

Wednesday, 28 April 2021

(10.00 am)

MR FERNANDES: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the third day of evidential hearings in Tranche 1 Phase 2 at the Undercover Policing Inquiry. My name is Neil Fernandes and I am the hearings manager.

For those of you in the virtual hearing room, please turn off both your camera and microphone unless you're invited to speak by the Chairman, as Zoom will pick up on all noises and you will be on screen.

I now hand over to the Chairman, Sir John Mitting, to formally start proceedings.

Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. As at the beginning of every evidential session, a recording made last year is going to be played. For those listening to it for the first time, please listen carefully.

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

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

10           Evidence is going to be given live over screens in  
11 the hearing rooms. It is strictly prohibited to  
12 photograph or record what is shown on the screens, or to  
13 record what is said by a witness or anyone else in  
14 the hearing rooms. You may bring your mobile telephone  
15 into the hearing rooms, but you may not use it for any  
16 of those purposes. You may use it silently for any  
17 other purpose. In particular, you may transmit your  
18 account of what you have seen and heard in a hearing  
19 room to any other person, but only once at least  
20 ten minutes have elapsed since the event which you are  
21 describing took place.

22           This restriction has a purpose. In the course of  
23 the Inquiry, I have made orders prohibiting the public  
24 disclosure of information, for example about  
25 the identity of a person, for a variety of reasons.

1           These orders must be upheld. It is inevitable that,  
2           whether by accident or design, information which I have  
3           ordered should not be publicly disclosed will sometimes  
4           be disclosed in a hearing. If and when that happens,  
5           I will immediately suspend the hearing and make an order  
6           prohibiting further disclosure of the information  
7           outside the hearing rooms. The consequence will be that  
8           no further disclosure of that information may be made by  
9           mobile telephone or other portable electronic device  
10          from within the hearing room, or by any means outside  
11          it.

12           I am sorry if you find this message alarming. It is  
13          not intended to be. Its purpose is simply to ensure  
14          that everyone knows the rules which must apply if I am  
15          to hear the evidence which I need to enable me to get to  
16          the truth about undercover policing.

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

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

25

1 MR PIERS CORBYN (called)

2 Mr Corbyn, do you wish to be sworn or to affirm?

3 I think you may be on mute.

4 Mr Corbyn, can you hear me?

5 A. I can.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Splendid. Do you wish to be sworn or to

7 affirm?

8 A. To affirm, Sir.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Then may that happen, please.

10 (Witness affirmed)

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Warner.

12 Questions by MR WARNER

13 MR WARNER: Thank you, Sir.

14 Mr Corbyn, you have given us a 79-page statement,  
15 dated last year, I believe.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Before I ask you some questions, can you just confirm  
18 please that the statement that you have given us is true  
19 and correct to the best of your knowledge and belief?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Thank you.

22 Starting at the beginning of your political life, if  
23 I can, please --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- it's right, I think, that your political activism

1           began as a student in the late 1960s in London; is that  
2           right?

3           A. That is correct, yes.

4           Q. And in fact, the first march that you can recall  
5           attending was a Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament march?

6           A. Yes. I did attend such marches when I was at school,  
7           actually, just before going to university, but those  
8           were quite limited in my activities. Most of my  
9           activities developed in university after the first two  
10          years at university.

11          Q. I see.

12                    And I think it's also right that you became  
13          the president of the Imperial College Student Union?

14          A. That's right. I was elected president for 1969 to 1970.

15          Q. And as part of that role and your political activities  
16          at that time, you were involved in a number of  
17          anti-nuclear campaigns and campaigns against chemical  
18          and biological warfare?

19          A. Yes, yes. The campaigns against chemical and biological  
20          warfare were -- were very important, sir, to me and  
21          Imperial College and to all scientists. A -- Dr Stephen  
22          Rose, later Professor Stephen Rose, was in  
23          the biochemistry department, and he brought in a lot of  
24          information about these things, which was very useful.

25          Q. You've told us in your statement as well that you

1           attended both of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign marches  
2           in 1968.

3       A.   Yes.

4       Q.   You've described that as the main issue of the day at  
5           that time.  Were you a member of the VSC?

6       A.   Well, insofar as I was actively supporting it, yes, but  
7           I wasn't -- if -- I don't think -- well, if it had  
8           a membership structure, I wasn't part of that.  I was  
9           just an active campaigner for VSC, the Vietnam  
10          Solidarity Campaign.

11      Q.   So you didn't attend local or branch meetings or  
12          anything of that nature for the VSC?

13      A.   Yes, there would have been one or two local meetings,  
14          yes, yes, but it wasn't like a membership organisation,  
15          if you see what I mean.

16      Q.   I see.

17      A.   The International Marxist Group was a membership  
18          organisation though.

19      Q.   Yes.  We'll come on to that --

20      A.   Of course.

21      Q.   -- in a moment.

22                 Just focusing on the VSC marches, were you involved  
23                 in organising them at all, or were you more of an  
24                 attendee at them?

25      A.   I was more of an attendee and a mobiliser.  I would

1 bring people along, bring along banners; and sometimes  
2 I might have been involved in stewarding, but that would  
3 have been of the people I brought along, essentially.

4 Q. On either of the marches in March or October of that  
5 year, do you recall witnessing any violence or disorder?

6 A. No, although there was a big crowd around the American  
7 Embassy in Grosvenor Square which the police tried to  
8 disperse; they tried to prevent demonstrators getting to  
9 Grosvenor Square. But I wouldn't say any violence was  
10 initiated by demonstrators, it was the police trying to  
11 stop people going there.

12 Q. Is this the October demonstration in --

13 A. Yes, I think that was October either 1968 or 1969.  
14 Probably October 1968.

15 Q. Were you yourself in Grosvenor Square in October '68?

16 A. I was, yes.

17 Q. And were you aware of any weapons being used in  
18 the course of --

19 A. No.

20 Q. -- that demonstration?

21 Mr Corbyn, you've also said in your statement that  
22 the IMG, the International Marxist Group, of which you  
23 were a member --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- had been active within the Vietnam Solidarity

1 Campaign.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. How did the two groups interact? Were they inextricably  
4 linked or were they separate?

5 A. No, they were separate, because the VSC had a number of  
6 different political groups operating in it and  
7 supporting it, so it was what you might call a united  
8 front of different groups, and I think individual --  
9 individuals who just joined in and became organisers,  
10 but I wasn't one of those.

11 Q. So is it fair to say the IMG was just one of these  
12 groups that were --

13 A. Just one, but probably the most influential.

14 Q. I see.

15 And can I take it from that that there was a lot of  
16 crossover in terms of people supporting the VSC and  
17 the IMG?

18 A. Yes, well, everyone in the IMG would have supported  
19 the VSC, I would say, yes.

20 Q. Right.

21 Mr Corbyn, are you able to say whether the IMG were  
22 involved in any of the disorder that happened in the VSC  
23 demonstrations in 1968?

24 A. No. I mean, the IMG's role always, historically, was to  
25 mobilise people and make -- from that, make propaganda

1 to a wider public on what was the nature of world  
2 conflict, the nature of US imperialism, and so forth.

3 Q. I see.

4 In terms of your political life, did you become  
5 involved in the IMG and Spartacus League through  
6 the VSC, or were you involved before or at the same  
7 time?

8 A. I was interested in the VSC because -- actually, at that  
9 time, you have to think, that was the thing going on in  
10 the world; and I remember at school we would have  
11 discussions about Vietnam, you know? It was a formative  
12 crisis for tens of thousands of young people at the  
13 time, and I was one of them.

14 Yeah, the reason why I joined the IMG wasn't  
15 specifically that, although of course I noted that  
16 the IMG was close -- was an important force in the VSC.  
17 I became editor of the University of London student  
18 newspaper "Sennet" after being president of the student  
19 union. And it was around that time I noticed the IMG  
20 and they got involved in helping doing some of  
21 the things I was doing, and then I joined them in about  
22 1970. It was after I was president of the student union  
23 that I joined them, it wasn't during that time.

24 Q. I see.

25 Is it right that you became involved in

1 the Spartacus League at around this time as well?

2 A. Yes, that's right. The Spartacus League. It was  
3 originally misstated as something else in the evidence,  
4 but we put it right in my statement here.

5 Yes, the Spartacus League was part of the IMG.  
6 A sort of recruiting youth section, if you like. And  
7 I was an active member of that.

8 Q. So, just so that we can understand how it interacted  
9 with the IMG, was it run by the IMG?

10 A. Yes, it was, it was run by them.

11 Q. And it was -- you described it as a "youth section".  
12 Can I take it from that --

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. -- it had a large student membership?

15 A. Yes, yes, that's correct.

16 Q. Could you be a member of the Spartacus League without  
17 being a member of the IMG, or were the two --

18 A. You could. No, you could. In fact, quite a number of  
19 people were, and I was that initially. And then, if you  
20 proved your worth, the IMG would ask you if you wanted  
21 to join the IMG as well.

22 Q. Right.

23 So, can we take it from that that not all of  
24 the members of the Spartacus League necessarily went on  
25 to become IMG members?

1 A. That's correct. Some of them might have not been  
2 interested in that. Some of them might have lost  
3 interest in politics all together, but most  
4 Spartacus League members would have become IMG members,  
5 yes.

6 Q. I see.

7 Can we just have a look at a report that we have  
8 recovered on the Spartacus League, and it will come up  
9 on the screen.

10 A. Okay.

11 Q. It is --

12 A. Well, I've got a very thick file here, so I don't need  
13 to look through that then; that's useful.

14 Q. Don't worry too much about that. I'll just read  
15 the number out for the technician. It's {MPS/732360}  
16 and it's page 2 when it comes up, please,  
17 {MPS/732360/2}.

18 A. Okay, thanks very much.

19 Q. Thank you.

20 Now, Mr Corbyn, you can see this is a report from  
21 January 1972?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Of a meeting of the Notting Hill Spartacus League at 17A  
24 Rendle Street; that was your home address, wasn't it?

25 A. That was my home address, yes, and we had a number of

1 meetings of the Notting Hill Spartacus League there.

2 And of course, I didn't realise at the time, but some of  
3 the people in the Spartacus League were police agents,  
4 and I was entertaining them in my flat unknowingly.

5 Q. Were you the organiser of the Notting Hill branch?

6 A. I was, yes.

7 Q. And --

8 A. Due to my recollection. Yes, yes. Yes, I am.

9 I remember a lot of detail actually in the past, but  
10 there will be some gaps, I think. But yes, I was  
11 the organiser of Notting Hill Spartacus League, yes.

12 Q. And just in terms of what that would have entailed, are  
13 we talking about sort of keeping minutes and agendas and  
14 things like that?

15 A. Yes, that type of thing. Lists of -- lists of members  
16 and contacts, telling people when there were meetings,  
17 and then organising newspaper sales of -- of the IMG  
18 paper.

19 Q. I see.

20 A. Which was called -- well, it kept changing its name,  
21 actually. I was -- it might have been Red Mole,  
22 something like that, but it did change its name at  
23 various stages.

24 Q. We can see at the end of the second paragraph that eight  
25 persons were present at this particular meeting. Was

1           that a common attendance number for this group at this  
2           time?

3           A. Yes, yes. Yes, half a dozen to a dozen, that sort of  
4           numbers, yes, yes.

5           Q. All right.

6                     I'm just going to read the third paragraph out for  
7           the transcript. It reads:

8                     "The meeting was chaired by Piers Corbyn and was  
9           concerned with the future activities of the Notting Hill  
10          Spartacus League Branch. [Privacy] briefly outlined  
11          the activities of the Notting Hill Red Defence Group and  
12          this was followed by a deep and involved discussion of  
13          SL ..."

14                    Spartacus League:

15                    "... Assistance to the Group. Although [Privacy]  
16          took great pains to point out that the majority of  
17          people involved in the Group were not members of  
18          the International Marxist Group and were completely  
19          non-sectarian and had no wish to be otherwise,  
20          the discussion centred around how the Notting Hill  
21          faction of the IMG could take over, run and use  
22          the organisation for recruitment to the IMG."

23                    Can you recall, Mr Corbyn, what the Notting Hill Red  
24          Defence Group was?

25           A. I think that was an idea that we wanted -- I might be

1 wrong, but I think it was the same thing as what we  
2 later called -- this is -- "People's Defence Group",  
3 where, you see, because of the way the police behaved at  
4 times in Notting Hill, in clearly a racist fashion  
5 towards some of the population, that there should be  
6 kind of independent people's policing and be called  
7 that, the Red Defence Group. That's as far as  
8 I remember. But otherwise, I -- yeah, I can't think  
9 what the purpose of Red Defence Group was other than  
10 that.

11 Q. Just in terms of the last section of that paragraph,  
12 that "the IMG could take over, run and use  
13 the organisation", was this something that the IMG  
14 frequently did with other groups?

15 A. Well, no. I mean, you see, this, of course, is written  
16 by a policeman, who was presumably reading into  
17 a situation something which he might have wanted to  
18 present to his superiors to confirm what they may  
19 believe. I mean, I myself, when I was involved in these  
20 things, was interested always in getting people to join  
21 in and stay active and make propaganda. The idea of  
22 taking over groups wasn't something that I thought was  
23 something that ought to be done, because independent  
24 groups acting together, in my view, is a better way than  
25 having a sort of -- well, takeovers, as you describe

1           there.

2           So I would say on that that it's likely  
3           the policeman was -- or woman, whatever, was reading  
4           into it too much.

5       Q. I think we know that this was a policeman

6           -- (overspeaking) --

7       A. Yeah, yeah, okay, we do, but -- well, I think we do, but  
8           sometimes there were women involved in -- in these  
9           groups, so -- and the identity of the infiltrator has  
10          not been revealed to me.

11      Q. Mr Corbyn, can I ask this document --

12      A. If I saw the names of all the people that were present  
13          at those meetings, I would probably be able to identify  
14          which one was the policeman. However, we've got a lot  
15          of redacted information on this -- these reports, which,  
16          you know, I mean, if you're trying to have an inquiry  
17          into what was going on in 1968, one needs to have  
18          maximum information not limited information.

19      Q. Can I ask that this document's taken down, please. And  
20          we're going to have a look at another report, please.

21      A. Okay.

22      Q. It is {UCPI/15694}.

23      A. You've got a lot of documents in here. A lot of work  
24          has been done.

25      Q. Yes, it has.

1 A. I haven't got diaries anything like -- in fact, I don't  
2 even have diaries of these things, so this is a useful  
3 diary of activities I was doing, even if through  
4 the eyes of a policeman.

5 Q. Mr Corbyn, this is what's described as an International  
6 Marxist Group and Spartacus League conference.

7 A. Yeah. Can I move this screen a bit further forward so  
8 that I can see it a bit better? Because the printing on  
9 these things are not -- not really good. Yeah, that's  
10 better. Okay.

11 Q. It was held in May 1972.

12 A. Okay.

13 Q. And at the top of page -- sorry, of paragraph 3, which  
14 we can see there, it reads:

15 "Persons attending the conference were classified as  
16 either Delegate, Consultative Delegate, Observer or  
17 Visitor."

18 A. Mm-hm.

19 Q. And if we just scroll down to the bottom of that  
20 paragraph, please.

21 A. Do I scroll -- oh, I see, someone else does. Yeah,  
22 okay.

23 Q. Thank you.

24 A. So we're to be reading paragraph 3 or 2?

25 Q. Just 3.

1           So what we have there is four categories of people  
2           who attended this conference.

3       A. Yeah.

4       Q. Are you able to recall which category you would have  
5           fallen into?

6       A. Ah, let's have a look. So a delegate -- let's go  
7           through these again.

8           So you can be a delegate -- oh, here you are, here  
9           you are: delegate, consultative delegate, observer or  
10          visitor. And that was 1972. Actually, I can't  
11          remember. I don't think I was an observer or visitor,  
12          I was either a delegate or a consultative delegate.

13      Q. Thank you.

14           The last sentence of this paragraph reads:

15           "The last category, Visitor, was any person, not  
16           a full member of either organisation ..."

17      A. Yeah.

18      Q. "... who was sympathetic to the politics of  
19           the organisation. Such persons could attend open  
20           sessions only and had no voting rights whatsoever."

21      A. Yeah.

22      Q. Can we take from this, Mr Corbyn, that a member of  
23           the public could have attended this conference but in  
24           that capacity?

25      A. Well, they weren't public conferences. They'd have to

- 1           be invited.
- 2       Q.   Right.  Even as a visitor?
- 3       A.   Yes.  Yes, definitely.  It wasn't advertised as a --
- 4           you know, a "come and join in" thing.  It is -- I think
- 5           what would happen is that you -- any of the groups or
- 6           any of the part of the IMG, any of the branches, would
- 7           have contacts.  And they would say to contacts --
- 8           you know -- that is people who were showing some sort of
- 9           interest in what was going on -- "Do you want to come
- 10          along to the conference" and "you can be there as an
- 11          observer."  That's what would happen.
- 12       Q.   I think, can we also take from that sentence that there
- 13          were both closed sessions and open sessions?
- 14       A.   Oh yeah.  There were indeed closed sessions and open
- 15          sessions, yes.
- 16       Q.   So even within the group of people who were present at
- 17          the conference, only some could attend closed sessions;
- 18          is that right?
- 19       A.   Yes, that's right.  I mean, it is a bit like the London
- 20          boroughs.  They have council meetings where they have
- 21          closed sessions and open sessions depending on what
- 22          they're talking about.
- 23       Q.   I see.
- 24       A.   So it's a normal process in a lot of organisations in
- 25          the United Kingdom.

1 Q. Can we scroll to page 2, please, and paragraph 5 of that  
2 page {UCPI/15694/2}. Thank you.

3 Halfway through this paragraph, Mr Corbyn, you'll  
4 see that I think Bob Purdie opened the proceedings.

5 A. Ah, I remember the name.

6 Q. He then called for an immediate vote on three items,  
7 the first being the ratification of the fusion of  
8 the IMG with the Spartacus League.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. That's a vote that was then carried?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. So can we take it from that, Mr Corbyn, that from this  
13 point onwards, the Spartacus League became part of  
14 the IMG?

15 A. Yes, that's right. Well, I think the idea was that  
16 the Spartacus League, as a youth section, wasn't  
17 necessary anymore and one would just have the IMG.

18 Q. Thank you.

19 I just want to ask you a couple of other questions  
20 about things that happened at this conference.

21 Could we move to page 6, please, {UCPI/15694/6}.  
22 Thank you.

23 And it's paragraph 24 that we're interested in.

24 A. Okay, that's a bit small on my screen.

25 Q. Don't worry, it will get bigger --

1 A. Oh, okay.

2 Q. -- if you just bear with us a moment.

3 This is a topic that was raised at the conference.

4 I'm just going to read it out again:

5 "Surgitt's speech reiterated the now standard  
6 clichés of Women's Liberation, oppressed women in  
7 society, the struggle for equal rights,  
8 the establishment of the woman as an accepted member of  
9 society and the fight against sexist male chauvinism.  
10 Her speech contained little that was constructive and  
11 confined itself almost entirely to an attack upon  
12 the men at the conference. This attack brought squeals  
13 of delight from most of the other female members of  
14 the audience."

15 Mr Corbyn, can you help us with whether that's an  
16 accurate description of something that happened?

17 A. I -- I don't remember. Surgitt of course is a kind of  
18 cover -- a party name, obviously. So I'm wondering  
19 who -- it's a long time ago -- who that could have been.  
20 There were that sort of thing said, but I think perhaps  
21 that description of it is a bit over the top.

22 Q. How --

23 A. I mean, there were certain, you know, criticisms from  
24 women of the attitudes of men, but it was all in  
25 the context of we all being in the IMG together. But

1           yeah, those type of things were said, yes. The way that  
2           is put forward perhaps is a bit over the top.

3       Q. All right.

4       A. So far as I remember. I mean, you know.

5       Q. Yes. Well, that's quite understandable.

6           Can we move to page {UCPI/15694/4}, please.

7           Thank you.

8           And it's paragraph 16 I was just going to ask you  
9       a question about.

10          It reads as follows:

11          "The conference ... took fraternal greetings from  
12       a Peruvian member of the FI."

13          And I think that's the Fourth International?

14       A. Yes, it would be the Forth International.

15       Q. "His speech ... was brief and delivered through an  
16       interpreter, was exceptionally well received. No doubt  
17       this was due to its revolutionary content for  
18       the speaker called for revolutionary support for  
19       the armed struggles throughout the world such as in  
20       South America and Ireland and contained such stirring  
21       phrases as 'the revolution will not be won until Marxist  
22       blood is spilled in the street'. He ended with shouts  
23       of 'Viva la revolution' and the audience duly rose to  
24       its feet and applauded."

25          How seriously were statements like this taken for

1 the IMG, Mr Corbyn?

2 A. Well, I mean, there were numbers of statements like  
3 this, but I took them as being -- well, there used to be  
4 this phrase around, the IMG would say, "If you care to  
5 struggle, we will solidarise with you". Which would  
6 mean that either the IMG organisation would support --  
7 support: it doesn't mean endorse everything -- support  
8 many things going on, because they were against world  
9 capitalism, or in particular US imperialism. But if  
10 you're leading to a thinking, well, because people were  
11 applauding this group whatever they were doing,  
12 therefore the IMG would want to do the same in  
13 the United Kingdom, I think that would be a completely  
14 wrong conclusion.

15 Q. I see.

16 This document can come down now. Thank you.

17 A. Mm-hm.

18 Q. Mr Corbyn, moving on to the IMG more generally, you've  
19 described in your statement that the IMG considered  
20 itself a revolutionary organisation. What was meant, in  
21 your mind, by that?

22 A. Well, it means that the idea of the IMG and the -- well,  
23 the IMG in particular, would have been that  
24 the capitalist way of running things had to end; and  
25 capitalism was in crisis, and therefore there had to be

1 a revolution into a socialist, or socialistic of some  
2 sort, society, where the open market didn't determine  
3 how things happened, ie the strength of different  
4 capitalists didn't determine how things happened, and  
5 you had a sort of more democratic process. But that's  
6 what it meant, yes.

7 The word "revolution" doesn't necessarily mean  
8 violence at all. It means a revolutionary change, a big  
9 change, a fundamental change, a change in the basic way  
10 in which society was organised.

11 Q. Did you consider this was -- at the time, I'm interested  
12 in. Did you consider this was likely to happen  
13 immediately, or quickly, or was this a longer term --

14 A. Well, I myself, I do recall at some point having  
15 discussions with people. So I sort of believed, yeah,  
16 it was all going to happen somewhere within five or ten  
17 years. Now, looking back, I think this was just  
18 delusional nonsense, but that's what I thought.

19 Now, people in the IMG, I think they'd have  
20 a variety of views. Probably most people believed in  
21 a slow sort of process; because we recognised we were an  
22 infinitesimal group of a few hundred people, and putting  
23 forward ideas which we hoped would catalyse people into  
24 a better understanding of things.

25 You know, you have to think, in terms of groups on

1 the left, "the left" in the sense used in those days,  
2 the IMG was the one which did a lot of kind of  
3 theoretical work and kind of analysis of the way --  
4 the way world history was -- was developing.

5 I mean, in terms of any groups promoting violence,  
6 the IMG wasn't -- wasn't that. There were groups out  
7 there maybe which, you know, would have had different  
8 views, but they weren't -- they weren't the IMG. I was  
9 in the IMG, not in other groups, I mean.

10 Q. Did the IMG consider that this change should come about  
11 through democratic means or otherwise?

12 A. Well, I would say democratic means. I mean, that would  
13 involve demonstrations and protests, but democratic  
14 means, yes. You know, you have trade unions, you have  
15 tenants' organisations, you have all sorts of groups  
16 which will bring together people.

17 You see, to me, in my mind, change is -- involves  
18 numbers, and that is the key. Whereas there will be  
19 some people that might have believed you had to kind of  
20 manipulate situations in a paramilitary fashion. This  
21 wasn't my view, or, as I understand it, the IMG's view,  
22 which is why the IMG was the IMG, as opposed to some  
23 other groups, which might have had entirely different  
24 ideas.

25 Q. Could we have a look please at {UCPI/10944}, please.

1           Mr Corbyn -- thank you -- this is a report by  
2 a police officer of a meeting held between the IMG and  
3 a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

4           If we could scroll down to paragraph 4, please.

5 Thank you.

6           Tariq Ali, who no doubt you'll be familiar with --

7 A. Yeah, it's normally pronounced "Tariq Ali".

8 Q. Sorry, Tariq Ali, spoke at this meeting and said as  
9 follows:

10           "Tariq Ali then thanked Anthony for coming along to  
11 explain the ideas of the [Communist Party], but added  
12 that he disagreed with the basic concept that Parliament  
13 must survive, since it had shown only too clearly that  
14 it merely represented the interests of big business.  
15 What was needed, he continued, were workers' councils  
16 set up during the period of change which followed  
17 the revolution (opposition ideas would be allowed, but  
18 control would remain with the great mass of workers  
19 through their councils)."

20           Would you have agreed with Mr Ali in advocating for  
21 councils and the abolition of Parliament, Mr Corbyn?

22 A. Yes, insofar as the way forward. Yes, I would agree  
23 that you had to have accountability of society run by  
24 the people from below. So you'd have these committees.  
25 Which is obviously modelled in the Russian Revolution

1           idea of "soviets", ie all the people in one area would  
2           represent that area or the interests of the -- of  
3           the workers or trade unionists in that area, and that  
4           would then feed up to a more democratic control.

5           It doesn't mean Parliament would disappear  
6           instantly, I would say, but you see, Parliament as it is  
7           -- or then certainly -- well, now even more so -- is  
8           controlled by external forces, largely. And I don't  
9           need to tell you that there is a lot of corruption in  
10          modern Parliament and conflicts of interest. And if  
11          conflicts of interest were removed from the modern  
12          Cabinet, then it would be an empty room, which would  
13          probably be better.

14          Anyway, we're digressing into the now. But, you  
15          see, I think you can understand from the now why then --  
16          and I don't believe Parliament then was much better, but  
17          probably was a bit better then, Parliament nevertheless,  
18          its function, is essentially to carry out the wishes of  
19          those who have the main controlling interest in modern  
20          society, ie capitalists of various types.

21        Q. Mr Corbyn, thank you. Can we take this document down,  
22        please.

23        A. Yeah.

24        Q. One of the officers who reported on you, HN353, whose  
25        cover name was "Gary Roberts", has stated that "the IMG

1           were strong on words but in hindsight I think they were  
2           not really likely to act on them".

3       A. Well, yes, that's true. Well, that's true of most  
4       politicians, indeed. Although, IMG members didn't think  
5       of themselves as politicians. Yeah, I think that's  
6       a fair statement. So they would make big rhetorical  
7       things about revolution and class struggle and  
8       everything, but partly they were, I would say,  
9       theoreticist armchair socialists. Perhaps I was one of  
10      those at the time, although I was always very keen on  
11      activity and talking to people and communicating, and  
12      getting people involved in demonstrations of various  
13      sorts against injustices of the time, like the Irish  
14      issues, the various workers' struggles going on, tenants  
15      issues, housing issues, and so forth.

16     Q. Well, we'll come on to some of those --

17     A. Yes, of course.

18     Q. -- Mr Corbyn.

19                I think it's right that you later, in 1972, became  
20                the organiser for the Notting Hill branch of the IMG  
21                rather than the Spartacus League?

22     A. Correct, yes, because the Spartacus League then had  
23                disappeared anyway, so -- or had been merged, so yes.

24     Q. And these meetings again took place at your home  
25                address; is that right?

- 1 A. Yes, they did, generally speaking.
- 2 Q. And we can see an example of one of these reports. Can  
3 we bring up {UCPI/8948}.
- 4 A. You've done a lot of work to get all these things  
5 together, I'm impressed, because I couldn't remember all  
6 this stuff.
- 7 Q. This, again, you see in paragraph 2, that's the same  
8 address in Rendle Street, so your home address?
- 9 A. Yes.
- 10 Q. If we turn to page 4 of this document, {UCPI/8948/4},  
11 and just zoom in on the middle -- if we just scroll down  
12 a little, please. Thank you.
- 13 This is a document that I think you prepared?
- 14 A. Ah, did I indeed?
- 15 Q. That has been appended to the report.
- 16 A. So that must have been my typewriter at the time, okay.
- 17 Q. What I'm interested in, Mr Corbyn, is this is  
18 a prospectus for --
- 19 A. I'm going close to the screen to have a look. There's  
20 some sort of -- oh, okay. What's that "of the ..."?
- 21 Q. I think it reads:
- 22 "The initial plan -- adopted by  
23 the working group after many discussions -- was to  
24 undertake the following activities ..."
- 25 A. Okay.

1 Q. So what I'm interested in, Mr Corbyn, is what  
2 the Notting Hill branch of the IMG were doing with their  
3 time.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. The first is "Red Circle".

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Can you just tell us briefly what Red Circle was,  
8 please?

9 A. Yeah, Red Circles were public events which were  
10 advertised, and it involved people sitting around in  
11 a circular fashion in a room, usually a hired room above  
12 a pub, and it would have speakers along on issues of our  
13 time. Like, a speaker would come along about Vietnam,  
14 for example; a speaker would come along about  
15 the miners' strike. Although then there wasn't  
16 a miners' strike, but there were later on. A speaker  
17 might come along about the situation in students --

18 Q. I see.

19 A. So they were quite lively discussion groups, completely  
20 open to the public. So you'd give all leaflets, people  
21 would come along, and you would talk.

22 Q. And the second thing we can see is "Mole Sales". That  
23 I think might be a reference to Red Mole, the IMG --

24 A. Correct, that was the Red Mole sales. And we sold those  
25 often in Portobello Road on what is now Portobello

1 Green, a place I was visiting only a few days ago  
2 campaigning for my election as Mayor of London, and  
3 other candidates from for the Let London Live campaign.

4 Q. The third thing we can see mentioned is "People's  
5 Association". Could you just help us what that was, if  
6 you can?

7 A. Yes, yes, yes. I think this referred to what  
8 I mentioned earlier about Red Defence. The people's  
9 association I think was some IMG contact, whose name  
10 escapes me, wanted to have sort of grassroots community  
11 things which would kind of become community police, to  
12 prevent the police, or -- or as an alternative to  
13 the police in their sometimes racist -- well, often --  
14 normally, I would say, racist approach to the area. And  
15 there was a people's association set up by these guys,  
16 who were not IMG members but were sympathisers,  
17 I suppose.

18 Q. And --

19 A. And it says "the PA collapsed in October". Yeah,  
20 I remember that, but I don't know why it collapsed. It  
21 might have been that the principal people moved out,  
22 I don't know.

23 When they say "intervention ... was successful",  
24 I think that meant that people had listened to what we'd  
25 said and, you know, the organisation, the people's

1 association managed to make some impact on its  
2 alternative policing ideas. But clearly it didn't last.

3 Q. Were these associations controlled or run by the IMG, or  
4 were they --

5 A. No.

6 Q. -- entirely separate?

7 A. No, no. I remember the guy. I can sort of almost  
8 picture him in my mind. No, he was an interesting guy  
9 and would -- you know, said he was doing these things,  
10 would we help and join in. So we did. It was --  
11 I would say the IMG's role was essentially supportive.

12 I would say, it's important to understand the IMG  
13 did often support things without trying to control.  
14 I mean, whereas some other revolutionary groups were  
15 only into control. And I do remember the phrase "We  
16 should set up a support committee for this" or "support  
17 committee for that", you know, some strike or protest,  
18 you know, that sort of thing.

19 Q. Just, finally, the last thing that was on there -- we've  
20 just lost it -- but it was the Claimants Union. What  
21 was the IMG's involvement in the Claimants Union?

22 A. I think again it was supportive. You see,  
23 the Claimants Union then was just people who were  
24 claiming benefits and were not getting their just  
25 benefits, so they would form together and put pressure

1 on the -- the social security offices.

2 No, I remember some of the activists there, who were  
3 -- they weren't IMG members but they were very dedicated  
4 -- dedicated people.

5 Q. Was the IMG involved in the Claimants Union, or just  
6 members thereof?

7 A. Well, in a supportive way. It says there, "initial work  
8 totally unproductive". I don't -- I don't really  
9 remember all the details, but it's something about their  
10 anarco-hippy blah blah blah. I don't know. But there  
11 were some good people involved in the Claimants Union.  
12 That's in my personal assessment. But they were really  
13 into one thing, that is making sure people got their  
14 benefits, rather than wider issues, I think.

15 Q. Could we just turn to the first page of this document,  
16 please, {UCPI/8948}, and paragraph 5, when we get there.  
17 Thank you.

18 Now, this is the report of the officer who has  
19 appended the document we've just looked at. And  
20 the officer's written:

21 "The meeting then moved to item eight on the agenda,  
22 a discussion on the perspectives document, produced by  
23 Piers Corbyn, on the proposed merger of the Notting Hill  
24 and West London IMG groups. In that document ... Corbyn  
25 used various coded initials in many instances,

1           apparently to confuse the identification of persons if  
2           the document happened to fall into the hands of  
3           Special Branch."

4           Then the officer goes on to say:

5           "(An appendix giving the identification of  
6           the majority of such coded initials is attached ...)."

7           A. Okay.

8           Q. To your memory -- the best of your memory, Mr Corbyn,  
9           did you use coded initials when preparing documents like  
10          that?

11          A. Yes, yes, that was the norm in the IMG. The theory was  
12          that if you had these coded initials or party names,  
13          then the Special Branch, if they were around  
14          infiltrating, or anyone who got these documents,  
15          wouldn't know who was what. However, of course,  
16          the Special Branch were infiltrating us anyway, so they  
17          knew everything.

18          A bit like modern mobile phones: people might be  
19          trying to keep themselves secret, but frankly, you know,  
20          if Bill Gates wants to know what you said yesterday, he  
21          can find out.

22          Q. How concerned were you as a group about material like  
23          this?

24          A. Well, I took it seriously, to -- to use these party  
25          names, or -- or initials. Although, sometimes

1 I couldn't remember who was who myself. So then maybe  
2 rather than a party name, I'd put some initials, which  
3 then people would know, you know, what -- if "PC" was  
4 down there, it might stand for Piers Corbyn. Although  
5 I had a different party name, which was not "PC".

6 Q. Your party name, I think, was "Annual", wasn't?

7 A. It was. I think I had more than one party name. Most  
8 people started off with one or another. But I was  
9 called "Annual", yes, yes.

10 Q. I think there is a report, which we don't need to bring  
11 up, which confirms that.

12 A. Yes, it came from a nickname in a -- in an  
13 NUS conference. I was described as a "hardy annual"  
14 that always turned up. And actually, if you think  
15 about it, it should be a perennial. But anyway, that  
16 became my party name because the general public  
17 considered me a sort of an annual person who turned up  
18 to every National Union Of Students conference there  
19 was.

20 Q. Just so that we can understand how widely used this was,  
21 did you know, for instance, the real names of most of  
22 the members of your local branch of the IMG?

23 A. Oh yes, yes. I would know them by their real names and  
24 have to try and remember their party names at times,  
25 and, you know, it might have given the impression that

1 all these organisations were twice as big as they were,  
2 but anyway, that's ...

3 Q. Thank you. And this report can come down now.

4 How concerned, can you remember, were the IMG  
5 leadership about surveillance and possible infiltration?

6 A. Oh, I think they took it seriously. Although possibly,  
7 looking back, to an extent, it was something which made  
8 members feel part of something bigger, something more  
9 important than -- than perhaps it was, because we were  
10 quite a tiny group really.

11 Q. Did you take any other steps, other than party names and  
12 occasionally coded initials, to protect against this?

13 A. No, I don't think so. Well, obviously you don't leave  
14 documents lying around, you know, that sort of thing;  
15 don't talk to people about who your members are, or talk  
16 to non-members about who your members are, yes.

17 Q. Just so that we can understand the motivation behind  
18 this, why were you concerned personally about other  
19 people or the police being able to be aware of what you  
20 were doing at your meetings?

21 A. Well, it was not anyone else's business, I would say, so  
22 we had a right to privacy. That's -- that's all --  
23 that's all I would say.

24 Q. I see.

25 You've said in your statement that you assumed that

1           you were under surveillance, which would certainly fit  
2           with what you've told us.

3       A. Well, yeah. In the IMG, generally people believed that  
4       we were. And I think there had been some evidence of  
5       that, which I didn't know about. But of course now  
6       I knew it was true, and much more extensive than  
7       I imagined possible.

8           You see, having -- it seems to be three officers who  
9       were pursuing me for -- well, various officers, but at  
10      any one time there seemed to be three -- two or three  
11      pursuing me. And this went on for ten years. That is  
12      a massive use of police time, for what? For what,  
13      you know? I didn't do anything dangerous. Nor did  
14      anybody, to my knowledge, in -- in the parts of the IMG  
15      that I knew.

16     Q. Mr Corbyn, if we can turn to a slightly separate topic.

17           Can we please bring up document {UCPI/8130}.

18           And, Sir, that's at your tab 13.

19     A. You want me to look at tab 13?

20     Q. That's just for the Chairman, Mr Corbyn. It will come  
21      up on the screen.

22           This is a meeting of the London aggregate of  
23      the IMG, and I'm interested in the top of page 2,  
24      please. {UCPI/8130/2}.

25     A. Mm-hm. Can you make it a bit bigger? Ah, good.

1 Q. Now, this reads as follows, for the transcript:

2 "However, the main part of his speech was the seven  
3 point plan as given on page 11 of the attached document  
4 which deals with the way in which members of  
5 the organisation could become more deeply involved in  
6 the tribunal field, especially engineering, local  
7 government, building trades and the Post Office."

8 Mr Corbyn, what was the IMG's relationship with  
9 trade unions, as far as you can recall?

10 A. Well, the idea then was -- well, the idea was to recruit  
11 trade unionists; or even members of the IMG would start  
12 working in certain fields and then build trade union  
13 branches or associations with the IMG, with a view to  
14 supporting trade union struggles and protests, or  
15 whatever, in different industries.

16 It was termed an important thing to do, rather than  
17 doing "student work", as it was called. Student work  
18 wasn't being dropped, but it's -- the point was that  
19 the IMG wanted to develop more into a wider field.

20 Q. Were the IMG --

21 A. To change society, you see? Trade unions being the --  
22 essentially the producers of wealth, so therefore  
23 potential to change society into something more  
24 democratic and accountable.

25 Q. Were the IMG trying to gain control of trade unions?

1       A. Well, I suppose, if they ever got enough members or  
2       supporters in a trade union, then they -- they might  
3       become leaders thereof. But this stuff here was just at  
4       least to get a presence of that all, I would say.

5       Q. I think we can possibly infer from this that the IMG,  
6       certainly at this point, was trying to get more  
7       involved --

8       A. Yes.

9       Q. -- with trade unions. Is it fair to say that you would  
10      support trade unions on specific strikes?

11     A. Oh, generally speaking, yes. Well, as I said, there was  
12     a joke in the IMG, "If you care to struggle, we will  
13     solidarise with you." So the IMG would go around  
14     supporting all sorts of things, not necessarily  
15     the detail. You know, we have this phrase of  
16     conditional -- sorry, "unconditional but not uncritical  
17     support for X, Y, Z." So you'd say to these workers  
18     doing some strike or occupation, "Great, we support you  
19     completely." And that protest or action might do  
20     something that we wouldn't have agreed with, but we'd  
21     say, "Well, okay, maybe you should have done this or  
22     that," but it doesn't mean we'd stop supporting  
23     the general project of this strike or occupation, or  
24     whatever.

25     Q. I see.

1 A. So it wasn't about control, it was about support.

2 Q. Could we please take this document down and replace it  
3 with {UCPI/7940}.

4 And, Sir, you'll find that at tab 3 of your bundle.  
5 Thank you.

6 Now, I'm interested in the third paragraph, and I'm  
7 afraid it's a pretty poor quality document, so I'll try  
8 and read the second sentence.

9 It reads:

10 "Piers Corbyn and [Privacy] emerged as the leading  
11 personalities, advocating a strong militant approach to  
12 the student protest march."

13 This is, I should say, a report proposing a march  
14 against a miners' strike -- sorry, supporting a miners'  
15 strike --

16 A. To support the miners' strike, yes.

17 Q. And the report suggests that you and other IMG members,  
18 in the face of opposition from International Socialists  
19 members, proposed a march to the National Coal Board  
20 headquarters, and there is some suggestion later on that  
21 an occupation was envisaged --

22 A. Really? Okay.

23 Q. Do you consider this a fair characterisation, Mr Corbyn?

24 A. Yes, I do remember this -- this, actually. It was quite  
25 fascinating. I think there was a -- some sort of

1 student rally in Trafalgar Square, or some -- I think it  
2 was mostly students -- maybe even called by the NUS --  
3 supporting the miners. And we thought -- or I thought,  
4 and my supporters, that we ought to march from there to  
5 the National Coal Board, to call upon the Coal Board to  
6 give in to the miners.

7 And that we did by a tactic of a group of IMG  
8 supporters marching round Trafalgar Square approximately  
9 twice, chanting things like "March to the Coal Board",  
10 if I'm remembering the right thing. And then the crowd  
11 in Trafalgar Square just joined in. They thought,  
12 "Well, that's something to do, let's go there." And  
13 there was a great big crowd went off to the Coal Board,  
14 and I remember being lifted on somebody's shoulders to  
15 speak with a megaphone about supporting the miners.

16 But, frankly, I don't remember anything about trying  
17 to occupy the National Coal Board. I -- I suppose  
18 people might have thought of such things. But we were  
19 there to make a point that the whole country should be  
20 supporting the miners.

21 Q. Now, Mr Corbyn, you'll see the top of paragraph 4 --

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. -- it reads:

24 "The IMG/SL ..."

25 So I think that's the Spartacus League at this

1 point:

2 "... members were obviously furious at

3 the 'wishy-washy approach', by the IS ..."

4 And I think that's International Socialists?

5 A. That is, yeah.

6 Q. "... members who [I think it might say] contrived to

7 gain support from the uncommitted members present."

8 A. Mm-hm.

9 Q. Now, evidently, from that, there was both IMG and

10 International Socialists --

11 A. Yes, yes.

12 Q. -- at this meeting. To what extent did you tend to

13 interact and cooperate with

14 the International Socialists?

15 A. Well, I think the general idea of the IMG was to

16 cooperate as much as we could on joint activities. But

17 on some occasions the IS, for their own reasons, didn't

18 want to co-operate. That's how I saw it going on. And

19 this was an example.

20 I can't, for the life of me, see why the IS wouldn't

21 want to also march to the Coal Board, but anyway ...

22 Q. The tenor of this report, Mr Corbyn --

23 A. That's what seems to have happened.

24 Q. -- certainly suggests that the IMG group in this meeting

25 wanted to go further than the IS group?

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. You know, marches rather than -- directed marches rather  
3 than other things.
- 4 A. Yes.
- 5 Q. Was that what tended to happen between the different  
6 outlooks in the two groups? Was that --
- 7 A. Yeah, I would say so. I would say so, at that time.
- 8 Only all these groups evolved in different  
9 directions. But mostly that would be the case, yeah.
- 10 Q. If we could move to the second page, please, and  
11 paragraph 9? {UCPI/7940/2}.
- 12 A. It's quite interesting remembering all this stuff.  
13 Thank you for -- well, I don't know if I should thank  
14 you or not, frankly, but it's fascinating remembering in  
15 detail these little events, which -- well, I think they  
16 were important at the time. I think they were important  
17 to do these things.
- 18 Q. So paragraph 8, just before we go on to paragraph 9:  
19 "[Privacy] also suggested that, if possible, members  
20 should attempt to occupy the Coal Board offices ..."
- 21 A. Oh right.
- 22 Q. "... although he was none too hopeful of this as he  
23 anticipated the building would be heavily protected ..."
- 24 A. Well, I think that's pretty obvious. Yeah, okay.
- 25 Q. Paragraph 9 says this:

1            "[Privacy] then called for 'three volunteers to take  
2 part in a special task during the demonstration which  
3 could involve breaking the law'. Three unidentified  
4 members readily volunteered and were told by [Privacy]  
5 that he would later give them private instructions  
6 regarding this task. He assured the volunteers that if  
7 they were arrested and prosecuted any resulting fines  
8 would be paid by the IMG."

9            Can you recall, Mr Corbyn, if this was accurate --  
10 an accurate description?

11        A. Well, I just don't remember that. I don't remember it.  
12        But I suppose your question might be -- I mean, that  
13        could happen. I wouldn't rule out this. I don't think  
14        it's been made up by a policeman; something must have  
15        been going on. But you see, when it's something  
16        breaking the law, I mean, it might be as simple as  
17        writing a slogan on a building or hoisting a banner over  
18        something, you know what I mean? I don't know -- unless  
19        we know what actually happened, I can't really comment  
20        further on that. But I was not one of these three  
21        volunteers, if indeed the volunteers came as described  
22        there.

23        Q. Were things like this commonly discussed at IMG meetings  
24        or wider meetings, plans to break the law --

25        A. No --

- 1 Q. -- in whatever capacity?
- 2 A. No, no, mostly it was pretty mundane sort of stuff. But  
3 as I say, what they mean by "breaking the law" here,  
4 is -- I think you have to find out what that is.  
5 I mean, did the policeman report on what was happening  
6 later on? That's what we need to know. Or you need to  
7 know for this Inquiry.
- 8 Q. I am just interested to know whether something like this  
9 would have been a common occurrence or, you know,  
10 a memorable, rather extraordinary thing to have come up  
11 at a meeting?
- 12 A. Well, I would say it's memorable and rather  
13 extraordinary, because it's -- it's, you know, making  
14 promises about fines being paid or something, which is  
15 -- well, it suggests it's something risky. But mind  
16 you, of course, then you could easily get arrested for  
17 just doing a bit of flyposting. So the actual activity  
18 might not be such a big deal. I'd like to -- I'd like  
19 to know what it was, I mean, if they did this. I don't  
20 remember any dramatic thing happening. Maybe it just  
21 didn't work. Maybe the people involved dropped out.
- 22 Q. More generally, Mr Corbyn, you've said in your witness  
23 statement that --
- 24 A. Mm-hm.
- 25 Q. -- and I'm quoting -- that "an unjust law will

1           inevitably be broken".

2           A.   Mm.

3           Q.   What was your attitude towards breaking the law at that  
4           time?

5           A.   Well, yeah, at that time I believed there were -- well,  
6           I still believe there's just laws and unjust laws.  
7           Unjust laws get introduced by the powers that be in  
8           order to impose things which may be incorrect.

9                    Now, at the time, I might have been concentrating on  
10           housing issues.  And we could talk about squatting  
11           later, although you don't mention much of it,  
12           surprisingly, in these reports.

13                   But unjust laws are things whereby people are put in  
14           a position where they have to agree something when  
15           really they don't want to but they're kind of  
16           blackmailed or -- not bribed but blackmailed, and told,  
17           you know, if you -- you can become a tenant or  
18           a licensee if you agree to leave when the owner wants  
19           you.  But, you see, this is a kind of -- I would say  
20           that's not a just -- just law of treating people's  
21           housing rights, for example.

22           Q.   We'll come on to that --

23           A.   Okay.

24           Q.   -- aspect and your involvement a little later.

25                   I'm just interested to know, is this your view or is

1           this a view that was widely held amongst the members of  
2           the IMG at around this time?

3       A. Well, that's my view that I describe. What would  
4           the IMG think about laws? Well, I think they would  
5           think something similar in that you ask  
6           the question: where does law come from? You know, laws  
7           are agreed by -- well, a parliamentary process, but then  
8           who is instigating things in this parliamentary process?

9           You see, right now, we have Parliament agreeing to  
10          allow the police to have even more spycops powers than  
11          in the past, you know. And this Inquiry has happened  
12          precisely because of spycops, ie policemen infiltrating,  
13          overstepping the reasonable mark in their personal  
14          relationships between male policemen and women; and,  
15          you know, consequent children, which was horrific. And  
16          that's the main reason why this Inquiry is happening,  
17          I think.

18       Q. Mr Corbyn --

19       A. Yeah, okay.

20       Q. -- just going back to --

21       A. -- perhaps I'm rambling a bit.

22       Q. -- back to the 1970s -- sorry to take you back there --

23       A. No, I don't mind. That's fine.

24       Q. Would the IMG, in your view, have been open in calling  
25          for what was considered to be an unjust law to be broken

1           by its members? Would that be something that was  
2           encouraged?

3       A. Well, I think it would be a specific thing, I would say,  
4       I think -- well, you'd have to give an example. And  
5       I can't think of any specific example other than in  
6       the housing movement, when in fact it wasn't so much  
7       laws but rules introduced by short wrd     life housing  
8       organisations. And I said, well, you have to break  
9       these agreements, because housing rights were more  
10      important than the interests of these housing  
11      associations.

12           Now, you're looking for a law, some sort of law  
13      where the IMG said, "break this because it's unjust".  
14      Well, I don't know. But there were trade union laws.  
15      There were laws introduced against trade unions, yes,  
16      where the government at the time were trying to limit  
17      the powers of trade unions, the right to strike and so  
18      on. Now, those -- things like laws against the right to  
19      strike -- were considered, yes, definitely, as unjust  
20      laws, and therefore should be challenged and broken,  
21      yes.

22      Q. Could we just --

23      A. And they would be specific. It wasn't like a -- it  
24      didn't mean that it would be right to rob people,  
25      you know? So they would be quite specific. Like,

1 I would describe them as politically-motivated laws, if  
2 you like.

3 Q. Can we just turn to another report on a slightly  
4 different subject, please.

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. It's at {UCPI/8798}. And, Sir, this is behind your  
7 bundle at tab 10. Thank you.

8 This is a report which attaches a leaflet produced  
9 by you on behalf of the Notting Hill IMG, regarding  
10 something called the Metro Youth demonstration, which  
11 was held in June 1972. Now, this demonstration I think,  
12 Mr Corbyn, was in relation to the Metro Youth Club,  
13 which was in Notting Hill and was popular within  
14 the black community at that time.

15 A. Right.

16 Q. And I think the march was concerning the police's raids  
17 and arrests --

18 A. Mm-hm.

19 Q. -- at that club.

20 At paragraph 2 it says:

21 " ... the assessment Corbyn urges that the next time  
22 such a demonstration ..."

23 I think that should say "occurs":

24 "... less attention (no attention) should be paid to  
25 police who 'helped' formulate the route."

1           Why was that something that you advocated,  
2           Mr Corbyn, to not engage with the police for  
3           a demonstration?

4           A. I -- I don't know. I'm just thinking. You see -- well,  
5           it depends what the police wanted to do and what  
6           the Metro Youth wanted to do. I mean, it -- it --

7           Q. If we look at the second page --

8           A. Yeah, I mean, you see, sometimes the police would be  
9           trying to not help us, obviously --

10          Q. Okay, thank you -- (overspeaking) --

11          A. -- (inaudible) so I can't remember the details, I'm  
12          afraid.

13          Q. Well, if I just read paragraph 3, under the heading of  
14          "Assessment". This is a document that I think you  
15          produced, so this might help --

16          A. Really?

17          Q. -- to jog your memory. The turnout was about --

18          A. I can't remember if my typewriter looked like that. It  
19          looks like a different typewriter.

20          Q. "The turnout was about 60 people ..."

21          A. Where are you? Oh down there. Assessment 3, yes.

22          Q. "... 40 people at the start of the march, and 30 when it  
23          reached Portobello Road after returning from Harrow  
24          Road. The turnout was not very good but the numbers are  
25          not at all important in any critical sense for this type

1 of demo. The tactic of taking the demo down  
2 Portobello Road was proved to be absolutely correct.  
3 Many leaflets were given to people there, a lot of  
4 people talked about the matter -- because of the focus  
5 the 30 or so marchers created -- the police completely  
6 foiled (they could not follow with their van)."

7 A. Oh, it means were completely foiled.

8 Q. Sorry, were completely foiled.

9 A. Yeah, I see that. I typed that --

10 Q. And the next sentence which has been quoted in  
11 the report says:

12 "Next time less attention (no attention) should be  
13 paid to the police who 'helped' to formulate the route  
14 which in part went via empty streets (in which it is  
15 not ..."

16 I think that should say "possible"?

17 A. Yeah, I think it was "possible to present ideas to many  
18 people."

19 Yeah, you see, the IMG's idea was presenting ideas  
20 to people. So marching down an empty streets, which is  
21 what the police were advising, was not helpful. No,  
22 I can say that I'm glad we did go down Portobello Road.  
23 It didn't cause any people any trouble. And our  
24 leaflets, whatever they were about at the time, got more  
25 traction.

1 Q. Just in terms of the interaction with the police --

2 A. You see, the police can't -- they act as if they're in  
3 charge of people's right to protest. And of course,  
4 they're still doing that, and I think --

5 Q. -- (overspeaking) --

6 A. No, but there have been occasions recently, to be fair,  
7 the police have said, "Okay, okay, Mr Corbyn," or  
8 whoever, "You guys want to go that way, all right," and  
9 they'll just say "yes". But this time in Notting Hill,  
10 the police were anxious to prevent us getting our  
11 message across, I would say.

12 Q. As a result of that, did you --

13 A. And it was a peaceful message. There wasn't anything  
14 dangerous or violent, to my recollection, involved here.

15 Q. Did you refuse to interact with the police as a result  
16 of that, Mr Corbyn?

17 A. Well, I didn't seek to interact with the police, but  
18 when it became necessary or they asked me questions,  
19 I would -- I would interact. I mean, later on in  
20 the squatting movement, it was sometimes necessary to  
21 interact with the police. But that's what I would say.  
22 We were running our own show, as far as I was concerned,  
23 and if the police wanted to advise, sort of tell us  
24 where we should go, we would listen to what they say.  
25 But, you know, we had to maintain that we had the right

1 to protest and demonstrate where we wanted, subject to  
2 not endangering life and limb or whatever, of course,  
3 obviously.

4 MR WARNER: Sir, is this an appropriate point for a short  
5 break.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

7 Mr Corbyn, the shorthand writers need a rest, and  
8 they have 15 minutes.

9 A. Yes. Well, that's fine, Sir John. Thank you very much.

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

11 MR FERNANDES: Good morning, everyone. We will now take  
12 a break. May I remind those in the virtual hearing room  
13 to remember to join your break-out rooms, please.

14 The time is now 11.15 am, so we shall resume at  
15 11.30 am.

16 Thank you.

17 (11.15 am)

18 (A short break)

19 (11.30 am)

20 MR FERNANDES: Good morning, everyone, and welcome back.

21 I will now hand over to the Chairman to continue  
22 proceedings.

23 Chairman.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

25 Mr Warner.

1 MR WARNER: Thank you, Sir.

2 Mr Corbyn, I'd like now to turn to a report, please,  
3 which deals with your proposal as an election candidate.  
4 It's {UCPI/17814}.

5 That's at tab 39, Sir.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

7 MR WARNER: Thank you.

8 This is a meeting of the South London branch of  
9 the IMG. I'm interested in paragraph 6 on page  
10 {UCPI/17814/2}. Thank you.

11 I'll just read this paragraph for the transcript:

12 "[Privacy] introduced the second major item on  
13 the agenda -- the GLC elections -- and said that the IMG  
14 intended to stand four candidates. The proposals put  
15 before the aggregate were that Piers Corbyn should be  
16 the IMG candidate for Lambeth Central and that the great  
17 majority of South London resources should be devoted to  
18 his electoral campaign."

19 Mr Corbyn, can you remember how you came to be  
20 proposed as a GLC candidate?

21 A. I -- I do remember the meeting, yes, and I was there and  
22 people just said that I should do it. And I thought  
23 about it and said, "Well, okay, that will be an honour."  
24 So I did.

25 Q. And presumably, in this election campaign you did

1 the usual things that a candidate does, leaflets,  
2 canvassing, thing like that?

3 A. Yes, that's right, standard sort of stuff.

4 Q. Right.

5 And if we look at another report, please. It's  
6 {UCPI/17335}.

7 It's at tab 40.

8 It's paragraph 4 we're interested in for now,  
9 halfway down. Thank you.

10 This is a slightly later report, about just over  
11 a month later --

12 A. Okay.

13 Q. -- in the run-up to the election.

14 Paragraph 4 reads:

15 "[Privacy], the campaign manager, reported that  
16 the majority of proposed public meetings would be  
17 cancelled because they appeared unlikely to attract any  
18 sizeable audience. It was also evident, he said, that  
19 there was insufficient time and resources to canvass  
20 the whole of the constituency, although it was essential  
21 to distribute Corbyn's electoral manifesto as widely as  
22 possible. The plan of activity was that during  
23 the forthcoming week all available comrades would  
24 distribute leaflets throughout the day, canvass from  
25 6 pm until 9 pm and afterwards go 'flyposting' in teams

1 of three."

2 Is that reference to "flyposting", Mr Corbyn, likely  
3 to be illegal flyposting, or not?

4 A. Well, I don't know. It depends what they decided to do.  
5 But there was a fair amount of corrugated iron around  
6 those -- in the area, and I think often people would put  
7 flyposting on corrugated iron. Would they put it on  
8 places which would -- where it might be -- well, I don't  
9 know about illegal, but possibly unlawful. I -- I don't  
10 know.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Flyposters would just put flyposting around, as in -- as  
13 they do in these days.

14 Q. More generally, Mr Corbyn, how do you feel -- how did  
15 you feel learning that information like this was being  
16 reported on your activities, to the police?

17 A. Well, you mean learning now that this is reported?

18 Q. Yes.

19 A. Well, two things. One, it's pretty innocuous what we  
20 were doing, flyposting.

21 Am I concerned about these ongoing reports? Well,  
22 yes, because they're an intrusion in -- into privacy  
23 without justification, because if you can, you know,  
24 spend this effort looking at election campaign groups  
25 flyposting or not, then -- well, on us, then what about

1 all the other candidates? I mean, there would have been  
2 Labour Party, Conservative Party, Liberal at the time,  
3 I suppose, all sorts of people. All of whom might have  
4 done flyposting but were, I think, not being spied upon  
5 by the police. I mean, why was that? Why not spy on  
6 all of them? There aren't the police resources to do  
7 this. You know, I'm not quite sure what the spying  
8 purpose was for here, because it's unimaginable that in  
9 an election campaign we would be doing anything  
10 dangerous, you know?

11 Q. Thank you, Mr Corbyn.

12 I'd like, please, to look at the paragraph above  
13 the one we've just read, which is paragraph 3. It's on  
14 a different topic, but it's contained within the same  
15 report.

16 Thank you.

17 I'll just read that paragraph:

18 "The agenda of the meeting, which was chaired by  
19 [Privacy], comprised two items, namely a report and  
20 discussion on Piers Corbyn's electoral campaign ..."

21 Which we've just considered:

22 "... with allocation of comrades for tasks in  
23 the coming week, followed by a discussion on  
24 the anti-fascist demonstration to be held in Haringey on  
25 Saturday 23 April ..."

1           Now, if we turn to page 2, please, {UCPI/17335/2}.

2           Thank you. Just the top of page 2.

3           We can see here that this is the second item being  
4           discussed:

5           "... IMG intervention in the anti-fascist  
6           demonstration to take place on Saturday  
7           exactly your birthday! 23 April, 1977 at Duckett's  
8           Common, N8. He explained that some twenty-five  
9           political and anti-racist organisations were joining to  
10          form a united front to oppose the National Front march  
11          and implement the IMG policy of 'no platform for  
12          fascists'."

13          Mr Corbyn, the events that are being discussed there  
14          were what came to be known as, "The Battle of Wood  
15          Green" --

16         A. Ah, okay.

17         Q. -- on 23 April 1977.

18         A. Was I there?

19         Q. That was going to be my question.

20         A. Oh, okay.

21         Q. Do you remember -- (overspeaking) -- Wood Green in  
22          April 1977 for that demonstration?

23         A. I don't know. Was Tariq Ali a leading light in this  
24          event?

25         Q. I'm not sure, Mr Corbyn. It was an event which took

1 place, as I say, in April 1977 --

2 A. Well, it was on St George's day 1977, as you can see.

3 Q. A large demonstration by a number of groups opposing  
4 the National Front.

5 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I think I would have been there.  
6 And I remember vaguely -- well, that or another event up  
7 there, I remember Tariq Ali speaking from the back of  
8 a truck or lorry, and me also speaking from the back of  
9 a truck or lorry. Probably a number of people speaking.

10 I don't remember what you would describe as  
11 "The Battle of Wood Green", though. I mean, I think  
12 the idea was that just sheer numbers of this united  
13 front against facism, sheer numbers of people like that  
14 present would ensure that the National Front wouldn't be  
15 able to pass through whatever they had in mind, because  
16 the police obviously would make sure that the two groups  
17 stayed apart, the consequence of which would be that --  
18 well, quite likely the -- well, I said IMG, but I mean  
19 this -- you know, this united front wouldn't be able to  
20 go anywhere beyond wherever they were, but the  
21 National Front wouldn't be able to either, which was  
22 the intention, to stop them spreading racist propaganda.

23 Q. Well, thank you, Mr Corbyn.

24 The incident that did occur in April --

25 A. Okay.

1 Q. -- of 1977 at Wood Green resulted in some disorder.

2 A. Mm-hm.

3 Q. Do you remember violence or disorder of any kind  
4 happening at the march that you went to?

5 A. No, I don't. The thing that comes to my mind was me --  
6 me speaking with Tariq Ali and others from the back of  
7 a lorry. There was a big crowd around, but I don't --  
8 I don't remember disorder.

9 I mean, it could be that disorder was -- occurred  
10 and was then the only thing reported in the media, as  
11 like the end of this gigantic 500,000 rally that's just  
12 happened last weekend, and at the end of it the police,  
13 I have to say, attacked a music -- a music sub-event in  
14 Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, and that got reported in  
15 the media as if that was what the 500,000 -- possibly at  
16 least -- demonstration was about, which of course it  
17 wasn't.

18 So, you know, this report here might be partly from  
19 media, or possibly the eyes of a policeman who was  
20 concentrating, as he would naturally, I would say, on  
21 any disorder that took place.

22 But no, honestly, I don't remember. I don't  
23 remember disorder at the event I am remembering, which  
24 sounds familiar, because there were these united fronts  
25 of action to oppose fascistic or fascist groups.

- 1 Q. Thank you, Mr Corbyn.
- 2           There was another march in August of 1977 in
- 3           Lewisham.
- 4 A. Okay.
- 5 Q. Which was a similar march against the National Front.
- 6 A. Okay.
- 7 Q. Are you able to remember whether you were at that event?
- 8 A. No. I mean, I didn't go to every event, you know,
- 9           because --
- 10 Q. Did you attend many events/marches opposing
- 11           the National Front?
- 12 A. Quite a lot, yeah. I would have turned up at most
- 13           anti-NF rallies, or perhaps half of them. I -- I --
- 14           I don't know. I don't remember Lewisham, but I do
- 15           remember this -- something definitely happening in
- 16           Haringey that I was at. Lewisham, I don't know, you'd
- 17           have to tell me which part of Lewisham it was and it
- 18           might -- might come to mind.
- 19 Q. It was a big march through the centre of Lewisham in
- 20           August 1977. It doesn't matter if you can't remember
- 21           that one.
- 22           I'm interested in --
- 23 A. Oh, okay.
- 24 Q. -- more generally, did you have much involvement with
- 25           the Anti-Nazi League at around this time?

1       A. Well, yeah. I -- I went along to Anti-Nazi League  
2       events, which were a kind of combination of united  
3       fronts against what was thought to be fascistic  
4       tendencies, ie Nazi tendencies, which were propagated by  
5       people like the National Front Party. But I didn't have  
6       any -- any key involvement, no. I just went along as  
7       a -- an active supporter of the Anti-Nazi League.

8       Q. I see.

9               And did the IMG have a particular policy on  
10       confronting or opposing right-wing groups at this time?

11       A. Yeah, I think so. I mean, it would have been -- well,  
12       I remember we supported the Anti-Nazi League, but  
13       I don't think the IMG was the main force in  
14       the Anti-Nazi League. I think there were a lot of  
15       groups involved in the Anti-Nazi League, and it became  
16       something which had a lot of happy music and did events  
17       on Clapham Common, for example, which were, you know,  
18       I think good creative events. In fact, irrespective of  
19       the politics, they, you know, got young people,  
20       you know, involved in -- in things.

21       Q. Thank you, Mr Corbyn.

22               Just finally on this subject, you told us a moment  
23       ago that you went to a number of these marches. Did you  
24       witness any disorder or violence at any of these marches  
25       that you went to?

1       A. Well, actually, no. You see, I think these ANL things  
2       and other anti-fascist demos, they were meant to be just  
3       largely large groups of people getting in the way of  
4       whatever the National Front wanted to do.

5               Now, there may well have been confrontations,  
6       indeed, or mostly they were confrontations between  
7       the police and the NF or the police and  
8       the Anti-Nazi League, because both sides would be trying  
9       to do something, ostensibly to get to the other, but  
10      really it was this kind of symbolic fracas, in my  
11      opinion. But I don't remember being -- I was never  
12      personally involved in those sort of fracas.

13      Q. Thank you, Mr Corbyn.

14              Can we turn to a separate topic, please, and bring  
15      up report {UCPI/21485}. That's at tab 36. Thank you.  
16      And if we just zoom in on paragraph 1.

17              This is a report, Mr Corbyn, submitted by -- thank  
18      you -- a police officer, with a copy of a Fare Fight  
19      internal document listing the active supporters of  
20      the campaign.

21              Can you just tell us briefly please what the Fare  
22      Fight campaign was about?

23      A. Yes, certainly, with pleasure, actually. I would say at  
24      the outset, Fare Fight was a kind of absolutely totally  
25      passive protest about fare rises. Why this should

1           involve, you know, police surveillance like this, I've  
2           no idea.

3           But the "Fare Fight" campaign happened because  
4           Bromley Council had been to court to prevent the GLC --  
5           well, London Transport, but it was then the GLC's  
6           involvement in that -- reducing fares, and  
7           Bromley Council made the fares go up. So then a "Fare  
8           Fight" campaign was formed, which was to fight these  
9           fare increases and make them go down.

10          What we were doing was we issued -- I mean, not me  
11          personally, but I was part of the setup which did  
12          this -- issued little booklets of what were  
13          called "deferred payment slips", whereby, if you  
14          travelled on the Tube or the bus, you would hand in --  
15          you would buy a 10p ticket -- that was the smallest  
16          ticket you could do -- and you would say on it, "I today  
17          travelled from A to B and tendered a 10p ticket, and if  
18          you wish to recover the sum due, please contact me at"  
19          and you give your name and address.

20          So these were handed in in tens of thousands, or  
21          hundreds of thousands. Now, of course, it's up to  
22          London Transport then to chase people who hadn't paid  
23          what they said then should be the fare. And that was  
24          how the protest took place, and it was designed to cause  
25          disruption to the payment systems of London Transport,

1 and therefore, hopefully, get fare reductions.

2 Now, without going into the details, I ended up  
3 being the test case for this in the High Court in -- it  
4 was called "Corbyn v Saunders". And we didn't win that  
5 case, and these deferred payment slips were not allowed.  
6 But the consequence of the campaign was that actually  
7 the fares -- did go down again.

8 Q. Thank you --

9 A. I could go into the legalities of what happened in  
10 the High Court, but it was all about whether or not  
11 there was a comma present -- (overspeaking) -- and  
12 the law should be read as if there was not a comma  
13 present when there was a comma present in  
14 the sentence "travelling on the Tube without having paid  
15 the sum due, and with intent to avoid payment thereof".

16 Q. Thank you, Mr Corbyn. We don't need to go into  
17 the legality.

18 A. Oh, okay, all right. It's just that I remembered in  
19 detail and I was quite surprised that I did, so  
20 I thought I would tell you.

21 Q. We've got plenty of detail on that from your statement.

22 A. Okay.

23 Q. I am just interested in knowing, this campaign, what  
24 sort of methods did you use? Did you protest? Did you  
25 produce leaflets? What sort of things did you do?

1       A. No, the only thing we were doing was -- we might have  
2       had some placards and leaflets -- yeah, we did have  
3       leaflets. We had leaflets. Well printed leaflets,  
4       I remember, which everybody read. And I think you had  
5       a deferred payment slip on the bottom of each leaflet  
6       which you could tear off and use. And we handed out  
7       little booklets of deferred payment slips as well. That  
8       was the sum total of the campaign. Very focused, very  
9       specific. Completely passive.

10      Q. Is it right, Mr Corbyn, that the campaign had quite  
11      a wide support base from other groups?

12      A. Oh, absolutely, it was hugely supported. I remember  
13      giving out leaflets on the Tube train, and everybody who  
14      took a leaflet read it instantly, as if it was -- well,  
15      you know, the readership of our leaflets was much higher  
16      than newspapers.

17      Q. Could we just turn to page 5 --

18      A. Yeah.

19      Q. -- of this report, {UCPI/21485/5}. I think some of  
20      the groups may be mentioned there.

21             I'm afraid this is the wrong way round, but the  
22      bottom half of this page we can see --

23      A. There we are.

24      Q. They've solved it for me. Thank you.

25             You can see reference to the Young Liberals,

1 East London Libertarians, other groups -- thank you --  
2 like Waltham Forest Trades Council?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Claimants Union, the Socialist Worker,  
5 International Socialists. It's right that this campaign  
6 attracted quite a lot of wide support --

7 A. Absolutely. It was mass support, mass opposition to  
8 these fare rises which had been imposed unjustly --  
9 I would say this was an unjust law, by the way --  
10 unjustly by Bromley Council, by some -- something they  
11 did in the -- in the courts.

12 Q. Thank you.

13 A. (inaudible) faked a democratic decision by  
14 the GLC and London Transport to hold fares down.

15 Q. Thank you. This report can come down now.

16 I'd like to ask you, please, about a slightly  
17 different topic.

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. It's correct, isn't it, that you became involved in  
20 a number of groups concerned with the situation in  
21 Northern Ireland in the 1970s; is that right?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And was that through the IMG or was that entirely  
24 separately?

25 A. It was mostly through the IMG, but I was always

1           slightly -- or certainly interested in Ireland, because  
2           I remember as a child visiting Ireland, visiting Galway  
3           with my parents. So I -- I was interested anyway in  
4           Ireland, yes.

5           Q. There are three groups which we'll talk about.

6           The first is the ISC. I think it's right, isn't it,  
7           that the IMG --

8           A. ISC is Irish Solidarity Campaign.

9           Q. Irish Solidarity Campaign.

10                     It's right, isn't it, that the IMG had quite some  
11           influence within the ISC?

12           A. Yes, that's true. Anything the IMG was involved in or  
13           initiated would often have the word "solidarity" in it.  
14           So it's like Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, Irish  
15           Solidarity Campaign.

16           Q. I see.

17                     This influence, was it an attempt to try and control  
18           the ISC, or was it more based on a similar support --

19           A. I think it was a similar support thing. I mean,  
20           I wasn't very involved, but I did go to -- to events.  
21           You see, the IMG idea in my mind then was to support or  
22           organise or initiate the most effective groups in order  
23           to present ideas to a wider -- wider layer, wider  
24           population. So, that didn't necessitate the IMG  
25           controlling things necessarily --

- 1 Q. I see -- (overspeaking) --
- 2 A. -- although some people liked controlling things.
- 3 I think the important thing was to build these groups so
- 4 that they would gain traction.
- 5 Q. Just in terms of the IMG's policy towards
- 6 Northern Ireland, could we bring up {UCPI/8129}.
- 7 That's behind tab 7, Sir.
- 8 It's paragraph 13 on page 2, please, {UCPI/8129/2}.
- 9 I should say, this is a pre-conference meeting for
- 10 the All London Members of the IMG.
- 11 Just in terms of this issue, paragraph 13 reads:
- 12 "After this Peter Gowan spoke on the question of
- 13 Ireland and the IMG's attitude towards the situation
- 14 there. He said the political committee of the IMG
- 15 intended changing their official slogan on Ireland
- 16 from 'Victory to the IRA' to 'Solidarity with the IRA'.
- 17 This measure was being taken as it was felt the former
- 18 slogan was ambiguous."
- 19 A. Mm-hm.
- 20 Q. Can we take from this, Mr Corbyn, that the IMG supported
- 21 the IRA within the conflict in Northern Ireland at the
- 22 time?
- 23 A. Well, I think from that you can say that the support --
- 24 if you want "support" to mean literal support for what
- 25 they do -- as it was ambiguous.

1           Now, I remember Peter Gowan. He was a great guy,  
2 a fantastic historian, and he's passed away,  
3 unfortunately. But he was, you know, a really wonderful  
4 fellow. And very, very knowledgeable on history. So,  
5 you know, he would have been saying things which people  
6 would listen to.

7           I think the solidarity with the IRA would mean we  
8 support the right of -- or the campaign for a united  
9 Ireland. Although -- well, obviously lots of things  
10 the IRA were doing, or appeared to be doing, which I  
11 think we would not support. But the word "solidarity"  
12 here means a kind of general support for the aims,  
13 that's what I would say, or my understanding of it.

14           This phrase, I'm not sure if that "victory to the  
15 IRA" sort of slogan was around for a long time or not,  
16 but it clearly could be misunderstood by all sorts of  
17 people. So it was right to change it, if in fact it had  
18 existed as a significant thing anyway.

19       Q. Mr Corbyn, just so we're clear, you've said that the IMG  
20 would support some aspects of the IRA's policy?

21       A. Yeah, ie the aims. That is there should be a united  
22 Ireland, and that the division of Ireland in the --  
23 was it 1921 division of Ireland was wrong, and,  
24 you know, the whole of Ireland should have stayed as  
25 Ireland. But, you know, that's, of course -- it wasn't

1 the case. I mean, there was a -- you know, we still do  
2 have a divided Ireland.

3 Q. Would the IMG have supported the tactics used by the IRA  
4 or not?

5 A. I would say no. Well, it depends which tactics you  
6 mean, because, you see, the IRA, or their political wing  
7 Sinn Fein, Sinn Fein did all sorts of things which  
8 no one would disagree with. Like, they built community  
9 groups to help people who were unemployed, and all that  
10 sort of stuff. So, you know, they covered a broad front  
11 of activities. And I would have thought really that  
12 when they talked about solidarity with the IRA, it meant  
13 they would be, in reality, having solidarity with Sinn  
14 Fein, which was the political angle of the struggle for  
15 a united Ireland.

16 Q. I see.

17 Turning, please, to the ISC -- and we can take this  
18 document down. You've told us in your statement  
19 the ISC was established to provide a network for  
20 the nationalist community in the UK. What was your  
21 involvement in the ISC?

22 A. Well, small. When there were meetings -- you see,  
23 I think the ISC probably coordinated things like the --  
24 or coordinated with the anti-Nazi -- sorry, not  
25 the Anti-Nazi League, the Anti-Internment League, AIL,

1           which was -- and that did interest me. And they would  
2           work with other things. The Troops Out Movement was  
3           another thing. So they were all different groups which  
4           were mobilising on the Irish question. And  
5           I personally, and I think most IMG members, would  
6           definitely go along to things involved with  
7           the Anti-Internment League; because of course -- I don't  
8           know if you know yourself, but at that time, the British  
9           Government were arresting people in Ireland who they  
10          deemed to be dangerous and interning them, imprisoning  
11          them, without trial. And this, you see, is against all  
12          democratic processes under English law. So we were just  
13          campaigning for very basic human rights.

14         Q. Thank you.

15                 Is it fair to say you attended meetings of all three  
16                 of these groups, so that's the ISC, the AIL and TOM?

17         A. I might have, but not in any large role. I mean,  
18                 the Anti-Internment League would have been the main  
19                 thing I would have gone along to.

20         Q. So can we take it from that you weren't involved in any  
21                 management or organisation?

22         A. No, no, not involved in any management or organisation  
23                 of these -- these -- these campaigns.

24         Q. And in terms of their activities, what would they do?  
25                 Are we talking about marches and leaflets, and things

1           like that?

2           A. Yes. Yeah, they'd have marches and leaflets in Kilburn.

3           I remember marches and leaflets in Shepherd's Bush  
4           Green, because it's a big kind of green triangle is  
5           Shepherd's Bush Green, and that would be a good place  
6           for meeting quite a lot of Irish -- Irish people living  
7           around there.

8           And there were quite a few Irish people -- because  
9           at that time, you see, 19 -- well, it depends what time  
10          this was. But between 1972 and 1975, I was squatting in  
11          Elgin Avenue, Paddington. And they were quite a number  
12          of Irish people squatting as well. Some of whom were  
13          undoubtedly Republicans, in the sense they supported  
14          the Republican cause. That doesn't mean they were  
15          involved in the IRA in any way, but that sort of factor.

16          The label "republican" can lead to confusion. I  
17          mean, a "republican" means supporting the republic of  
18          all Ireland. That's what it meant in those days anyway.

19          Q. I think what may be obvious is that all three of these  
20          groups are Republican groups in one way or another?

21          A. Yes, absolutely, absolutely.

22          Q. In terms of their aims, did any of these groups advocate  
23          for the use of violence in furtherance of those --

24          A. No, not to my knowledge.

25          Q. Did they support the use of violence by others in

1 Northern Ireland on either side of the divide?

2 A. Well, I don't think so, no, no. I mean, you see, the --  
3 I mean, the violence from both sides was -- was in the  
4 end, I would say, counter-productive. And in the end,  
5 of course, we have police now in Northern Ireland, or  
6 relative police, which has got rid of "The Troubles",  
7 as they call them.

8 Q. In your memory of being involved in these groups, did  
9 many of the people who were members or at meetings  
10 advocate individually for the use of violence in  
11 furtherance of the causes they supported?

12 A. No. I remember when Bloody Sunday happened going on  
13 a big demonstration at Trafalgar Square, or it must have  
14 been the day after or something, Trafalgar Square and  
15 down Whitehall and down Downing Street. And the police  
16 tried to break it up, and then there were various  
17 scuffles with the police, but that's all they were. And  
18 I was arrested, in fact, for something. And I think  
19 I got a minor thing, a conditional discharge or  
20 something, so it wasn't -- wasn't a big deal.

21 But then, you have to realise what was happening.  
22 I mean, the British army had shot at defenceless people,  
23 and so there was a huge amount of anger. And that was,  
24 you know, a big -- a big demonstration. But that was --  
25 the anger was against what the British Army had done,

1 and the British Army was effectively suppressing  
2 the people's rights, which included interning --  
3 internment of people, in a totally undemocratic fashion.

4 Q. Thank you, Mr Corbyn.

5 I'd like to move on to something you mentioned  
6 a moment ago, please. You mention that you were  
7 involved in the squatting movement from -- I think it's  
8 from about 1972 onwards.

9 A. Correct, yes.

10 Q. You've said in your witness statement that this was  
11 perhaps through the IMG that you became involved in  
12 this?

13 A. Ah, no, it wasn't through the IMG. At that time, I was  
14 a member of the IMG.

15 Q. I see.

16 A. I became involved in squatting because I lived in  
17 Notting Hill at 17A Rendle Street, and I took  
18 the landlord to a rent tribunal and got the rent halved,  
19 and then the landlord gave me a notice to quit, because  
20 we did not have furnished tenancy security. And my  
21 elder brother who was sharing the flat with me -- not  
22 Jeremy, who's younger than me -- elder brother, called  
23 Andrew Corbyn, who has unfortunately since died, but he  
24 said to me, he said, "Why don't we squat? Piers, why  
25 don't we squat?" And I said, "Don't be silly, only

1 hippies do that." But anyway, nevertheless, we did  
2 squat. And the IMG view of this was that maybe this was  
3 -- well, it's okay, you're squatting. But when  
4 I started saying, "Oh, we should organise things in  
5 squatting, because we have to stop evictions," some of  
6 the people in the IMG were opposed to this and said, no,  
7 we should do things which they described as "the real  
8 tenants' struggle" in Notting Hill.

9 Q. Oh, I see.

10 A. But I did convince them that they should actually  
11 support what I was doing, and they did in the end. And  
12 which we achieved very great things there.

13 Q. We'll come on to those.

14 A. Yes, of course. Yes --

15 Q. But just --

16 A. The answer to your question is, no, I got involved  
17 because of my housing needs.

18 Q. I see.

19 We can take it from that, can we, that certainly  
20 the IMG involvement, the faction, I think you said in  
21 your statement, was quite small, at least --

22 A. Well, yeah, it was -- we set up an IMG squatting faction  
23 to sort of explain to the IMG people what was going on;  
24 and also get practical support for when we did things.  
25 And that, actually, was a good thing to do, because in

1 the end, we were very successful and the IMG or other  
2 left groups realised the importance of this form of  
3 action to help house the homeless.

4 Q. I see. Can we please bring up {UCPI/9509}, please.

5 It's at tab 27, Sir.

6 Mr Corbyn, this is a report submitted by a police  
7 officer with a copy of Easy 111, which is a document  
8 we'll look at in a moment, published by the Maida Hill  
9 Squatters and Tenants' Association, and I think this was  
10 produced after what's described as "the successful  
11 campaign of the Elgin Avenue Squatters"?

12 A. That's right.

13 Q. Which led to them all being rehoused. And this is  
14 a campaign that you were involved in --

15 A. Well, I was the key organiser, I would say.

16 Q. Key organiser, yes.

17 Just in brief, it's right, isn't it, that this was  
18 a squat that you had become involved in, in vacant  
19 houses due for demolition?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And after a campaign by you and others, the council  
22 agreed to rehouse you all, and so you left.

23 Can we turn, please, to page 9 of this document  
24 {UCPI/9509/9}. Thank you.

25 I'm interested in the section that

1 reads "Demolition" in the bottom left of the page.

2 A. The bottom left.

3 Q. Don't worry, it will come up.

4 A. Oh, it will come up, okay. Ah, right.

5 Q. This is a document that you produced, possibly with  
6 others. And the part under "Demolition" --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. -- says:

9 "On the dawn of Thurs Oct 16, 200 police were in  
10 Elgin Avenue outside the empty houses. They had been  
11 booked for the eviction if we had not ... gone ..."

12 Can we take it from that, Mr Corbyn, that in  
13 the process of the attempted eviction, the police had  
14 attended in some numbers, if you hadn't agreed to  
15 leave --

16 A. Well, I think, yeah what happened, October 15, at noon  
17 or thereabouts, the GLC and police agreed that we would  
18 all be rehoused and the police would, if you like,  
19 supervise and assist our leaving. And we went to South  
20 London in vans, or whatever, organised by the GLC.

21 Now, we didn't know, but in fact the police had  
22 a plan that if we hadn't left, there would be a mass  
23 eviction on the following day, probably -- well, they  
24 liked doing these things at 6 am, so probably it would  
25 have been at dawn on the next day. But curiously -- and

1           that's when the demolition began -- the police carried  
2           out their exercise anyway and all turned up. But which  
3           was obviously completely unnecessary because nobody was  
4           going to try and get back in there because we'd all been  
5           successfully rehoused. But, you know, these things have  
6           a life of their own, don't they.

7           Q. Could we turn to page 2, {UCPI/9509/2}, please.

8           A. But I remember turning up there at dawn, because I got  
9           a phone call to the effect that -- or some call -- how  
10          did I know to be there?

11          Q. Thank you --

12          A. Anyway, we knew the demolition was going to happen, so  
13          we went there to watch.

14          Q. Thank you, Mr Corbyn.

15                 I'm just going to read a small section out, then  
16                 I'll ask a question or two about it. It's the very  
17                 bottom part of this page, that says:

18                         "Our collective organised strength and support meant  
19                         we could physically resist and in a confrontation human  
20                         justice would be on our side. So whatever happened  
21                         the GLC had to lose and we had to win."

22          A. Yeah.

23          Q. Now, in your witness statement you've told us that an  
24          announcement which was made in this case to defend  
25          the squat against eviction often led to rehousing.

1 A. Mm-hm.

2 Q. Was an announcement to physically resist the eviction  
3 therefore a tactic, or was this something that was  
4 realistically going to happen if they hadn't --

5 A. Well, I think realistically, a crowd of people standing  
6 around outside a building, even though we'd built  
7 barricades, would not prevent the -- the police or  
8 the bailiffs gaining control. So, our barricades  
9 were -- although physical, in their effect they were  
10 largely -- or in fact, primarily symbolic and political,  
11 to say, you know, what's behind the barricades is right,  
12 and the police trying to -- or the bailiffs trying to  
13 remove people is wrong.

14 And we put forward clear demands about the right to  
15 housing for everybody, and the need to use up empty  
16 properties which the GLC had. And GLC councillors, to  
17 give them their credit, accepted our argument, only  
18 after we had projected this idea across people and got  
19 support from local tenants' associations and Westminster  
20 Trades Council. And then they gave in, and  
21 Richard Balfe, the chair of the housing management  
22 committee, organised adequate rehousing. I remember  
23 having a meeting with him and others in the town hall,  
24 where he had to basically shout at GLC officers to tell  
25 them they had to find this housing for these people by

1 a certain time. Which they did, because the GLC had  
2 huge resources of empty properties.

3 Q. Thank you, Mr Corbyn.

4 Could we look at the bottom of page 3 of this  
5 document, please, {UCPI/9509/3}.

6 A. Yes, I hope so. I remember typing this. This was  
7 a long time ago. But anyway, there you are.

8 Q. Right.

9 Now, this page has what appears to be a quote from  
10 you at the bottom.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. I'm just going to read out -- I do apologise that it's  
13 not that clear. I think it reads:

14 "Even though we had more than average for London's  
15 homeless of desperate, disoriented people, our  
16 organisation and policies won. At the end, people were  
17 more ready to physically confront the police and State  
18 than I expected. The Streets Meets were  
19 the pooling ..."

20 A. Pooling, oh pooling, yeah.

21 Q. "... and creating of all our strength. Our victory  
22 proves the indomitable spirit of humanity. The lessons  
23 of Elgin and other struggles before it everywhere will  
24 be used in a thousand struggles to come in housing and  
25 workplace until Capitalism is finally smashed and our

1 world will be OURS."

2 Now, Mr Corbyn, I'm just interested in that, where  
3 it says that "people were more ready to physically  
4 confront the police and State than I expected".

5 A. Mm-hm.

6 Q. That seems to suggest that there was at least  
7 a realistic prospect that there could have been some  
8 violence --

9 A. Well.

10 Q. -- (overspeaking) -- if anything happened; would you  
11 agree with that?

12 A. Well, wherever the violence comes from. You see, what  
13 it meant was we would call upon people in the buildings  
14 to stay put, which they did. In the weekend before, we  
15 had, what, 200 people in the street. Only three people  
16 left. Only three people left. Despite the fact they  
17 knew that there was an eviction imminent. At that  
18 point -- because we hadn't got our offer of housing at  
19 that point, the weekend before, it came on the Monday  
20 morning. What that meant was you wanted people to stay  
21 in the buildings and be in the way of any police or  
22 bailiffs who would try and come in. So any violence  
23 would have to come from the police and bailiffs.

24 And there would be a crowd outside from local  
25 squatters. There were hundreds of squats in the area.

1           And they indeed turned up, and stood outside on the --  
2           on the day when we were rehoused. In that case it was  
3           for solidarity, ie I get, you know, moral support, if  
4           you like.

5           That's what that means. It doesn't mean that people  
6           were ready to take up armed struggle or anything  
7           approaching that against the -- the state. As I said,  
8           the purpose of these things was political persuasion of  
9           those in power so that it became politically necessary  
10          for them to do what we wanted, ie house the homeless.

11         Q. Could we just have a quick look at the top half of this  
12          page, please?

13         A. Yeah, sure.

14                 Crumbs, I'm remembering these people now I'm seeing  
15                 them. Heathcote Williams, he's died now. Now, he  
16                 wasn't a squatter -- well, he was, but not there, he was  
17                 a supporter.

18         Q. You'll be able to see that in fact the second person who  
19          is mentioned on this leaflet is listed as "25 single"?

20         A. "Michael Johnstone, 25 single".

21         Q. I'm interested in what he says towards the end of  
22          the paragraph --

23         A. Okay.

24         Q. -- ascribed to him. It says:

25                 "If they hadn't given us rehousing and let us

1 inspect it, and if the Sheriff and Police had tried to  
2 break the barricades without our consent I would have  
3 thrown rubbish and ..."

4 "Card" I think that possibly says?

5 A. No "sand", I think.

6 Q. So sorry, "sand", you're quite right:

7 "... I was ready to meet their violence with  
8 violence. If it meant prison it meant prison."

9 How does that fit with what you have just told us,  
10 Mr Corbyn?

11 A. Well, I'm telling you what I thought and how we  
12 initiated -- or how I organised the struggle. It's an  
13 individual there who's saying he would have been ready  
14 to commit -- well, to meet their violence with violence.  
15 That's what he says. So I wrote down what he said,  
16 that's all. It doesn't mean that we were putting  
17 forward such a thing.

18 Q. But certainly that members --

19 A. "We" meaning me writing this newspaper, this newsheet,  
20 and the sort of small committee of immediate active  
21 supporters, some of whom might have been in the IMG, but  
22 it's -- we were a self-organised democratic setup in  
23 Elgin Avenue. I don't remember this guy. I think "25"  
24 means not his age but the house he lived in.

25 Q. I see.

1 A. So it's number 25 Elgin Avenue.

2 Q. You've said in your statement you were surprised at  
3 the readiness of people to confront?

4 A. Mm.

5 Q. What did you mean by that? Why were you surprised by  
6 it?

7 A. Well, a threat of eviction is a very fearful thing. And  
8 what had surprised me was, the weekend before I said to  
9 everybody, "Look, we're going to build barricades.  
10 We're still trying to make the GLC rehouse us all. They  
11 may come evict us next week. Please stay put." And  
12 people did, despite how fearful it was. If you think  
13 about it, you know, because people had seen evictions in  
14 other places; they'd seen the police storming in, or  
15 the bailiffs storming in backed by the police, and on  
16 occasions there might be arrests. But it's a scary  
17 thing. And I said, "Well, it is a scary thing, but if  
18 we stay put, they may indeed rehouse us." Which is what  
19 happened.

20 So the resilience, if you like, was people deciding  
21 to risk, you know, an unknown, potentially hurtful  
22 situation. You know, as I said, only three people left  
23 the street in that previous weekend. And that really --  
24 you know, I knew at that -- I knew at that point we'd  
25 win. That Monday morning I knew we'd win, because only

1 three people had left the street, and the GLC could see  
2 us. They could see the banners, they could see  
3 the barricades. And they thought, "Well, okay, they're  
4 actually right, these squatters are actually right."

5 So this thing about risking things wasn't about  
6 violence, it was about people being ready to -- well,  
7 face violence from the police and bailiffs, if you like.  
8 I mean, I would regard breaking down the door with  
9 a sledgehammer as a violent act. Okay, it's maybe not  
10 against a person, but it is a violent act, I would say.

11 Q. Thank you, Mr Corbyn.

12 Just lastly on this, the very last thing you've said  
13 at the bottom of the page is about smashing capitalism.  
14 Can we take it from that that your involvement in  
15 the squatting movement was linked to your political  
16 activities at that time and that --

17 A. No, I was in the IMG, so I would tag on these sort of  
18 things. But, you know, that wasn't my motive for being  
19 involved in squatting. My motive for being involved in  
20 squatting was to, 1, house myself and, 2, house others.  
21 And the consequence in the end of this victory in  
22 Elgin Avenue was that the GLC revised its whole policies  
23 completely. There were 10,000 squats in GLC properties.  
24 And two years later, the GLC gave tenancies to all  
25 10,000 GLC squats. And that followed on from our

1 struggle. And that was a fantastic -- fantastic  
2 victory. And achieved without any violence, or even  
3 a single arrest -- or a single arrest at the barricades.  
4 I mean, people did get arrested for sometimes entering  
5 other -- entering squats, or whatever. But, you know,  
6 in terms of our campaign, we were totally peaceful.

7 And the IMG went along with what I was doing. There  
8 wasn't any attempt to make us more anything, or  
9 whatever. They said, "Yeah, that's fantastic, Piers,  
10 you know, you've achieved a lot of things here."

11 Q. Thank you, Mr Corbyn. You, I think shortly after, also  
12 became involved in a similar issue at the Huntley Street  
13 squat.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Could we please bring up {UCPI/21215}. Thank you.

16 This is a report of a meeting at which you spoke  
17 I think on behalf of the Huntley Street squatters  
18 campaign?

19 A. Mm-hm.

20 Q. It's a meeting held in Conway Hall in March 1979. And  
21 it was held under the auspices of the People's  
22 Commission, and was concerning persons unknown. And  
23 I think that was connected to the Persons Unknown trial  
24 which was around at that time.

25 The report --

- 1 A. Right.
- 2 Q. -- notes that:
- 3 "The majority of those presents were from Persons
- 4 Unknown and friends of Astrid Proll."
- 5 And says:
- 6 "Among the other groups represented were
- 7 the anarchist black cross, the London workers group,
- 8 the gay activists alliance ...(Reading to the words)...
- 9 the Huntley Street squatters campaign."
- 10 A number of these groups are anarchist groups,
- 11 Mr Corbyn?
- 12 A. Mm-hm.
- 13 Q. What connections did you have other than speak at
- 14 meetings like this with anarchist groups?
- 15 A. Well, I knew some of these anarchist group operatives,
- 16 but I'm trying to remember. I do remember meetings in
- 17 Conway Hall, but what was this --
- 18 Q. Well, if we scroll --
- 19 A. (inaudible) commission, what was that?
- 20 Q. If we scroll down to the second half of the page, that
- 21 might help. Paragraph 4 -- thank you -- if we could
- 22 just go up a little. Thank you.
- 23 I'll read out what it says?
- 24 A. Some.
- 25 Q. "Dave Morris acted as the spokesman for the Persons

1 Unknown and said that the purpose of the 'People's  
2 Commission' was to examine evidence of the ways in which  
3 the laws were enforced by the police and to hold  
4 a demonstration against the police later that year."?

5 A. Okay.

6 Q. You've told us that you went to some meetings with  
7 anarchist groups. Did you share any of their aims or  
8 objectives?

9 A. Well, the aims and objectives here were about organising  
10 some sort of tribunal which was aiming to get the police  
11 to presumably not to certain things they were doing. It  
12 says "have a panel of judges". I suppose these were  
13 judges which were like people judges as opposed to  
14 getting a judge from a court, I suppose "should liberal  
15 types be invited to ...". Who -- is this a document I'm  
16 meant to have written or this is a document from  
17 the police?

18 Q. It's from the police.

19 A. Special Branch, who were posing these questions,  
20 I understand, yeah, obviously, yeah.

21 Q. It's a meeting at which you spoke?

22 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

23 Q. Your name is on the --

24 A. Sure, no. No, I'm sure I would have spoken, saying,  
25 "Look, we have to call the police to account", which is

1 something which applies now as well as then, and --  
2 well, I mean, as you know, I'm standing as a Mayor  
3 candidate in the coming elections and I think the police  
4 do have to be more accountable. That's what my  
5 involvement in this would have been about. It wouldn't  
6 have meant that I would -- you see, I wouldn't have  
7 known all of these groups anyway. I'd know some of  
8 them, that's for sure, but -- oh, you suddenly lost that  
9 thing. It doesn't matter, does it? Can you hear me?

10 Q. Yes, yes, Mr Corbyn.

11 A. Well, I'm just saying that to my mind, when I was  
12 speaking there, that was about holding the police to  
13 account so they didn't do things which were illegal or  
14 -- or unjust. The fact that there were -- the meeting  
15 included anarchists is really neither here nor there,  
16 for my attendance. I mean, I don't come or go to  
17 meetings based on who's there, I come or go to meetings  
18 based on what needs to be said to people -- well, which  
19 could be there or people who could be perhaps not there  
20 but hear what was said.

21 Q. So is it fair to say this is, as far as you can recall,  
22 a meeting at which you shared a common cause with other  
23 people who were there?

24 A. A common cause in terms of calling the police to  
25 account, yes, but beyond that, I don't remember any

1 common cause.

2 Q. Can you remember other meetings with similar groups,  
3 anarchist groups, on different causes, or is this a --

4 A. No, I don't. I mean, within the squatting movement,  
5 there were -- there were all sorts of political groups  
6 operating. Quite a lot of religious groups operating,  
7 you know? Ha re Krishna's operating, children of god  
8 operating and different anarchist groups operating. So  
9 I just regarded them as people who were operating and  
10 hoped they had cooperate when we needed numbers to -- to  
11 make a -- make a point, like, you know, getting  
12 someone's gas reconnected if the gas company had  
13 disconnected them, for example.

14 Q. Thank you very much, Mr Corbyn.

15 There's just one more issue I wanted to ask you a --

16 A. Sure.

17 Q. -- question on briefly. Could we please bring up a copy  
18 of your witness statement. It's {UCPI/34186}, and it's  
19 page 59, paragraph 173 {UCPI/34186/49}.

20 A. Ah, right, so I've got it in front of me. I thought you  
21 were going to show it.

22 Q. It's on the screen in front of you.

23 It's a section of your statement where you were  
24 asked whether you recall Colin Clark who was a --

25 A. Ah, yes.

1 Q. -- a UCO, HN80. You say there that you remember him  
2 selling Red Mole every Saturday morning.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Now, I think, in fact, Mr Corbyn, you have seen  
5 a photograph of HN80 before you gave evidence today.  
6 Now, I just want to ask you this, please. Red Mole was  
7 an IMG publication, wasn't it?

8 A. It was.

9 Q. And I think we know that HN80 reported on the SWP  
10 exclusively. Would it have been very unusual for  
11 a member of the SWP to be selling the Red Mole every  
12 Saturday?

13 A. Oh, it would, it would. That would have been not  
14 a thing they would do. So perhaps I've got confused  
15 about who I saw. You see, I've been shown some photos  
16 but they aren't photos I recognised, but I do remember  
17 the name "Colin Clark".

18 Now, he could be a policeman infiltrating in the IS,  
19 the International Socialists, who -- who would -- could  
20 easily turn up at things we were at, but he wouldn't  
21 have sold -- sold Red Mole. So, perhaps my memory is  
22 confused, I don't know.

23 But I do remember a "Colin Clark" and he was quite  
24 an intelligent, knowledgeable guy, you know, and  
25 I didn't suspect him of being a policeman at the time.

1 Well, as I said here, he was a good conversationalist.

2 Q. Mr Corbyn, thank you very much. Those are the only  
3 questions --

4 A. So, I -- so, perhaps you can refresh my memory. I mean,  
5 have I actually been shown a picture of "Colin Clark",  
6 or somebody else?

7 Q. You have.

8 A. Then I didn't recognise him, so perhaps -- perhaps this  
9 wasn't then "Colin Clark" who was long auburn hair. But  
10 I think I'm describing "Colin Clark" accurately.

11 Q. Mr Corbyn, it may not matter, I just thought it was  
12 important that you had an opportunity to know --

13 A. No, no, thank you. I just would say that I don't --  
14 I mean, you know, looking back, I'm kind of staggered to  
15 think, my god, these people in front of me helping or  
16 whatever, including in my flat and so on, were actually  
17 -- actually policemen.

18 And of course, you know, these policemen involved  
19 would be deemed to have assisted in the things we were  
20 doing, which, if what we were doing was illegal or  
21 dangerous, then of course it must be questionable as to  
22 the police's role.

23 I do remember specifically infiltrators in  
24 the Huntley Street squad. They were called "Nigel" and  
25 "Mary" and we suspected these people were police agents

1 or something. And in the eviction -- there was an  
2 eviction in Huntley Street in the end, but this "Nigel"  
3 and "Mary" were police agents because people amongst us  
4 were subsequently arrested. I'm surprised there's  
5 nothing about them in these documents. I asked Michael  
6 Harris the (inaudible) who were "Nigel" and "Mary" and  
7 he said, "They worked for me" and the whole court, it  
8 was the biggest court in Marylebone Magistrates Court  
9 when completely silent and the magistrate went berserk.  
10 He said, "You mean to tell me you had police agents  
11 working for you but helping the squatters go around  
12 London collecting corrugated iron and building  
13 barricades against the law"? And the magistrate was  
14 very angry.

15 But it seems to me now that since you haven't  
16 mentioned this "Nigel" and "Mary" perhaps they were  
17 working directly for the Undersheriff of London not for  
18 the police and not part of Special Branch, I don't know,  
19 but I think that's something which Sir John Mitting  
20 might want to look into, that there was other things  
21 going on involving other branches the state, not just  
22 Special Branch.all this

23 Q. Thank you very much, Mr Corbyn. I don't have any  
24 further questions.

25 A. Thank you.

1 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Corbyn, the remit that I have --

2 A. Yes.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: -- occupies my time and that of the Inquiry

4 team without extending it any further.

5 A. I guess that's a fair comment, it's just that I'm a bit

6 fascinated that, you see, my main activity then was,

7 you know, loads of stuff in squatting but they

8 concentrated all these things about Irish and so on when

9 of course there was a lot going on in squatting

10 including infiltration, so who were "Nigel" and "Mary"

11 without being linked with the Undersheriff. Okay, you

12 can't extend the Inquiry, I don't know, but it's an

13 issue, I don't know.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: One of the things I'm going to ask you to do

15 is break for a quarter of an hour. At the end of every

16 witness's evidence, time is allowed for

17 core participants to propose questions to

18 Counsel to the Inquiry.

19 A. Yes.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: If you wouldn't mind coming back in a quarter

21 of an hour, I'd be grateful.

22 A. Okay.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

24 A. Thank you.

25 MR FERNANDES: Good afternoon, everyone. We will now take

1 a break. May I remind those in the virtual hearing room  
2 to remember to join your break-out rooms, please.

3 The time is 12.30 pm, so we shall resume at 12.45 pm.

4 Thank you.

5 (12.32 pm)

6 (A short break)

7 (12.46 pm)^RACH DID A SCAT

8 MR FERNANDES: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome back.

9 I will now hand the Chairman to continue proceedings.

10 Chairman.

11 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

12 Mr Warner, I understand there is one question that  
13 you are going to ask Mr Corbyn at this stage.^ndex?

14 MR WARNER: Yes, sir.

15 Mr Corbyn, can you hear me all right? Mr Corbyn?

16 I think you might be on mute.

17 A. Got it.

18 Q. Right.

19 Mr Corbyn, I've just got one follow up question, if

20 --

21 A. Sure.

22 Q. -- you don't mind.

23 You told us earlier this morning that the IMG did  
24 try to support other groups without controlling them.

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And you went on to say that some other groups --  
2 revolutionary groups did join others in attempts to try  
3 and control them.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Drawing a distinction between the IMG and these other  
6 groups.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Could you help us, please. Can you remember what other  
9 groups used to do that?

10 A. Well, the impression I had -- I think it was accurate,  
11 from my memory -- is that the IS,  
12 International Socialists, were normally very intent on  
13 controlling whatever they were doing. So, they would  
14 have things which we would describe -- or I would  
15 describe as "fronts" -- quotes here? . So, you know,  
16 they would have some campaign or other called something,  
17 but really it was just being controlled completely by  
18 the IS.

19 The IMG did, I suppose -- well, yeah, the IMG  
20 would -- would have a less controlling way of doing  
21 things, although, of course, in all these groups there  
22 are people who would be intent on control because it's  
23 easier to manage, possibly, but you see, it's not  
24 necessarily more effective, you know. I think  
25 the important thing is to get more participation, and

1 I think that was generally the IMG view.

2 Q. Is it just the IS that you were thinking of, or any  
3 other groups, or is it them in particular?

4 A. Well, there would be other groups like anarchist groups  
5 who would really just be very self-contained and  
6 wouldn't want anybody interfering with them, if you  
7 like, and would probably -- they might indeed set up  
8 campaigns or front campaigns but nobody indeed be  
9 totally in charge of them. But the anarchist groups, to  
10 be fair, would just turn up at meetings and join into  
11 anything, so there wouldn't be a consistent pattern with  
12 them.

13 MR WARNER: Thank you, Mr Corbyn. That was the question  
14 I had for you.

15 A. Okay.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. That concludes your evidence now.  
17 May I thank you for --

18 MR MENON: Sir, excuse me. May I ask for permission to ask  
19 a few questions? I thought --

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Sorry, I do apologise. You wish to ask  
21 questions in re-examination?

22 MR MENON: If I may.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: I apologise, I had overlooked that fact.

24 A. Okay.

25 MR MENON: I'll just use a small part of my allotted time,

1 if I may.

2 Mr Corbyn, just a few matters.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Looking back at over 50 years of activism, have you in  
5 your opinion ever engaged in any political activity that  
6 you consider was subversive in that it threatened  
7 the safety or wellbeing of the state and was intended to  
8 undermine or overthrow by --

9 A. No, I haven't, neither then, nor since then, nor now.

10 I mean, obviously things happened which could be  
11 misinterpreted in those ways, but no, I would say  
12 the answer to that is no.

13 Q. Now amongst the intelligence reports that have been  
14 disclosed to you there are a number of that indicate  
15 that a particular SDS officer who uses the nominal  
16 HN338, an officer who's no longer alive, attended at  
17 least three small political meetings at your home in  
18 1972?

19 A. Well, I want to know who this HN338 was.

20 Q. Yes, I understand. I mean, the position is that we  
21 don't know his cover name and you haven't been shown  
22 a photograph of this particular officer from the 1970s  
23 and my question is this: if you were given his cover  
24 name and if you were given a photograph of him from  
25 the early 1970s, might that assist you in remembering

1 more about this particular officer and the nature of his  
2 spying on you?

3 A. Oh, it certainly would. It certainly would. I mean,  
4 you know, seeing a face brings forth memories. You see,  
5 I remember "Colin Clark". I'm slightly puzzled that  
6 I didn't recognise his photo, but on the other hand,  
7 you know, photos and memories can be confusing. But  
8 I do remember this "Colin Clark", who was, you know,  
9 a friendly sort of guy.

10 I remember a Paul Pearson being active in  
11 Imperial College and also sometimes coming to my flat.  
12 Could he be HN338? I don't know. I don't believe  
13 I don't know.

14 Q. Thank you.

15 Could I please ask for the following document to be  
16 put on the screen {UCPI/10850}.

17 Sir, I think it's at tab 34 of your file.

18 But Mr Corbyn, you'll get it on the screen.

19 A. Okay.

20 Q. You can see from the top that it's a Special Branch  
21 document, and if you look at the first three lines, it  
22 reads as follows:

23 "The following has been received from a reliable  
24 source and is based on twelve months acquaintance with  
25 the squatting field in London."

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. And you can see it's dated 12 August 1976.

3 A. Okay.

4 Q. And unless I'm missing it, we don't know the author of  
5 this particular document, it doesn't appear either by  
6 number or by name anywhere.

7 Have you had the opportunity, Mr Corbyn, to re-read  
8 this document?

9 A. I have, yes, I have.

10 Q. In your opinion, does it accurately portray  
11 the squatting movement in London in 1976?

12 A. Well, partly, but in its, you know, general view,  
13 I would say no. You see, the squatting movement then  
14 was hugely diverse and this document, although it's got,  
15 you know, geographical and organisational things  
16 correct, like people were meeting at Saint Paul's road  
17 and campaigning at (inaudible), those things are  
18 correct, but it seems to have in it quite a lot of  
19 political interpretation which I think -- I don't know  
20 if they're trying to please someone who this report was  
21 written for.

22 It sort of implies things were a lot more  
23 anarchistic than they were, although anarchists were  
24 important, and suggests that squatting appeared to be  
25 more of a political thing than it was. Although

1 squatters became political, you know, people -- people  
2 squatted through desperation. That's what happened in  
3 Elgin Avenue, people were desperate. I'm just flashing  
4 through this in the printed version.

5 There's one thing -- yes, he says on page 2, I think  
6 it is -- these are not numbered paragraphs, he said:

7 "The truth is that over 80% [this is the squatters]  
8 do not want council housing because it would mean that  
9 they were required to meet certain obligations."

10 You see, that's just not true. I mean,  
11 Elgin Avenue, everybody who was offered housing took it.  
12 Nobody turned it down. And it did involve obligations,  
13 obviously, of paying a licence fee and eventually when  
14 people were rehoused it was -- it was the rent.

15 Now, there were anarchists in the movement who said  
16 we shouldn't accept any rehousing, we should squat on  
17 forever, because that's like a new future, and I just  
18 said, "Look, that's ridiculous", I mean, people have  
19 come here for housing and that's what they want and if  
20 it means paying rent then they'll pay rent and they'll  
21 want to and that's exactly what happened.

22 You see, this document is written, I don't know,  
23 from the point of view of somebody who was anarchistic  
24 and wanted to believe certain things. You see, we don't  
25 know who wrote this. Was it a sort of anarchistic

1 person who sent it in hoping to convince the police of  
2 something? I don't know what is the origin of this  
3 document. But I would say as it is it's an  
4 oversimplification of the -- the reality, and I've got  
5 another mark here.

6 Ah yes, about the police. It says on page -- well  
7 -- ah, the bottom of the page, it's (inaudible) numbered  
8 here, it says:

9 "The general attitude towards the police is one of  
10 complete non-cooperation."

11 Well, that isn't true either. I mean, attitudes  
12 toward the police was just a practical matter, as most  
13 people's attitude towards the police is. And indeed, in  
14 Elgin Avenue, we didn't seek cooperation with  
15 the police, but when we wanted -- when we needed to  
16 discuss things, or when they wanted it to discuss with  
17 us, we did, and I remember a specific case, very  
18 illustrative, of we -- there was somebody who had been  
19 making trouble in the street, you know, living in there  
20 and harassing women and serious, serious, stuff, so we  
21 told him, we had a street meeting and told this guy he  
22 had to go and we removed him from the squat. We told  
23 him somewhere else he could go and live but he wasn't  
24 going to be allowed in Elgin Avenue any more.

25 Q. Thank you.

1       A. Now, the police turned up when there was this -- they  
2       could hear arguments in the street because the police  
3       station wasn't far away and the police said to me, they  
4       said, "Well, okay, he stays on that side of the road and  
5       you people stay on your side of the road". So they  
6       actually endorsed what -- what we had done.

7       Q. Mr Corbyn, can I ask you a follow on question from this?

8       A. Yes.

9       Q. Which is this. You mentioned when you were answering  
10      questions earlier that you were surprised that given  
11      squatting activism was such a major part of your  
12      political activity in the 1970s that there are so few  
13      intelligence reports disclosed to you that actually deal  
14      with your squatting activism. Why is that? Why are you  
15      surprised about that?

16     A. Well, given that they put so much effort into following  
17     my detailed activity, Irish or whatever, and when  
18     I moved from Rendle Street to Elgin Avenue, I'm  
19     surprised there wasn't, looking back, there logically  
20     should have been police who would move into the squat  
21     because they could completely spy on me easily that way  
22     by squatting in Elgin Avenue and if they had done that  
23     they would have produced a report but we don't see any  
24     reports from them, so far as I can see, which is  
25     puzzling, because in the mind of the Special Branch,

1 surely our squatting activity was -- well, I don't know,  
2 they might think letting me go into a Troops Out  
3 Movement meeting was dangerous, but surely a squatting  
4 activity would be equally dangerous if the Troops Out  
5 Movement thing is deemed dangerous. So I don't know why  
6 they weren't there. It's it -- or perhaps they were and  
7 we haven't had any reports of it. Perhaps Sir John  
8 would like to look into that. I mean, do they have  
9 reports which are no use, or that put us in -- put me  
10 into an embarrassingly good light? I mean, I just don't  
11 know. I'm mesmerised.

12 Q. Mr Corbyn, finally this. Is there anything else that  
13 you would wish to say to the Chair of the Inquiry to  
14 assist him in his search for the truth, as far as  
15 the police spying on you is concerned?

16 A. Yes. If we want more search for the truth, I would say  
17 we should ask them point blank: did you have any police  
18 agents in Elgin Avenue? This "Nigel" and "Mary" who  
19 turned up in Huntley Street, who were they actually  
20 working for? Were they in fact some employees of  
21 the Sheriff of London, or was it another Special Branch  
22 link which they don't want to tell us about? Certainly  
23 those things.

24 Also, what was the aim of the Special Branch in all  
25 this activity? Because you know I've been surveilled

1           for a decade. I mean, for what? I mean, they haven't  
2           accused me of doing anything dangerous in the sense of  
3           these reports. I would have thought there's better use,  
4           frankly, of police time than -- than this sort of thing.

5       Q. Thank you, Mr Corbyn. That's all I ask, Sir. I hope  
6           I've used my ten minutes and no more.

7       THE CHAIRMAN: You have indeed done. Thank you.

8           Mr Corbyn, can I say two things to you.

9       A. Yes, sir.

10       THE CHAIRMAN: First of all, thank you very much for  
11           eliminating the various groups in which you were  
12           involved in this the late 60s and early 1970s. It is  
13           refreshing to hear from somebody who participated as  
14           widely as you did.

15       A. I'm glad you find it useful.

16       THE CHAIRMAN: And it paints a side of document you don't  
17           always get from the documents and always from the former  
18           undercover officers and their managers' evidence.

19           Now, you say in response to the last question of  
20           Mr Menon for what reason why you are surveilled. I'm  
21           looking not so much surveillance overall but at  
22           the infiltration of groups?

23       A. Yes.

24       THE CHAIRMAN: -- (inaudible) which you participated by  
25           undercover officers. That is one of the very basic

1 questions that I'm going to attempt to answer.

2 A. Good. Your Honour, thank you.

3 I mean, it was quite exciting to be able to read  
4 a sort of diary from certain eyes of what I was doing,  
5 and I'm astounded that I remembered so much. But,  
6 you know, the whole purpose of it needs clarification,  
7 absolutely, and I wish you every success in getting  
8 clarification, Sir.

9 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for that. Your evidence is now  
10 over and Mr Fernandes will announce the closure of this  
11 morning's session. I intend that we should resume at  
12 2.05, because we've overrun slightly.

13 A. Thank you.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

15 MR FERNANDES: We will now take a break for lunch. May  
16 I remind those in the virtual hearing room to please  
17 remember to join your break-out rooms. The time is  
18 1.05 pm, so we shall resume at 2.05 pm. Thank you.

19 (1.03 pm)

20 (The short adjournment)

21

22

23

24

25