

TRUE SPIES 3. IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU

4th December 2002

Opening Titles - True SPIES

Madeline Haigh: We were living in a very neat and tidy semi-detached in a very neat, tidy, respectable street, it was all open plan green lawns, and extremely middle class, extremely quiet, extremely conservative, and my two young children were in a little local fee-paying school.

And I used to teach Mrs. Thatcher's daughter at a girl's public boarding school...

Commentary: Madeline Haigh was haunted by a recurrent nightmare - that nuclear war would end the world.

She felt she had to do something and joined a local Quaker peace group. When the authorities cancelled an anti-nuclear rally, she wrote to the local paper.

Madeline Haigh

Madeline Haigh: ...until I started writing anti-nuclear letters, because I was worried about my children, the only political activity I had ever taken was to vote.

Commentary: The Secret state - that's MI5 in the lead and Special Branch in support - was alerted.

Keith

West Midlands Police Special Branch 1975-86

Interviewer: Why did you find that letter of particular interest?

Keith: We had had information that Mrs Haigh had showed sympathy.. sympathetic views towards the Communist Party..

Interviewer: Information where from?

Keith: An agent source.

Commentary: The source was a Communist. Apparently he'd come across Mrs Haigh at a meeting. Special Branch then turned up with a cover story.

Madeline Haigh: ...said he was CID and that he was investigating a mail order fraud for Grattons catalogue company.

Interviewer: A mail order fraud?

Madeline Haigh: Yes.

Interviewer: But it was a cover story, it wasn't a true story?

Keith: Oh no, it would be a cover story to establish who she was.

Commentary: Keith, working to MI5, wanted to find out whether Mrs.

Haigh was a potential enemy of the state.

Interviewer: You were telling lies?

Keith: Absolutely, yeah, but it was seeking information, and that's what I was paid to do.

Madeline Haigh: It's rather hard to say to somebody who's being perfectly friendly and polite "I don't believe a word of what you're saying". It's.. it seemed terribly rude.

Keith: I didn't see a problem with telling a few fibs to gain information, that's never been a problem. We get away with it 99.9% of the time.

Subtitle: It Could Happen To You

Commentary: At the time, the Cold War was reaching a new intensity. Soviet military might seemed to threaten Western Europe.

America responded by deploying Cruise missiles on British soil - at the Greenham Common airbase.

Thousands of women camped outside in protest. The Secret State was convinced that Moscow was exploiting CND for its own subversive ends.

Sir Philip Knights
Chief Constable West Midlands Police 1975-85

Sir Philip Knights: It was perceived that CND had links to the Communist Party, and it was automatically, I think, assumed, that there would be people in there who had subversion as their main aim, and we wanted to try and find out who they were.

Commentary: Special Branch was interested in Madeline Haigh because at gatherings of her Quaker peace group, she'd met the occasional Communist.

Keith
West Midlands Police Special Branch 1975-86

Keith: She might develop into a Communist Party member. If she's fringe interested in extreme politics then she was certainly within the remit of the Special Branch to be investigated.

Interviewer: They believed that you were a Communist Party sympathiser.

Madeline Haigh: (Laughs)

Interviewer: And that you had attended meetings of what they implied was a front organisation run by the Communist Party.

Madeline Haigh: They're completely mad.

Interviewer: And they said that an agent within the Communist Party had told them about you.

Madeline Haigh: This is completely ludicrous. I mean what kind of world were these people living in?

Interviewer: Did you go to any Communist Party related meetings?

Madeline Haigh: Never.

Interviewer: But it was a gross invasion of her privacy wasn't it?

Keith: Democracies all have invasions of privacy. If you're perhaps a person who is interested in being against the general run of democracy, then surely you put yourself within the realms of being investigated.

Commentary: Madeline Haigh went to Greenham Common to show solidarity with the Women's peace camp.

Such was the climate of suspicion at the time that anyone involved in CND could attract the attention of the Secret State.

Interviewer: So if I had gone on a CND demonstration in the early 80s I was therefore a legitimate person for investigation?

Sir Philip Knights: Unfortunately yes, you probably could have been, yes.

Interviewer: And a knock on the door.

Sir Philip Knights: Possibly, yes, possibly.

Interviewer: By Special Branch officers.

Sir Philip Knights: Possibly. Yes. Unless you inquire, you don't find out. You can't just pick it out of thin air whether somebody is a subversive or not. You have to inquire.

Interviewer: How would you describe what happened to you?

Madeline Haigh: It was like going through a looking glass into another universe. And I'd naively thought that in a democracy you could challenge government policy.

And what I found was if you look like being too effective at that then the machinery of the state would turn on you. And it was a denial of what this country was supposed to be being kept safe for.

**Sir Philip Knights
Chief Constable West Midlands Police 1975-85**

Sir Philip Knights: The police can't stand by and say isn't it interesting. You've got to be involved, and sometimes you make mistakes, and sometimes you have to apologise which is what we did.

Commentary: Madeline Haigh refused to be fobbed off and it took her three years to get the police to come clean.

As a result of her tireless efforts, new Home Office guidelines were drawn up restricting the targets that Special Branch could go

for.

They said: "Data on individuals should not be collected solely on the basis that such a person supports unpopular causes."

Race, like CND, was an issue that galvanised thousands to march through Britain's streets. The difference was that, unlike CND, race provoked violence - as the Far Right and Far Left clashed.

The Secret State decided that both sides had to be targeted. Special Branch recruited a spy to infiltrate the National Front.

Chris Cradock
West Midlands Police Special Branch 1970-87

Chris Cradock: I placed him within that organisation. He rose to a certain level within the organisation that I wanted him to rise to, very quickly, so it was easy for him to access information.

Commentary: The spy had been responsible for some notable intelligence coups against the Far Right over the years.

His role was to keep his head down and ears open - to warn of forthcoming street aggro and violent threats.

Steve
Special Branch Agent 1974-91

Steve: Sometimes people would come up and talk to me about naughty activities and I would have to say I don't want to listen to this, and human psychology being what it is, they would insist on telling me what it was. Or you have the ability to merge so much into the background that socially people behave.. feel able to freely talk with you sitting there because you're accepted like part of the furniture.

Commentary: One of the key targets for the far Right in the Midlands at the time was a leading light of the Labour party - known for her plain speaking.

Interviewer: How was Clare Short regarded?

Steve: Loathed. What would be described on the extreme right as a 'race mixer'. She was constantly attacking the role of the National Front, she advocated multiracialism constantly on TV, generally a bad lot she'd have been regarded as.

Archive (Clare Short):

"I get a lot of hate mail - I get racist letters from all around the country saying 'Ohhh you're in favour of immigrants and there are too many already'. I think they've got to be challenged."

Commentary: Some members of the National Front planned to rid their area of this turbulent socialist, using methods more common in Northern Ireland.

Interviewer: Were there plans to get her?

Steve: There was talk about fire bombing her home because she

lived in the constituency and there was also plans for her to speak at the Trades Council, and they were planning to plant an incendiary device under the stage where she was speaking from.

Interviewer: Were they planning to kill her?

Steve: I think that would have been an added bonus sort of thing.

Commentary: Steve heard they planned to start by torching the Communist Party Bookshop in Birmingham.

Steve: It was decided to nip it in the bud as soon as possible, and they were in fact all arrested at the first event which was the attempted incineration of the Communist Party bookshop.

Interviewer: Where were they arrested?

Steve: Behind the premises with the materials, yeah. They were tried and convicted and sent to prison.

Interviewer: How did they come to be caught? How did the police know?

Steve: (laughs) Well that's fairly obvious isn't it. Because they had the information provided to them by me.

Commentary: Steve then felt the fear that grips all spies at such moments - would the finger of suspicion point at him?

Steve: When things go wrong, they all start thinking of the main players, don't they. 'Well who was there?' And the more forceful you were in the conversation at that time, the more likely you are to be remembered and.. you know.. many's the time people used to say 'well obviously you're not under suspicion because you weren't there, were you' when in fact I was.

Interviewer: How would you describe him as an agent?

Chris Cradock: In right wing circles, the best agent I've ever dealt with.

Commentary: By the end of the 80s the subversive threat that had occupied the Secret State for so many years, suddenly and dramatically changed.

The Berlin Wall fell and the Cold War ended.

MI5 no longer saw Moscow as the dark manipulator behind subversion in the UK.

Stella Rimington
Director General MI5

Stella Rimington: You no longer had large domestic communist parties which were acting in concert with, you know, the nation's enemy, so to speak, because the Soviet Union came to an end and communism, world-wide communism collapsed.

Ken Day: And to all intents and purposes the routine inquiry work on so called subversive groups really ended round about 1990. By

1991 it was virtually moribund.

Commentary: Any subversion there now was became the preserve of Special Branch. MI5 was thus left free to concentrate its resources and well honed skills on countering the IRA.

But the Cold War left a legacy. What was to happen to the mountain of files so painstakingly compiled over the years?

Ken Day: I took the opportunity to weed out lots of old historical records in Special Branch so we concentrated on the current issues, and I was able to get rid of many thousands of records in Special Branch.

Interviewer: You destroyed the files?

Ken Day: Thousands of them.

Ken Day
Metropolitan Police Special Branch 1969-98

Interviewer: But this is years of work.

Ken Day: Years.. it broke people's hearts, I know it broke people's hearts, there were these old files going back to the dark ages, but it wasn't providing us with the intelligence about tomorrow.

Commentary: So what was to become of all the Secret State's spies? In the New World Order, those on the Far Left seemed redundant - and even those on the Far Right could be retired.

Interviewer: Did you pay off your agents at the end of the Cold War?

Stella Rimington: At the end of the Cold War, yes, large numbers of agents that had been working this area were stood down.

Interviewer: And pensioned.

Stella Rimington: Some of them would have been pensioned, depending on, you know, their terms of employment.

Steve
Special Branch Agent 1974-91

Steve: They arranged for somebody to come and see me one day and thank me for all my services and they slipped this envelope across the table, that later turned out to have a considerable amount of money in it.

Interviewer: How much?

Steve: £5000, and that was like the equivalent of a gold watch I suppose. So therefore my role had effectively come to an end.

But I disagreed with that I might add, it's like house insurance, the only time you need it is when you haven't got it.

Commentary: But the Secret State didn't pension off all its

agents. Some it retained - to face emerging new threats.

The Cold War might have ended but Special Branch was determined to stay in business.

Ken Day: It was regarded as being very useful if we could switch these agents from Communist Party, Socialist Workers' Party, to report on the potential for public disorder and criminal activities that these groups were carrying out. So they weren't.. a lot of them didn't go to waste, they still work today.

Interviewer: They were realigned.

Ken Day: Realigned.

Interviewer: And still working today?

Ken Day: And still working today

Commentary: One of the most serious new threats came from Animal Rights activists like the Animal Liberation Front - the ALF - they were prepared to use violence.

Benn Gunn

Chief Constable Cambridgeshire Police 1994-2002

Benn Gunn: Over the years animal extremists have learned tactics from terrorist groups ... in the sense of using incendiary devices and on a few occasions high explosives. Their organisation is difficult to infiltrate and clearly we need to use the whole gamut of intelligence gathering methods in terms of addressing that threat.

Commentary: Although the ALF deny they are terrorists, they certainly look like them and, to the Secret State, act like them - breaking into laboratories to liberate animals bred for tests.

They've also targeted meat lorries and abattoirs - as well as the companies who run them.

In 1994 an ALF leader was jailed for 14 years for sabotage.

Keith Mann

Animal Rights Campaigner

Commentary: What you were involved in was terrorism wasn't it? You were a terrorist.

Keith Mann: Well again one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. Call us violent, call us terrorists, call us thugs, call us anarchists, they're all used regularly. All we're asking for is change. We want people to stop using violence against animals.

Commentary: But animal rights extremists also devised more subtle ways of hitting big business, they targeted giant multinationals like Smith Kline Beecham which tested some of its medicines on animals.

Keith Mann: The last thing in the world they want is the air of

publicity. They don't want people talking about what they're doing to live animals in their laboratories behind closed doors. They're not almighty anymore these companies. They're not all powerful. They can be impacted upon by little people, and that's what's happening.

Commentary: Special Branch countered these new economic subversives with methods traditionally deployed against the Left and Right. This resulted in intelligence that Smith Kline Beecham's Lucozade was to be targeted.

Richard
Metropolitan Police Special Branch 1976-2000

Interviewer: Where did you get the intelligence from?

Richard: From an officer who'd been associated with the group that was plotting this.

Interviewer: An undercover officer?

Richard: Yes.

Interviewer: And is it difficult to infiltrate such groups?

Richard: Yes, it is extremely difficult, because only those who trust each other will get involved in those sort of actions.

Keith Mann: The Lucozade bottles allegedly were going to be contaminated with a bleach so that Lucozade, the company at the time the time would have to remove that product from the shelves,

Commentary: The intelligence presented Special Branch with a classic dilemma: to protect the public or protect their undercover colleague.

Richard: A decision was taken that protecting the public from contaminated Lucozade was probably more important than protecting the officer.

Commentary: As a result the company took drastic action - costing millions of pounds. Five million bottles were withdrawn. The public were safe - but what about the undercover officer?

Richard: I think there was fingers of suspicion pointing backwards and forwards across the table at various people, but the officer managed to survive that one.

Commentary: In the 90s, as animal rights activists widened their campaign, the Home Office gave Special Branch additional funds to recruit more spies.

Ken Day
Metropolitan Police Special Branch 1969-98

Ken Day: There were 1 or 2 that were on the payroll earning quite considerable sums, probably up to £10000 a year, £10000 I would be wanting 22 carat gold information from them, intelligence from them.

Interviewer: Did you get any intelligence of that quality?

Ken Day: Tremendous intelligence the whole time we were getting it.

Interviewer: Worth the money?

Ken Day: Every penny. We were running approaching a hundred agents if not more within the animal rights field.

Interviewer: A hundred?

Ken Day: A hundred.

Commentary: Since there weren't that many militant animal rights activists Special Branch had most of them covered.

Benn Gunn: I would assess that there are no more than thirty or forty activists prepared to use extreme violence to further their cause in the country in terms of animal extremism.

Interviewer: Do you know who these thirty or so hardcore activists are?

Benn Gunn: Yes we do.

Commentary: So how did Special Branch deploy all its new spies? The strategy was to identify the leaders and then target them.

A prime candidate was the ALF's Press officer and Chief ideologue, Robin Webb.

Archive (Robin Webb):

``It's no good asking for animal liberation - they're not going to hand it to us. We've all, when we leave here, in our own way, we've got to go out and take it.''

Interviewer: Robin Webb, how was he regarded?

Ken Day: Seemed, as far as we were concerned, to know too much about what was happening. Whenever events.. the real animal activist had carried out an operation, he was the first one to be told about it.

Robin Webb: When the law is wrong, yes I believe people should break the law.... maybe, just maybe, we have to use short-term violence in pursuit of a long-term peace.

Interviewer: Was he targeted?

Ken Day: He was targeted very much so, yes, we had agents running against him.

Interviewer: Agents running against him?

Ken Day: We ran agents against him, yes.

Interviewer: That you were handling?

Ken Day: Yes.

Interviewer: And how close to him were they?

Ken Day: Very close, he wouldn't.. I think he would be quite surprised if he realised just how close they were.

Robin Webb
Animal Liberation Press Officer

Robin Webb: I have been made aware that my house, my car and my telephone have been monitored, have been bugged, that I have been under surveillance, and that my mail has been intercepted. All of these are completely unwarranted in what is supposed to be a democratic free society.

Commentary: But that's not how Special Branch officers saw it. They suspected Webb was up to no good.

Interviewer: And what information were the agents giving you? What kind of information about Mr Webb?

Ken Day: Well in the end they gave us information that he may have been in possession of a shotgun...

Interviewer: And what action did you take?

Ken Day: We kept surveillance on him and waited for him to pick the shotgun up.

Commentary: Webb maintained that he'd been given an article in wrapping and didn't know what it was.

Robin Webb: I was aware of what I thought was in the package.

Interviewer: Which was?

Robin Webb: It was equipment which was going to be passed on to be used by somebody else to help animals.

Ken Day: He was arrested in possession of a shotgun and without a certificate and he was taken to a local police station and charged.

Commentary: At Lewes Crown Court, the prosecution was asked to disclose all its evidence - including that obtained covertly through Special Branch spies and technical surveillance.

But the risk of exposing the agents was too great. The prosecution dropped the case and Webb walked free.

His supporters suspected the Secret State had been up to its tricks.

Robin Webb: The Crown Prosecution Service made a formal admission to Crown Court that an undisclosed agency had entered my vehicle and had placed listening devices, although they refused to identify which agency it was.

Interviewer: In your car?

Robin Webb: In my car.

Interviewer: A bug?

Robin Webb: A bug, yes.

Interviewer: Did you bug his car?

Ken Day: I wouldn't wish to comment on that.

Commentary: Whatever the truth, a shotgun was found in the car. The Secret State never got its man - but lessons were learned.

The next target was - another prominent Animal Rights activist - Barry Horne.

Interviewer: How would you describe Barry Horne?

Robin Webb: As a committed man, a very kind man, a very caring man. He saw the whole spectrum of the animal welfare animal liberation movement and was prepared to do whatever was necessary at any given time.

Commentary: Barry Horne had been an animal rights activist for years. He began his career by protesting against butchers' shops.

Archive (Barry Horne):

``I've seen butchers carrying carcasses of dead animals into their shops - that is totally offensive to me, it's revolting.``

Commentary: He then graduated from words to direct action.

Ken Day
Met Special Branch 1969-98

Ken Day: He was strongly, very strongly, suspected of causing many hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of damage to stores in Cambridge and on the Isle of Wight, very strongly suspected of that, but unfortunately there was no evidence to bring him before the court.

Commentary: Horne was so security conscious that initially Special Branch failed to recruit a spy.

But eventually indications received in Special Branch that he was about to start another bombing campaign...

Interviewer: How did you know he was about to start another bombing campaign?

Ken Day: We had an agent who was reporting on Barry Horne.

Interviewer: Was he close to Barry Horne?

Ken Day: The man was very close, yes.

Interviewer: Why would a man like that who was close and a friend of Barry Horne, be prepared to betray him?

Ken Day: I wouldn't say it was a question of betraying him, it was a question of possibly looking at it in a way of saving human life.

Commentary: Acting on information from the spy, Horne was tracked around the country for six weeks by National Crime Squad surveillance teams.

Finally he drove into Bristol. As he went round the shops, a team followed him. Then they pounced. This time there was no lack of evidence.

Ken Day: Barry Horne was actually caught in the act of putting three significant fire bombs down in three stores in Bristol and actually being caught doing it, and they were defused there and then. Saved a lot of damage and possibly saved peoples' lives, so yes we were delighted.

Interviewer: Caught red handed.

Ken Day: Caught red handed.

Interviewer: Could you have done it without the agent?

Ken Day: No.

Commentary: Horne was sentenced to 18 years for a fire bombing campaign that caused £3 million worth of damage.

In gaol he embarked on a series of hunger strikes in protest against the government's failure to introduce a Royal Commission on Vivisection.

He died last year, weakened by his protests.

By now terrorist threats were appearing once again in the ranks of the Far Right.

Although the Far Left threat had largely disappeared there was a growing menace from offshoots of extreme right wing groups like the British National Party - the BNP.

**Stella Rimington
Director General MI5 1992-96**

Stella Rimington: There were still some small organisations - and particularly fascist organisations still continued, you know, that would have been still anxious to subvert the state if they could

Ken Day: There certainly seemed to be a growing number of racial attacks and the excuse for those racial attacks was quite clearly that this is what the BNP would support, and so we had that growing at quite a considerable pace on the one hand, then we had breakaway groups in the British National Party, particularly Combat 18...

Commentary: Combat 18 was set up by the BNP - a hand-picked unit of heavies to protect its members in confrontations with the Left. It was called Combat 18 because the figures 1 and 8 refer to the first and eighth letters of the alphabet - A and H - the initials

of one Adolf Hitler.

Stella Rimington: There was a certain level of threat from that area, yes. And it was.. it was certainly looked at.

Interviewer: And action taken upon?

Stella Rimington: Appropriate action would have been taken.

Commentary: That usually meant recruiting more spies.

Richard

Metropolitan Police Special Branch 1976-2000

Richard: The Combat 18 organisation was quite open that they wanted to engage in violent acts and they regularly published some quite nasty magazines targeting leftwing opponents, members of ethnic communities, and gays. So they were an organisation that really need to be looked at fairly closely.

Commentary: But Combat 18 was on the lookout too. By the mid-90s, it suspected Special Branch agents might be close.

Ken Day: We had people reporting to us on Combat 18 for several years.

Interviewer: But those agents would have been running serious personal risks given the nature of the people they were working with.

Ken Day: Absolutely.

Commentary: C18 also established links with the Far Right in Europe. They were equally unlovely. Aided by the European fascists, C18 planned a violent campaign.

Richard: It was round about Christmas '95, received information that an attack was going to be made against the UK mainland by rightwing extremists, probably from Scandinavia, acting on behalf of Combat 18 in the United Kingdom.

Interviewer: How did you get the information?

Richard: From a source.

Interviewer: What was the name you were given by your source?

Richard: The name we were given was Thomas.

Commentary: This is Thomas - surname Nakaba. He doesn't like the media.

Richard: Then discussions started with our colleagues in Denmark.

Interviewer: They knew who he was?

Richard: They knew him very well Yeah. He's well known in Denmark.

Commentary: Special Branch heard of names on a C18 hit list and picked up details of a plan.

Letter bombs were to be made in Denmark, taken by ferry to Sweden and posted from there.

A surveillance team followed the bombers and watched them post their deadly packages.

Richard: In the post box there was I think three jiffy bags containing video cassette cases which were made up as postal devices, fairly crude.

Ken Day

Metropolitan Police Special Branch 1969-97

Interviewer: Were they designed to kill?

Ken Day: They were designed to kill, there's no two ways about that. The damage that those things caused when they were detonated, they were massive explosions.

Commentary: One of C18's targets was the Olympic athlete, Sharron Davies.

Interviewer: Why Sharon Davis?

Ken Day: Because she had married a black athlete. You can't understand it, the mentality, you just cannot understand.

Interviewer: And what was the quality of the agent that enabled you to stop these attacks?

Ken Day: Well obviously to be able to pre-empt an attack like that they were absolutely first class.

Interviewer: So was the group destroyed from within?

Richard: Yeah, the seeds of destruction were sewn there, yes. It then declined from there onwards.

Ken Day: Knowing that the operation that we had against the extreme right saved peoples' lives, there's no greater reward that I can have.

Commentary: But although the Secret State had the Far Right extensively penetrated, the coverage was not broad enough.

It failed to prevent three murderous attacks in London by the so-called 'nail bomber', David Copeland.

Steve

Special Branch Agent 1974-91

Steve: It's a thought that's haunted me ever since the Copeland affair, I feel that if I'd have been around at that time and operating in East London, I would have known after bomb 1.

Interviewer: You think you could have fingered him?

Steve: Given the fact that he's been featured with the ex-leader of the BNP at prominent meetings and rallies and so on, I would

have known who he was.

The cost of people being able to go round this country freely and without fear of injury is that you have eternal vigilance.

Paul Gill
Newbury Bypass Protestor

Paul Gill: I love waking up to seeing the sunshine coming through the leaves or hearing the rain coming down through them. Owls perching on the branches just outside your window in the night.

The downside of it is that eventually they're going to get chopped down. To see an area of such beauty ripped apart by machines tarmac'd over so that people can take a few minutes off a journey time is devastating.

Commentary: As gridlock loomed, a new kind of protestor emerged - gentler but no less exhaustive of police resources.

When the government announced a nine-mile bypass for Newbury, an army of protestors took to the woods.

Some lived in trees to prevent the contractors cutting them down. The sheriff's men moved in. To the police, these were subversives, determined to stop lawful activity.

Paul Gill: I know that the state have.. you know, employed people to creep around in the bushes and take photographs of me and stuff, it's sort of what happens, it sort of makes you feel a bit vulnerable.

Sir Charles Pollard
Chief Constable Thames Valley Police 1991-2002

Sir Charles Pollard: The ones who were planning and tried to carry out seriously illegal acts are very subversive in a sense of subversive to democracy.

Commentary: The cost of policing Newbury was almost £8 million. The Secret State needed top grade intelligence to thwart the protestors.

That meant recruiting informants - from whatever source. The information came at a price - and the prices certainly varied.

Mervyn Edwards
Thames Valley Police 1971-2001

Mervyn Edwards: Sometimes £25 to an informant is quite sufficient for information that will help build the picture, right up to, on some occasions, what would appear to be quite substantial amounts of money for people that will give information at the top level.

Interviewer: A thousand pounds a week?

Mervyn Edwards: It could be, that type of money.

Interviewer: Worth it? It all sounds an awful lot of money.

Mervyn Edwards: It is a lot of money. For me, absolutely worth it.

Commentary: We can now reveal for the first time that the police recruited a top grade agent to infiltrate the protestors. And controversially he came from a private security company. The police normally keep such firms at arms length.

Ken Day

Metropolitan Police Special Branch 1969-98

Ken Day: One's got to remember that these types of organisations are in it commercially, they need to gather intelligence, they need companies to buy that intelligence, so there's always a big problem with looking at that.

Commentary: An unprecedented contract was drawn up between the agent, the private security company and Thames Valley Police.

Sir Charles Pollard: That meant that we could anticipate what their plans were in doing things, and therefore on many occasions we were able to pre-empt the situation which would happen

Commentary: Once he'd infiltrated the green activists, the Newbury agent had to prove his worth.

When the protestors realised that they too, like the trees, could be uprooted, they literally dug in - excavating several tunnels. The main one was ten feet deep and 90 feet long.

Paul Gill: We were hoping that the tunnels were going to stop access of machinery onto site that they weren't going to be able to bring in large vehicles into the sites to get people out of the trees to take the trees down, they wouldn't be able to fell trees because of the impact on the ground would cause danger to those underneath.

Commentary: Although the police had taken all the minor tunnels, it was too risky to storm the main one.

The Newbury agent provided vital intelligence on the best time to swoop. He told his handler there was only a man and a woman in the shelter over the entrance. A third protestor, he said, was sleeping in the main entry shaft.

Mervyn Edwards: ...and so we decided to take the tunnel in the middle of the night when there was nobody actually in the tunnel itself, it was merely being guarded.

Commentary: Undercover officers were watching the shelter - or 'bender' - and waiting for the agent's signal.

Mervyn Edwards: It was clear that a good deal of drinking and Tennents Strong Brew had been drunk because of the discarded cans all around the camp.

And so inevitably in the early hours of the morning the male protester, sleeping at the top of the tunnel in the bender, came out and went into the bushes to relieve himself where he met with the police officers who detained him, and inevitably his girlfriend came out to go to look for him and she was also

detained and was reunited with her boyfriend...

Commentary: That left the person sleeping in the entry shaft.

Mervyn Edwards: ...and it's pitch black in the middle of the camp, and by now it's about 3.30 in the morning, and some noises were made at the top of the entrance to the tunnel by police officers which required investigation and he came out to investigate, and again then he met with my police colleagues and at that point then they had secured the entrance to the tunnel.

Commentary: The tunnel that had taken nine months to build was captured in a few short minutes.

Paul Gill: We hoped that somebody was down the tunnel, it didn't take long to find out that nobody was, and so that defence had sort of become ineffective, it was quite a big blow really, quite demoralising, you know, a lot of effort had gone into it and a lot of hopes had been put into it.

Interviewer: Could you have done it without the intelligence from your source?

Mervyn Edwards: No, not in that manner, not at all. Not so successfully, so safely and so quickly.

Interviewer: Did you know that the reason why the police were able to take the tunnel when they did, was because they had a highly placed agent in your midst.

Paul Gill: It wouldn't surprise me. I wouldn't be surprised at all.

Interviewer: He was paid a lot of money to do what he did, to infiltrate you and..

Paul Gill: He'd have to be paid a lot of money, because if anybody found out about it while he was there I should imagine it would be quite dangerous.

Commentary: By the time Tony Blair came to power, the animal rights activists had devised a new strategy - to target the industry that they believed made millions from animal suffering.

They began by attacking the first and most vulnerable link in the chain - animal breeders like Hillgrove cat farm

Keith Mann
Animal Rights Campaigner

Keith Mann: There is a whole network of companies in this country and all around the world who make their money by breeding specific animals for people who experiment on them.

So we decided we'd start at the bottom if you like and take out a few of the.. take out some of the weaker links, the breeders, the not so big companies.

Commentary: The Secret State planned to confound this scheme by

moving the Newbury agent into the world of animal rights.

Mervyn Edwards
Thames Valley Police 1971-2001

Interviewer: Your source moves on from Newbury with the street cred that he's got from Newbury to Hill Grove.

Mervyn Edwards: Yes, absolutely.

Interviewer: And that's enabled you to do what?

Mervyn Edwards: To work on the sort of numbers that we could expect to turn up, and whether they were going to target the cattery or whether they were going to, as they did on occasions, target the owner's house which was all within the same complex,....

Commentary: The defence of the owner's right to breed cats stretched police resources.

The Newbury agent's information meant the police were ready at the right time and in the right numbers. The owner was at first defiant.

Archive (Farmer Brown):

``I am going to carry on to when I intended to retire. I don't intend giving in to anarchy It makes me more determined than ever.``

Sir Charles Pollard
Chief Constable Thames Valley Police 1991-2002

Sir Charles Pollard: If you just sat back and say okay, well this is going to cost an awful lot of police so we can't afford to protect this person, that's a pretty bad decision to take. So you really have to take people on.

Commentary: Despite the best efforts of the Newbury agent, the protestors won.

Archive (Farmer Brown):

``I've been beaten up, my wife has been attacked, the staff's homes have been attacked, cars have been completely vandalised, written off. And that has been a big drain.``

Commentary: The cats were saved. The new strategy of applying economic pressure seemed to pay off. Now it was time to hit bigger targets.

Next on the hit list was Huntingdon Life Sciences - HLS - that carries out animal experiments on behalf of pharmaceutical companies.

The campaign was fuelled by a secret video filmed by an undercover journalist who'd infiltrated Huntingdon's labs.

The company was subsequently placed under new management. Two workers were dismissed.

Greg Avery: A lot of people, whilst we were doing Hillgrove, had watched the footage taken inside Huntingdon of the beagle puppies being ... punched and had never forgotten that.

Commentary: The campaign was spearheaded by a group known as SHAC - Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty. SHAC's tactics include violent intimidation of HLS staff.

Brian Cass
Managing Director Huntingdon Life Sciences

Brian Cass: I believe it's as close to terrorism as most of my employees ever want to come.

To them certainly when you're being.. have a mob in your driveway, at your home, when your car may have been set on fire, that to those people is terrorism without question.

Commentary: The campaign culminated with a violent attack on Brian Cass himself.

Brian Cass: I suddenly heard running footsteps, obviously quite purposeful and more than one set, rushing up behind me, and I turned to find 3 individuals with balaclavas and what certainly looked like pickaxe handles or something of that nature, already literally raised above their head, intent upon obviously hitting me with them.

So I got quite a severe beating across my arms and shoulders, and a very nasty gash on the head which required about 9 stitches.

Keith Mann
Animal Rights Campaigner

Keith Mann: If the state keep closing in on legitimate protest and making it illegal and dangerous to demonstrate lawfully, people are going to go to the furthest extreme...

Interviewer: Killing people?

Keith Mann: ...and the furthest extreme, absolutely, is to take the life of somebody like Brian Cass.

I'm not saying I want it to happen or I'm encouraging it, but you can see that when a protest.. legitimate protest is taken away, there's nothing left to people.

Interviewer: And that's why the secret state is watching you.

Keith Mann: Well the secret state is making us like that. It is turning people into subversives.

Benn Gunn
Chief Constable Cambridgeshire Police 1994-2002

Benn Gunn: If Huntingdon Life Sciences was to fail and be brought down by animal extremists they would merely move on to another organisation.....the domino effect that this would have on the pharmaceutical industry the biochemical industry, its customers,

its finance stakeholders etc etc, would be a matter of serious concern for government in terms of economic stability

Commentary: To combat this new threat - and the serious violence that goes with it - the Secret State uses every high tech resource at its disposal.

Greg Avery
Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty

Interviewer: What evidence of surveillance have you found?

Greg Avery: Tracking devices on vehicles, listening devices, intensive, er, following of people - costs millions - all paid for by the taxpayer.

Keith Mann: People have learnt not to talk openly on the phones now, to check vehicles with radio frequency detectors for bugs, for tracking devices, not to talk in houses, to be aware who's listening when they're in the pub, if they're having a conversation in the pub.

Commentary: But as ever, the most effective method of spying is planting agents.

Interviewer: Do you have agents inside SHAC?

Benn Gunn: I think because this is a current activity that's going on, you wouldn't expect me to disclose operational tactics.

Interviewer: Nor would I expect you not to have agents within SHAC.

Benn Gunn: That may be your view.

Commentary: The coyness is perhaps understandable given the acute sensitivity of current operations. But there's no doubt, the spymasters are committed to the long haul.

Ken Day
Metropolitan Police Special Branch 1969-98

Ken Day: We'd be prepared to fund somebody for a long period of time until they got to, if you like, a management position within these organisations and were able to report directly on what the plans were for the future.

Interviewer: How long?

Ken Day: Sometimes years.

Interviewer: Years?

Ken Day: Years.

Interviewer: To get to the top?

Ken Day: To get to that position where we knew that they were

reporting what was going to happen tomorrow and not what happened yesterday.

Commentary: But in combating the many faces of subversion, where does the Secret State draw the line?

The repercussions of a night-time raid on a British Aerospace factory near Preston illustrates the dilemma.

The intruders were women belonging to a peace group known as 'Ploughshares'. Their targets were fighter jets being sold to Indonesia.

Janet Lovelace

Janet Lovelace: Ploughshares is a movement that opposes anything to do with violence and promotes the good of all in the world

Commentary: The women damaged a jet. They were subsequently arrested and charged.

Janet Lovelace: It went to a jury trial and they were acquitted because ... it was felt their crime was to prevent a bigger crime, and the public went with that, much to the annoyance of the state.

Commentary: Because she was sympathetic to Ploughshares - though not actively involved - Janet Lovelace was about to be drawn into the Secret State's net.

It marked the beginning of an extraordinary chapter in her life. As a mother of three and a former police officer, it was the last thing she expected.

After the Ploughshares acquittal, she had a surprise visit. Two Special Branch officers knocked on her door.

Janet Lovelace: I was at home with my youngest daughter. I was very disconcerted they should be at my front door. They asked if they could come in to speak to me. I asked what it was about and they just said we want you to do some work for us.

I was totally gob smacked is the only word I can think of. I couldn't believe they were there asking me to work for them.

Commentary: Janet Lovelace was worried. It seemed like the Secret State crossing the line.

Janet Lovelace: I felt very intimidated and scared because I lived alone with three children and no family to support me. And I realised that these people were watching me.

Commentary: The police may have failed the first time around, but now they were determined to get a Ploughshares conviction - this time based on inside information.

Janet Lovelace: They said we want you to go to some meetings of Ploughshares to get us names and addresses, telephone numbers, car registration numbers of the people who attend these meetings. So I asked what was that for and they wanted to try and stop the actions before they happened.

Commentary: Positioning a potential spy is a sensitive operation - as every Special Branch officer knows from Lancashire to the West Midlands.

Keith

West Midlands Police Special Branch 1975-86

Keith: You'd always get the feeling from most people, 'I don't want to be a police informant. I don't want to snitch on people I know, because it's disloyal'

Possibly the last thing you mention there may be some form of payment in it, you know, just slip that in gently somewhere along the line, and see how they responded.

Janet Lovelace: They said they'd pay me £200 a month to start with which will be reviewed every so often. They would give me extra bonuses for important information and further bonuses should the key people be arrested with the information I provided.

Commentary: The handler's nightmare is that such Covert approaches will backfire.

Keith: Very, very delicate operation, because they could report to the national press, 'I've been approached by a police officer to become an informant in X organisation'.

Commentary: And that's exactly what happened in the case of Janet Lovelace. She went to The Guardian.

She now dreads that as a result of her traumatic encounter with the Secret State, she too may have a Special Branch file.

Janet Lovelace: I'm absolutely appalled and I'm not surprised, I'm worried, worried really because it's the repercussions that could come on later in life. It's a file on me. Is it going to affect the children as we go along because their mother did this, their mother did that, their mother stood up for the rights of other people.

Commentary: It's clear that in 2002, more than a decade after the end of the Cold War, the Secret State is still countering so called subversion - in this case from anti-globalisation protestors.

The central dilemma that faces the Secret State today is the same as it's faced over the decades.

How far is it justified in infringing civil liberties to defend parliamentary democracy?

Stella Rimington

Director General MI5

Stella Rimington: I suppose you could say that we won the Cold War without a shot being fired. So, that's something that the West achieved. In this country we achieved that but we also preserved our civil liberties. We have no communist government, we have a

democratic government. We have freedom of speech. We have freedom to form pressure groups and say what we want without the state trying to stop us.

Commentary: That's not how it feels to those on the receiving end of the Secret State's attentions.

Despite her background as a police officer, nothing had prepared Janet Lovelace for the intrusion on her freedom.

Janet Lovelace

Interviewer: So how did people react to learning about what happened to you?

Janet Lovelace: The immediate reaction is don't be silly, that doesn't happen. They read these things in books and Spy Catcher and things. They don't believe it happens to the ordinary person, and when I tell them "Yes it does" and relate the experience to them, they're absolutely appalled that it does, and they can't believe that it does go on at this level.

Commentary: But to the defenders of the Secret State, if you're innocent you've nothing to fear.

Looking back over these turbulent decades they believe there's a price to be paid for our freedom.

Sir Charles Pollard Chief Constable Thames Valley Police 1991-2002

Sir Charles Pollard: The idea that innocent people won't get caught up in this, I wish there was a magic wand would stop that. But if they're innocent, at the end of the day they're innocent and nothing's going to happen.

If anything, we have not been bold enough. We have not been bold enough in seeing where the line is and going right up to the line to stop people who are basically criminal people doing serious things, whether its subversives or criminals. And it is that robustness that if anything we haven't quite got.

Commentary: Many may shudder at the thought - believing the Secret State has already crossed the line between national security and individual liberty.

A liberal democracy needs a Secret State to defend it - but its citizens and politicians need to ensure it does so within acceptable and accountable limits.

Eternal vigilance is required - not just to defend the security of the state - but to defend our personal freedom.

End Credits

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