutely correct.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Secondly, before the Second World War,
12 the only government anywhere in the world that had any
13 Trotskyist influence upon it, as viewed by Stalin but
14 not I think as viewed by Trotsky, was the republican
15 government in Spain where it was thought that Andreu Nin
16 and the POUM had at least some influence. They may or
17 may not have done, but there was disagreement about
18 whether or not he and they were Trotskyists.

19 A. Yeah, Trotsky denied that, because they weren't,
20 you know, pure enough for him. But they, on the other
21 hand, were very keen that Trotsky come to Spain and help
22 rebuild their armies so they could fight against Franco.
23 And I mean, Trotsky obviously knew that had he --
24 the first minute he set foot in Spain, he would have
25 been picked up either by the GPU, or by the Republicans

1 or by the fascists, so he didn't go; it was not
2 feasible.

3 But the POUM, in my opinion, contained some of
4 the best and most sort of clear-sighted people in --
5 in -- on the Republican side at the time.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: But am I right in thinking that before
7 the Second World War that was the only government that
8 had any avowed Trotskyist influence?

9 A. Yeah.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Since the Second World War, I think there is
11 the Lanka Sama Samaja in Sri Lanka.

12 A. LSSP, yeah.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Which has contested ordinary democratic
14 elections for decades and occasionally supported
15 governments, including that --

16 A. And been -- and been government Ministers.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, but performing perfectly ordinary
18 political (inaudible) in a democracy.

19 A. Yeah

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Now, you may know -- I don't -- about
21 Bolivia. Could you put, in two/three sentences, what --

22 A. Well, the Trotskyist influence was largely organised
23 through the miners' union, which they controlled,
24 the POR. The party was called the POR, Partido Obrero
25 Revolucionario, Revolutionary Workers' Party. They were

1 very, very strong in the Bolivian tin miners' union, and
2 the trade unions in general, and so whenever there was
3 even a slightly radical government, I'm not sure whether
4 they ever got a ministry, but they certainly
5 collaborated with it.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Apart from those two instances, post-war, is
7 there any other foreign government that has been
8 influenced by avowed Trotskyists?

9 A. For a limited period, in Algeria, after independence,
10 the Ben Bella government, which came to power after
11 the French left, did have a very leading Greek
12 Trotskyist, Michel Raptis -- his underground name was
13 Michel Pablo, so he was known as "Pablo" -- who was, if
14 not in the government, very close to it, and advised
15 the Algerian government on going down a non-bureaucratic
16 path of state enterprises by having an element of
17 democracy and workers' control right from the beginning,
18 which would improve both productivity and class
19 consciousness, was how he put it, and he remained close
20 to Ben Bella until Ben Bella was removed in a military
21 co up.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: You and others may wonder why I've been
23 asking these questions. It's because of the definition
24 of subversive activities given by Lord Harris in
25 the House of Commons in 1975, which is a definition of

1 subversion and subversive activities which has been
2 carried through the decades in this country, and
3 I simply wanted to see whether or not --

4 A. Right.

5 THE CHAIRMAN: -- UK Trotskyists, even by reference to what
6 was going on abroad, fell within it or not. I'm
7 grateful for your answers and for your elucidation on
8 a rather arcane topic.

9 A. Thank you.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your patience, and
11 your questioning is now at an end.

12 A. Thank you very much. Thank you.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: And today's proceedings are at an end. We
14 will resume at 10.00 am tomorrow.

15 MS PURSER: Thank you very much, everyone. That concludes
16 the hearings for today. We will resume at 10 am
17 tomorrow.

18 (4.15 pm)

19 (The hearing adjourned until 10.00 am on Thursday,
20 12 November 2020)

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