

In the Undercover Policing Inquiry

1st Witness Statement of Richard Chessum

4th April 2020

This statement is provided to the Undercover Policing Inquiry further to the Rule 9 request on the 4th February 2020. This statement is provided further to the interactions with the man whom I knew as 'Rick Gibson'

The Inquiry has also asked me about the undercover officer and 'Gary Roberts.' I would like to assist the Inquiry about these undercover officers but without further information, disclosure or contemporaneous photographs, sadly I am unable to help further.

Personal Details

1. **Please give your full name and date of birth.**
 - i) My name is Richard Chessum, my date of birth is 19th February 1942.

Political Activism

2. Please outline your political activities in the Student Movement, as part of Troops Out Movement (TOM), supporter of Big Flame and any other activism of relevance to the Inquiry with dates. When doing so, please include a summary of what the aims of the groups that you joined or supported were and the methods they used to try and achieve these aims. Please also include any positions of responsibility that you held.

i) I have had a significant political journey throughout my life, and I have involved myself in many socialist and social justice campaigns. My intention by becoming involved in the Troops Out Movement, Anti-Apartheid Movement, the International Marxist Group, Big Flame discussion groups, the Labour Committee on Ireland, the Labour Party and most recently in campaigns to protect the rights of migrants, is to contribute to the creation of a better world.

ii) My journey into socialist politics was initially through the Methodist Church. I was a lay preacher in the Church from approximately 1961 until approximately 1964. In 1963 I applied to the Church to be considered a candidate to enter theological college and become a full-time minister in the Methodist Church. I received the full support of my local congregation and went through many stages in the process until I reached the Methodist conference where I went before a panel of approximately 30

Church Ministers. After the interview a vote was taken by the Ministers who had interviewed me. By 15 votes to 14 I was advised that I was unsuccessful, but I was encouraged to put my candidacy forward in the near future.

ii) I was told that the main reason I lost the vote was not because of my Christian socialist beliefs but the way in which I expressed them from the pulpit. Indeed, a short time after the vote I received a letter from the Church stating that this the main reason my candidacy was refused and inviting me to apply again the following year.

iv) Despite this set back, I was offered by the Church to work at the South London Mission. In 1964 I became a full-time worker. Just before this I was invited by Reverend Dr. Donald Soper who led the West London Mission to go and see him. He was at that time the President of the Christian Socialist Movement, he had twice been the President of the Methodist Conference (an honour given to few) and he was later made a Lord and became Lord Soper. As a result of his influence I became actively involved in the Fellowship of Reconciliation.¹ He wrote articles for the weekly newspaper Tribune, and at the same time I wrote satirical article for them also.

v) The South London Mission is important as it provides the Inquiry with my developing belief in social justice, human rights and socialism – views which I still hold today. However, I became disillusioned in the work of the Mission over a short period of time. I remember one particular incident which affected by beliefs. In October 1964, I remember Patrick Gordon-Walker the Labour Shadow Foreign Secretary lost a seat

¹ The Fellowship of Reconciliation is an international movement of people who commit themselves to active nonviolence as a way of life and as a means of personal, social, economic and political transformation. (see <https://for.org.uk>)

in Smethwick in the West Midlands. He lost his seat to the Conservative candidate Peter Griffiths who campaigned on the slogan, "If you want a nigger for a neighbour vote Liberal or Labour". I remember being absolutely appalled by this.²

vi) I remember the women came in from the suburbs and attended the South London Mission as volunteers. Their job was to count the money which had been collected through the Church, for children in Africa. I recall one day they were at the Mission, counting the money, but voicing their very enthusiastic support for the slogan of the Conservative candidate and their victory in Smethwick. I remember being very upset by this and I did not hesitate to challenge them. Among other things I pointed out the hypocrisy of them collecting for children in Africa and yet supporting such clearly racist and abhorrent views. After challenging them I was called in by the Minister of the Mission. I was advised by the Minister not to challenge them as the Mission needed them as volunteers, so it was important not to upset them.

vii) I objected to other activities that were occurring in the Church during this period. For instance, the Scouts would hold a service, but this involved them coming into the Church with the Union Jack flag, and in my opinion being very jingoistic. I felt uneasy with this and did not feel it should be my job to officiate at such events. I felt that religion should not have a nationality or support such displays of nationalism. These examples and other incidents forced me into making the difficult decision to leave the Mission. When he heard this, Donald Soper requested a meeting with me. I went to see him and he expressed sadness that I had made the decision. I also told him that I was

² See The Guardian, 15th October 2014 - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/15/britains-most-racist-election-smethwick-50-years-on>

thinking of leaving the Church as I was having increasing doubts with my Christian beliefs. He was a little upset, but confessed that he could not persuade his own daughter to go to Church. He expressed the view that he hoped I remained a Christian, but if I did not it was a consolation to him that he was convinced I would remain a lifelong socialist.

viii) After leaving the South London Mission I returned to my home village of Langford, which is near Biggleswade in Bedfordshire. Between 1964 until approximately 1968 I decided to commit myself to working in the mid-Bedfordshire Labour Party and also the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. I was also instrumental in setting up the United Nations Association in the area and became the Secretary of that. In the mid-Bedfordshire Labour Party I was the political officer.

ix) I had already been involved in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament³ for many years. Indeed from 1961 onwards I had attended many activities including the annual demonstration from Aldermaston to London which usually occurred around Easter. In one particular year I participated in the march for peace and the end to nuclear weapons in three of the four days of that particular march. The exception was the Sunday when I had a Methodist service to conduct.

x) Taking the decision to leave the Methodist church was a difficult one, but looking back it was part of my political development. Moving away from the Church I then went to a number of Quaker meetings in 1965. I was originally attracted to the

³ See: www.cnduk.org – the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament campaigns non-violently to achieve British nuclear disarmament – to get rid of the Trident nuclear weapons system and stop its replacement.

Quakers due to their liberal beliefs and their pacifist ideology. At that time I considered myself a pacifist.

xi) I would say that from 1968 onwards I became much more interested with international issues. At that point I was particularly concerned with the situation in Vietnam, the developments in South Africa and the racist apartheid regime there. It was during this time I began moving away from pacifism because of the intervention of the west, particularly from the leaders of the United States in these and other countries. Along with many others at the time I came to hold the strong belief of the right of people's to self-determination. Given the role of the United States and other countries including Britain, it felt that pacifism would never convince them to stop bombing and invading. I supported their right to fightback. At this point I became involved with the protests organised by the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign⁴ and also the Anti-Apartheid Movement.⁵

xii) During this time I became not only inspired by the peoples of Vietnam and South Africa, but also as a result of the ideas of Bertrand Russell. Indeed, he was the President of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. Further to the ideas of Bertrand Russell, his speeches at the CND protests of Aldermaston, and the international campaigns for self-determination I began to move towards secularism.

⁴ The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign was founded in 1966 by members of International Marxist Group in conjunction with the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. It is well documented, further to the release of Special Branch files, that the Campaign was infiltrated by SDS officers. See <http://specialbranchfiles.uk/1968-protest-and-special-branch-0/>

⁵ The Anti-Apartheid Movement was a broad based organisation campaigning against the racist apartheid system in South Africa. The Movement was infiltrated by Special Branch. Resources can be found here: <https://www.aamarchives.org> and here: <http://specialbranchfiles.uk/anti-apartheid-movement-story/>

xiii) In order to show my opposition to what was going on in Vietnam, and in solidarity with the people of Vietnam to struggle for self-determination I attended a number of Vietnam Solidarity Campaign demonstrations. I would travel from my village in Bedfordshire to London to attend. The issue of Vietnam was a massive issue domestically and internationally. It was in the news all of the time. Over that period the demonstrations became bigger and bigger. I recall that I attended at three of the national demonstration organised by the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign that went to Grosvenor Square the home of the U.S. embassy. This location was obviously the logical place to protest against the intervention by the U.S. in Vietnam.

xiv) The first demonstration I attended that was organised by the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, I recall, in October 1967. I remember I was on this demonstration because earlier that day I had attended a rally out of interest of the British-Soviet Friendship Society which was held in the Albert Hall. I recall the rally going on later than expected and as a result I was late for the beginning of the protest to the US embassy. I decided to join the demonstration at the end, and subsequently entered the Grosvenor Square at a different entrance, and slightly earlier to the main demonstration. As a result, I was the only protester who reached the steps of the embassy behind police lines and just prior to the main demonstration entering Grosvenor Square. So, there I was behind police lines, who had lined up to face the main demonstration and stopping them coming too close to the US embassy. I was holding a placard I had made which said "I may be wrong but I believe we may be witnessing the first stages of World War III" – that was a direct quote from the then Secretary General of the United Nations – U Thant. He had in fact described the Vietnam War as one of the most barbarous in world history.

xv) Needless to say when the police saw me I was unceremoniously thrown into the main body of the demonstration. There was then an altercation between the police and the demonstration. I recall the police charging the demonstrators on horseback and the demonstration throwing bits of mud and paving stones at the police. I recall it ending in a riot. I cannot be sure how many people were on this first demonstration but there was certainly several thousand people.

xvi) I recall then attending a Vietnam Solidarity Campaign demonstration in March 1968. I recall marching with my sister, and her then husband. I recall being on the main body of the march this time, and when arriving in Grosvenor Square, I recall the police taking pictures of the demonstrators. Embassy staff were also taking pictures.

xvii) The biggest Vietnam Solidarity Campaign demonstration, and possibly the most famous was in October 1968. There was upwards of a hundred thousand people on this demonstration. There was no doubt that a small minority were intent on trouble, and as the protest developed there was a lot of trouble between the demonstrators and the police. In my view it was not the best way forward to highlight the issues. I do not know who instigated the trouble, I was there to show my solidarity.

xviii) It is well known that the International Marxist Group were the unofficial leadership of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. At that point I was seriously considering becoming a Marxist. However, I felt better equipped as a campaigner and activist to remain largely independent from the various and many socialist groups that existed in the 1960s. It is fair to say at that point probably the two biggest groups on

the New Left were the International Marxist Group⁶ and also the International Socialists.⁷

xix) In 1970 I enrolled at Goldsmith College which was part of the University of London. I embarked on a degree course to study sociology. I remember attending the 'freshers fayre' in order to join the Socialist Society. Once I discovered that there was not one, I then set up a stall at the fayre and recruited over 70 members to become establish it.

xx) In that first year at University I organised a number of meetings, including one on Vietnam. I recall that Tariq Ali spoke, who was then one of the leaders of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign and he came to speak on the developing political issues in Vietnam. It was at that point, and following a discussion with Tariq Ali that I considered becoming a member of the IMG. Although I did not in fact join until 1972 when I finally joined.

I was involved in the following organisations:

a) Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

⁶ The International Marxist group was the British section of the Fourth International. The Fourth International was founded by Leon Trotsky and his supporters in the 1930's. Attached is a link to what the IMG stood for: <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/img/img-gamohists/img-what-we-stand-for.pdf>

⁷ The International Socialists were founded in 1950 as the Socialist Review Group, later renaming itself the Socialist Workers Party. See here: <http://internationalsocialists.org/wordpress/about/>

I was involved as a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. This was and still is the leading organisation against Britain's commitment to nuclear weapons. I had attended the historic Aldermaston to London demonstration on a number of occasions. I have no doubt given what I know now that the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was infiltrated.⁸ How the campaign organised was public knowledge, it has branches and elects delegates to a national conference which then votes in a national committee.

b) Anti-Apartheid Movement

I am totally opposed to racism in all its forms. Prior to becoming a student, and indeed whilst I was one, I was involved with the Anti-Apartheid Movement. I attended pickets and demonstrations. I was also involved in the Stop The Seventies Tour.

This campaign was aimed at the South African touring rugby and cricket teams. It was intended as an extension of the boycott into sporting events. I was involved in stopping the 'W Isaacs XI' from playing. I became involved through the Anti-Apartheid Movement. I went along to The Oval cricket ground. The protest was organised so that when a whistle was sounded, approximately 20 protesters went onto the field and spread pebbles on it in order to get the game stopped or delayed to highlight the issue of the South African's touring the UK in breach of the United Nations embargo

⁸ See here: <http://specialbranchfiles.uk/cnd-story-2/>

I recall a man called Gordon Winter⁹ during this time. He claimed he worked for the *Johannesburg Sunday Express*. He took photographs of protestors, although we suspected he was an agent for the Bureau of State Security, which is the South African version of Special Branch/MI5/MI6. It dealt with state security matters both in South Africa and internationally. The Anti-Apartheid Movement advised us not to trust him after we reported him. They suspected he was an agent of the South African state. Those photographs, I suspect, found their way to Special Branch in the UK given the close working relationships between the two organisations.

On a demonstration of the Anti-Apartheid movement into Trafalgar Square, I was rather alarmed when he not only noticed me but knew my name and made a point of coming over to speak to me.

I was also involved in later demonstrations of Stop The Seventies Tour. For instance, I attended a rugby game at Twickenham during the South African rugby tour to protest at the South African team.

c) Anti-Internment League

Internment was brought in by the British State in August 1971 and the Anti Internment League was organised as a result. I recall that Kate Hoey, who later

⁹ Gordon Winter 'Inside BOSS: South Africa's Secret Police' (Penguin – 1981) – He was recruited by South African intelligence in 1963. He was deported from South Africa in 1966 as a cover for BOSS spying activities in London between 1966 and 1974.

became an MP in South London, was the National Secretary. The Anti-Internment League was established to oppose this.

I remember organising a march to Woolwich Barracks very early on to protest against internment.

Internment without trial, was introduced by the then Unionist government early on the 9th August 1971. It involved mass arrests by the British army of people from Catholic and nationalist backgrounds. The intelligence used in making the arrests was seriously faulty and scores of people ended up detained who had no connections with the IRA. It was a massive blunder by the British state. It was counter to civil, political human rights and I was totally opposed to this. It is important to remember that the demonstration in Derry on the 30th January 1972, which led to innocent people being shot by the British army, was in fact a demonstration against internment and for civil rights of the Catholic minority.¹⁰

I was actively involved helping to organise the first demonstration against Bloody Sunday. On the Sunday night as the news came in I drafted a leaflet which I distributed around Goldsmiths college the next morning urging people to go to a lobby of Parliament at lunch time. I recall that there were dozens of students from Goldsmiths, at Parliament, lobbying their MP's as a result of my leaflet.

¹⁰ See The Guardian, 'How a protest about internment led to Bloody Sunday' – 14th March 2019.
<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/mar/14/how-a-protest-about-internment-in-northern-ireland-led-to-bloody-sunday>

I recall that the following weekend after Bloody Sunday I was part of the national demonstration organised by the national Anti- Internment League that marched to Downing Street. After that demonstration the homes of the leadership of the Anti-Internment League were raided and they were charged with conspiracy although I understand that those charges were dropped at a later date.

The strategy of internment, and the events of Bloody Sunday were counter-productive. Many argued against them, including myself, as they lead to the growth in the IRA, and other para-military organisations.

d) Socialist Society

As stated above, I established the Socialist Society at Goldsmiths College when I first enrolled. The Socialist Society generally held public meetings most weeks on topical national and international issues. We also held meetings on socialist theory and issues. It was a democratic organisation which was open to all students and staff at Goldsmiths college

e) Troops Out Movement

The British Army went to northern Ireland to protect the catholic community from pogroms from loyalists. But as time went on it became an occupying army in nationalist areas because of ill-conceived policies of the British state. As the British army consolidated itself in Ireland, then the Troops Out Movement was organised. I think it started in 1973. I was very busy with college work, and had

gone through a period of illness and so did not feel able to be involved. However, when 'Rick Gibson' wrote to the national office, both myself and others felt obliged to set up a branch.

The Troops Out Movement had branches across the mainland Britain. I think its main aims were to campaign around the simple demand that British troops should be withdrawn from Northern Ireland. Indeed the Metropolitan Police would have been aware of its main aims given that they have a copy of the Troops Out Movement constitution at tab 14 [MPS-0728728] and would have been aware of its aims.

The organisation had a national committee, but also a London committee. Delegates were elected from the branches to these bodies and there was a national conference every year.

The aims of the Troops Out Movement were also educational with a number of events to highlight the issues in the north of Ireland. For instance - a talk was given at the South East London branch which included showing the film 'Ireland Behind the Wire' - see tab 17 [MPS 0728734]. Also Troops Out Movement supporters were involved in deputations to the north of Ireland, and provided reports to local and national bodies – see tab 36 [MPS-0728725]

f) International Marxist Group

I joined the International Marxist Group in 1972, and remained a member for about a year. Much of my activity and the organisation is answered from Q.7

g) Big Flame discussion groups

After leaving the International Marxist Group I was invited to attend Big Flame discussion groups. I answer questions on this from 5.13 below.

h) Labour Committee on Ireland.

The Labour Committee on Ireland was a pressure group inside the Labour Party. Ken Livingston was our national President, John McDonnell was our national Chair, and Clare Short was an active supporter. We also received support from Joan Maynard, Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn. It also included Labour party members, local councillors, and a number of individuals who later on became MP's.

The main aims of the Campaign were to highlight issues regarding the abuse of civil and political rights by the British Army. It campaigned for a united Ireland. It met monthly generally in London, but not exclusively.

I was asked to act as the press officer for the campaign from the mid 1980's to the early 1990's.

i) Assist Sheffield

For the last 17 years I have devoted much of my time to working with asylum seekers and refugees. Along with a handful of others, I was one of the founders of the organisation *Assist Sheffield* in 2003. We founded the organisation as a response to the homelessness and destitution of many of the asylum seekers we met in our Conversation Club for asylum seekers and refugees (a place where they came to make friends, learn English, and break out of their isolation, which I also help found and of which I am still a Trustee). We now have grown considerably from small beginnings and we now have over 300 volunteers in *Assist Sheffield*, and it is a registered charity. It employs 7 staff and has 8 houses in which asylum seekers are accommodated. We help about 100 each week with money and are also able to provide a home for many of them. The number of those we have helped runs into the thousands, and we are a well respected charity with local Bishops and an MP as patrons. I have been a Trustee of the charity from the beginning, and am now its Joint Chair.

3. Did you use any alias or aliases in relation to any of your political activity, if so what was it, what were they and why did you use an alias?

i) When I was a member of the International Marxist Group, I understand all members were encouraged to take 'party names.'

ii) I thought it was ridiculous as I had always been involved in open organisations. I then told the then branch organiser in south east London that I would take the name 'Winston Churchill.' As a result of that I was assigned the name 'Churchill.'

Intelligence Reports

4. Please consider the intelligence reports which the Inquiry has obtained and included them in your witness pack. Are the details that have been recorded accurate? If not, please identify any inaccurate reports and set out the respects in which the reports are inaccurate?

i) I have only a very vague recollection of the letter I wrote and that was published in *Black Dwarf*. This is mentioned in Tab 2 [MPS-0728205].

ii) I find it surprising and indeed alarming that the letter that appeared from me in *Black Dwarf* mentioning "decent British housewives" should have "attracted attention".

iii) I have managed to get sight of it again recently and re-read it for the first time for over 50 years. It was written in the immediate aftermath of the Grosvenor Square demonstration of October 1968 when I was still living in my home village of Langford in Bedfordshire. I think I had intended it as an article but it was printed as a letter, probably because it did not completely chime with the political slant that the people producing *Black Dwarf* desired.

iv) Having re-read it, I think it is a perceptive and apposite satirical comment on British society at the time. It follows on from a number of satirical articles I had been writing for the weekly newspaper *Tribune* whose managing director at the time was Michael Foot. The letter makes reference to many scare stories that had appeared in the media in the run up to the demonstration, to some of the language used, and to

actual events which occurred. Admittedly it is a bit tongue in cheek but I am even now quite proud to have written it as I think it succeeded in what it was attempting to do, which was to make people laugh as well as to think more deeply. I say it is alarming that the police should have thought it necessary to regard it as noteworthy or even dangerous, as I think that displays the mindset of people who were afraid of freedom of speech and who might be persuaded to participate in the creation of a police state

v) I am shocked at the scale of files that have been opened on people. I am very surprised that for instance a file was opened on my sister Privacy.

vi) In addition was it necessary to open a file on the Reverend Paul Oestreicher RF- 405/ Privacy see tab 20 [MPS0728739] He is recorded in my witness bundle, on 28th May 1975, he was on the General Synod¹¹ at the time. He was a long standing campaigner for peace and was one of the most respected Church ministers of his time.

vii) I also question the need of John Lennon RF: 405/70/363 to have a file. His entry is recorded by Rick Gibson, 30th December 1975 [MPS 0728772] see tab 65. Was this really necessary?

5. Please provide a factual account of your contact with and experience of Rick Gibson. You can answer the specific questions about Rick Gibson below, either separately or by incorporating them into your narrative.

¹¹ The General Synod is the national assembly of the Church of England - <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/about-general-synod>

5.1 How did you first come to meet Rick Gibson?

i) I came to meet 'Rick Gibson' as a result of him writing to the national office of the Troops Out Movement. I understand he made it clear that he wanted to join a group in south east London because he had signed on for an evening course in Goldsmiths College. He made a point to the national office that he was attending the College, and therefore it is clear that he wanted to place under surveillance political activity in the student body. I suspect given my high profile at the College that I was one of a handful of activists he was particularly interested.

ii) I first met him at the Student Union bar at Goldsmith College. However, for the reasons outlined below I think the meeting took place before 6th February 1975.

5.2 The intelligence report dated 17th February 1975 (at Tab 3) relates to a meeting in the students union bar at Goldsmith on 6th February 1975. Was this occasion the first time that you met Rick Gibson? If not can you recall how long after you first met Rick Gibson this meeting occurred?

i) I think that a meeting took place with 'Rick Gibson' before 6th February 1975. See Tab 3 [MPS-0728678].

ii) For purposes of clarity 'Rick Gibson' wrote to the National Office of the Troops Out Movement to join. 'Rick Gibson' advised that because he was signed up for a Portuguese class at Goldsmith College he needed to join a group in south east London. I was contacted by the Troops Out Movement national office and asked to

meet with him. I was known by many of the leading figures because of my activity in the Anti-Internment League.

iii) There was not a branch of the Troops Out Movement in south east London, so myself and others in the Socialist Society agreed to meet with him. I think through informal discussions we thought that maybe we could launch a branch from a public meeting which could be organised at Goldsmiths College.

iv) It now seems clear why the Special Demonstration Squad targeted the Troops Out Movement. The Birmingham Pub Bombing took place on 21st November 1974. 'Rick Gibson' wrote to join almost immediately.

v) We first met 'Rick Gibson' in the Student Union bar. The meeting was attended by me and a few others from the Socialist Society. This either took place in December 1974, before the end of term, or in January 1975. I remember that 'Rick Gibson' did not turn up to the first planned meeting we had arranged. The meeting was rearranged and then we informally discussed the Troops Out Movement. Further meetings took place to make arrangements to launch a south east London branch of the Troops Out Movement through the Socialist Society – see tab 6 [MPS-0728698].

vi) Arrangements were made to seek support for that launch meeting, see tab 7 [MPS-0728699]. With the launch meeting of the south east London Troops Out Movement branch on the 12th March 1975 – see tab 8 [MPS-0728701]. We then took steps to reach out to the labour and trade union movement to seek support and build an active branch – see tab 9 [MPS-0728710]

5.3 How close a relationship did you have with Rick Gibson and how did it develop?

i) As the intelligence reports indicate I had a close relationship with 'Rick Gibson.' Initially that was a political relationship in the Troops Out Movement. We would go to the London meetings together. After meetings we would often have a drink and chat. I thought we had similar views about the problems of sectarianism within the Troops Out Movement and an interest in combating that.

ii) I went to see Charlton Athletic with 'Rick Gibson.' He would come and visit me in my home. Clearly he was interested in cultivating a friendship.

iii) I was very active in the Troops Out Movement, and following contact from the national office organised the initial and subsequent meetings to establish a south east London branch. Given my previous activities in the Anti-Internment League I can only surmise that I was seen as a prominent target by the Special Demonstration Squad / Special Branch. It is likely that 'Rick Gibson' strategically befriended me because of this.

iv) 'Rick Gibson' skilfully played a role in the branch as someone who could be relied upon. He was also non-partisan. He aligned himself, initially with activists who were independent lefts, and was non-sectarian. He later became close to Gery Lawless who was one of the leading national organisers. This was important as he infiltrated the organisation.

v) I recall sometime after 'Rick Gibson' had left his course at Goldsmith College he told me he had got a job driving a van. I met him a few times in Woolwich during lunch time. I recall on one occasion 'Rick Gibson' invited me to the office that 'Rick Gibson' 'worked' at. I remember this was above a bank and in order to get entrance you had to go down a side path. The office was a standard office, and I recall one woman being there and lots of files on shelves in the office. I suspect it may have been a temporary office for the SDS itself.

vi) As a side note, I recall talking to Privacy my girlfriend at the time (and later my wife) that 'Rick Gibson' could be an infiltrator or police spy because he had no Irish background or political background and his understanding of the issues had been very limited. However because of his commitment and activities we later dismissed these thoughts as paranoid.

5.4 Did you ever live with Rick Gibson? Did Rick Gibson ever propose moving in with you?

i) I never lived with 'Rick Gibson.' I shared a flat at 234 Burrage Road, SE18 with my sister, and when she left to go to be a social worker in the north east of England I became the tenant, then shared the flat with my then girlfriend and also other students from time to time. I remember 'Rick Gibson' put out 'feelers' about moving into the flat but he never did so.

5.5 How often did Rick Gibson come to your home?

- i) 'Rick Gibson' was a frequent visitor to my home. This was partly because many of the meetings the Troops Out Movement were held there. Marxist discussion groups were also held there.

- ii) In addition 'Rick Gibson' also attended socially when we hosted people for dinner.

- iii) There were also informal and formal political discussions. So in conclusion 'Rick Gibson' was a frequent visitor.

5.6 What role did "Rick Gibson" play in setting up the South East London Branch of The Troops Out Movement (TOM)?

- i) "Rick Gibson" was the catalyst to the establishment of the south east London branch. He had written to the National Office to enquire about a branch in the area explaining that he was a student at Goldsmiths College studying Portuguese.

- ii) I was contacted by the Troops Out Movement national office and was central to organising an informal meeting of activists at Goldsmith College (mainly from the Socialist Society) to meet with him.

- iii) I was on the Student's Council, and therefore I was influential in publicising the launch meeting in the College. The aim was to get as many people at the Socialist

Society meeting with the view to launching a branch of the Troops Out Movement, but crucially ensuring that new people would become involved to lead the branch.

iv) I think 'Rick Gibson' would have been involved in distributing the leaflets for the meeting. You will see in tab 7 (MPS-0728699) a typed letter I had produced which was distributed in the local area and to trade union and labour movement bodies to secure an attendance at the launch.

v) The south east London branch of the Troops Out Movement was launched on the 12th March 1975 and was addressed by Gery Lawless (RF 335/57/4300) one of the national leaders of the organisation.

5.7 How committed a member of the South East London branch of TOM was "Rick Gibson"?

i) I would say that 'Rick Gibson' was a very committed member. He had access to a car, he was enthusiastic to do things and he was willing to take on the role of being the Secretary of the south east London branch. (see tab 9 MPS-0728710)

ii) Anyone who has been a campaigner will know that having an enthusiastic person to play the role of secretary and a willingness to campaign and organise is always welcome. He would occasionally Chair meetings – see tab 22 [MPS-0728681] and tab 28 [MPS-0728676]. He also was active in organising and producing leaflets for our public meetings – see tab 24 [MPS-0728667]. He was also involved in

leafletting – see tab 33 [MPS-0728719] and picketing, for example see tab 34 [MPS-0728722]

iii) I remember early on how keen 'Rick Gibson' was to visit former members and supporters of the Anti-Internment League. Many of them were members of the Irish community. I recall with interest how he was keen to obtain the addresses of these people and presumably this information was passed through to Special Branch and MI5. He visited them with me., this gave him credibility and there is no way they would have spoken to him had I not been involved and had gone along with him.

iv) There was understandably a reluctance from many people within the Irish community to be seen to be supporting the Troops Out Movement. This was because of the effect that the Prevention of Terrorism Act had in terrifying many in the Irish community, who as a result of the Act could be detained for up to 48 hours without charge, and then for a further five days with the agreement of the Secretary of State. This resulted in the picking up of thousands of people from the Irish community and was used to terrorise the Irish community.

v) I had spoken to people who had been detained under the PTA they often said it was the most terrifying experience of their lives. Many people suffered at the hands of the security services and the police and I now suspect that 'Rick Gibson' would have passed these names to his superiors.

vi) Home Office figures at the time indicate that the number of detentions from when the PTA came into force in 1974 up to the 31 December 1982 was 5,555. The

number of individuals charged under the various sections of the Act was 98 (1.76%). Of the 98 charged 83 (1.49%) were found guilty. 33 of those found guilty were given a suspended sentence. Altogether, therefore, 50 individuals (0.9% of those detained) were given prison sentences ranging in length from 1 year and under (22) to over 1 year and up to 5 years (7) and finally, over 5 years (21).¹²

vii) It is important to note that at the time, the National Council for Civil Liberties had argued that even for those charged with offences the Act was unnecessary to the process of catching those involved in terrorism. The NCCL stated that "...all the people detained under the Act and subsequently charged with criminal offences would have been arrested and questioned without using the detention powers of the Act itself" and they pointed to "...efficient and speedy police work, not emergency powers, which result in suspects being brought to trial"¹³

viii) Roy Jenkins was the Home Secretary who introduced the PTA. He had a reputation as a liberal Home Secretary and stated he was very reluctant to introduce it because he said the measures contained in the act were draconian, and hoped they would only be temporary.

ix) As an example of the way in which the PTA was used, I recall one of the members of the south east London branch being detained under Act. 'Charlie' who had learning difficulties, and was questioned for hours about the Troops Out Movement. I cannot be sure if 'Rick Gibson' had anything to do with it. Charlie spoke

¹² 'The Prevention of Terrorism Act: Normalising the Politics of Repression' Joe Sim and Philip A. Thomas, *Journal of Law and Society*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Summer, 1983), pp. 71-84

¹³ National Council for Civil Liberties, *The Prevention of Terrorism Act: The Case for Repeal*, (1981) p39

to me about his experience and told me that he tried to convince them he was a good citizen and has evidence he mentioned he was friendly with me.

5.8 How did "Rick Gibson" behave at pickets, demonstrations and other political activities that you may have witnessed?

i) In political activities "Rick Gibson" was not an agent provocateur or a trouble maker. His general strategy I think was to be as inoffensive as possible.

ii) However, I do remember one activity where the south east London branch of the Troops Out Movement picketed a house of a Junior Minister for Northern Ireland – Roland Moyle the MP for Lewisham North – see tab 31 [MPS-0728704] and tab 36 [MPS-0728723] Whilst 'Rick Gibson' attended the picket I do not remember whether he was there when we were invited into the house of the Junior Minister. Strangely we were asked questions by a number of people who were, I assumed, friends or relatives of the Minister. It is possible that 'Rick Gibson' may have notified them that the picket was to take place, that in fact the security services were alerted and had invited us into the house. I recall strangely we were then asked the question, "Which organisation in Northern Ireland we support?"

iii) Looking back at this event it was so strange.

5.9 What political line did "Rick Gibson" take when speaking at TOM meetings?

See for example Tab 73.

i) 'Rick Gibson' only spoke at two or three meetings that I know of. That is, he spoke beyond the usual business or organisational issues.

ii) The branch meeting of the Troops Out Movement mentioned at Tab 73 was a meeting where he spoke on the topic of "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination". I think he probably would have only spoken for 5 minutes. He had a poor grasp of political issues generally.

iii) With regards to his general position in the branch 'Rick Gibson' took a non-sectarian position, his contributions were extremely short, and he was non-controversial.

iv) Generally a wide dispensation was given to him, partly because he was not connected to any political group or faction, partly because of his access to a car and his general willingness to be active in doing things.

5.10 How was TOM organised? What positions of responsibility did Rick Gibson assume with TOM? At what level of the organisation and when? How did he come to assume those positions of responsibility and what information did those roles give him access to?

i) I am unsure whether the Troops Out Movement had a central office but as the secretary of the south east London branch it would have allowed him to build a certain reputation and build a certain amount of kudos. He was a frequent delegate to the London regional meetings. He was later elected to the Coordinating Committee.

ii) It is ironic in a way that even though I had a longer standing history of activism in Irish solidarity that 'Rick Gibson,' he managed to get elected to the national committee above me. An election took place for the national committee where he secured two votes more than me, and this made the difference. I think this is partly due to the fact that he presented himself as an independent, he latched on to me, and then later Gery Lawless. I realise now that it is likely he would have voted for himself but not for me. 'Rick Gibson' was inoffensive and went out of his way to make himself acceptable and therefore was elected to the national committee even for longer than I was.

iii) From being the south east London branch Secretary, he then went on to become the London organiser and then joint national Secretary.

iv) I had in fact been asked by Alan Hayling of Big Flame whether I wished to become London organiser. He told me that Big Flame would support me. However, I did not stand because I learned that a friend of mine wanted to stand and Gery Lawless had said derogatory things about her, and said he would support me, but I was worried that this would cause a rift between me and my friend. I mentioned this to Alan Hayling. After this I was advised by Alan Hayling that 'Rick Gibson' had volunteered to be London organiser and therefore there was no vacancy.

v) Becoming London organiser would have allowed 'Rick Gibson' access to all the London membership lists, their names and addresses, and details. He would have

also been privy to national discussions because at this time London had the biggest membership and the most branches.

vi) Later 'Rick Gibson' became national secretary and convenor of the national officers (secretariat) this would have allowed him access to the national membership lists, he would have been aware of all the activities in London and across Britain. He would be aware of public meetings and where they would be hosted. It may be no coincidence that the Troops Out Movement had many venues cancelled, and many rallies and large meetings stopped as a result of visits from Special Branch see tab 47 for example (MPS-0728755). Increasingly the Troops Out Movement was denied even the right to book venues. I know that Special Branch would visit pubs and other venues and advise the proprietors that the Troops Out Movement was an illegal organisation. It is entirely possible that this information was provided by 'Rick Gibson.'

vii) I note at tab 27 [MPS-07228675] that 'Rick Gibson' attended a meeting of those who supported Gery Lawless (one of the leading figures in the Troops Out Movement)

5.10.1 How did people come to Chair meetings within South-East London branch of TOM? How did Rick Gibson Chair such branch meetings on the occasions that he did so? What control, if any, did Chairing a branch meeting confer over the agenda and the course of debate?

i) Chairing a meeting in the south east London branch was fairly informal. Chairing a meeting varied from branch meeting to branch meeting. Chairing a branch did not

really necessarily give you any influence over the agenda, which was often set on the day.

ii) Chairing may allow you to rule certain things out of order such as motions and possibly cutting people short if necessary, but it would not have given you an excess amount of power. I think being the Secretary would have allowed you to gain access to membership lists, and this was probably far more important to Special Branch.

5.10.2 What information and/or influence did the role of Secretary to South-East London branch of TOM confer on Rick Gibson?

i) I think the Secretary position was influential. The secretary was in charge of the membership details. If notified by the national office of a potential new member it was up to the secretary to follow this up, or assign someone to visit that person.

ii) I remember on one occasion where 'Rick Gibson' was given the task of writing to Guy Barnett MP for Greenwich. I recall that despite being sympathetic, the MP never replied to our requests for a meeting. Eventually I wrote to him, and he replied immediately. He told me he never replied to unsigned letters. 'Rick Gibson' claimed he had signed the letters when I challenged him, however I doubt this. Eventually a group of us met together with Guy Barnett MP when he invited us to meet him in the House of Commons bar and he was friendly and sympathetic.

5.10.3 What is your recollection of the circumstances in which Rick Gibson resigned as Secretary of South-East London branch TOM? – Please consider the intelligence report dated 21.10.75 before responding.

i) I was not elected to the London Coordinating Committee and Rick Gibson was. At that point I think 'Rick Gibson' was already the London organiser. Recorded in the witness pack [tab 51 MPS-0728732] is a record of him resigning. The reasons for doing this was not because he was 'outraged' by the sectarianism of the Revolutionary Communist Group or Workers Fight, but because he was basically moving on and up in the Troops Out Movement. I think he wanted to free up his time to concentrate on being the London organiser.

ii) It was not a scathing attack as 'Rick Gibson' reports in his note to his superiors [see tab 51 MPS-0728732] it was, from recollection, a very laid back and matter of fact announcement. It was only a few words as opposed to a scathing attack as reported.

iii) I also think the reasons he gave were tactical. By claiming he was against 'sectarianism' he was ingratiating himself with the leaders of the Troops Out Movement. The leadership grouped around Gery Lawless did not want the national organisation dominated by the Revolutionary Communist Group or Workers Fight. In resigning for the reasons he gave, this will have got support with the leadership, and would have helped him in his new role.

iv) It must be exhausting having a false identity. I can only assume that keeping that up in multiple meetings would be tiring.

5.10.4 What did the role of delegates of the Bloody Sunday Commemoration Committee involve (see report dated 13 January 76 at Tab 66)? What information and/or influence did attendance at as a delegate to this Committee confer on Rick Gibson?

i) The Bloody Sunday Commemoration Committee was organised to commemorate that on 30 January 1972, in the Bogside area of Derry, British paratroopers shot unarmed people, during a civil rights march against internment. In total 13 people were left dead, a 14th person died some time later but the family are convinced that he died as a result of the injuries sustained on the day.

ii) After the Saville Inquiry in 2010, David Cameron issued a public apology for the actions of the soldiers, describing the killings as follows, he said:

"the conclusions of this report are absolutely clear: there is no doubt; there is nothing equivocal; there are no ambiguities. What happened on Bloody Sunday was both unjustified and unjustifiable."¹⁴

iii) The Committee was mainly organised by the International Marxist Group. It was done to highlight the fact that innocent people were murdered by British armed forces. At the time it was important to stress that innocent people had been killed in the United Kingdom, by our own soldiers. We wanted to remember those innocent people, but

¹⁴ Hansard 15th June 2010 -

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100615/debtext/100615-0004.htm>

also to underline the fact that civil rights were denied to the catholic minority in Northern Ireland, and that internment was a breach of human rights. This is important to emphasise as we now know that none of the casualties shot by the British Army were armed with a firearm, nor did they pose any threat of causing death by serious injury. In no case was any warning given before the soldiers opened fire.¹⁵

iv) The role of delegates to the committee would have been to help organise the event, arrange the stewarding and invite speakers. 'Rick Gibson' would have had access to knowing who was delegated to the Committee from not just the Troops Out Movement but potentially other organisations. He would have been aware of all the details of the commemoration march, speakers, and plans for the day. 'Rick Gibson' would have been able to report all of this back to the police.

v) For 'Rick Gibson' he would have also been able to use it as a show of loyalty to the national leaders of the Troops Out Movement, who I think were initially suspicious of the motives of the International Marxist Group in organising the Bloody Sunday Commemoration Committee see tab 57 [UCPI 0000009306] and tab 65 [MPS-0728772]. I think the leadership thought there was an intention to establish an alternative Irish freedom organisation, but this was not the case.

vi) I can only say that it upsets me to think that something which was well intentioned, done to highlight the abuse of human rights, to commemorate the unlawful deaths of innocent people was monitored and infiltrated by the police.

¹⁵ One of the main conclusions of the Saville Inquiry - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-of-the-bloody-sunday-inquiry>

5.10.5 What information and/or influence did attendance at all London TOM meetings confer on Rick Gibson?

i) As stated previously 'Rick Gibson' had built his position within the Troops Out Movement. Remember, he was the catalyst for the formation of the South East London branch of the Troops Out Movement.

ii) By initially positioning himself close to me politically, and as a 'friend' he was able to use my authority as a cover. He also later built a close relationship with Gery Lawless see tab 27 [MPS-07228675]

iii) He then used that authority to be delegated to represent the branch at the London wide Troops Out Movement meetings.

iv) I think 'Rick Gibson' had worked out, by being a fairly amenable independent, that he would be trusted across the board – particularly by the London and national leadership. Thus as an attendee he could report on the activities of the different London branches, up and coming public meetings. He would also as an 'independent' be party to the many informal discussions between people as a trusted comrade.

v) It is possible that should he wish he could have caused divisions between people, and may have done so. Often Troops Out Movement branches had problems hosting public meetings as I understand Special Branch officers would visit venues and tell the hosts that the organisation was illegal. I suspect 'Rick Gibson' and the

information he provided to Special Branch may have been instrumental. (see tab 47 – MPS-0728755)

5.10.6 What function did the London Coordinating Committee of TOM play? What access and/or influence did Rick Gibson's attendance at meetings of the London Coordinating Committee of TOM confer on him?

i) The London Coordinating Committee of the Troops Out Movement would, take reports from branches across London. It would also resolve disputes in and between branches.

ii) The Coordinating Committee being based in the Capital would have been influential national tone and possibly could have even taken reports nationally.

iii) It would have set campaigning priorities for the London organisation which would have had an influence on the national strategy..

iv) The Co-ordinating Committee provided a strategy and leadership for London. 'Rick Gibson' would have been able to understand all aspects of the activities of the London wide Troops Out Movement and would have had a say over certain campaign or strategic plans.

v) It concerns me that a democratic campaigning organisation would be spied upon and be subjected to political policing. This was an organisation seeking to raise

the legitimate concerns of British troops being in the north of Ireland and the subsequent problems their presence was causing there.

5.10.7 What function did the Organising Committee to which Rick Gibson is recorded as being elected on 19 September 1975 play (see tab 47)? What access and/or influence did Rick Gibson's appointment to this office confer on him?

i) Answers to this question I think are covered above.

5.10.8 What did the London organiser to which position Rick Gibson appears to have been appointed to do? What access and or influence did Rick Gibson's appointment to this office confer on him?

i) As the London organiser, 'Rick Gibson' would have been able to strengthen his role in the London organisation and probably the national organisation. London was central to the Troops Out Movement (as it was for many other national political campaigns) and therefore 'Rick Gibson' would have been at the centre of campaigns and organisation. At tab 53 [MPS-0728736] I note that it is recorded that 'Rick Gibson' would stand as the London Organiser, with the apparent support of Gery Lawless. He was later appointed as the organiser – see tab 58 [MPS-0728762].

ii) 'Rick Gibson' was generally not very knowledgeable about politics generally, or even the specifics of issues in Ireland. On top of this, his character was such that he would not really push major organisational agenda items. He may have involved himself in borderline disputes between branches. He may have even had a deciding

vote, or may have been the deciding vote or person in resolving some issues. However, I think generally he always placed himself in a position that if people needed him he always made himself available. By also keeping himself as an 'independent left' then many of the leading figures would have trusted him.

- iii) Thus as London organiser he would have:
 - a) Access to membership lists;
 - b) Resolve problems within or between branches;
 - c) Would have had the ear of the national leadership; and
 - d) Would have potentially had access to national lists of members also.

5.10.9 What information and/or influence did attendance as delegate at National Coordinating Conference of TOM and the National Delegate Conference confer on Rick Gibson?

- i) At this stage 'Rick Gibson' would have been well-known as the London organiser and well-known among a leading and influential group of key people, both national leaders and branch organisers. As such 'Rick Gibson' would have been a go to person and seen as a person to trust.
- ii) As a delegate 'Rick Gibson' would have had full speaking rights at the national conference. It is unlikely that he would have spoken on anything political. He was not very knowledgeable and did not have a very good grasp of the political issues. Nonetheless as can be seen in the intelligence reports, he did intervene on organisational issues always coming across as "non-sectarian".

5.10.10 What information and/or influence did the role of convener of the secretariat confer on Rick Gibson (see tab 80)?

i) As I understand it the secretariat were the national officers of the Troops Out Movement. As the convenor of the officers, and therefore officers meetings he would have made arrangements of all meetings of the national officers group.

ii) Effectively the role was akin to being a national organiser. As such he would have had access to the names, addresses and personal information of all members of the Troops Out Movement. That is, the Metropolitan Police would have had all of the private information held by the Troops Out Movement which was an open, independent, democratic organisation run by its members which was engaged in lawful political activity. The Troops Out movement further to its constitution had two main demands:¹⁶

- Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole
- Immediate withdrawal of British armed forces from Ireland

The Troops Out Movement was organised as a political campaign and pressure group. It was not illegal, nor had it acted illegally in organising for what are in essence reasonable demands supported by many people in the United Kingdom. Yet, the Metropolitan Police / Special Branch felt the need to place an undercover officer to play a role as a national officer.

¹⁶ See Tab 14 – MPS-0728728 – constitution of the Troops Out Movement. (a copy held by Special Branch)

iii) I note that further to his national role that 'Rick Gibson' would have been aware of all national campaigns and ongoing strategy.

iv) Given that he probably had free time to do this work he would have been the link person to the branches throughout the country and the national officers on a day to day basis. He may have played a role of stifling the organisation.

iv) 'Rick Gibson' would have been fully aware of discussions between officers and would have been aware of the agenda prior to all meetings.

v) I am aware of a report that 'Rick Gibson' prepared for the officers as the Secretariat Convenor regarding the fringe meeting held at the Labour Party Young Socialists National Conference. In it, again he was at pains to emphasise his non-sectarian credentials against other members of the organisation.¹⁷ This contribution by 'Rick Gibson' was just a way of ingratiating himself with the national officers. I have seen the report and I am surprised at its sophistication. I would be surprised that he would have written this without help.

vi) As a result of being central to the London branches, the branches throughout the country and being known to all of the national officers, all of this information would have been provided to the Special Branch, Team B and C in the Metropolitan Police, as well as MI5.

¹⁷ See the report from Rick Gibson here - https://powerbase.info/images/8/83/Rick_minutes_1976.pdf

vii) I understand that 'Rick Gibson' used the name of a deceased child to create his identity. This is appalling to me and shows a lack of sensitivity to that family.¹⁸

viii) I note that the legal representatives of 'Rick Gibson' had sought that his real name is not released. They call for 'fairness.'¹⁹ I wonder where the fairness or the legality is when they seek to infiltrate organisations and potentially derailing their activities?

ix) 'Rick Gibson' was supported by the south east London branch of the Troops Out Movement in his nomination to be London Organiser and member of the secretariat – see tab 60 [MPS-0728743].

5.11 Please look at the intelligence report dated 14 April 1975, at Tab 12 and in particular para 4 it suggests that you, Rick Gibson and another agreed to fly post in the local area.

5.11.1 Did this fly posting activity go ahead?

j) I believe so.

5.11.2 Did Rick Gibson participate in fly posting to your knowledge?

¹⁸ See pt. 2- <https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/HN297-Open-risk-assessment-from-the-MPS.pdf>

¹⁹ See MPS legal services submissions 3rd July 2017 - <https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/HN297-Open-application-from-the-MPS.pdf>

i) The activity did go ahead. I did not take part because on the night in question I had a migraine.

ii) Rick Gibson (RG) and an activist called Olivia called at my door but I was too ill to take part – but I am certain it did go ahead.

5.12 It would appear that London branches of TOM including the South-East branch was subject to sectarian infighting (21 April 1975 at Tab 14, 29 April 1975 at Tab 15, 20 June 1975 at Tab 24, 4 July 1975 at Tab 27, 21 October 1975 at Tab 51 in particular). To what extent did Rick Gibson become in this sectarian infighting?

i) The membership of the South East London branch of the Troops Out Movement was comprised of different organisations. There were Labour party members, but also members from the International Marxist Group, International Socialists, Workers Fight, Revolutionary Communist Group and well as independent lefts such as myself.

ii) There were differences of opinion at the South East London branch meeting. I would say there was at times antagonism between, on the one side members of the Revolutionary Communist Group and Workers Fight, then on the other independent lefts and the other groups. We felt that they were not interested in building a broad based organisation. I felt that they were more interested in scoring points, and to recruiting people to their own organisations.

iii) It is important to note that at tab 81 [UCPI-0000009733] that 'Rick Gibson reported back that Sean Matgamna of the International Communist League (previously called Workers Fight) had been censored by the Troops Out Movement committee. This followed Rick Gibson's report from the Labour Party Young Socialists fringe meeting.

iii) Generally I stayed away from the sectarian disagreements. I note that 'Rick Gibson' claims that he intervened and attacked other groups – see tab 51 [MPS-0728732] However from recollection this was not really the case. I think those reports were for the benefit of his bosses and line managers. My recollection is that 'Rick Gibson' generally did not get involved and stayed aloof from the intense discussions around Ireland. This worked in his favour through accident rather than design. Had he become involved in those heated discussions he would have shown his naivety, and this may have exposed his cover.

5.13 How did Rick Gibson come to be involved with Big Flame?

i) Big Flame has been described as a Trotskyist Group²⁰ this is not the case. Big Flame was an organisation in the libertarian Marxist tradition²¹ they strongly believed in working with the Irish community. I would also say there were also a lot of feminists in Big Flame. Many women joined Big Flame because they felt oppressed and found it to be a safe haven from the sectarianism and strict discipline of other left groups. Big Flame were not authoritarian, and were strongly opposed to the theory of democratic

²⁰ See the risk assessment of Rick Gibson at pt.2 - <https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/HN297-Open-risk-assessment-from-the-MPS.pdf>

²¹ See - <https://bigflameuk.wordpress.com/about/>

centralism.²² I would consider them as the least sectarian of all the left groups. They produced a newspaper which I think came out every few weeks. They had groups in London (north and south) Manchester, Nottingham Liverpool, Newcastle and Glasgow. Big Flame were one of the key organisations in the Kirkby rent strike in Liverpool.²³

ii) I got on very well with the members of Big Flame, although I never became a member. I was invited to their discussion groups by Alan Hayling one of the leading activists in Big Flame. I was invited because I was an independent left and they recognised that I had similar views to them. Had I not left London it is entirely possible that I would have joined Big Flame, although I was also seriously considering re-joining the Labour Party.

iii) I note that at tab 45 [UCPI-0000007630] that I attended a Big Flame meeting on the 20th September 1975. I note that this report is made without 'Rick Gibson being present at the meeting. I would ask the Inquiry to advise who was spying on me and also the meeting?

iv) I mentioned to 'Rick Gibson' in general conversation that I was attending Big Flame discussion groups. He said that he was interested and asked me whether he could come along. I mentioned this to some members of Big Flame, and they said that is fine bring him along.

²² See <https://socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5467/2366> - this provides a general overview to Big Flame and their approach to organisation.

²³ See <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/history/blog/2018/women-kirkby-rent-strike/>

5.14 How committed a member of Big Flame was Rick Gibson?

i) I am fairly certain that 'Rick Gibson' was never a member of Big Flame. He only attended a few discussion groups, and then he had asked to join that organisation in the summer of 1976. I think Big Flame had their suspicions of 'Rick Gibson', but what maybe concerned them was that he had indicated that once he joined, he was going to move to Liverpool and get involved there. I think this raised alarm bells for the leading figures in Big Flame. The branch in Liverpool was one of their biggest and also they had built relationships with people in nationalist communities in the North of Ireland. They were concerned that if 'Rick Gibson' joined he would get access to them.

ii) Big Flame was a libertarian Marxist group and not as doctrinaire in its political positions as other groups on the left. Prior to, and then on leaving the International Marxist Group, I was an independent left. As such I often had friendly discussions with Alan Hayling about Big Flame which was why I ended up going to their discussion groups.

iii) I did not know that Big Flame had suspicions about Rick Gibson until after I had left London. When I returned and met Alan Hayling again at a meeting of the west London Troops Out Movement he told me they had exposed 'Rick Gibson' as someone living under false name. They were concerned he was an infiltrator, but they were unsure where his origins were.

iv) The suspicions of 'Rick Gibson' centred on his lack of politics and political nous. Prior to joining the Troops Out Movement he was an unknown, he had no Irish background, no history in the labour and trade union movement.

v) So from recollection 'Rick Gibson' was very keen to come to the discussion groups, and presumably was hoping that this would be a stepping stone to joining Big Flame. In reality it was his downfall.

5.15 How was Big Flame organised? What positions of responsibility did Rick Gibson assume within Big Flame? At what level of the organisation and when? How did he come to assume these positions of responsibility and what information did these roles give him access to?

i) As stated above, I do not believe that 'Rick Gibson' was ever a member of Big Flame. 'Rick Gibson' was the Secretary at the formation of the south east London branch of the Troops Out Movement, and this would have brought him a certain amount of kudos. As can be seen at Tab 79 (UCPI 00000012396) he did Chair a public meeting of Big Flame. However, this was not a branch of Big Flame because the South London branch was based in Brixton. This was purely a one off meeting to show the film 'Popular Power' about the revolution and the overthrow of the fascist regime in Portugal. Therefore he may have just been given an opportunity to Chair a meeting at that point as because he was the secretary of the Troops Out Movement in the area.

ii) Like many organisation Big Flame was organised with a branch structure. They probably had a national conference that elected a national leadership. But, as a

libertarian Marxist group it would have been a non-hierarchical structure with branches free to be involved in whatever campaigns they wanted to be involved in.

5.16 How did Rick Gibson come to Chair public meetings with South London Group of Big Flame held 12th April 1976? What if any influence did Chairing this meeting give Rick Gibson?

i) I think it was likely that 'Rick Gibson' volunteered to Chair the meeting. He chaired the meeting probably to court favour with Big Flame. He had indicated that he wanted to join.

ii) I think he was given the opportunity to Chair because he was a leading figure in the Troops Out Movement at this point. Additionally, the meeting of the 12th April 1976 [see tab 79 – UCPI 00000012396] was held at the same venue as many of the south east London branch meetings of the Troops Out Movement.

5.17 What was Big Flame Ireland Commission, what was its aim? What information or access did Rick Gibson's involvement with this Commission confer on him?

i) From recollection I think the Big Flame Ireland Commission was a broad based campaign/commission which was on an invite only basis. It was primarily designed as a discussion group and was there for educational and research purposes only.

ii) I do not recall Rick Gibson being involved in the Commission because it was about education, research and analysis. Although I note that he attended a meeting of the Commission at tab 40 [UCPI-0000027166], tab 46 [MPS-0728754] and tab 55 [UCPI-0000009283].

5.18 To your knowledge did Rick Gibson have any sexual contact with anyone whilst in his undercover duty? The Inquiry is particularly interested in this regard in evidence that you gave about Rick Gibson, Mary, her flat mate and the other women to whom you referred in your application for Core Participant status – if so, please explain what happened.

i) My understanding is that he had sexual contact with at least four female activists. One of which was 'Mary' who I know is a core participant, and has provided the Inquiry with a statement. She was unaware that 'Rick Gibson' was a police officer.

ii) It is also the case that 'Rick Gibson' had another relationship with an activist from Goldsmiths College who was also periodically involved in the Troops Out Movement branch in south east London.

iii) I am sure he had at least two other sexual relationships. I recall when 'Rick Gibson' was exposed by Big Flame to be a police officer I was shown the dossier that they had assembled. Amongst the evidence was a copy of a scrawled note from 'Rick Gibson' to a female member of the Big Flame group explaining why he had to "go away." I did not see who the letter was addressed to, but I was given to understand that this was a serious relationship.

iv) He also had sexual relations with another woman who was in "open relationship". She was an activist.

5.19 Did Rick Gibson participate in or encourage any crime?

i) Not that I am aware of.

5.20 Was Rick Gibson involved in criminal proceedings in any way?

i) Not that I am aware of.

5.21 Was Rick Gibson involved in civil legal proceedings in any way?

i) It is possible for the reasons outlined below that he may have had access to legal advice – see tab 70 [MPS-0728777] However, I can only surmise this as a possibility.

5.22 Did Rick Gibson become privy to any confidential legal advice as a result of pretending to be an activist?

i) I think it is very unlikely that 'Rick Gibson' would have had access to legal advice or legal opinion. Legal action was discussed by the leadership of the Troops Out Movement particularly in relation to where halls or venues were denied to them, or cancelled.

ii) Given that he had attending the London regional meetings, then later the London organiser and then secretary for the national officers he would have had privy to that legal advice.

5.23 When was the last time you recall seeing Rick Gibson and in what circumstances?

i) I left London in September 1976. I would have said goodbye to a number of activists involved in the Troops Out Movement, members of the International Marxist Group and Big Flame. At that time, I would have also said my goodbye to 'Rick Gibson, but I cannot recall when. But it was around that time I would have seen him last.

5.24 Did you move to Warwickshire on or about 10th September as the report dated 3rd September 1976 suggests (Tab 90)? If so, did this bring to an end your activism with South-East London TOM? If not, please explain.

i) I think this would have been about right.

ii) There was no branch of the Troops Out Movement to where I had moved, and so I lost contact with it.

iii) I had been a member of the Labour Party from 1963 to 1968 and on leaving south east London and moving to Warwickshire I re-joined the Labour Party.

iv) As a result of being active in the Labour Party, I then eventually became a parliamentary candidate in 1982 for the Warwick and Leamington constituency.

v) In addition to that I later became a District Councillor from 1983 to 1987 for the Labour Party.

vi) As a result of these activities in the Labour Party I became involved in the Labour Committee on Ireland. I was approached to be their press officer and in fact took that position from mid to late 1980's or maybe as late as the 1990's. As a result I attended various monthly meetings in London and Birmingham as well as Manchester on occasion. I got to know John McDonnell MP and Clare Short MP very well.

vii) At one Labour Party Conference where I was involved in lobbying on behalf of the Labour Committee on Ireland, I was given the task of accompanying mothers of children who had been seriously injured or killed by plastic bullets. I introduced them to leading figures in the Labour movement including MP's. One of these was Peter Archer the Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who tried to organise a meeting with Neil Kinnock the then Labour leader. Needless to say the meeting didn't happen despite his attempts. The devastating impact of the use of plastic and rubber bullets can be seen in the pamphlet disclosed in 'They Shoot Children: the use of rubber bullets and plastic bullets in the north of Ireland.'²⁴

²⁴ Information on Ireland. They Shoot Children Use of Rubber and Plastic Bullets in the North of Ireland – 1st December 1982

viii) As a result of my work with the Labour Committee on Ireland I became very friendly with a number of Labour MP's including Clare Short MP and Jeremy Corbyn MP.

viii) Despite leaving London, and 'Rick Gibson' behind, I continued to care passionately about Irish self-determination. I continued to campaign around issues of human rights abuses and social justice for the people in the north of Ireland.

5.25 How did you come to learn that Rick Gibson was not who he said he was?

i) In the Autumn of 1976 when I returned from Warwickshire to London I attended a meeting of the west London Troops Out Movement. The purpose of attending the meeting was to meet old friends.

ii) At the meeting I met Alan Hayling who informed me about the situation with 'Rick Gibson.' I remember discussing this with Alan Hayling in a launderette. I was told that a file had been created by Big Flame members, and the file was later held by 'Den.'

iii) After the discussion with Alan Hayling I was shown the contents of the file. It included the birth and death certificates of the real Rick Gibson. It also included a scrawled note to a girlfriend from 'Rick Gibson.' I was told the girlfriend was a member of Big Flame. There were a few other documents as well that showed that 'Rick Gibson' was in fact a infiltrator into the organisation. We were unsure whether he was a police officer, or an MI5 agent.

5.26 What steps did you take to verify he was not who he said he was?

i) During the visit and after I had seen the file that had been prepared by Big Flame I decided to back to the office in Woolwich where 'Rick Gibson' claimed he had worked, and where I had once met him. On arriving I realised that the offices were locked up.

ii) I went to the bank that was situated below those offices, and asked what had happened. They told me they had moved out a month before. A bank worker gave me a telephone number that had been left with the bank. I rang them twice but there was no answer. After placing the receiver down, the phone rang and when I picked it up there was no one there. I tried a third time and finally got through. When I told them I was trying to reach 'Rick Gibson' the person I spoke with went away for some time, he returned and then advised me that 'Rick Gibson' no longer worked there. He asked me to provide my details, and I gave him my name, address and telephone number. He said that if 'Rick Gibson' got in touch they would ask him to get in touch with me. I never had any further communication from them.

iii) On the same visit I went and visited 'Mary' and another fellow activist from Goldsmith College. I visited in order to advise them that 'Rick Gibson' was a police officer. I recall that the activist had advised that she had once been to 'Rick Gibson's' Putney bedsit and she told me that it was very sparse and very unlivable.

iv) Mary and the other activist both informed me that they had been discussing whether he was a policeman. They informed me that he never stayed the full night, but always left in the middle of the night. They said they had no evidence that he was a police officer, and then I informed them what Big Flame had uncovered.

v) I understand that members of Big Flame went to the flat where 'Rick Gibson' had moved to in south east London. I recall they had gone the day after he had been confronted with the evidence. They had found that the flat was completely empty.

5.27 When did you know for certain that Rick Gibson was an undercover police officer?

i) At the time I saw the file that Big Flame members had assembled I was still unsure whether he was a police officer, MI5, an army member or even a member of the fascist National Front. I initially thought he was probably MI5. Big Flame themselves were unsure whether he was a state agent, which was most probable or even a fascist.

ii) It was not until 1986 that I had it confirmed that he was a police officer further to the investigations of Nick Davies and Ian Hollingsworth of *the Guardian* who notified me that 'Rick Gibson' was a police officer.

6. Can you recall any contact with Gary Roberts in the approximate period 1974-1978? If so, please set out any recollections that you have of this individual.

Note "Gary Roberts" refers to you in his witness statement to the Inquiry in the following terms:

"56. I knew Richard Chessum in the IMG and I could have been the author of the Special Branch report at Tab 189 UCPI 0000017796. I was never tasked to report on an individual person. He was a person involved in the IMG and would have reported his move for someone else to consider its relevance or not. Would report on such changes of circumstance as it would be updating information for the individuals personal file, if they had one. Special Branch would undertake roughly yearly reviews of personal files to ensure that they were up-to-date particularly individuals of prominence. Whether it was a person of prominence I cannot now recall nor would I have been making that decision."

i) With regards to Gary Roberts I have not seen the Tab 189 mentioned. I have also not seen the Witness Statement from Gary Roberts which would of course have potentially assisted me to recall the name.

ii) Without a contemporaneous photograph of Gary Roberts it is impossible for me to remember who he was. Given the failure of the Inquiry to provide that information to assist me, I am unable to assist the Inquiry further which is unfortunate given I feel that as a Public Inquiry it should be assisting Core Participants as much as possible.

6. What relationship did you have with the International Marxist Group (IMG) during the period covered by the intelligence reports in your witness bundle?

Where you at any time a member of the IMG? If so, when? If and when you were not a member, how active a supporter of the IMG were you?

i) I first came into contact with the International Marxist Group during my support of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign.

ii) Later, and as outlined above I organised the Socialist Society at Goldsmiths College. I had been inspired to set up a branch after attending the student occupations at the London School of Economics where there was a very strong and active Socialist Society. I wanted to create a broad based group, eventually I recruited 70 people to the society and organised numerous meetings in order to discuss socialist ideas.

iii) I did not want to join the International Marxist Group as was more interested in building broad based and open organisations that campaigned on a range of issues. I was not interested in joining a closed hard left group because I often got annoyed with the tactics of hard left groups in that they seemed more interested in recruiting to their own particular group and less interested in building the movement.

iv) I was broadly sympathetic to the ideas of International Marxist Group. I was inspired by the likes of Tariq Ali who had organised the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, and was one the Group's leaders. He spoke at the Goldsmith Socialist Society and had asked me to join. I didn't joined the International Marxist Group until 1972.

v) On joining the International Marxist Group my overriding impression was there was a lot of discipline at meetings and demos. I recall being challenged by the National

Secretary. I was sent a letter disciplining me for failing to attend a particular demonstration. I began to feel as well that this disciplined approach was not conducive to making inroads into the working class and to building a broad based organisation. However, I did agree with the analysis that they gave in relation to capitalism. I thought there was some very good people in the IMG who were interested in building a broad-based socialist organisation.

vi) However, I did not particularly like some other members and their sectarian and at times bullying approach. I felt the atmosphere was not conducive to building a broad-based socialist organisation. I did not agree the theory and practice of democratic centralism²⁵, which seemed to me to have more to do with centralism than democracy.

vii) When I joined the International Marxist Group, I think I was the first member in south east London at the time, or if not probably the most active and certainly the one who wanted to build a branch. A national organiser called Phil Shimeld, and another one called Nigel came from the national leadership to help organise a new branch. A branch was set up and needed a branch organiser. Despite my central role in getting things off the ground in south east London they suggested another person to be the local organiser of the new branch. I got the feeling that they already regarded me as a slightly unreliable comrade.

viii) In April 1973 I advised Brian Grogan the National Secretary of the International Marxist Group that I would need to take a break because of my pending exams. He

²⁵ On democratic centralism see - <https://www.britannica.com/topic/democratic-centralism>

responded by saying he thought I was telling them I wanted to leave the organisation. I felt that they were happy about that because I had been a dissident on many things. Therefore I stopped attending the meetings, didn't go back, and effectively left the Group.

ix) Notwithstanding the above, I supported much of the analysis of the International Marxist Group in relation to their analysis of anti-racism, the National Abortion Campaign, and anti-imperialism. Indeed, it was a former member of International Marxist Group, Privacy who was later involved in a Socialist Action who invited me to become the Press Officer of the Labour Committee on Ireland.

x) In relation to the International Marxist Group I did agree with their analysis on Ireland, not just politically but organisationally as they along with Big Flame and the International Socialists, wanted to build a mass broad-based Troops Out Movement. I often felt that the Revolutionary Communist Group and Workers Fight were only interested in pushing their own agenda more than the issue of Ireland.

7. To what extent was the information contained in the intelligence report in your witness pack that related to the IMG and matter of public knowledge?

i) With regards to the information in my witness pack, I think most people in Goldsmiths College were very aware of my socialist viewpoint and also my support for the Troops Out Movement. I think many people actually thought I was in the International Marxist Group even though I had left it. The activities that we organised with the Troops Out Movement, the International Marxist Group and the Socialist

Society were of public knowledge. Branch meetings were open to all members of the public, anyone could get involved in any of the organisations relatively easily.

ii) Much of the information contained within the witness pack would have been known by activists in south east London who were active or members of these organisations. We held stalls, leafletting and public meetings all of the time.

iii) Whilst I was not a member of the International Marxist Group until 1972 I was sympathetic to them. I worked with them at the National Union of Students National Conference on one occasion at the time that I was the left candidate for the President of the Student Union at Goldsmiths College. That was not in the witness pack which is of some surprise given my activities during this period.

iv) Mentioned in the witness pack, but only fleetingly is something I think is important. At Tab 2 (MPS-0728205) it states the following:

"On 4.2.72 he intervened in a scuffle when two men were being arrested for taking and driving away, as a result of which one escaped."

The details are not in the witness pack and I want to advise the Inquiry about this as it both informs my political views, and the context of which myself and other socialists were working with at the time.

v) In approximately 1972, I was at the International Marxist Group's national office. I think they were situated close to Angel, Islington. I was there in order to get printed a leaflet because I was running for the sabbatical president at Goldsmith College. Our platform was very much about ensuring that socialists would be on the executive of the students union. In particular I was running on a platform of student rights and no platform for fascists (the reason being that we had the national student organiser of the National Front at Goldsmiths College).

vi) I recall coming out of the office and I think was in Kings Cross on my way to another meeting with someone I had met in the office. It was very dark at the time. I seem to remember that the street lights had been turned off to preserve electricity because of the ongoing Miners strike. We entered a side street and witnessed what appeared to be a fight between two white people and two black men who were being attacked. One of the white people was hitting one of the black men man in the middle of the road. Just on the pavement another black man was being attacked by the other white man. The colleague who was with me at the time, who I had met in the national office assumed that this was a racist attack. This was in the context of my activities within a local anti-racist committee where some local Asian men had been attacked and hospitalised. My colleague said he would take the incident in the road and left me to challenge the white man on the pavement. I would stress at this point I was completely unaware that the white men were both police officers as they were both in plain clothes. I tried to stop the fight, protect the black man from being attacked, but in the process was manoeuvred onto some hotel steps, the white man then revealed to me he was a police officer and then told me I was under also arrest. My colleague and the other man in the road had escaped. I was then placed in a police car and the

arresting officer was sat next to me. On arrival at the police station I recall being marched into the custody suite, and the police officer, I remember very clearly stating:

"This coon was arrested because he was trying to take a vehicle without consent and this bloke was trying to get the coon free."

vii) I was appalled by this, not only was I appalled by the fact that it was said, I was appalled that the custody sergeant did not challenge this language. I think this will not come as a surprise to many people as many officers of the Metropolitan Police were had a reputation for racism. It is the context in which myself and other socialists were operating and trying to campaign against racism and fascism at the time.

viii) I was kept in a cell for a while and I remember falling asleep, which annoyed the police officers. I was later charged with wilfully obstructing a police officer and then released in the early hours of the morning.

ix) I went to a local solicitor who was active in the National Council for Civil Liberties and I was advised to plead not guilty. When the court case came around I pleaded not guilty and the case initially was adjourned.

x) Six weeks later I returned to Court as my case was due to be heard again. Myself, and solicitor waited all morning before the case was called. Just before entering the court a police officer approached me, and cautioned that I was also to be charged with assaulting a police officer. The case was then adjourned again, which allowed my solicitor more time to prepare my defence given this fresh charge.

xi) I remember that for the trial my solicitor sent a colleague named Ron Rose who was a black lawyer. The significance of this is that I remember during the hearing the Magistrate being extremely rude to my lawyer whilst at the same time treating me with more respect. I recall that the police claimed that I had tried to throttle the officer who had arrested me which was completely untrue. My lawyer very effectively showed that they had lied.

xii) I was supported in the public gallery by many anti-racists, members of the labour movement students from Goldsmiths College and members of my family. The public gallery was full and approximately thirty people were there to support me. I had very good character reference from my senior tutor and the Chaplain to the college. I remember they were very angry about the charges and when I was found guilty of one of the charges they urged me to appeal.

xiii) The conclusion of the case was that I was found not guilty of assault but found guilty of wilful obstruction – even though I was unaware that they were plain clothes police officers at all.

xiv) I remember that 'Rick Gibson' knew all about this. I recall telling him all about the case, telling him of the racist behaviour and language of the police. It was strange that he did not recall it in his notes, maybe he was embarrassed by what the police had done, what they had said and the assaults.

8. What were the aims of the IMG and in particular did not they seem to overthrow the state as it was in the 1970s.

i) The International Marxist Group shared an analysis with all Marxists of the state as a capitalist state. Its main function was to maintain the capitalist order. The International Marxist Group wanted a socialist state rather than a capitalist one. The International Marxist Group, its members, including me saw that the capitalist state wanted to maintain an economic order that was unjust, exploitative and would take the side of the employers against the workers. It was recognised that the state could play a positive role in providing services and welfare for working class people but insofar as it did so it was a consequence of long and sustained campaigns that reforms had been won. It depended upon the balance of class forces at the time.

ii) In my view, if you have a conscience and you are human you cannot agree with this kind of state. The injustice that it perpetrates inevitably lead me to becoming a socialist. I agreed with their analysis.

9.1 Did the IMG use violence to advance its aims?

i) In my view, it did not use or seek to use violence to advance its aims. It was involved in legal political activity and whilst it justified revolutions in undemocratic societies it did not see it the same way here and in my experience they were not involved in violent activity.

9.2 Did the IMG foresee a time when violence would or might be necessary to realise its aims?

i) There have been accusations about the International Marxist Group being violent or socialists being violent, but this is not true. It was involved in some of the biggest demonstrations in mainland Britain at the time. It also was the central organiser of a number of demonstrations including the very large demonstrations against the Vietnam war. It is not possible to control individuals on demonstrations who engage in activities that are not planned.

ii) I also know that the police at times was overtly racist. I remember at the Grosvenor Square demonstration organised by the IMG against the Vietnam war that a black demonstrator was at the front line of the demonstration facing the police lines, one of the police, his face twisted with rage, lunged forward to attack the black demonstrator. His police colleague was very worried about this and pulled him back. This confirmed in our opinion that they were institutionally racist, which it was later found to be.²⁶

iii) The International Marxist Group never advocated violence. If anything, the left has always been the subject of violence whether it is anti-racist demonstrations, trade union rights, or even internationally such as the Government of Salvador Allende who at the time was overthrown by state violence supported by US imperialism.

²⁶ The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (the Macpherson Report) was a 350 page report which criticised the Metropolitan Police for institutional racism.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277111/4262.pdf

iv) If anything the International Marxist Group took defensive action to protect itself from state violence or National Front/Nazi violence – organising stewards to protect the demonstration.

v) The reality is when the state often uses violence against peaceful demonstrators. Indeed my own MP (in the 1960's) - Stephen Hastings, made the following statement which reported locally in mid Bedfordshire

"That time has arrived when it has to be questioned whether the existence of a Labour Government is compatible with democracy."

I recall he was quoted in the Biggleswade Chronicle or the Bedfordshire Times. This comment was made in the context of him also supporting Iain Smith and Rhodesia declaring UDI. It is also important to note that it was reported at the time that Lord Louis Mountbatten was discussing the possibility of a military coup to unseat a democratically elected Labour Government. Therefore I think that the questions are very loaded and does not take the broad picture of what was going on in society as a whole.²⁷

9.3 Did the IMG advocate, provoke or approve of public disorder in order to advance its aims?

²⁷ See here details of a well reported plot by Louis Mountbatten to prepare a coup against the then Labour gov't - https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2006/mar/15/comment_labour1

i) In my short membership of the International Marxist Group I did not witness them collectively, or individually advocate, provoke or approve of public disorder. It is true they wanted to organise the biggest campaigns and the biggest demonstrations in order to highlight the many problems in Britain at the time.

ii) So for instance they organised the massive Vietnam Solidarity Campaign demonstrations. They organised demonstrations against the National Front, demonstrations against racism, and also in support of many trade union activities including strikes and demonstrations. The central aim was always to build the organisation and put forward socialist views.

iii) So overall my lasting memory of the International Marxist Group was that it was involved in activities to promote socialist ideas and to propagate those ideas through big campaigns to secure a maximum amount of people involved. In doing so they did not advocate, provoking or approving of public disorder.

**9.4 Did the IMG consider it necessary to break the law to advance its aims?
If so, please explain.**

i) When I was a member of the International Marxist Group I never knew or found it was their policy that laws should be broken. There were bad laws, such as those aimed against the trade union movement that needed to be campaigned against. There were other laws and policies which needed to be campaigned against but again, this was in the bounds of building a broad based campaign to bring trade unionists, the community and the working class together against bad laws and policies.

ii) Sometimes I wished when it came to organised racism and fascism of the National Front the police and the state would enforce the law against racism.

iii) Do I think it is necessary to break the law to advance aims? Non-violent direct action has been characteristic of many campaigns in each generation and has often been very effective in bringing about changes to the law. It is also been very effective in bringing to public attention issues that could not be raised in any other way. However, the International Marxist Group was less involved in these campaigns than some other political groups. By and large it was not their way of operating.

9.5 Did the IMG vet its members?

i) I would say in a very cursory way the International Marxist Group may have checked people who joined. However, people who joined the south east London branch when it was established generally were never checked. It went no further than people being recommended but even then political novices were invited to join although this was very rare.

ii) Of course the International Marxist Group and other organisations of the left had a knowledge of MI5 or state involvement. There was an awareness and there were discussions about that. But whilst there would have been some cursory checks, generally detailed checks never occurred to my knowledge. However, I was not involved on a national level so I did not know about this.

9.6 Did the IMG take other security precautions to keep its plans, tactics or other matters confidential?

i) The only thing I can say is for the purposes of ensuring that blacklisting did not take place, the International Marxist Group did use party names. I have answered this above.

ii) The International Marxist Group south east London branch took minutes which are available to all members and open discussions took place in branch meetings about all matters to do with campaigning in the trade union movement, in the Labour party and with other organisations of the working class. There was not a veil of secrecy that this loaded question implies. There was general discussion and it was very open.

iii) However the only reason for secrecy was to avoid blacklisting.

9.7 Was the IMG concerned about infiltration by the police or others. If so, please explain why?

i) I would say that every left organisation was concerned. In terms of organisations being infiltrated there was more a fear of infiltration by fascists, or state agent provocateurs being used to lead the organisation into bad territory.

ii) Infiltration has been a historic problem for progressive political organisations and the labour and trade union movement. The National Unemployed Workers Movement, which sought to highlight and campaign on behalf of unemployed workers,

for social justice and against poverty in the 1930's was infiltrated by the police.²⁸ The Trade Union Movement was infiltrated by organisations linked to the CIA.²⁹ The Economic League existed to keep track of people who were active in many campaigns from the Quakers to the International Marxist Group, from Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament to trade unions.³⁰

iii) There was a general concern about undercover reporting, but mainly and particularly because for many it affected the potential to find work or a career in the future notwithstanding the wider implications of agent provocateurs in the organisation.

9.8 Are you surprised that the police deployed undercover officers to report on the IMG?

i) On one level I am not surprised because of the history of the Trade Union Movement being infiltrated and monitored by the Economic League. Generally the historic role of the state has been to undermine socialist and trade union campaigns. From the police, to MI5, to the big companies, and even overseas organisations, have all spied on us.

ii) In addition I am not surprised. Many see the state as a neutral state when it is not. A capitalist state is not neutral. It works in the interest of the top echelons of society. Therefore they want to maintain the capitalist order. In that mind they need

²⁸ Hayburn, R (1972) 'The Police and the Hunger Strikers' *International Review of Social History*, 17(2) pp625-644

²⁹

³⁰ See Mike Hughes, 'Spies at Work' – a definitive guide to the work of the Economic League established in 1919 to keep track of trade unionists and socialists. The first blacklisting organisation.

to infiltrate organisations and to keep tabs on what is happening within those progressive organisations and within the working class movements as a whole. I had a friend who was at the London School of Economics and she met Harold Laski who warned her about state involvement and even named one academic who was in MI6.

iii) Overall I think there is an unhealthy obsession of the state in infiltrating organisations. I sometimes feel that this has got out of hand and it is something that elected politicians are not prepared to reel in as they are also afraid of the dark state and the methods that they use.

iv) I note that that at tab 23 [UCPI0000007318] that a meeting of the International Marxist Group which took place on the 28th May 1975 was reported on. This is of interest because it was held at my home address. Given that Rick Gibson is not present I would like the Inquiry to advise which undercover officer was there to report on it. In addition a Marxist Discussion Group took place on the 12th October 1975 at my home – tab 52 [UCPI0000008223]. 'Rick Gibson' was not present, who reported on this meeting?

Impact

9. If not already covered in your answers to the above-questions, please explain the impact that Rick Gibson had upon you including how you felt when you found out:

a) That he was not who he said he was; and

b) That he was an undercover officer.

i) At the time I would say that 'Rick Gibson' was a confidant, a friend and an ally in the Troops Out Movement. I considered him a comrade. We often talked after the branch meetings and I provided him my views on Ireland and other political views – he was a political novice, and I wanted to help.

ii) He often asked about Troops Out Movement members who were close to the Republicans, some of which I always felt the organisation should keep their distance from anyway. I had genuine solidarity with the Irish people and I thought the British state's interference both historically and more recently in the 1970s and 1980s was a disgrace. Partition created a sectarian state. It was designed so that Protestant Loyalists could dominate every facet of it. The police force was overwhelmingly Protestant and Unionist. Constituencies and council wards were gerrymandered and this contributed to huge discrimination in employment and housing. The possibilities for effective political action were extremely limited for Catholics and nationalists. Their votes in elections counted for little and the trade union movement was dominated by loyalists and unionists because of the discrimination, and with so many Catholics being unemployed. The only way that conflict could be stopped was through a united Ireland in which Catholic and Protestant workers could unite on politically equal terms. There was a rebellion in the North. The Labour Party itself had never accepted the partition of Ireland. This was a regular and normal point of view at the time, it was not extreme. It was a question of democracy and civil rights.

iii) Our analysis was that Northern Ireland was created as a sectarian state and has remained so. The loyalists controlled every aspect of the state, and successive British governments did not change this. When it came to the crunch the British state always sided with the loyalists. The Nationalist and Republican side did not believe in the legitimacy of the British state. The troops although initially sent in to protect the Catholics when 70,000 were intimidated and burnt out of their homes (which was the biggest forced population shift since World War Two) but we did not believe that the troops remaining there would play a progressive role. Sadly me and others were sadly proved right. The British troops became an occupying force and as it was their involvement actually led to the creation and increased support of the Provisional IRA.

iv) However, just because we had a broad analysis of why the troops should be out of Northern Ireland, this was for democratic, social and human rights reasons. I did not support the methods of the Republicans at the time. I think it is appalling that 'Rick Gibson' and the police had an interest in a democratic campaign in the way that they did. The fact that he was able to move up the ladder from the being a branch secretary, to London organiser, to the national organiser shows how open and democratic the organisation was. However, it is absolutely appalling and goes against everything that supposedly this country believes in, which is the idea of being able to democratically organise and protest.

v) With regards to his impact, I think my response is to think of the conversations that I had with him and possibly the way he may have interpreted or reinterpreted them. I remember initially when I was speaking to my partner, Privacy we talked about infiltration. We actually suspected at first that 'Rick Gibson' might be an infiltrator, but

because of his role in being available and being generally a nice person, we looked back and thought we were being paranoid. I remember talking to 'Rick Gibson' on more than one occasion about police and state infiltration. I even raised the fact that from the outside they must think we are crazy people, and yet we are ordinary people. I remember RG actually saying, "*Perhaps they even get to like you*" I now take this to understand that he knew we were genuine campaigners.

vi) As far as betrayal, I feel that 'Rick Gibson' and the information he sent through to Special Branch, and ultimately to MI5 may well have had an impact on my life. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s I found it very difficult to obtain work. At the time I finished university I found it very difficult to secure work in lecturing and research. I tried to get into teacher training but was refused notwithstanding the fact that I had a degree. I applied to Huddersfield and Coventry but was refused. I ended up applying for all kinds of jobs but never seemed to get them.

vii) I recall even applying for a job as a sorter at the Post Office where we had to get 15 questions right out of 50 to be shortlisted and secure a full time job. I was not offered a job, this despite the fact that I secured 43 questions out of 50 correct. When I asked the reasons for why I did not get the job I was told that the Post Office was, "Not at liberty to give me this information"

viii) I remember a former colleague of mine whose wife after they had separated formed a relationship with a police officer. She wished to look for work in the civil services and her new partner said he would inquire into it. He got back to her and said,

you stand no chance because your former husband is listed as one of the most dangerous men in Britain

ix) Given the above I am appalled that an undercover police officer should end up in one of the leading national positions of the Troops Out Movement which was an open, and democratic campaigning organisation .

10. If you recall Gary Roberts, please explain the impact that he had upon you and the finding out that he too was an undercover officer.

i) I have no recollection of Gary Roberts, I would appreciate further information with regards to this officer and also a contemporaneous photograph in order to assist the Inquiry.

ii) I note that David Hughes and Ian Cameron were also people who infiltrated the Anti-Internment League but again without contemporaneous photographs I would not be able to assist the Inquiry.

Other

11. Please set out any factual evidence that you can provide about the conduct of Rick Gibson and Gary Roberts to assist the Inquiry to get to the truth.

i) As above, I cannot possibly comment on Gary Roberts as I do not know who this person is.

ii) With regards to 'Rick Gibson', I would say that he was very clever in his role. I am concerned that his role was not just to spy on people, but also to derail campaigns and I think for the reasons outlined above I think he probably did do that.

12. Is there anything else that you wish to add that may be of assistance to the work of the Inquiry?

i) I would like the Inquiry to look into the way in which these reports may have affected my career opportunities. I think I was blacklisted, and would like the Inquiry to consider and examine to what extent I was blacklisted? To what extent were my details provided to potential employers? What methods were used to provide potential employers with information on job applications such as myself?

ii) I would also ask the Inquiry to consider police monitoring of my work with the Labour Committee on Ireland, and surveillance of the campaign itself. To what extent was police surveillance/infiltration of myself and my activities continued after my involvement with the Troops Out Movement? In particular my work with Labour Committee on Ireland but also my work within the Labour Party more generally.

Documents

13. Do you have any documents that may be potentially relevant to the work of the Inquiry, e.g. photographs, diaries or other contemporary documents? If so, please explain what they are. If you are content to provide copies to the

Inquiry for use as evidence please do so. Alternatively, if you are concerned about providing copies now, please set out your concerns briefly and the Inquiry will contact you to discuss them.

In addition to the footnotes, please see attached the following:

1. The Alternative White paper produced by the Troops Out Movement.
2. The report on the Labour Party Young Socialists Meeting produced by Rick Gibson -
3. Information on Ireland - 'They Shoot Children' – 1 December 1982

Diversity information

14. What is your racial origin?

White

15. What is your gender

Male

I believe that the content of this statement to be true

Signed Richard Chessum..... *Richard T Chessum*

Date: *4th April 2020*