Thursday, 12 May 2022

(10.00 am)

THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the first more or less traditional evidential hearing to be conducted by the Inquiry. Up to now, we've all had to do it on remote screens. It's a great relief to do it in the flesh again.

Before we start, may I ask those of you in the public area at the back to look at the document -- the single-page document put in front of you, which explains why what I'm about to say must be complied with.

Anyone with a handheld electronic device may of course use it to transmit to the outside world silently what you hear, including the evidence that you hear in this hearing room, but only after ten minutes have elapsed from the event that you are describing. The purpose is explained in the document. It's, briefly, to ensure that orders that I have made are upheld.

You may not use those devices for recording or for photographing. It's important that these restrictions are complied with. If they're not, it will cause a great deal of trouble and may result in a sanction for the person or persons breaching them.

I'll rearrange my desk so that I can see everybody a little more clearly.

MR FERNANDES: Thank you.

Welcome to Day 1 of evidential hearings at the Undercover Policing Inquiry. My name is Neil Fernandes and I am the hearings manager.

There is no fire alarm testing expected today, so if the fire alarm does go off, please follow the fire exit signs and make your way to the muster point, which is the Hard Rock Hotel, Great Cumberland Place. On arrival at the muster point, please make yourself known to a fire marshal, who will be wearing a high visibility jacket, and who will be keeping a register of all attendees.

The fire marshals will also be responsible for letting everyone know when it's safe to return, in liaison with representatives from the Thistle Hotel.

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

Chairman.

MS LINDSEY GERMAN (called)

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Ms German, may I first of all establish how I may address you without causing offence; is it "Ms", "Miss" or "Mrs"?

A. Yeah, "Ms" is fine. I'm a doctor as well, but probably best to stick to "Ms", I think.

THE CHAIRMAN: I will do whatever you prefer.

A. That's great, thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ms German, I understand that you wish to affirm, and Mr Fernandes will read the words out to you to permit you to do that.

(Witness sworn)

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr Barr is now going to ask you questions on behalf of the Inquiry. Before he does, may I explain two things. One of them arises from your own written witness statement, in which you suggest that some of the questions are based on a misappreciation of what was going on and a preconceived view that is wrong.

First of all, may I make it clear, neither I nor my inquiry team have a preconceived view about what was going on. We're here to inquire into what happened, not to assert a preconceived view. And many of the questions that you were asked in the Rule 9 request were asked because of the information that we have from contemporaneous documents and the like, which give one version of what occurred, to permit you to respond to it.

Likewise, when he asks questions, it will be on

behalf of the Inquiry; but he will also be putting questions to you on topics, and to some in the form, that have been suggested by other core participants in the Inquiry with whose views you may well disagree.

A. Thank you for explaining that. I would just -- yes, and I'm sure we can come to it in the course of the evidence.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, if there's anything you would like to say at this stage, please do so.

A. Well, I would just like to repeat that I do think a number of the questions do stem from misconception, but hopefully I'll have a chance to discuss that further as we go on.

THE CHAIRMAN: Certainly.

A. Thanks.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Barr.

Questions by MR BARR

MR BARR: Thank you, Sir.

Ms German, could we start with your full name, please?

A. My full name is Lindsey Ann German.

Q. And you've provided a very fulsome witness statement to the Inquiry, dated 14 February 2022. Are the contents of that witness statement true and correct to the best of your knowledge and belief?

A. Yes, they are.
Q. And today we're seeking your assistance in relation to what we call the "Tranche 1 era", that is from 1968 until the early 80s -- 1982, 1983, or thereabouts.
I'd like to start with a little bit about your activism and your career in the relevant period with the International Socialists, which became the Socialist Workers Party.
You describe in your witness statement an early political awakening, with a revulsion to war, colonialism, racism, fascism and class inequality; is that right?
A. That's right.
Q. And you started your activism with the Stop the Seventy campaign in Leicester as a student?
A. That's the first demonstration that I went on.
Q. And then you joined the Socialist Society at the London School of Economics?
A. That's right, yes, in 1972.
Q. And in that same year, you were greatly moved by the three big industrial disputes of that year: the miners' strike, the dockers' strike and the builders' strike?
A. That's right, and it was a very -- it was a time when there was a very, very high level of industrial action;

and I felt this was something that really should be supported, so I got very involved in those.

Q. And it was in 1972 that you joined the Hillingdon branch of what was then the International Socialists?

A. That's right, yeah.

Q. And after you had completed your studies, you became the full-time student organiser in 1975?

A. Yes.

Q. And you remained a full-time worker within the Socialist Workers Party for the rest of the Tranche 1 era?

A. That's right, yeah.

Q. In 1977, you became the full-time district organiser for Central London?

A. Yes.

Q. And then, in 1979, you were voted on to the Central Committee as the women's organiser?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you help us with how big the Central Committee was?

A. Well, as I recall, it was about ten people. I couldn't be exactly right about that, but that kind of number. It was a relatively small body of people. It was answerable to bigger committees inside the International Socialists, but it was around that size, yes.

Q. Was that the ultimate executive decision-making body --
A. It was. It was --
Q. -- within the SWP?
A. It was the day-to-day organising body of the SWP, yes.
Q. Can I turn now to the aims of the Socialist Workers Party. What I'm going to do is put what I hope are a series of reasonably straightforward propositions to you, and then at the end, just to make sure I've not missed anything and you've got the chance to be absolutely clear with us, I'll ask you if I've missed anything.

The Socialist Workers Party is a revolutionary socialist movement?

A. That's right.
Q. And the aim is to bring about a socialist society?
A. Yes.
Q. And that requires the self-emancipation of the working class?
A. That's right. And I think it's important to stress this. This isn't something that's done on behalf of people, it's something which we saw, and I continue to see, as something that has to be the majority of people changing society for the better.
Q. Self-emancipation --
A. That's right.

Q. -- is a very important part of the philosophy --
A. Of course, of course.
Q. -- isn't it?
And so the struggle -- it can only be achieved by their struggle?
A. Of course, yes. It can't be substituted for by any small group of people who's acting on their behalf.
Q. And the outcome would be that new institutions would replace old institutions, so ultimately you would like to see elected workers' councils making decisions for the country, rather than the current parliamentary arrangements that we have today?
A. Well, I think, for any socialist of my sort, you see Parliament as very, very limited in terms of the democracy that it achieves; and the more it's aged as an institution, in a way, the less -- the less democratic it's become, that it doesn't really represent the interests of -- of a wide-ranging number of people; and particularly, I think a lot of people are very alienated from Parliament at the moment.
So this idea of self-emancipation is a higher form of democracy; it involves more people. It involves people being elected from workplaces, from communities, and making their own decisions about how a society is run.

Q. And so is -- the end goal is you do away with Parliament, replace it with workers' councils; and you think that the result is you get a country which is run by the people in the interests of the people, and not a country which is run in the interests of profit by a small elite through Parliament?

A. That's right. And it is something that, I think, as I say, is a much wider, higher form of democracy than the one we have now.

Q. And essentially this is the replacement of a capitalist society with a socialist society?

A. That would be the ultimate aim, but of course that is a situation we're still quite a long way away from. But that is the idea of it, that society would be run on the basis of need and not of profit; which, in my opinion, would be a big improvement on what we have now.

Q. Have I missed anything fundamental about the aims of the SWP?

A. Well, I think -- I think it's perhaps worth putting a little bit in context, that this is something that, when I joined, and when I think most people become socialists, revolutionary socialists of that sort, it's not that we felt this was an immediate achievable aim, it was something we -- we desired to happen, but we recognised as a few thousand people, and even if you add

together other organisations, tens of thousands of people, weren't in a position to do.

So I think one of the important things is to stress that, that it's -- if you like, it's an aim that we have, but it's not something that we thought was going to happen in 1979 or 1980.

Q. I'll come back to progress --

A. Okay.

Q. -- in a moment.

Can we deal before then with methods. Is -- again, I'm going to put some propositions to you, to see whether you agree with them.

First of all, is the main method you used to build support amongst the working class until ultimately they have the power to overthrow the current institutions?

A. Well, that's not quite a method, is it? I mean, what do you mean by "a method"? How --

Q. It's building support. A lot of the work you do is about spreading -- spreading your message, spreading your philosophy within the working class, to try and generate --

A. That's right, that's right.

Q. -- the bottom up --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- self-emancipation that we talked about earlier?

A. And that takes the form of activity in trade unions; it takes the form of selling papers, and generally arguing about these kinds of things, yes.
Q. So the sort of places that the SWP was active in the Tranche 1 era were workplaces, in those days particularly within industry and the civil service?
A. That's right, in all of those. We had -- for a time, we had factory branches and we had workplace branches; and we would organise people within those workplaces, but also geographically as well; and students and all the different areas that we thought we could.
Q. Students and schools as well?
A. We didn't have permanent organisation in schools, but there were times when we were involved in activity round schools, particularly against the National Front, but also other issues as well.
Q. A lot of anti-racism work?
A. Very much so.
Q. Women's rights?
A. Yes.
Q. And lots of single issues, such as the Irish question, campaigns against cuts, closures and supporting individual types of industrial action?
A. That's right. There was -- that was the range of things that we did. And we would get involved in different

issues as they were important.

For example, in the second half of the 70s, there were big campaigns around abortion, because that was something that was subject to restrictions, that there was attempts through Parliament to restrict the right of abortion. So there were big demonstrations, big campaigns which we were involved in. And that's just one campaign, but those were the sorts of things we did, yes.

Q. And a lot of political education?

A. Yeah, of course.

Q. And you were seeking to expand your membership?

A. Yes, and we did. We did expand our membership.

Q. It's fair to say, isn't it, your organisation grew a great deal during the 1970s, didn't it?

A. That's right.

Q. Have I missed anything fundamental about the methods that the SWP and its predecessor was using in the time we're talking about?

A. I -- I just think -- no, I don't think you've missed anything, but I think it's just -- you seem to be sort of dividing it up into different things, rather than looking at it more as a totality, which it was. You know, there was -- there was the activity, but also there's the political discussions, political debates,

all those sorts of things, which were very important to us at the time.

Q. I see. So it's all wrapped up?

A. It's all part of the same -- the same process, yes.

Q. Now, would it be fair to say that the SWP pushed its work very hard?

A. Well, we were enthusiastic about what we did. I don't know whether it's right to say we pushed it very hard but ...

Q. I'll give you some examples so we can explore that.

So, for example, in terms of industrial disputes, very much your philosophy as an organisation was that escalation would tend to give a better outcome for the working people who you were supporting?

A. Well, I don't think that's quite the right way to look at industrial disputes.

I mean, as far as I'm concerned, industrial disputes arise when people have a grievance; and we had very, very big ones, as you've referred to, in the early 70s, over the miners and the dockers who were put in prison. We had all those sorts of things. But essentially, what you've got with strikes is people take strike action when they don't have any other outlet to do so.

In that situation, we would always support the strikes. We would want them to be as rapid as

possible, as successful as possible in terms of winning their demands. But in terms of sort of pushing them to be escalated as much as possible, this was something which was part of the trade union movement, it wasn't something that we did separately from the trade union movement as a whole. If you supported the strikes, that's what you did.

Q. Yes, and your organisation did support the strikes --

A. Absolutely, yes.

Q. -- and you would turn out, in force if you could muster it, and you would back the strikers to the hilt, because you wanted to see them win?

A. That's right. But I also think it's worth saying that in most cases with strikes, actually, there are ones that take place with relatively small numbers of people, there are ones that take place with relatively small picket lines, and we supported all of those. When I was central London organiser there was a strike of steak houses here in central London. And I would go most days, I would go and see them. And they had perhaps five or six people on the picket line; they weren't mass pickets most of the time. So there's differences and different sorts of strikes.

Q. Differences in scale. But would it be fair to say that on the whole, you thought that by pressing management,

workers were likely to get a better outcome?

A. Absolutely. And I still do. I think that, you know, we've seen, since the 70s, the halving of trade union membership, and that generally has gone alongside a much worse condition for many working people.

Q. And would -- another example of where considerable passion and resolve was deployed was in your work confronting racists?

A. I think it's worth putting this in context. Yes, that's absolutely true. But I think it's worth putting in context that we had in the 70s a very big growth in fascist organisation, in the second half of the 70s. We connected that very much with the disappointment that people felt with the Labour government and the way in which wages were being cut and general disappointment. And there was a very, very strong atmosphere there of the sense that the fascists were growing. There was 100,000 votes for the National Front in London in 1977, and that was a very frightening prospect.

So I think, for most of us, we saw racism as a very central issue that we had to confront. And we saw it as a way -- if racism and fascism was allowed to grow, it would seriously weaken working class organisation.

I think it's also worth saying that this was -- you know, I was of the generation that my parents

were -- my dad was in the invasion of Sicily; he was in the Navy for five years during the war. One of my uncles lost his leg at Nijmegen. The war was very, very real to millions of people then. And I think the idea that you saw fascism returning in the 1970s was a very frightening thing, not just to my generation but to older generations as well.

Q. The far right were certainly active on the streets in the 1970s, weren't they? And the early 80s.

A. They certainly were, yes.

Q. And your organisation thought it essential to confront those far right activists on the street, didn't you?

A. We did, because the -- if you look at what they modelled themselves on, they modelled themselves very much on the way in which Hitler organised before he came to power in 1933. And therefore street protests, particularly in immigrant areas, were very, very important to them. And Hitler himself was quoted as saying that the only thing that could have stopped him was if people had stopped him sufficiently early when he was still relatively -- part of a relatively small group, whereas obviously, by 1932/33, Hitler was a much, much bigger force.

So we thought it was extremely important that we did confront them and say that they didn't have the right

to march. And of course, they always chose to march through areas with big numbers of black and Asian people. That was a very deliberate intimidatory practice on their part.

Q. Well, we'll come back to some of that activity in more detail later. But what I'd like to do now is tie together the aims that we've explored and the method that you were using to advance towards realising those aims.

Was, ultimately, the expectation, or at least the hope, that you'd get to a stage where the working class was strong enough to overthrow existing institutions?

A. Well, that's -- as I said to you earlier, that was the aim in the general sense. That's what we believed needed to happen in order to achieve a socialist society. But we also were very realistic that this wasn't about to happen. And therefore, for example, we stood in Parliamentary elections in the 1970s, in order to put our arguments across. So it wasn't that we were just saying, "Okay, this is all going to happen in the next few years," what we felt was, we had to use any avenue to get our arguments across. We knew the majority of workers still looked to Labour Party and still looked to Parliament for change. And therefore we

engaged in that arena as well.

Q. Thank you.

I understand that. At the moment, I'm moving into a slightly more hypothetical scenario, because I appreciate it never reached that stage in the time we're talking about. But was the ultimate aim to use these methods of campaigning to build up the working class to the point where they could overthrow the existing institutions? I think you've previously agreed with that proposition.

A. Yes. And I think it's just worth saying as well that that is -- we felt that one of the ways that you did this was by working round campaigns, round strikes and so on, because that strengthened confidence and organisation among working class people, yeah.

Q. I appreciate the next step didn't happen, but I want to ask you this in terms of what might have been anticipated.

Did you anticipate that if the working class had ever become strong enough to overthrow existing institutions, that before they were able to do so, it was overwhelmingly likely that the state would use force to prevent that happening?

A. Yes, we did think that. And of course, we had the very recent example of the coup in Chile, where exactly that

process had taken place, where a democratically elected government had been overthrown because it had policies which didn't fit with what the Chilean ruling class wanted, or indeed what the CIA wanted, who was involved in it as well.

Q. And the same had happened in Spain in the 1930s?

A. The same happened in Spain in the 1930s. And it's worth just remembering that in Portugal and Spain where you had this transition to democracy in the mid-1970s, there's -- also people felt there was a threat of that as well there. So these were real concerns that people had.

Q. And at that stage, would it be fair to say that the Socialist Workers Party would consider the use of force both acceptable and necessary?

A. I think, again, this needs to be looked at in the context. If you look at most movements -- Chile's a good example, but it's true, I think, of most revolutions that actually they're not fantastically violent events, that actually it's the counter revolution, if you like -- and this is true in the French Revolution, it's true in the Russian Revolution in lots of senses. But it's the counter revolution where you see much more violence. But, yes, we were prepared to defend ourselves, and we were

prepared, if necessary, to defend the institutions of working class organisation and working class power against any attempt to stop them achieving these things democratically.

Q. I just want to show you a document. Could we go to {UCPI/18503}. For those working from a hard copy, it's volume 2, tab 30. Can you see that?

A. No, where is it?

Q. That is not the right document. Sorry, the document I'd like is {UCPI/19542}.

A. I don't have a ... I don't think the screen's working.

Q. Is your screen working, Ms German?

A. No.

Q. Okay, we will have to do something about that.

I can show you, for these purposes, the document, but then the public will not be able to see it. Sir, would you like to rise for a moment while we sort this out?

THE CHAIRMAN: I fear so. I'm afraid we have these technical difficulties. They're bound to occur.

A. Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Eventually we'll overcome them.

(10.28 am)

(A short break)

(10.32 am)

MR FERNANDES: Thank you. Please be seated.
THE CHAIRMAN: I understand there's a temporary solution has been found, but not yet the permanent one.
MR BARR: That's absolutely right, Sir.
And could I just take a moment now to remind people that when we have short adjournments, please would people sitting at the back not approach the witnesses. It's important that witnesses give their evidence alone.
Ms German, the document that's up on the screen is a document which is a report about the National Student Aggregate. If we could turn to page {UCPI/19542/16} within that file, please.
One of the documents that was attached to this SDS report on the National Student Aggregate in 1983 was this document, which appears to be produced by the Socialist Worker Student Society, with the headline, "Fight for a change ..."
And if we scroll down:
"... to socialism".
A good deal of the basic propositions about the SWP that I put to you I got from this document --
A. Oh dear. Maybe you need to read a bit more than just the leaflets.
Q. It sets it out all very simply.
The bit that I particularly want to put to you,

under the headline "Workers' power":

"The alternative to Labour is revolutionary socialism -- the armed seizure of power by the working class and the creation of a new kind of society."

Following the questions I asked you before we had to adjourn, could you explain, please, where the armed seizure of power comes into matters?

A. Well, I think I have explained that really, that when people face -- when there is a situation where there's a possibility of revolutionary change or systematic change, then this is when you get the old establishment which really fights back against that change, and that's when you need to be prepared to do this.

I mean, this isn't -- you know, when I said to you about maybe reading a bit more on this topic, I mean, Marx made this point in 1871 at the defeat of the Paris Commune, when he then took the conclusion that you couldn't peacefully overthrow the system, that you would have to be prepared for -- as happened in Paris, for armies to attack you, for people to be killed in large numbers, and you would need to defend yourself. And that's exactly what that says there.

So, I think -- you know, I don't think that's different from what I've -- what I've been explaining.

Q. So, to be clear, there is no question of the SWP using

arms during the 1970s?

A. Of course not. I mean, this is -- you know, I think -- when I said -- and I said earlier about the misconceptions about what we're saying, I think there's this kind of concept of small groups of people with arms, I don't know, infiltrating the police or the army, or any of these sorts of things. This was never on the agenda. And we knew the situation was such with even at our largest of several thousand members, that this would have been completely counter-productive, it wouldn't have involved self-emancipation, it wouldn't have involved the mass of workers acting on their own behalf. It would have been a small -- I don't know what you want to call it -- a "putsch" or whatever, by a minority on behalf of a minority.

Everything you read about our tradition, the International Socialists, the SWP, all of those, actually is very much against that kind of approach. It's a difference that goes back to the differences that Marx had with Bakunin, and all sorts of other people; it's a fundamental difference. And it's one that I've always believed, that you'd have to have the mass of people fighting for change on their behalf.

Q. Now, I want to move to the question of progress, quite accepting it never got to a revolutionary situation in

the 1970s and 1980s. But there were fluctuations during this period which I want to explore with you.

Before you even joined the International Socialists, in 1968, was there a feeling of excitement amongst revolutionaries that something might be happening given what was occurring in France at the time?

A. Very much so. I mean, I went to France to improve my French in April 1968, and unfortunately missed the -- you know, you could see all the posters and things up then. And when I came back and saw all the places I'd been on the television, that was a feeling, I think, lots and lots of people around the world felt, that this was a real chance of change, it was an upsurge and very, very important. And it mark the beginning of a period of intense political change in France, and elsewhere.

Q. And was there a feeling that the same might be beginning to happen here with the enormous numbers of people who turned out especially to the anti-Vietnam demonstrations, particularly in March, and then later on in October of that year?

A. They were very big demonstrations compared to previous demonstrations in Britain, certainly in my lifetime. And they were -- they were ones that people felt, again, this was people coming on the streets demonstrating, and it marked a new politics which people had hope of

the Labour government which was elected in '64, but this was going beyond what the Labour government wanted to do, much, much more so, and very, very clearly in support of a group of people who were fighting against the Americans in Vietnam.

Q. And you've explained that the feeling that started in 1968 carried on for a few years after that. Would you link it in to what was happening in 1972 with some very big strikes, and the miners' strike in particular, being very successful?

A. I think what happened after '68 was you got the development of, particularly in Britain and Italy but other places in the world, you got the development of very, very big strikes, and Britain and Italy had the two biggest in Europe. And so yes, they were connected. And it was part of, I think, again, from my generation, you had people who were becoming radicalised over political issues, as you've explained, in terms of apartheid South Africa, racism, those sorts of issues. But also this was taking place in the workplace among young workers who'd had rising living standards, and who expected that they would be able to achieve more; and that's what they -- that's what they were campaigning for.

So yes, I think those things are connected. And it

was part of a general wave of political activism, economic activism, whatever you want to call it, in that period, from '68 until round about '75, I suppose.

Q. The other big thing that happens is in '74 the Conservative government falls, doesn't it, again, in the face of serious industrial disputes?

A. That's right. The Heath government was brought down by the second miners' strike in 1974.

Q. So in that period in the late 60s and early 70s, was there a sense that you were getting somewhere with your revolutionary progress?

A. There was a sense that more people were breaking from the ideas of Labour, if you like, and looking to the left of Labour. I think that was a very strong feeling. And that was true in the International Socialists. We recruited lots of workers from car factories, from different factories around the country. And yes, I think there was a sense that people were moving towards the idea that there needed to be a more fundamental change than had been achieved by the Labour government. I think they were right in that.

Q. And then, as those of us who were around in those days will know, we get to 1979 and the "Winter of Discontent". Before we get on to Margaret Thatcher,

could you help us with: in your estimation, what was the high point for your party's aspirations during the 1970s? What was the closest that you think you got to achieving your goals?

A. I think, in terms of the aspirations of the International Socialists and the SWP was to become a major force on the left in Britain, and particularly to replace the Communist Party, which was then much, much bigger than we were, it was still a considerably large organisation, but to replace it politically and industrially. And we achieved some of that, but not, obviously, all of it.

Q. So in terms of progress to a situation where the working class had the means to overthrow -- or the will and the support and the motivation to overthrow the institutions of the existing state, on a scale of 1 to 10, as a high point, what would you score your high point in the 1970s?

A. I mean, I think the high point of the 1970s was 1972, with the -- with the very, very big strikes, which were very, very successful. As you say, you then had the second miners' strike.

But I think this is -- you know, when we look at it, the question of whether you can overthrow society, whether you can have a revolution, doesn't lie with

the people who term themselves "revolutionaries", it lies with the people who actually are going to make that revolution themselves. This -- at this time, there actually was a revolution going on in Portugal, which went on for something like 18 months; and I think people saw that as a kind of model of what could happen elsewhere. But that was a very different situation from the situation we faced in Britain. This was a situation where people had lived under fascism for decades and where the colonial wars in Angola and Mozambique were creating mass disaffection amongst the army. So those were the particular circumstances. So we didn't think we were anywhere close to that at that time.

Q. I won't press you if you don't want to put a number on it. So would you prefer to say you weren't anywhere close?

A. Yes, we weren't anywhere close, absolutely.

Q. And then Margaret Thatcher comes to power in 1979. Would it be fair to say that in that period, late 1970s/early 1980s, the tide recedes and you thought that revolution seemed a very long way off?

A. We had a Tory government, which was very dedicated to attacking working people. We now know that there were a whole number of -- the Ridley plan, all sorts of things, where they systematically took on the unions and

working class people in order to weaken them. And you had a whole number of other policies that Thatcher pursued which were also aimed at doing this.

It's worth remembering, though, that although this was a situation electorally, it was another five years really until the defeat of the miners' strike in 1984 to '85 where she actually succeeded in beginning to break the unions. There were very big protests in the early years of Thatcher, particularly very big demonstrations about unemployment, very big strikes which went on, steel strike, railway strike. So it wasn't that straight away you can see there's a big defeat electorally, obviously, but that wasn't massively surprising given how -- by that point, how unpopular the Labour government under Callaghan was.

But it took some years for that defeat to follow through industrially, if you like, and that was -- the crucial point in that was the miners' strike, I think, in '84 to '85.

Q. But in terms of where you were going in progressing towards your aim, would you describe those years in the early 1980s as a time in which your progress was moving forwards or backwards?

A. I think we came to a recognition very early on as an organisation that the working class movement was in

retreat. And we saw that, I think, before many other organisations on the left, for the reasons that I've just explained, there were all these strikes, all these -- all these things going on. So, we did come to that recognition.

Nonetheless, for an organisation of our size, it was still possible to hold big meetings, to recruit people, to do all those sorts of things. So it wasn't like an instant -- you know, an instant outcome from the -- from the election of Thatcher. And there was still a lot of people who were ready to campaign over a range of things. There were also very big events, like the riots in London in 1981, which were a reflection of how there was a large section of the population who were disaffected with Thatcher's policies.

So there were all those things that were important for us to take on board. So it was a mixed picture, I think, at the time.

Q. And it's certainly the case, isn't it, that you and your organisation didn't give up; if anything, you redoubled your efforts?

A. We certainly didn't give up. And we saw it as something -- this was a big attack on the working class after the successes of the early 70s, in particular. And so we were determined to keep going. Yes, we did.

Q. Can I move now to a completely different topic. It's a question of what external support, by which I mean support from outside the country, the SWP I think didn't have, is going to be the theme of my questions.

Is it right to say that no nation state backed the Socialist Workers Party from abroad?

A. Of course. And it's just worth reiterating, because, again, I know that sometimes it's put in some of these reports that our politics was always that we didn't see any other nation state as a kind of model of socialism. So we regarded the Soviet Union at the time, for example, as state capitalism. So as a different form of capitalism, but nonetheless a capitalist state. So, yeah, we didn't get support and we didn't seek support from any other state.

Q. In fact, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think it's right, isn't it, there's no state supporting any Trotskyist philosophy?

A. To the best of my knowledge there isn't. I'd be very surprised if we hadn't heard about it by now.

Q. The Soviet Union, positively hostile to Trotskyism?

A. Yes.

Q. China, the same?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. Completely different topic again now: openness;

the degree of openness with which you and your organisation conducted its political business.

In many ways, it was an open party, wasn't it? Easy to join?

A. It was very easy to join. And as we see from the evidence from this Inquiry, we can see that perhaps too easy for some people to join. But it was. We had an open recruitment policy. We believed that people didn't need to take an exam to join our organisation, that you learn in the process of organising and activity and going to meetings, and things like that. So, yes, we had -- we had that policy.

Q. No vetting, no party names, nothing like that?

A. We didn't have party names at all, apart from the people -- again, the undercover police were the only people who had false names, to the best of my knowledge, in the SWP.

Q. Lots of public meetings?

A. I'm sure you've been through all the evidence of this. Lots of public meetings. We sold a newspaper which was perfectly open and available to anybody who was prepared to buy it. I think the -- the undercover police had a subscription to it at one point. We had a bookshop where people could go and buy -- obviously not mainly our books, but books of a left persuasion of all sorts

of things. We were -- we were an open organisation.

Q. Lots of opportunity for people who joined your organisation to get involved and to participate in the life and the running of the party?

A. That's right, yes.

Q. I'll come back to that a little later.

But there comes a point, doesn't there, where not everything is done out in the open, and we drew your attention when you were asked to produce a witness statement to the 1978 National Delegate Conference, where a number of security measures were taken, weren't they, to ensure the confidentiality in particular of various documents about party affairs; is that right?

A. Yes. Yeah.

Q. I want to explore with you what the motivations were for those security measures. The first one that I think you've mentioned in your statement is fear of state surveillance.

In your own words, could you articulate what it was that you didn't want them doing and why.

A. It wasn't particularly a question of the discussions we had in conferences being discussions we wouldn't want to have in public. And usually we would have a report of the conferences in our publications, and we would have

meetings afterwards, which certainly some non-members could go to, which explained what had happened to them.

But I think we were worried about a number of things. Firstly, the threat to particular members of the SWP, particularly people who were in the industry, who were under threat of blacklisting. And as we know, that -- that has been something which has affected generations now of -- of people on the left; and some of this has come out in the Inquiry, and some more, no doubt, will come out about it.

So we were very worried about that, and we were worried about people's names being -- you know, their proper names being given, or exactly where they worked being given, because we knew people were being sacked, we knew people were not getting jobs even though they seemed very well qualified for these jobs. So yes, we were concerned about those things.

We were also worried in general about state surveillance, that we didn't believe that the state had the right to effectively spy on what we were doing in meetings.

I think it's also fair to say that in that particular period, where there was a very big threat from the National Front, as we'll no doubt come on to talk about, that we didn't want any infiltration from

them or from the far right, or anything going to them which could be interpreted as -- as helpful to them.

So I think, for all those reasons, we took that particular stance at that conference in particular.

Q. Would it be fair to say that you wanted the freedom to associate and express yourself politically without state interference?

A. That's right. And I think this is something that any party -- I mean, not just parties of this sort of persuasion, but I think any party does have private meetings and private discussions. I think this is true, you know, for any party of any sort. They don't have everything out in the open, for perfectly understandable reasons.

Q. Well, that might be another separate reason, that every organisation has some information that it wishes to keep confidential.

A. Financial, membership, all these sort of things. I think it's perfectly reasonable to do this.

Q. Could we move now to the attitude of the Socialist Workers Party to the police. Could we start at a philosophical level. Is it the view of the SWP that the state uses the police to divide and rule?

A. I -- I'm not sure "divide and rule" is the right way to -- to express it. I would say that the police are an

organisation which is used in order to ensure that certain sorts of laws are followed and certain sorts of rule is followed, but I'm not sure "divide and rule" is the right way to describe that.

Q. I got that from your witness statement.

A. Oh right, okay. Well, my apologies. My apologies if I said that, so ...

Q. If you want to clarify exactly what you mean, please do.

A. All I mean is that I think that when you're talking about the police, they act in a certain way to do with certain crimes. And there's some crimes that they regard as more important, and there's some crimes they regard as less important. And of course I think what I said about "divide and rule" was to do with ethnic minorities in particular, is that -- is that correct, from the witness statement?

Q. We can have a look. It's paragraph 78 of your witness statement. Let me just find it and make sure I give the people the right reference. It's {UCPI/34739} and once that is up, can we have {UCPI/34739/33}, please.

A. Oh yeah, I see it, yeah.

Could I just clarify -- or do you want me to wait until people have got it up?

Q. Once it's up and people can see it. It's right at the bottom of the page, for those following

the evidence.

Yes, is there anything you wish to add or nuance to what you've expressed there?

A. Yes, I think it may be a kind of slightly misreading of the grammar, possibly. It says also:

"... a Marxist understanding of the state, the latter involving how the state uses war, the military, the police and racism to divide and rule."

So these are different elements of the state is what I'm saying. So -- so it's about racism, it's about war. They use those as well. Does that -- does that clarify you?

Q. Do you believe that the police is used, along with those other institutions, to divide and rule the working class?

A. Well, I think they're certainly used very, very often against working class people, in terms of whether it's picket lines, whether it's stop and search of black and ethnic minorities, yes, I do.

Q. And we can turn it up if necessary, but over the page at paragraph 82 {UCPI/34739/34}, you say effectively they're used to keep the working class in check?

A. Yes, well, I think, as you say, in the philosophical level, that's true. I mean, the police was founded in the early stages of capitalism; so it was very

consciously done in that way.

Q. So what I would like to know is, to what extent did that philosophical analysis -- political analysis of the role of the police and the state have when it came to the SWP's treatment and dealings with the police?

A. Well, I think it made us aware of the way in which the police would behave, and that therefore we would look at the way that they behaved, and see this as part of a wider picture, not as the actions of individual police.

Q. And so would it be fair to say the SWP has a negative view of the police as its starting point?

A. I think it's -- it would be fair to say that it's not an institution that we thought would actually benefit working class people.

Q. And did that mean that when you were out on the streets forcefully challenging the racists, that if the police got in your way, they were essentially fair game?

A. No, I don't think that's the right interpretation of it. I think our interpretation of it was that during these years, the police repeatedly allowed the fascists to march in areas where they deliberately were going in there in order to intimidate and harass local black and Asian people; so we saw it in that way, and we saw it as something that we felt wasn't acceptable. And I think

what's come out from what I've seen so far of the Inquiry is actually that there clearly was a position that they would protect these -- these marches. And there clearly was a position that they were treated more favourably, I would say, than people demonstrating against them.

Q. And what was your organisation's response to that so far as how you treated the police was concerned?

A. Well, it wasn't about individual treatment of the police, it was about how we thought we had to respond to this threat of fascism. And we -- we saw this in a number of ways, but one of the crucial ways we saw it was actually to say we are going to confront the fascists and that the police should not be protecting them.

Q. And if we take it to another context, for example, if we think about the demonstrations outside the Conservative Party Conference, which we'll come back to in more detail later, but in that sort of scenario, was the view that the police were protecting the elite ruling class?

A. Well, they clearly do protect Conservative Party conferences, yes, they do. That's just a matter of fact.

Q. Was it, therefore, viewed as legitimate to try and push

through their cordons, and things like that?

A. I don't know which one you're referring to, but people would have pushed through, if they felt that they could do so. But that wasn't the main aim of demonstrating. And the main aim of demonstrating wasn't against the police, it was against the Tory Party conference. So I think that's an important distinction to make.

Q. Yes. Accepting that distinction, though, what was the SWP's attitude to its members trying to push through a police line at one of its demonstrations?

A. Well, I think that depends entirely on the context. It depends entirely on the context. I mean, most demonstrations that people go on, this question just simply doesn't arise. It does arise over a whole number of things where, if you look at what has been going on, you find that the police are very much protecting the fascists, and particularly in the example of fascism, but obviously there may be other examples as well. But particularly with that, I think it is -- I certainly would think if people pushed back against that, they would be justified in doing so.

Q. Well, we'll come back to some specific examples later, but for the moment what I'd like to move on to next, Ms German, is united front work. Again, I will put what I think are some basic propositions to you, and you can

tell me where I'm getting it wrong.

First of all, a "united front" is an attempt to unite the working class on specific issues?

A. That's right.

Q. Main aim is to win its demands. And it also presents an opportunity for you to spread the message and to recruit. Specific examples -- for the transcript, I can see you're nodding.

Have I missed anything about the basic structure of a united front?

A. Well, it's a very brief set of propositions here, so --

Q. Yes, we'll move on to the detail.

A. -- we'll move on to what it actually means, yeah.

Q. Would your work with the Anti-Nazi League be regarded as united front work?

A. I think that was made very clear in my statement, that the Anti-Nazi League was an example of a united front, where very large numbers of people would become involved, and we would work with those people over the specific aim of defeating the fascists.

Q. I'm going to put some propositions to you that come from Lord Hain's evidence, because he obviously worked integrally as part of the ANL. One of the things he said was that the SWP had strong power and influence within the ANL and provided a lot of organisational

support and background. Would you agree with that?

A. I think that's true.

Q. He said that at the time of the National Front's demonstration at the by-election in Ilford North, he had spoken to Paul Holborrow, to agree to ensure that SWP activists did all they could to avoid violence. Do you know anything about that?

A. I don't know about the specific. I was on the demonstration, and I did leaflet in the Ilford North by-election, as I remember. But I don't -- I don't know about the particular discussions between Paul Holborrow and Peter Hain.

Q. Can you recall if any particular line was disseminated through the party membership about violence at that particular demonstration?

A. I can't. But again, I don't think people set out on these demonstrations, "Are we going to have violence?" They set out on the demonstrations to stop the National Front. And in most cases, this would have been something which didn't involve a high degree of violence, if any violence; it depended very, very much on, as I can see it, the police response; because nearly always, the National Front demonstrations weren't particularly big, they were, you know -- if you look at the pictures, you can see in Lewisham, you can see in

Southall, you can see in all these, they're not particularly big; they're a few hundred.

What is noticeable is the police presence round them. And that's -- and to my recollection, in Ilford, that wasn't the same degree. I can't remember exactly, but I don't think it was to the same degree. So I think this idea we're saying, "Let's be violent on this demonstration," or, "We're not going to be violent on this demonstration," is really a misconception of how we approached the demonstrations.

Q. Final proposition. The SWP had a reputation for far left sectarianism, but he thought your party had curbed that tendency, so far as the ANL was concerned. I appreciate that might be a slightly pejorative view that he expressed, but I wanted your reaction to it.

A. Well, I think it's Peter Hain's view. I think people in the SWP would have said, actually, far from being sectarian, with the Anti-Nazi League we really tried to broaden it out. We really saw it as a very, very important initiative, and one that would -- and I think did -- transform the political situation in Britain, because it was very influential in weakening the fascists, and with all the consequences that have since -- or maybe negative consequences that have since happened, that we didn't have a growing strength of

the fascists. And that was something that was very important to us.

So I think Peter Hain's maybe being a bit -- you know, a bit unfair on this, that we were sectarian on everything else but not on -- not on the Anti-Nazi League. I think we were the people who actually very much had the idea that we wanted it to be as broad as possible, which is why it involved people -- not just like Peter Hain, but all sorts of other people who were a long way away politically from the SWP.

Q. I'm going to ask you about a selection of other activities which I think fall under the heading "united front", and to explore the role of the SWP in them.

First of all, can we start with School Kids Against the Nazis. To what extent was its creation and existence down to the Socialist Workers Party?

A. Well, I think the Socialist Workers Party was involved in School Kids Against the Nazis. We had school student members who organised, we were involved in the National Union of School Students, which I think was around the same period. And there was a radicalisation among school students, because, again, the National Front -- and it's a different situation from the one we have now in London, certainly, but in London, there was quite a lot of support for the National Front in a whole range

of places, but including in schools. And so it was very, very important to be involved in challenging that.

But of course, you know what it's like in schools. I mean, you will have a very small number of people who were SWP, and it will be much wider forces who began to organise against the National Front.

Q. How would you describe the level of influence or control that the SWP had within SCAN?

A. I would say they had some influence, but so did all sorts of other people. I would say it was perfectly -- the SWP were a minority in SCAN.

Q. Women's Voice, essentially the same questions. To what extent was Women's Voice a creation of the SWP?

A. Well, Women's Voice is a -- is a slightly different project from what I would call a genuine united front. It was aimed at being for people who didn't necessarily want to join the SWP but who saw themselves as socialist women and people who wanted to organise. And of course, when we set it up, there was a lot of women's organisation taking place at that time. Throughout the 1970s, there were a whole range of issues.

But it was always connected to the SWP, and it was always quite openly connected to the SWP. And so I don't think it really fits into the model of a united front in the same way as the ANL, or indeed the Right to

Work Campaign. It wasn't like a women's campaign around abortion, for example, it was a general socialist organisation of women.

Q. Rock Against Racism?

A. Well, that's different again. Rock Against Racism was formed by a handful of people in, I think, 1976, after David Bowie made has racist comments at a concert --

Q. I think your statement said Eric Clapton.

A. Sorry, Eric Clapton. That's a big mistake, isn't it? Sorry about that. Yeah, it was Eric Clapton.

But that was a few people. Some of them were in the SWP, like David Widgery and a couple of other people. But a few of them weren't. So it was a sort of mixture. And they organised gigs and they got huge support for that. And they obviously were central to the carnival that we had in 1978 in Victoria Park. That's what they did.

So, again, I don't quite see Rock Against Racism as, again, a classic united front. It was a great initiative, and they still do things with it, and there's a lot of very, very good histories of it now. But it was -- it was very much based, obviously, on the music, and that was -- that was the centre of it. So it didn't have sort of mass membership or anything, or -- it wasn't organised along those sorts of lines.

You didn't go to a Rock Against Racism meeting every week, or something like that, it was a different sort of set up.

Q. Thank you.

Now I'm going to put another of our witness's takes on some of your work to you for your comment. This is from Piers Corbyn. He said that from his memory the:

"... International Socialists, were normally very intent on controlling whatever they were doing. So, they would have things which we would describe -- or I would describe as 'fronts'. So, you know, they would have some campaign or other called something, but really it was just being controlled completely by the [International Socialists]."

Is that a fair observation in relation to any of your work?

A. I don't think so. And I don't know why Piers would know particularly. I mean, he didn't really work with us, as far as I know, about anything. And my only contact with him was when he -- they organised a squat in -- no doubt he's told you about this, I expect -- in Tolmers Square, they had a big squat there in the early 1970s. But as far as I know, he never worked with us over anything much at all. So it's obviously his opinion, but I don't think it's correct.

Q. Can I move now to CND. And there was some SWP involvement within CND, wasn't there?

Was that overt or surreptitious?

A. I don't understand this line -- I mean, this line of questioning about "overt" and "surreptitious". We didn't go secretly into CND. We were involved in it, insofar as we were involved in it, at different periods quite openly, and we sold our paper and we contributed in meetings and went on demonstrations, in exactly the same way that we would have done over -- over any other campaign. And of course, CND was very big in the late 50s/early 60s when -- before my time, but IS members were involved in it then. And in the early 80s it was very big, round Greenham Common and round the threat of missiles -- cruise missiles in Europe. So we were involved in it then. I went on the transPennine march over Easter, I think 1981. But it was a completely open operation. We didn't hide it from anybody.

So I don't quite understand. Why do you think it was covert?

Q. I just ask the questions.

A. Okay, sorry. Fair enough.

Q. But on that line, is it fair to say that CND was nowhere near being controlled by the SWP, there's just no

question of that?

A. Absolutely not. Very -- you know, no involvement at that central level or at an organisational level. It was -- it was local initiatives that people took.

Q. We've seen some evidence that you thought that CND would be more effective if it was more militant. Could you explain to us in what ways you thought CND ought to become more militant?

A. I think this was about a -- partly it's a kind of philosophical thing about -- CND's approach is very much -- or has been traditionally about non-violent direct action, sitting down and so on, which we took part in, but we wanted it to be more tied in to trade unions, we wanted it to be more tied in to perhaps more militant action, but particularly in terms of working class action. That was the -- that was the aim really, that we wanted it to be tied to -- to that kind of issue rather than just being sort of individual protests. We wanted it to be more, I suppose, collective, if that makes sense to you.

Q. What sort of methods did you think they should be using? Did you think they ought to be demonstrating more aggressively, or something like that?

A. Not more aggressively. I think we thought that the demonstrations, they could be -- we could have more

of the demonstrations, they could have -- they could be tied in to other issues, and so on. But these were -- you know, these were fairly small tactical differences really about what we thought was the best -- the best way of operating.

Q. Did you think they ought to get involved in direct action?

A. Well, they were involved in direct action. I don't think you can accuse CND of not being -- you know, going right back to the 50s, they -- there was a hundred of them arrested one day when they sat down in Trafalgar Square, I think.

Q. We've got quite a lot of evidence about that.

A. Yeah, and --

Q. But what I'm interested in is, essentially, were you and were other members of your party a voice pressing for more of that?

A. Yes, yes. I think that's -- we would have liked to have seen more of that. And more things where we actually linked up more with trade unions, which we thought was important. So perhaps "militant" isn't, perhaps, the right way to look at it, because many CND members did and still do get arrested for some of this. You know, if they go to Faslane, for example, where Trident is, they sit down and they get carried off and

get arrested. So I don't think you can say they're not involved in that kind of thing.

I think perhaps we wanted it to be more central to -- to working class organisation. That's perhaps the best way I can describe it.

Q. Can we move now to Ireland and the SWP's position on The Troubles.

You said in your witness statement that you supported the right of the provisional IRA to act, but you did not support bombing or terrorism as a tactic.

Could we look, please, at a document, which is {UCPI/15994}. That's volume 3, tab 35. Could we go to page -- this is a report on the 1982 National Delegate Conference. If we could go, please, to {UCPI/15994/114}.

Now, this is a document that has been attached to an SDS report, a very large SDS report about that year's National Delegate Conference. This is one of your organisation's documents which has been taken or copied by the SDS and reported.

Could you help us with what a "drafting commission" is as a document?

A. Yes, it's a -- it's a group of people get together and draft it and then it's voted on. It's like a resolution, I suppose.

Q. Right.

Can we look at the first two paragraphs, please. It's very difficult to read.

A. Yes.

Q. I think it says:

"This conference reiterates its support for the revolutionary position on terrorism. Individual terrorism, as Trotsky pointed out, is counter revolutionary in effect, strengthening the hand of the very class enemy against whom it is directed. The actions and recent threats of the INLA and the Birmingham pub bombings are an expressive example.

"At the same time, revolutionaries are not against violence as such. We make 'a fundamental distinction between individual terrorism and the revolutionary terrorism that the oppressed masses may employ against their oppressors' as occurred for example in the Russian Revolution or Vietnam."

Does that accurately explain why it was you were against the way that the provisional IRA were using terrorism and the circumstances in which you as an organisation did think that the use of force would be justified?

A. Yes, I think it explains that individual terrorism is something which is counter-productive, and we very much

stand in that tradition that we don't think it does anything except to create more oppression, normally. At the same time, as I have explained already, if you look at various situations where people are facing attack, whether it's the Vietnam War or whether it's the example used here of the Russian revolution, but I use the Portuguese revolution as another example, I think it does express the different aspects of our position.

Q. Thank you.

If we go to the last two paragraphs, if we could move to the bottom of the page, please. I think they read:

"However unpalatable their politics, which are crudely nationalist, based upon class alliances which have their own inevitable tensions, the armed Republican Movement is an essential component in the struggle to get the British out of Ireland.

"We have to cope with that fact, at the same time as we struggle to build a revolutionary fragment in the North with the help of our comrades in the South. 99% of socialists in Northern Ireland support armed struggle. We should too. The party must hammer out its attitude, if possible, towards splitting the Protestant working class from its repulsive sleeping partner, the Orange business community of the North. If it

thinks that that is impossible, it should say so."

Now, I'd like to dwell mainly on the first half of that second paragraph and the proposition that the Socialist Workers Party should support the armed struggle. Was it the SWP's position that it did support the armed struggle?

A. Well, if you look at the -- what I put in the witness statement, and the whole question was that we had a position which was unconditional but not uncritical support for the provisional IRA. What that meant was we supported their right to fight against the Northern State and against British imperialism. At the same time, we were extremely critical of their methods. And I think the wording of this actually makes that point, that we don't agree with the politics of the IRA, and we don't agree with the methods that they used. At the same time, we recognise that in the north of Ireland, this was a crucial component of people fighting against British rule at the time.

So those are the -- those are the two aspects of it, I think, which are important to understand. Now, I know it's -- I think sometimes it's a difficult concept for people to understand, that you can support but also criticise, but I think in this case it was absolutely necessary to have that position.

Q. Well, the expression of support for the armed struggle at the bottom of that document I'd like to explore a bit further.

Against what targets did the SWP support the use of violence by the provisional IRA?

A. Well, it would have been against targets of the Northern State. That would have been the target. But we weren't about supporting individual actions. We didn't agree with any of those -- you know, the bombings and the various things that took place.

And actually, it says in this document that we struggle to build a revolutionary fragment, as it's called, in the north, because it was extremely difficult for socialist ideas to get a hearing in the situation in the 70s, that obviously you had this -- you had the armed struggle going on. You had on the one hand the provisional IRA, you also had, on the other hand, the UDA and other loyalist paramilitaries, backed up very often by the police and the army.

So those were the -- that was the situation we found ourselves in in Ireland. We wanted to build a socialist organisation like we had in Britain, but it was extremely hard to make that breakthrough. And still I think -- still even today I think it's the whole way which nationalist and unionist politics divide up, it's

still difficult to do that.

Q. Could we have a look, please, at another document. It's {UCPI/19543}. And volume 3, tab 47.

Now, this is an SDS report dated 4 October of 1983. It appears to be about an individual. But what I'm interested in is paragraph 4, where it says:

"During a recent Central Committee social at the home of Chris Harman ..."

And we've redacted for privacy:

"... somewhat the worse for drink, spoke about the time he lived in Belfast and his [companions] with individuals associated with Sinn Fein and the Provisional Irish Republican Army ... He stated that at that time he was a member of the International Marxist Group ... Without mentioning names he said that he was trusted by PIRA and remains fully sympathetic to their cause."

The questions I have arising from that is, how common were such views within the SWP?

A. Well, I wouldn't accept that that's an accurate statement, apart from anything else. I don't think it's true. The person you're referring to was involved in the campaign over the H Blocks, for the right of the IRA prisoners to have political status, which was a big issue. He was also involved in the campaign over

the hunger strikes, which -- in 1981, which I can assure you was a very, very big and well supported campaign throughout Ireland, throughout the island of Ireland.

So I don't agree with this idea that he was, you know, fully sympathetic to their cause. That wasn't true. He had the same sort of criticisms that I've made of their -- of their behaviour. So, I mean, I don't think you can necessarily take this as a -- I think in this case you certainly can't take it as anything but gossip which isn't particularly accurate.

So, he was involved in Irish politics but had the same criticisms as the rest of us would have had.

Q. And in terms of connections -- direct connections and contact with the IRA, the report says it happened when the person was a member of the IMG. To what extent did the Socialist Workers Party have direct contact with members of the Provisional IRA?

A. I don't think we did at all. Sinn Fein was obviously the political wing. And as you know, Sinn Fein's now -- you know, is on course to -- is the major party in the north, and is on course to be in the south. So things have changed very -- very dramatically since the early 80s on that -- on that situation.

But I think it's fair to say our people in Ireland would have known people in Sinn Fein; just as everybody

who worked in politics in the North of Ireland, and in the south, would have known people in Sinn Fein. But Provisional IRA, we wouldn't have had. They wouldn't have wanted to have contact with us. They had a totally different aim, a military aim, which was -- which was different to what we were doing. So they wouldn't have done.

Q. Now, you've touched upon this already in some of your answers, but I want to explore the ways in which your organisation did advance its beliefs in relation to Ireland. As I understand it, it's supporting the Troops Out Movement, getting involved in campaigns such as the hunger strike and the H Blocks and so forth, protesting against the actions of the army in Northern Ireland. Have I missed anything significant?

A. I think by the late 70s and early 80s, that's what the main emphasis would have been.

The Troops Out Movement was regarded as -- again, as a united front, which we were involved in, and which was -- it was important to our work. I don't think it was central to our work particularly at that time. But yes, those were the sorts of things we were involved in.

Q. And I think, probably right at the start of your time in the IS, internment was a big issue, wasn't it?

A. Internment was a very big issue. And obviously by

the late 70s you're talking about, you know, the H blocks campaign and the hunger strikes. Those were the -- and the hunger strikes were a very big political issue. So we were involved in protesting about those, and about the right to get political status.

Q. Did the SWP provide any financial assistance to any paramilitary group?

A. No, no.

Q. Did the SWP provide any practical assistance to any paramilitary group in carrying out its operations?

A. No, it wouldn't have done.

MR BARR: Sir, is that a convenient time to take the morning break?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, it would be. We will break now for a quarter of an hour and resume, therefore, if my watch is right, at a quarter to.

(11.29 am)

(A short break)

(11.47 am)

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR BARR: Thank you, Sir.

Ms German, we're going to move on now to the relationship between the Socialist Workers Party and the far right.

Can we start, please, with events in Red Lion Square in 1984.

A. '74.

Q. Sorry, '74.

Your witness statement makes clear that you thought that free speech was a concept that you didn't think should apply to fascists. And was it in line with that belief that the counter-protest was organised to shut down the ability of the fascists to organise?

A. Well, the -- the protest was because the National Front had been given Conway Hall as a meeting place; and we felt this was unacceptable, for the reasons that you -- you outline, that, unlike with everybody else, where I'm in favour of free speech, I think with the fascists we make an exception, because their whole aim is to destroy democratic society and to deny free speech to all sorts of people, to people on the left, to migrants, and so on. So yes, there was a -- again, it wasn't just the SWP, there was a large number of organisations and groups that were -- that organised that demonstration in Red Lion Square.

Q. And just so we are clear, it's not just your personal opinion, this was the SWP's house line?

A. Yes, and I've got a -- I wrote an article in the 80s where I explain this, which I can make available to you,

if that would be useful.

Q. Thank you, it would.

The build-up to the demonstration, presumably the SWP was putting out loudly and clearly the message that there was going to be a demonstration against the fascists and it would like a big turn out?

A. That's right, and we were at the LSE, which is just down the road, so we mobilised in the university and in other places to get people there, yeah.

Q. And there would be no doubt in anybody's mind what the purpose of that demonstration was, namely to confront the fascists?

A. Well, what we wanted to do was to stop them meeting in Conway Hall. So if we'd prevented them from getting in, that would have been a main aim.

Q. So, how obvious was it that there was going to be trouble?

A. It was very obvious to me. I walked up. I must have gone to the LSE at the beginning. It was a Saturday, obviously. But I walked up from the LSE, which is only 10/15 minutes' walk up to Red Lion Square. And everywhere you could see police vans, all the sidestreets, Lincoln's Inn Fields, everywhere, there were loads and loads of police vans. So I thought there's going to be a huge policing issue here and we're

going to be stopped from trying to demonstrate. And that was indeed what happened. There was a very, very heavy policing operation. I mean, I've never seen -- before that, I'd never seen anything like it. I have, since then, on a few occasions, but not many. And I'm not surprised that somebody died on that day, because it was -- it was very, very heavily policed, and in a very violent way.

Q. Now, you were speaking, as I understand it, about the morning of the demonstration. Could I dial you back a few days before the demonstration: how obvious was it that there was going to be trouble?

A. Well, I don't think we were looking for trouble. We were looking to stop the fascists from marching. The police were determined to ensure that the fascists went in, and they were prepared to have a huge policing operation in order to justify it. And I'm afraid that was the pattern we saw again and again in the 70s.

Q. Let's imagine the police didn't turn up at all. And the fascists want to organise, you want to stop them organising. Surely that was a recipe for trouble?

A. Well, I think it would be more like the example that I gave in my witness statement about Haggerston School, where the fascists had been allowed to meet in a school hall in Hackney, we organised a protest outside, but

many of us also got into the hall and occupied the main room and stopped them from being able to have their meeting. And if the police hadn't turned up at all, I guess that's the sort of thing that would have happened. We'd have occupied the place, or stopped them getting in, and they'd have gone away.

Q. Is it your position then that prior to the day of the demonstration, it was not a foregone conclusion that there would be trouble?

A. I think we thought it was going to be a big issue, because the fascists were meeting in a big hall. I mean, it seats 400 or so people. So we thought it would be a big issue. But we didn't -- we didn't go looking for trouble. We weren't the people who created the trouble.

Q. Now, in your witness statement, and I think just now, you've essentially put the blame fairly and squarely on the police. There are others who came to a different conclusion. Lord Scarman, who inquired into events at Red Lion Square, fairly and squarely put the blame on the IMG, as I'm sure you're aware.

Do you accept that the IMG -- and I'm quoting now: "... assaulted the police in an unexpected, unprovoked and viciously violent attack."

A. No, I don't think that's an accurate description of what

happened. And as you know, the person who was killed on the demonstration was an IMG member, and they were demonstrating perfectly acceptably. It was the police who were determined to stop people getting near the hall. That was their aim.

And they continued this. When -- there was fighting, after a while, going on in the square. And when people retreated, the police pursued them and started attacking them with truncheons, they threw demonstrators over the railings. They used to have the -- you know, those underpasses they used to have which were in Theobalds Road. When people were moving away and trying to get away from the police, they were pursuing them.

So I don't think that's an accurate or a fair description of what happened.

Q. Now, I want to move to a very different way in which the tension between the far left and the far right was playing out on the streets, and the victims of the racist attacks that were going on at the time.

Could we have up, please, {UCPI/10659}.

This is not in the bundle, Sir.

And it's paragraph 4 that I'm interested in. This is a report by an SDS officer from 1976, from 13 July. And it's about a meeting which is dealing with racism in

Hackney. Paragraph 4 says:

"Several members of the audience then participated in a discussion on racialism in Hackney but no firm conclusions were reached. However ..."

And I'm using the words in the document:

"... a negress in the audience stated that an organisation called the West Indian Defence Committee, based in Brixton, was presently engaged in arming with knives and coshes as many black people in Brixton as possible and that this organisation was fully prepared to meet physical racialism in the area with physical attacks. Although no decisions were made by the Hackney Branch of the International Socialists, several members expressed both their approval of such actions and their regret that anti-racialist groups were not sufficiently organised in Hackney."

Was it the case that there were some in your organisation who did approve of arming with knives and coshes, and so forth?

A. I must say, I think this is a very bizarre report. I mean, it comes to the conclusion that nothing was decided. It says -- it says that several members expressed their approval of such actions. Well, maybe, but that clearly wasn't the dominant view. I'd be very surprised if people expressed their approval for those

actions, because we always tried to look at the fight against racism as a collective issue and not just simply whether people could physically defend themselves. There's many people in the black and Asian communities who have repeatedly defended themselves against individual attack; and I would absolutely support their right to do it in these circumstances. But it wasn't something that we ever saw as an effective way of building an anti-racist campaign.

So I must say, I regard the accuracy of this statement as not particularly high, from my experience of knowing people in Hackney and of the time.

Q. Perhaps I can put it this way. I'm not suggesting this was the party line, or anything like that. What I want to explore with you is were there hotheads within your ranks?

A. I think this kind of line of questioning, I mean, you know, you look at these documents which were written a long, long time ago. Were there hotheads in the ranks? You know, time and again when I've looked at all these things, there's no real evidence of this coming from these statements. And therefore I take them with a very -- this type of statement with a very big pinch of salt. And of course people react differently. Of course somebody might say, "Well, good for them."

But that doesn't mean they would do it themselves; and it doesn't mean that they saw it in that way.

And I think it's important to understand that when we talk about fighting against the racists, we always try to stress that it should be a collective thing; that it should be done through the unions, through mass campaigns, rather than this kind of individual action.

Q. We can take that document down now, thank you.

A. Could I just comment as well about the "negress".

Q. Yes, I mean, the use of language is terrible, isn't it?

A. And even in the 1970s, people didn't talk like that for the most part. You know, I just think it's worth saying.

Q. The -- I want to Zoom out a bit, but staying on the question of hotheads. Were you conscious in the way that you acted within the Central Committee that what you said might influence the more volatile of your members?

A. What we tried to do as a Central Committee was to give a line to the organisation, which the organisation followed or didn't. I mean, people didn't always do exactly what we said in the positive sense. So in other words, if you said, "We want you to go to a picket line at 6 in the morning," maybe half the people you asked would go and the other half won't. But generally we

accepted that that was -- people would accept the kind of position we put forward. And we very much stressed particularly over this, because we knew the nature of the society at the time -- we knew there were a lot of individual attacks. I mean, this is a dangerous time. It was a dangerous time for socialists as well as for black and Asian people, because if you had your badge on, if you were getting on the tube to Stratford, you were very likely to get attacked physically by a fascist on the tube. That was the situation we were in.

So we were very careful that we didn't want this to become a kind of individual gang fight between left and right. That would have been a step backwards, in my view.

Q. Can we move now to 1977 and Lewisham. In the runup to the demonstration and counter-demonstration at Lewisham, what was the line that the Central Committee was putting out?

A. Well, I wasn't on the Central Committee at the time, but the line that we were putting out was that it was going to be a very, very important demonstration. It was clear -- this was clear to the people of Lewisham, it was clear to the left in general, and it was clear to the fascists. They saw this as -- and they termed it very much as about "mugging" and about violence of black

people in Lewisham. And we knew this was going to be a very important demonstration. So we did encourage people to come.

As I've said, at the time, there was a by-election which we were standing in in Ladywood in Birmingham, and I was up there for three weeks working on that by-election. I would have gone to it if I'd been in London, but as we were we decided that there was going to be a fascist march in Birmingham, because they were standing in the election as well, so we stayed in Birmingham and had a counter protest to that.

But I think otherwise I would have been on it, and so would a great many other people. Thousands of people came on it. You know, so I think we saw it as an important -- in a way, we saw it as important in terms of making it clear that the fascists weren't going to be able to march through those kind of areas and to use particular issues in order to strengthen their position.

Q. Can you recall whether the party line was to encourage people to attend the ALCARAF demonstration in the morning or the gathering at Lewisham -- at the bottom of Lewisham Way, or both?

A. People went to both, or some people went to both. But we said -- for people who aren't aware, this was a demonstration that was held away from where

the fascists were going to march. So we said: fine, but we think it's important that we actually do go to where they are demonstrating and we attempt to block their march.

And that was what we wanted to do. We were quite open about this, and that we could see the value of the ALCARAF demonstration, but we also thought just doing that and not trying to prevent them from marching would be a mistake.

Q. And so this is -- is it another expression of the SWP's policy of closing down the far right's right to freedom of expression.

A. We regarded it as important particularly that they weren't allowed to march through these areas. And they didn't march round areas like this, right? They didn't march in the well-to-do areas. They went to the poorest areas, with large migrant populations. And they deliberately chose these areas, and they did so for a specific reason. They did so because they wanted to intimidate the local population. And it was remarkable that after most of these demonstrations, you would have an increase in attacks on black and ethnic minorities. So we felt that was a very important thing to do, yes.

Q. Now, the Inquiry's had some evidence of some film of what happened; and the main trouble seems to have

started as the National Front demonstration moved into the main road on onto the A2, and bricks were thrown at them and the police. Is that your understanding of what happened?

A. I think that's -- that's definitely the case, that nobody is saying that at Lewisham there wasn't fighting. There was fighting. But the question is, why was there the fighting? The local community, the local -- young people particularly, but backed up by nearly everybody in their community, saw it as important that these people weren't allowed to march. So, yes.

Q. I mean, what I want to give you the opportunity to comment on in particular was this seems to have been an instance where the violence was initiated from the left wing.

A. I don't think so. I think -- I think you have to see it as the violence is initiated by the people who decide they're going to have a hostile march through this area and by -- and it's -- it's allowed to happen by the police. And those two things, I think, are important.

And what the demonstration -- as I say, I wasn't there, but the demonstration, as I understand it, tried to block the road, and tried to stop them getting through. And I think that was an absolutely justified

thing to do.

Q. And would you condone the throwing of bricks at people?

A. Not particularly, no. But I do understand why people get into the state that they get in over these things. I think lots of young people at the time were very, very angry about this, particularly in those areas. And the truth is that they felt that this was the only way they could express themselves. I think it would have been much better if the police hadn't protected this march, and then we wouldn't have had these kind of problems.

Q. Was one of the consequences of confronting the fascists on the streets that violence and trouble was inevitable?

A. Well, again, I mean, you know, I think this -- this kind of way of approaching it is -- it seems to me that a lot of the questioning this morning has been about my politics rather than about what might be wrong with other people's politics, or indeed the role of the undercover police, which is the aim of the Inquiry. And I think that that's slightly regrettable, really, that it's going like this.

The idea we are responsible for the problem because we identify a real problem of the -- of the fascists marching, and what was clearly policy, that -- whoever decided it, that the Metropolitan Police would defend, and -- as I've said to you earlier, you only have to

look at the pictures to see to what extent the policing was involved. The number of police and -- in Red Lion Square, the number of police at Lewisham, the number of police at Southall which still, when I look at the pictures, even now takes my breath away. When you look at all of those, then to say it's our fault that there was violence just seems to me is completely wrong.

Q. I'm not suggesting -- in fact, this question isn't about fault, it was literally what it said. The consequence of coming out to confront the fascists on the streets was that violence was inevitable.

A. Yes, and the consequence of not coming out on the streets would be that there would be more attacks on black people. I mean, this is a time where black people were being killed, where people were being seriously attacked all the time. This was the whole atmosphere in these areas. It was the atmosphere in East London. It was the atmosphere where I lived. All of those things, the consequence if we hadn't done it would have been much, much worse for people.

Q. Can I remind you of a passage from a book you wrote "A People's History of London", for your account of this event. It's {DOC/83/1}.

The relevant passage reads:

"An important turning point came in Lewisham, South London, in the summer of 1977. Most of the left, local trade union organisations and the Communist Party held a rally in opposition to an NF march; the majority planned to march at some distance from the [National Front's] proposed route. But those who thought the [National Front] should be physically confronted -- mainly the Socialist Workers Party and black youth from the local community -- went on to gather at a point on the [National Front's] route where they thought the march could be blocked. Despite a heavy police presence, the anti-fascists did indeed break through the police cordon and disrupt the [National Front] march. Mounted police charged the protesters, and riot shields were used for the first time in mainland Britain. Fighting with the police lasted long after the [National Front] had gone home. The establishment's disapproval was shrill, and even the left-wing Labour leader, Michael Foot, described those who had broken up the [National Front] march as 'red fascists'. It was a watershed which led to the formation of the Anti-Nazi League ..."

Do you stand by that passage?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. Coming back to the question I asked you earlier. If

trouble was inevitable, it was the police's duty, wasn't it, to police public disorder?

A. But that isn't what happened at Lewisham. And I think -- I think two things. I think, firstly, when I say that they wanted to block the march, that's exactly what I've been trying to explain to you.

I also think you have to put this in the context -- and perhaps, if people are interested to read the rest of the chapter, which talks about the situation that developed, particularly after Enoch Powell's speech -- Rivers of Blood speech in 1968, the growth of the fascists in the early 1970s, and the way in which it needed -- the fascists needed to be confronted.

So I think this is the context that you have to look at it in. And the idea that this is about simply that the police were impartially trying to keep order just isn't true. It just simply is not the case. If you look at it, their role was very, very much to protect the fascist march. And this was something that I think was -- helped to lead to any disorder.

Q. Can I now put a specific report to you, please. It's {MPS/732886}.

Not in the bundle, Sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: So that I can identify it later, can you give me its date, please?

MR BARR: It's 1 September 1977. It's page 4 that I'd like, please, {MPS/732886/4}.

This is a report compiled after the event. It's the very bottom paragraph that I'm interested in:

"Finally, it is known that one member of the SWP was armed with an air pistol at Lewisham which, given the opportunity, he would have used to shoot at the police and members of the National Front. An Asian man, thought to be an SWP supporter, had in his possession a book which had the centre cut out to conceal a knife."

Do you have any knowledge of either the air pistol or the knife?

A. No, I don't, and I'm -- I'm not at all sure that these are accurate reports either. I mean, this is something we've been told is the case. There's absolutely no evidence for it. And I think when we look at some of the reports, it's like some of the ones we've talked about previously, this is things which are hearsay or just they talk about, but there's absolutely no evidence of this at all, or indeed that anything happened with these weapons, if they did indeed exist.

Q. The answer to this question may be obvious, but it's important that you answer it in your own words. Assuming for the purposes of this question that this is

true, can I take it that this wouldn't have been condoned by the Central Committee?

A. I don't assume that it's true, but if it were the case, it wouldn't have been condoned.

Q. Can we move now -- that can be taken down.

Can we move now to an event at which you were present on many days, the dispute at Grunwicks. Can we start with the aim of the SWP. Was it to assist those striking to prevent the picket line being crossed by people who were going into work?

A. The strike at Grunwicks was a very long strike. It was involving mainly Asian women. They faced an incredible attack from their employer, who was really, really strongly anti-union. He also was involved with the National Association for Freedom, so it was about trying to break the whole union and the union movement. So it was regarded as a very important strike. So, yes, it was there to assist them in winning, and to help them to have a picket which was going to be effective and which would stop the workers who had been replacing them from coming in.

Q. And the police were trying to prevent that from happening and to facilitate workers going into the factory?

A. They came in on a bus and the police's aim was to try to

let that bus through, and this was -- this was a picket line which at various points was supported by Labour Cabinet ministers, Shirley Williams was down there, people like that. It was a very, very widely supported strike. And it was felt that it was unjustified to allow this to become -- it became a kind of cause célèbre with this right-wing organisation using it as a means to trying to attack the unions on a wider scale.

Q. You described the strike-breakers in your witness statement as "scabs". That was a common --

A. That's a common expression --

Q. -- commonly-used expression?

A. I think it still is, yeah.

Q. I mean, it's highly pejorative, isn't it?

A. Well, it's a bit like talking about "hotheads" or things like that, isn't it?

Q. And would it be fair to say feelings ran very high against the scabs?

A. Well, you weren't directly confronting them, because they were in the bus. But, yes, people were very much opposed to them.

Q. But however strongly the strikers and members of your organisation felt about their actions, strike-breaking was not unlawful, was it?

A. I don't know whether it was unlawful to do what they did. I don't know.
Q. And was the object of --
THE CHAIRMAN: Forgive me a moment. On what basis can it be said that they were doing anything unlawful?
A. I don't know. I just said I don't know the answer to that.
THE CHAIRMAN: Forgive me.
MR BARR: And was the object, as you saw it, to try to overwhelm the police and break through and prevent the coaches getting in.
A. We wanted to stop the coaches getting in. That was the main aim of the operation. And we wanted to give support to Mrs Desai and the other people on the picket line.
Q. And that overwhelming the picket line at one point was exactly what did happen, as you explain in your statement?
A. On the day of the mass picket, yeah. I mean, most days, there were less people than that, obviously.
Q. Was it essentially when the miners turned up?
A. The miners turned up; all sorts of other people turned up. So that was probably thousands of people, and it was in a very small road.
Q. Would it be fair to say it was the deliberate aim to

push through those police lines?

A. Well, the deliberate aim was to stop the bus going through; and I think it achieved it on that day.

Q. Now, once again you find yourself differing with Lord Scarman. Lord Scarman conducted a statutory investigation and concluded -- and I'll read it:

"The union APEX, we are satisfied, had no intention of provoking violence and civil disorder by calling for the mass picket. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the risk of a mass picket getting out of control was known. A mass picket allows violent extremists to participate. Such people cannot be prevented from joining it and will use the opportunity it presents to provoke civil disorder, which in itself is sure to prejudice the very cause which the picket was called to promote."

Is that in fact what happened?

A. Well, I don't agree with this idea about violent extremists. There were thousands and thousands of people who came on that picket, and many others who turned up on other days. And I think it's -- if we're going to talk about pejorative terms, that is one that I think should be avoided. I know it's frequently put by the -- the undercover policing people, but it doesn't strike me as it's an accurate way of looking at it. So

unfortunately, I would have to disagree with Lord Scarman over that as well.

Q. Moving away from the dispute at Grunwicks to a general statement -- a statement you made about the ANL in your witness statement. You say that the ANL:

"... insisted that the fascists and the National Front had to be confronted physically on the streets, in order to prevent them ... gaining support from the very beginning."

What did you mean by "confront physically"?

A. I think I've explained that really, that it's -- they should be -- if we can in any way stop them from marching, then that should be the aim of what we're doing. And that was central to the whole idea. There was -- you know, if you look in the 1970s, there was a whole argument about: should we directly confront them or should we just talk about, you know, other ways of, you know, maybe changing the law and so on. And I think for many of us in the Anti-Nazi League -- not everybody, but many of us felt you had to stop them from marching. And this has become now a very, very normal thing that happens. Luckily, the threat of fascism isn't anywhere near as great now as it was then, but it's become much more accepted that this -- people don't want them to march through areas of high ethnic minorities, for

example. So I don't think -- I don't think there's anything particularly remarkable about that.

Q. By using the phrase "physical" -- "physically confront them", that's what you had in mind might be necessary?

A. Well, as I say, if you're saying you don't want them to march and you want to stop them marching, you may have to physically confront them.

Q. Can we move now to children. We touched on SCAN earlier. I want to take you to a document that comes from the SDS reporting on the 1980 SWP National Delegate Conference. It's {UCPI/16148}. It's volume 2, tab 16. And if we could go to {UCPI/16148/55}.

This, again, is a drafting commission paper that's been obtained and attached to the officer's report. I'd like to direct your attention to the -- first of all to the preamble. The gist of the preamble is it expresses the very grave concerns about fascist activity that were felt at that time. I'll give you an opportunity to read that.

And in that context, it then goes on, at paragraph 1, to say:

"It should be a top priority to organise against the Nazis in schools and on the football terraces, which they are making their recruiting grounds. The ANL has produced a school students/NUSS leaflet and this should

be distributed as widely as possible."

Does that fairly describe what the SWP was doing in schools at the time and why?

A. I think that when you look at the preamble and that point that you've just made, I think that when you look at this whole -- this whole question of the Anti-Nazi League, and they say it was -- we were successful quite early on in beginning to identify them as Nazis, which was very, very important to do, because, as I said, the whole memory of the Second World War was still fairly recent, and people didn't like Nazis, quite rightly, and could see there was an issue there.

So, I think you have to put it in the context that this was -- we were trying to get across that people -- that the people round the NF weren't acting in the interests of ordinary people but were actually fascists who were going to destroy society, and particularly were going to scapegoat ethnic minorities.

Now, when it comes to a top priority to organise against the Nazis in schools, on the football terraces, this is because they were aiming at young people and we wanted to counter that. Now, that was mainly done through leafletting and other activities of that sort.

Q. I'll take that as a yes; is that fair?

A. Sorry, yes, that's the -- that's the answer.

Q. Would you accept that schools becoming a political battleground between groups on opposing ends of the political spectrum would be a concern both for the authorities and many parents?

A. I think the problem we have and the problem we had then, but it occurs with other issues now, is that you can't keep politics out of schools; and particularly children are -- particularly teenage children are aware of a whole number of issues that go on, and that they do have comments on. So yes, you don't want it to turn into a battle between two groups of school students. At the same time, we felt it was very important we worked with teachers over this, we worked with all sorts of people to try to get across what we thought the danger of the National Front was.

Q. Thank you. Could we take that down, please.

I'm going to move now to the Right to Work Campaigns and the Right to Work marches. You've explained it in your witness statement, but if you could explain it just succinctly now. What were the Right to Work marches?

A. They came out of, obviously, a period of high unemployment in the mid-1970s -- the first one was in 1976. Unemployment was something that hadn't been seen in Britain since the 1930s. Since the Second World War, essentially, there was full employment. So this was

a big shock at all sorts of levels for people. And we felt that we had to be part of organising campaigning against unemployment; and particularly against youth unemployment, which was a big issue.

And we felt it also connected in some ways with some of the previous discussion we've had about the dangers of the far right; and unemployment has been a sort of recruiting ground for the far right at different times. So, again, we wanted to channel this into a very different direction against the government. And we did it, as I say, firstly against what was then the Labour government, then of course it became much bigger when unemployment grew still further again under Margaret Thatcher.

Q. What was the role of the SWP in the Right to Work marches?

A. Well, we helped to set it up. We worked with all sorts of people from the Labour left, other people in the trade unions. So we were involved in it, but, again, it was something that other people were involved in. It's an example, again, of the united front.

Q. Can I ask you, first of all, now about the 1976 march. I'm reading from the Special Branch annual report about that year. It said:

"Their progress attracted little publicity and on

arrival ..."

And it's talking about arrival in London:

"... about 80 strong on the outskirts of London, they took the opportunity of attacking their police escort in what amounted to a running battle, 44 officers were injured and 43 members arrested."

Were you a witness to any of these events?

A. No, I wasn't on the -- but I have to say, that was a -- you know, they disputed that account, and I think a Trades Council inquiry actually disputed that account as well.

Q. What, that there were 44 injuries and 43 arrests?

A. That we took the opportunity to attack the police. That wasn't -- that wasn't as we recalled it or as we argued it. But I wasn't at the event.

Q. Would it be fair to say that there was certainly trouble?

A. Yes, that's a matter of record, that there was -- there was trouble. But it depends where you think that originated.

It's worth saying in that as well that this was the day before we had a rally in the Albert Hall in support of the marches, where we got 5,000 people came to the event. So it was -- it had very wide support from trade unions and others.

Q. I'm going to move now to an area that we're particularly interested in, because you can give us some eyewitness evidence about undercover police officers. I'm going to start with the 1980 Right to Work march, an officer who used the cover name "Colin Clark" was the treasurer -- the national treasurer for the Right to Work march 1980, wasn't he?

A. Mm.

Q. I would like you, please, to assist us by telling us what you can recall of "Colin Clark", how he behaved and what he did.

A. Well, "Colin Clark" was, as you say, the treasurer of the Right to Work Campaign, and obviously this was a deliberate decision to get into positions where he worked for the SWP at different times to do with finance and to do with getting names of people, and he did so with the treasurer of the Right to Work.

Now, the march I was on was in 1981, which "Colin Clark", I think, in his statement says he wasn't on, but that isn't true, because he definitely was on it and I remember him very, very well on it. Because he was the treasurer, he was responsible for making sure we had enough money to pay for things as we went on, which -- they're very costly, because you have to, obviously, feed everybody and do all those kind of things,

transport people, and he was very central to it all. He was -- I always found him quite helpful to work with. He was -- and maybe this was the intention that he was always quite helpful with money and everything else. And it was only later that I began to think that maybe he was a police spy, because he disappeared, said he was going abroad, and nobody ever heard from him again, which as -- which, as we now know, is a pattern.

I mean, it makes me very uncomfortable the whole idea that I worked with him closely for three weeks, and I knew him at other times and worked with him over certain things. I think it's -- it's very disturbing that he was in this position. I don't see any justification for it at all.

Q. Just to be clear, were you on the 1980 march as well?

A. No --

Q. So just --

A. -- the one I organised or I was central to organising was the 1981 one. It was September 1981. It went from Liverpool to Manchester, and then up through the -- you know, all the Lancashire towns, to Blackpool. So that's why it took three weeks.

Q. Can you help us with whether "Colin Clark", as he was styling himself, participated in any decisions?

A. Oh, yes he did. Yes, he would have been -- we discussed

most days. I mean, most of it was at the level of "Should we go and visit such and such a factory," or "Should we -- where are we going to get the money from, because we've got problems with getting enough food for tomorrow," or whatever it was, they were mostly those kind of discussions.

But definitely I discussed with him, particularly when we went -- when we were close to Blackpool, because we were aware that we didn't want lots of these -- lots of these were very young people, they came from kind of council estates in Cumbernauld in Scotland and Liverpool, and various other places; we didn't want them to do anything which might lead to them getting arrested. And I remember having discussions with him about that, which I now regard as, you know, a complete breach of trust really.

Q. What was his line on that?

A. His line was to -- you know, we would have discussions about this, and he agreed that -- well, he's not going to say, is he, to me, "We should get them arrested." That might be what he wanted to do, but he's not going to say that when we're sitting there discussing how we can avoid a dangerous situation.

Q. Putting to one side what one might describe as "mundane decisions", did he participate in any decisions that you

would describe as "significant"?

A. Well, I think that was a significant discussion and a significant decision. And he will have participated in a whole range of things, because he was in discussion with the various people who were leading the march, and therefore, whether it was a smaller issue or whether it was a larger issue, "Colin Clark" will have been involved in it.

So he was -- he put himself very much at the centre of the operation in a role that obviously was important for us; and he did so quite deliberately, to -- presumably to find out as much information as he could.

Q. Are there any specific decisions that he took or influenced that caused you particular concern?

A. No. My -- my concern about him was more general. I mean, I just -- I just find that when I think about this now -- and I've thought about it a lot, obviously, recently, but I've also, as I said to you, thought about it in earlier times -- I think it's extremely disquieting the level at which these people made themselves so -- so central to things.

And as I said in my witness statement, I was a young woman then, I was between relationships. I'm not suggesting that there was any likelihood that he or I would have had a relationship, but that was obvious --

you know, we socialised and we did all those things, and it makes -- I'm not trying to suggest it's at all like the women who've suffered in the way that they have with these sexual relationships that people have had. But I feel it's a very uncomfortable thing to think back on and to look back on, and as I say, I find no justification for it whatever.

Q. Can you help us with the officer who used the cover name "Phil Cooper", at this stage just in relation to Right to Work marches.

A. "Phil Cooper" wasn't on that march, to the best of my recollection. He was on later marches, to the best of my recollection, which I wasn't on. I mean, I may have gone to protests at the conferences -- when they got there, you know, I'd gone for the day. But I wasn't part of organising those marches.

Q. We'll come back to his role in the headquarters later on.

On the 1981 match, was there trouble?

A. No, no. It was a -- it was a big march; we had several hundred people on it. And that's a lot of political and logistical organisation, to do this for three weeks; it's a big job. As I've said, they were young people for the most part, so quite inexperienced politically, whatever you'd want to call it, and it was -- they were

-- it was a remarkable successful thing.

We went to towns every night, we were put up by local trade unions, we were put up in community halls, we visited workplaces, people would speak, we'd have maybe a little rally in a public place every night and some of these marchers would speak. It was an extremely well-organised operation, which had a political aim rather than any kind of physical confrontation, and there wasn't one.

Q. I'm going to ask you a little bit about the 1980 march. I appreciate you weren't there, and if you're not in a position to answer, please just say so.

We've seen the reports of the 1980 march which indicate that there was some trouble when the march reached Southall and that seven people were arrested. And then there was more trouble in Brighton when the marchers joined a total of, it is recorded, about 8,000 people who were shouting abuse at members of the Conservative Party and there were some arrests there. The police assert that only the presence of a large number of police officers prevented more serious violence at Brighton.

Does that picture accord with your understanding of what happened from your conversations with members of your party?

A. Well, I do recall that the march was perfectly -- there were no problems at all with the march until it got to Southall, in other words until it got into the Metropolitan Police area.

Brighton, it strikes me as a rather odd thing for the physically to say that it was only because there was a big police presence. There's always a huge presence at any party conference, and particularly at the Conservative Party conference, so that would have happened anyway. So I'm not quite clear what -- what is being suggested.

Q. I'm just --

A. You're only asking the questions.

Q. Yes, just trying to establish the facts.

A. Okay.

Q. I see.

Okay, well, I think, in that case, we can move to 1982. And, again, I appreciate you weren't on the march, but I don't think you will need to have been for this next question.

Could we have up {UCPI/15888}.

It's volume 3, Sir, tab 34.

Now, this is a report with some attachments about the culmination of the 1982 march. What I'd like to show you first of all is page 11. {UCPI/15888/11}.

Now, I think you've had a chance to look at this document. This is one that attaches lots and lots of cheques -- copies of cheques. There's lots of information about who was supporting and funding the 1982 Right to Work Campaign.

Now, this document is part of those enclosures and appears to be a piece of paper recording the scale of donations. Most of the donations are made by organisations and we have been able to publish them. But in a couple of places we've had to make redactions for privacy in relation to, as you will see, some pretty small donations, one at item 16: £2.

I'd just like -- first of all, can you confirm that this type of information held by the Socialist Workers Party was confidential?

A. Well, it was confidential, except obviously it was leaked by the undercover people working there.

Q. Well --

A. But it was meant to be confidential, yes.

Q. -- that takes me to my next question. I'd like your reaction, please, to the fact the police obtained copies of and have stored, and either they or the Security Service have stored since then, a record of a private donation of £2 to the 1982 Right to Work march.

A. Well, I think the whole thing's astonishing, really, that they've got this list of -- of union branches, of, as you say, a couple of private individuals. This just seems to me -- why on earth is this acceptable? Why on earth did they need to have this information? I don't understand. It's a perfectly above board operation. It was perfectly legal. These donations will have been agreed by union branches and therefore they're completely acceptable. It's not like any individual is just giving these donations without -- with the exception of the individual people, but the vast majority will have been agreed by a branch committee, or several people in a branch.

I -- the only reason they -- they can do this, it seems to me, is tied in with the -- the wider questions of blacklisting, and particularly looking at particular union branches in ways which I -- I think, in a democracy, we should be able to, as union members, donate money to who we want without it being the subject of surveillance.

Can I ask you now for the benefit of your wide experience --

THE CHAIRMAN: Forgive me a moment, Mr Barr.

It is, I'm afraid, distracting if people talk in a way that can be heard, as it can be. Could I ask you

to keep what you want to say to each other until after the morning session is over, or if you really need to say it urgently, go outside and do it. Thank you.

MR BARR: Thank you.

I'd like the benefit of your long experience of the workings of the Socialist Workers Party to help us with some of the positions of authority that were assumed by SDS undercover officers. First of all, the roles of branch and district treasurer. It must be self-evident that they have access to financial information at, respectively, branch and district level, and who was making donations and so forth, and we've seen reporting enclosing financial details.

But can you help us as to, on the ground, what sort of level of meetings they are attending, what sort of participation you would expect a district or branch treasurer to be making to their branch or district?

A. Well, I think the main role -- obviously they had to pay out for, you know, if you're hiring a hall, or things like that, but the main role of the branch and district treasurers was actually to get people to pay subs and to make sure they're paying their subscriptions every month or every week. And in that situation, of course, it's a very central role, because it gives you access to the names and very often the bank accounts of

the individuals concerned in the particular branch, and obviously this can be passed on to people who are engaged in blacklisting and everything else, and that's obviously what happened.

District treasurers in particular would be very likely to be delegates to bigger meetings, like conferences and other national meetings that went on. So they would also have access to the whole national organisation.

Q. An obvious question, but I have to ask it. All of this financial information is confidential?

A. Yes, it's meant to be confidential.

Q. Contact secretary: are you able to help us with that, what that would involve?

A. Well, again, this would be somebody who will know the names of people around the organisation, people who may have come to meetings, or may -- we may regularly get the paper to them, or any of those sorts of things, and will be privy to, again, their names, their addresses, possibly their bank account, where they work, which is a central question, and we know what's happened to a lot of people in this situation. So it strikes me that this is one of the main reasons that the -- that these roles have been so eagerly taken up by undercover police.

Q. Again, all confidential information?
A. It should be, yeah, it should be.
Q. Do they get access to any decision-making meetings with this sort of post?
A. Definitely with -- at a district level, they almost certainly will be likely to be delegates. It's not -- not necessarily the case, but many of them will be delegates to conferences and to other national meetings. So then they have the access to hundreds of people. They will all go to events like Skegness where loads of the names, obviously, have been passed on.
Q. The officer who was a contact secretary was actually at branch level in the Twickenham branch, so is there anything you can tell us about what a contact secretary at branch level is likely to be getting involved in?
A. They may or may not be going as delegates. I mean, that's impossible to know at this stage. It's worth saying, the Twickenham branch was, of course, the branch where there was a big argument in -- I can't remember -- 1974 or '75, which led to a split in the organisation. So, I think it's interesting that they had somebody in there, and I'm sure that they will have played a role, presumably, in -- not in calming down any argument but in exacerbating it.
Q. Socialist Worker organiser: can you help us what that is

and what access that gives someone who holds that position, or influence?

A. Again, this is something where you'll be responsible for distributing the paper to people, collecting the paper from -- if you're in London, collecting it from what was then the print shop, you will be responsible for organising sales. And it was a very central role in a branch and in a district, the person who did that role. It was a very, very central role. Nearly always you would be, again, at the national conferences and things like that. You'd be -- you might well be introducing meetings and all those kind of things.

Q. District social committee.

A. Social committee?

Q. Yes. This is --

A. I don't quite understand that.

Q. We know --

A. I don't think they had a whole committee for organising social events, but maybe.

Q. Well, this is Vincent Harvey, 1976 to 1979 deployment in Walthamstow, and one of the positions we understand he assumed, as well as being a branch and then a district treasurer, was the district social committee. Do I take it you're probably not the best placed person --

A. I guess --

Q. -- to help us with that?
A. I guess that means that he organised some social events, but I don't know. And obviously that was part of his whole operation.
Q. Headquarters: we know that the officer who used the name "Phil Cooper" infiltrated your headquarters. Can you help us, really to set the scene, what is a headquarters like? Is it small? Is it large? How many people are there?
A. When these people were involved, we had a considerable operation in the sense that we had offices which dealt with the political jobs, you know, the Socialist Worker and all those sorts of things. We also had journalists who worked on the paper, but we also had a print shop which was considerable, which had lots of people working there. And those -- so you will be working among 40/50 people, probably, at one time. Maybe not quite that many, but not far off, 35 or ...
Q. Now, the term "headquarters" conjures up an image of the people at the very top being present. Was that true --
A. At one point we had an office, which was about half a mile down the road. And not everybody worked from the office. Some people did, some didn't. Some just worked from home, and only came in for meetings. But by

and large, the leadership -- or a reasonable section of the leadership would be in the headquarters, yes.

Q. Does it follow that "Phil Cooper" would have been rubbing shoulders frequently with people at the very top of the organisation?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you recall doing so?

A. Yes, I can, yeah.

Q. Can you help us with how he behaved and what he did?

A. He behaved in -- as with "Colin Clark", these are people who quite -- obviously quite deliberately didn't particularly get involved in arguments, didn't particularly do any of those sort of things. They did a routine, important job in the office. They would have gone to all the -- they would have gone to the meetings. They would have gone to meetings in their own district or branch, and we did have print shop meetings as well for the whole staff about a range of things, sometimes more generally political, sometimes about more practical things. They would have gone to all of those.

And they would have been at social events. If we went to the pub on a Friday night, or if it was somebody's birthday, or any of those, they would have been at all of those, and of course that's important for them in picking up all sorts of things about individuals

that no doubt they wanted to do.

Q. Did he keep a high or a low profile?

A. Fairly low profile, I would say.

Q. Can you recall whether or not he influenced any decisions?

A. Well, he didn't influence decisions in the sense that he was a member of the Central Committee or anything else, but he will have had a lot of influence over the kind of things -- access to all -- to loads of information about finance, about names of people, and that, to me, is the most -- is the most damaging thing.

Q. We'll come back to the documents that he obtained in a moment, but is there anything else you would like to tell us about what "Phil Cooper" said or did or how he behaved?

A. No, I think he -- as I say, I don't think he was particularly high profile in the job, but of course the -- he didn't need to be so high profile in order to obtain a great deal of information which -- which obviously wouldn't have been given to him if people had had any idea about his role.

Q. I'm now going to embark upon what's the final stage of my questions today, you'll be delighted to learn, but I'm going to put various documents to you, and the theme is I'm going to put the documents, we'll look at

the documents, then I want to have your reaction to them.

I'd like to start with some documents. The general theme is: they're about you. Can we start, please, in volume 1, tab 1. This is {UCPI/11563}.

This is an SDS report about a meeting at Holborn Library of the London district of the SWP, which occurred on 15 November 1977. If we could go to page 2, please {UCPI/11563/2}, and then down to the bottom of that page, to look at paragraphs 8 and 9.

8 and 9 reads:

"After a brief discussion period, the conference moved swiftly into the third session of the day, which featured Lindsey German, the new Central London organiser, who spoke on 'Recruitment and Cadre and Branch Building'."

And then paragraph 9 summarises what the officer says it was that you were talking about very much on those lines.

It appears, therefore, that the SDS are reporting on you pretty much from the moment that you are promoted in 1977.

Can we move now to {UCPI/13669}, please. This is volume 1, tab 9. This is a report -- an SDS report dated 14 December 1979. At paragraph 2, it reads:

"At the first meeting of the Central Committee of the Socialist Workers Party which was elected at the 1979 National Delegate Conference, the following areas of responsibility were allocated."

And then there's a list of names and responsibilities. You are listed as the women's organiser. Am I right in understanding that this is the first time that the Central Committee met and had been created?

A. Sorry, this particular Central Committee?

Q. Yes.

A. I guess so, yeah.

Q. So they seem to have followed your appointment in 1979 on to the Central Committee.

Can we take that down, please, and go to volume 1, tab 12, {UCPI/13961}. This is a report dated 12 May 1980. It reads:

"The undermentioned persons were identified as being present at the 'Blair Peach' demonstration held in Central London on Sunday 27th April, 1980."

If we move to page 3 {UCPI/13961/3}, there's a very, very long list of names, most of which we've redacted on grounds of privacy, but at the bottom of page 3, your name appears.

You knew Blair Peach, didn't you?

A. Yeah.
Q. And this was a demonstration to mark the anniversary of his death, wasn't it?
A. (Nods).
Q. There's a report that perhaps we don't need to turn up -- if you can't remember it, I'm happy to turn it up, though -- from 1982, which shows that you'd been reported on for so long that they were asking for an updated photograph of you.
A. Okay.
Q. Do you recall that?
A. I don't recall it, no.
Q. Well, let's have a look. It's {UCPI/15986}, volume 3, tab 36. That's dated 7 December 1982. Paragraph 2:

"This report brings up to date what is on record concerning the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) under the headings as shown."

And if we go to {UCPI/15986/2} and look at paragraph 3, it reads:

"The photographs on file of the undermentioned persons are no longer a good likeness and require updating."

And then your name is one of two that appears there.

Staying with volume 3, Sir, if we can go to tab 45.

And on the display, if we can take down the current

document and replace it with {UCPI/19408}. This is a report dated 24 August 1983. It's a report about you. It says that, at paragraph 2:

"Lindsey German, Central Committee member of the Socialist Workers Party ... has moved to ..."

Then we've redacted the details. It provides a telephone number and it says who you are sharing your address with and provides some details about that person, including membership of the SWP and the role within the party.

Paragraph 3 reads:

"German first met [Privacy] on the 1981 Right to Work march from Liverpool to Blackpool. [Privacy] became an SWP member whilst on this march and has since experienced a meteoric rise within the party."

Having shown you those documents --

A. Could I just -- sorry. Sorry, you carry on. I just wanted to query this, but anyway ... yeah.

Q. We were just getting to the point where, having shown you that barrage of documents about you, I want to give you the opportunity to react whether -- on points of factual accuracy, but, just as importantly, what your reaction is to all of this reporting about you.

A. Well, can I first say on this last one, the point 3 is completely inaccurate. I didn't first meet the person

on the Right to Work march. He didn't become an SWP member while on the march; he was already a member. And he was an organiser in Scotland and then became an organiser in London. So he had no meteoric rise within the party. So it's tripe, really, that whole -- that whole bit.

You know, I feel -- I feel -- with this particular thing about my address and who I lived with, I feel it's a completely unjustified intrusion. I've always been electoral register, I had a mortgage at the time, it's hardly, you know, that I'm moving from house to house and that you can't find me. All of this was completely in the public record.

I don't see the point of the -- these kind of reports, which basically are both inaccurate and -- and quite pointless. And I felt this about a lot of various things that I've -- I've seen, which have been things, many of which, were in the public record. You know, the annual event at Skegness was advertised in the Socialist Worker, Marxism was advertised in the Socialist Worker, there was no secrecy about it, so what on earth they think is the value of this is -- is beyond me.

But I wanted to particularly pick up, actually, on the Blair Peach demonstration, because I feel -- just to

give people the background, I knew Blair, he was a neighbour of mine at the time, and I would see him -- I wasn't a close friend of his, but I would see him in the pub, I would see him at meetings and things like that. I didn't go on the Southall demonstration, because I was ill, but my partner at the time did and said it was one of the most violent demonstrations he's ever been on. I know you have a witness statement from somebody who was on the march, which -- where she had her head cracked open with a police truncheon. We know that Blair was murdered by police and that's -- that's not disputed now, that's the truth. We know they went tooled up, again, if you look at the report from the -- that was given by -- the Amnesty report.

We also know from some of the statements in these reports how contemptuous they were of -- of the people who were demonstrating. Particularly, there's a reference to just after Blair died when his funeral took place. Now, that was a funeral of thousands and thousands of people who marched through East London where he lived and where he taught in the school there, and he was buried in -- in a cemetery just -- just in Bow. It's described -- in the report it's described as "mourners" in inverted commas, which I regard as a tremendous affront, particularly since the police were

responsible for his death. It's said we used the demonstration for our own ends, our own political ends, which is the whole kind of basis of these kind of arguments.

And I think for the following year when we had a commemoration march, to have so many people listed as subversive, as any of these things, I think is a -- is a completely disgrace really, and I think it tells you something about the mindset of the people who were doing this undercover policing and just the way in which they regarded demonstrators.

And just the final point on that, I notice that one of the undercover police was warned off going on the Southall demonstration because the uniformed police were going to crack down on it, and that's something that I think tells us a great deal.

So, I feel with these really that they are -- they're symptomatic of a much, much bigger problem which I think needs to be addressed by the Inquiry, which is the way in which the police treated people who were going about perfectly legitimate political activity in an absolutely appalling way.

MR BARR: Thank you.

Sir, would this be a convenient moment to break for lunch?

THE CHAIRMAN: Certainly it would. We'll break until, by my watch, 2.05, to give us a full hour.

Are you content with that?

A. I'm fine, thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Good. You're not finding -- you appear to me to be giving your best without undue difficulty, but if that's wrong, all you ever have to do is to say and I can break to allow you to take a break.

A. Thanks very much, but I'm fine. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Good. Then we'll resume at 2.05.

(1.03 pm)

(The short adjournment)

(2.05 pm)

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Thank you, Sir.

Ms German, before the lunch adjournment, we were speaking about documents which really named you. Now that we've had what I hope was a good lunch, we can go to Skegness, and I would like to show you two SDS reports about the SWP's Skegness rallies.

These were an annual event, weren't they, held at Easter?

A. That's right, yeah.

Q. Can we look, first of all, at a document from 1980. Volume 2, tab 15, {UCPI/14551}.

Now, this is the cover page of the report, which is dated 25 September 1980, referring to the Easter 1980 rally.

At paragraph 3, it says:

"Submitted with this report is a list, received from a reliable source, of those persons who registered for the rally and took up residence at the holiday centre for the weekend."

Thereafter, there is a very long list, running to about 50 pages, of attendees.

If we go over one page to {UCPI/14551/2}, we see an example of what I would call an "ordinary" page, which has names, district and then references.

But I'd also like to go to page {UCPI/14551/49}, please. Here, towards the end, we have a page where you've got names down the side, on the left. But then, under the heading "District", only some of the names have a district by them. And a lot of them -- a lot of the entries seem in fact to describe instead what the person did. And there are a number of entries which say "Entertainer", and a number which say "Individual".

Was this an event that you could attend if you were not a member of the SWP?

A. Yes, that's right, you could.

Q. And if we look at the first time "Individual" appears,

the highest entry, we see under "Reference" it says "No trace". Is it possible that somebody attended the Skegness rally in Easter 1980 who was not a member of the Socialist Workers Party and had never come to the attention of Special Branch before?

A. Yes, that's quite possible.

Q. And the entertainers, were they members of the SWP, or did it vary?

A. Not necessarily. They would be musicians or comedians, and things like that.

Q. Thank you.

That can be taken down.

Can we go to 1982, please. That's volume 2, tab 27. And the number for that is {UCPI/18180}. This is dated 14 May 1982, and paragraph 1 reads:

"Submitted herewith is a list, obtained from a secret and reliable source, of all adults, from the London area, who attended the Socialist Workers Party ... annual rally which was held at Skegness from 9th to 12th April ..."

And then there are pages of names and also documents that were emanating from that event.

Were the attendance lists for both those events confidential?

A. Yes.

Q. Can we now move from Skegness to the 1980 National Delegate Conference. That's volume 2, tab 16, {UCPI/16148}. This is dated 13 January 1981. It's a report on the National Delegate Conference of that year. It's a very long report. And I can take you straight to the bottom of the present screen for the question I want to ask you. There are listed -- there's a guide to what documents are attached to the report. The first one "Documents 1 to 10":

"Additional Information Sheets concerning confidential statistics on party membership, activities, and publications."

So they were indeed confidential, weren't they?

A. They weren't -- they weren't of individual names. They will have been of how many people had joined, how many people had left, and so on. So it wouldn't have been in breach of individual people's names.

Q. But these are statistics --

A. Yes, there will be -- there will be how many papers were sold, and so on.

Q. Yes, I'm moving from the names that we saw in Skegness to -- this is more about information about the party. Confidential party information. These are internal statistics about the state of your party, aren't they?

A. That's right.

Q. And those are confidential?
A. (Nods).
Q. A mixture of party and personal affairs, if we go to tab 17, {UCPI/16582}. This is a document dated 3 April 1981. It reads:

"Submitted herewith is an up-to-date list of the secretariat (and their telephone numbers) of the SWP National Office. The list was circulated with the SWP weekly information sheet dated 31.3.81."

And then there's a list of names and details.

These are people that "Phil Cooper" would have been working with?

A. Some of them, yes, he would have been.
Q. Again, confidential?
A. Well, yes. They -- they should have been confidential. That shouldn't have been available, the phone numbers, or -- or any other details about them.
Q. Finally, volume 2, tab 20 {UCPI/16619}. This is 30 September 1981. It reads, paragraph 2:

"The persons listed in the Appendix are shown in the records of the Socialist Workers Party ... at their National Office ..."

It gives the address:

"... as holding positions in the SWP as shown."

And there's a very long list of different people in

different positions. Would it be right to say that some of these positions will have been a matter of public knowledge and some of them would not?

A. Yes, it's probably a combination of both.

Q. But your records were themselves confidential?

A. Yes.

Q. Having put to you a series of documents containing large numbers of data, some of it personal, some of it not, what is your reaction to that reporting on your organisation, its members and those associated with it?

A. Well, I think -- let's just take Skegness first. Skegness was a weekend which was meant as a kind of combination of social holiday and political event. It attracted a lot of people who weren't SWP members, including people's partners, and obviously lots of children came, and people who just wanted that mixture of things. And therefore a lot of those names that have been passed over will have been of people who weren't SWP. And as you said, may well not have been on any list or any -- under any scrutiny from anybody.

So I think that is a breach of their -- their details.

It's also -- it really misunderstands the whole kind of event. This was an event which we were open about, which people came to. Some people didn't go to any

meetings. They -- you know, maybe they just went there because they just wanted to have a good time and their partners were going to meetings. There was absolutely no justification for what was done.

In terms of the party conference, again, most of these pieces of information didn't need to be given to anybody. As I've repeated on a number of occasions, these were -- people were engaged in activity which was perfectly above board and perfectly acceptable to anybody to be doing. And I find it quite amazing that these are -- you know, so many of these names have been handed over. And where would that have ended? It would end with them being blacklisted, not being able to get jobs and suffering detriment in all sorts of ways to their -- to their lives.

Q. Standing back now, you, I think, are well aware of the evidence that's been given in the earlier phases about infiltration of the SWP and the fact there were a large number of undercover police officers who did infiltrate the SWP in the tranche era. And we've seen that there was infiltration at branch level, district level, and to some extent at national level, for most of the Tranche 1 era.

Could I ask for your reflections, please, on the scale and duration of infiltration into your party.

A. Well, I think it -- as I've said, I don't think it was justified. I don't see why any of this information needed to be passed on. And the only conclusion that you can draw from people infiltrating, whether it's at national level, or indeed at branch or district level, is that they were looking to find things, that simply they wanted to put the left in a very bad light. That's the conclusion I draw.

And I feel that there's a very great difference between the infiltration of the SWP and any surveillance of the National Front, for example, which there simply wasn't. And that was clearly a decision that was taken.

So you have to see this, I think, as politically motivated. And I think you have to see it as trying to put the left in the light that they're to blame. And the whole sort of -- if you read many of the reports, the whole tenor of them is that the SWP was piggybacking on things, was using organisations, all this sort of thing. And very -- no evidence is really given to prove that. So I would say that there was a big effort put into this for very, very little results in terms of any information that was found, because most of that information could have been very clearly found in completely legitimate ways, which would have saved this infiltration and would have saved a great deal of public

time and money.

MR BARR: Thank you. Those are all my questions up to this stage; there may be some more in a moment.

THE CHAIRMAN: What our process requires is that -- is a pause of 20 minutes while anybody who is a participant in the Inquiry can suggest questions or lines of questioning to Mr Barr which he may then ask you when 20 minutes have gone, and then your counsel will have the opportunity of asking you any questions in what old-fashioned lawyers call "re-examination".

A 20-minute break, please.

(A short break)

(12.39 pm)

MR BARR: Sir, no further questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr Scobie.

Questions by MR SCOBIE

MR SCOBIE: Mr Chairman, not many more questions, but just a few topics.

I want to just start, if I may, with the issue of opposing National Front marches. I mean, was there a policy of stewarding and discipline in relation to the SWP about approaching those marches?

A. Yes, of course. We had a very extensive stewarding operation. We always made sure. What we wanted to do was to make sure that people could get to the marches

safely, could operate in a disciplined, collective manner, and not to have it descending into just fights between individuals. So yes, we put a lot of effort into that.

Q. One of the words you've used was "obstruction". Can you just define what you mean by obstructing the marches? What were you meaning by that?

A. What I think was usually what we intended to do was to say we didn't want the march to go on a particular route, and that therefore we would block the road, we would sit down in the road, as we've done on occasions, or we would try in different ways to prevent it happening. So that's really what we were about. We were talking about blocking, obstructing, whatever word you want to put. That kind of thing.

Q. So preventing the NF marchers from getting into the areas where there would be trouble?

A. Yes, that's right, because we didn't want to -- this wasn't seen as us versus the National Front in that sense. Obviously we didn't agree at all with their politics; we thought they were a real danger. But what we were concerned about was we were operating in a period with very, very high levels of attacks, with deaths -- more than 50 deaths in those few years of murders of black and ethnic minority people. So what we

wanted to do was to stop them being able to do it.

And I think what I felt very strongly, and I still do feel very strongly, is if you look at the approach of Hitler's Nazis before 1933, the control of the streets was incredibly important to them. And we didn't want the NF to be able to do that in this country. We knew they were getting very big votes in elections, and particularly in London in 1977, but we wanted to say we don't want this translated into activity on the ground, which can be actively harmful to so many people, including some of our own members who suffered attacks.

Q. Just this, there have been a number of specific allegations of -- I suppose allegations of so-called "hotheads" that were linked allegedly to the SWP. What did you do with people who fell within that bracket? I mean, were people like that actually expelled?

A. There were some people who were expelled in the late 1970s, or we parted company with one way or the other, because we put a very strong argument that this isn't about just individuals chasing after National Front. And that had been a problem generally, because certainly in the area I lived in in South Hackney, there were quite strong fascist groupings, that was true in South Hackney, in Shoreditch, Hoxton, Roman Road in Tower

Hamlets and various other places. And it could easily become -- you know, you had these old Mosleyite families going -- dating back to the 30s; it could easily become just an individual fight between people. And we were very much against that, because we could see where it could lead. It could just lead to forms of gang warfare, which wouldn't benefit anybody.

So that was very much against our policy, and we did break with these people where we felt we had to.

Q. We've heard of the disorder at Southall, at Lewisham, Red Lion Square, obviously. Looking back on it, what, in your view, could have been done to prevent that disorder, or those examples of disorder, looking back on those events, what could have been done to prevent disorder?

A. The main thing that could have been done would have been a recognition, by the police in particular, and by the higher authorities -- because there's no doubt there was a policy here going on that -- a recognition that it wasn't acceptable to just say to these people "Not only can you march, we are going to protect your marches". And particularly if you look in Southall, the whole of the community was against this. I mean, they've since -- there's a school named after Blair Peach, a primary school in Southall, because the community recognised

the sacrifice that he'd made.

But nobody wanted them there, is the honest truth. Nobody in Southall, apart from a tiny handful, would think it was a good idea.

Q. So in short, prevented by what?

A. Well, the police didn't need to have this policy. They didn't need to do this, and they went out of their way to do it.

Q. So, what, banning the march?

A. Well, banning the march is one option.

Q. Yes.

A. And that was done. Interestingly, in 1981, they did -- the Metropolitan Police did ban all the -- all the National Front marches. But we also took the view that bans themselves don't necessarily end the situation.

Q. Yes.

A. And that therefore we need to have a situation where the community and the left and the people who are anti-fascist do need to be able to say, "We are not going to put up with these people in our area."

Q. Just -- we know this morning a lot of questions were asked of you about the physical side of opposition, effectively. What, in real summary form, please, very short form, were the political campaigns you were

engaged in; and in essence, what was their purpose?

A. We did lots of support for the black and Asian communities.

Just to give one example. In Brick Lane, the National Front, in 1978, went and smashed a load of windows in Brick Lane of the Asian shops and restaurants. We took a decision that we would occupy the space at the top of Brick Lane where the National Front had their paper sale. And we did that with the Bengali community for several weeks.

And that was what I thought was a very important part of what we did. It was saying to people who were under threat, "We're willing to join in with you in defending your community against people." So those kind of things.

We painted out slogans. I've pained out slogans on my own block of flats when I moved in there, the NF put slogans on, and we were determined not to have them.

Q. Graffiti, that's --

A. That's right.

Q. So that sort of thing?

A. That's right. And that was most of what people did against the fascists. I mean, we're hearing all this now about several very high level confrontations. But most of it was: how do we combat racism? How do we

organise in schools and in factories, and all these places, against the National Front?

Q. Just moving away and dealing with a specific area you were asked about this morning, Grunwick, and people being bussed in. And you were asked a specific question, and I want to just go back to it. You were asked this: however strongly the strikers and members of your organisation felt about their actions, strike-breaking was not unlawful, was it?

And your answer was -- your reply was:

"I don't know whether it was unlawful to do what they did."

Just pausing for a moment. I mean, as a matter of fact, did you know one way or the other what the labour law was at that time?

A. No, I didn't.

Q. I mean, did you know one way or the other if it was legal to sack strikers and bus in a new workforce? Did you know?

A. I didn't know, but it shouldn't be legal, in my opinion, even if it was.

Q. So, when you said you don't know whether it was unlawful to do what they did, is that what you were getting at?

A. Yes, that's right. That's right.

Q. Just, finally, this. One of the words used on a number

of occasions this morning was the word "overthrow", and just this: how did you think the socialist transformation of society would come about? How did you -- what were your -- how did you believe it was going to come about?

A. I believe it -- and I still believe, it can only come about by people taking action into their own hands to try to achieve a more democratic society.

Now, than means all sorts of things. It might mean strikes, it might mean demonstrations, it might mean a whole range of different things. But it's mass activity on behalf of the masses. And I don't -- I don't see any alternative to that.

And it's always tried to be put, and I know with a whole number of the reports are trying to put it as it's like a putsch; you know, there's a tiny number of us that turn up and think that we're going to get rid of the MPs and whatever it is. That is so far from any socialist activity in this country it's just -- it's just not true.

Q. So did you -- I mean, did you and do you view it even as an evolving process?

A. It's a process. It's a process where you -- if you think about when any revolution or any major upheaval occurs, it's a process of decomposition at the top of

society, it's a process of people becoming more aware at the bottom of society, and it's a process of them winning larger and larger numbers of people to take action in order to change the society. That's how I would sum it up.

Q. Nearly there. Last -- last question really revolving around that process.

This is not just your own personal belief, but also the belief of, as you saw it from the SWP. As part of that process that you've just described and that evolving process, did it inherently necessarily involve violence?

A. I've -- I've always taken the view that revolutions aren't violent, or not mainly violent occurrences, they're occurrences which take place when people can no longer live in the old way and the rulers can no longer rule in the old way. That's when they come about and they involve a big democratic movement which isn't about violence. And when you look at -- when people talk about violent -- you know, the situation with, say, the French Revolution, you're looking at what happens after the failure of that revolutionary process, in my opinion.

MR SCOBIE: Yes.

Sir, we have no further questions. Thank you very

much.

Questions by THE CHAIRMAN

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

I have two fairly specific and minor questions.

First, in the papers I've seen reference to "squadists" as the people within the SWP who were advocating individual violence. And am I right in thinking that that's a term that you recognise, and that those are the people who were required to leave?

A. Yes, that's right. That's right.

THE CHAIRMAN: So when I see a reference to "squadists", it's that group --

A. That's what it means, yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Finally this, and please tell me if you don't know one way or the other, but my understanding of the law is that the 1948 Representation of the People Act, which I think applied at the time of the Southall disturbances, and indeed your own event at the school before you became an SWP member, those standing in parliamentary and local elections in London boroughs were entitled to use places that were wholly or mainly maintained at public expense for their election meetings. Is that something that you or the SWP were aware of at the time?

A. I was aware of it, and we objected to that policy. And

that's what the Haggerston School thing was about. I thought it was a terrible policy. And it was one that has been reversed quite some time ago. You'd obviously know when it was better than I do. But it's no longer the case.

And I think that's an interesting thing in terms of how people's views of these things have changed. I don't think anybody would argue, or nearly anybody would argue that it's a good idea for fascists to meet in school halls or council buildings. So that was -- we did object to that, yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: I entirely accept that you objected to it. But you objected to it knowing that the law of the land actually provided that they were entitled to make use of those places?

A. Well, I found out about it at the Haggerston School one, yes. It wasn't something I knew much before about back then.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for evidence you've given. I hope you've found it an interesting experience. I personally am very grateful to you for coming and telling us, all those years later, about what was going on from a senior level in the SWP at the time.

May I take it that I can expect the same from you when we get to our next tranche, Tranche 2?

A. I hope so.

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, of course, health and intellect permitting, of course. That goes for both of us.

Thank you very much indeed.

A. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think that concludes today's proceedings, does it not? Very well.

(2.54 pm)

(The hearing adjourned until 10.00 am on Friday, 13 May 2022)

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