

## **Undercover Policing Inquiry**

### **Response to Rule 9 Request**

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#### **FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF**

**Roy John Battersby**

**Date signed: 11<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

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#### Introduction

1. I make this statement in response to a 'rule 9' request from the Inquiry in their letter to me dated 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021. I have been asked a number of questions (some of which I set out below) about, broadly, two issues relating to undercover policing in the 1970s – the Workers' Revolutionary Party ('the WRP') its aim, tactics etc and a single intelligence report from 1976 about the WRP's education centre ('White Meadows', 'WM', in Derbyshire).
2. Unfortunately, due to recent ill health, I have only been able properly to engage with the Inquiry's questions this month and have been given a deadline of effectively 11<sup>th</sup> February to respond. So my contribution has been

prepared in haste. I have however been assisted by others and seen Liz Battersby / Leicester's statement, her response to identical questions and which covers similar ground, to mine and I agree broadly speaking with what she says so far as I have knowledge of the issue. I shall therefore not repeat the common ground covered in her statement. In the interests of speed, I have referred to some historical documents (e.g. press reports) where my (then) views were reported. I confirm that the views I expressed then are my beliefs now.

### Personal information

3. I was born on 20.4.36 (I am 85 years old). I am white and male.
4. Liz and I were a couple between 1967 and 1980. She was then known as Liz Battersby. We had two sons together born in 1971 and 1973. In 1980 we separated.
5. I am retired now. After university <sup>1</sup> my career began in 1960 in the theatre but was mainly as a freelance drama director for the BBC, ITV companies and others.
6. I started at the BBC in 1963 I was a producer/director. In the mid-1960s I produced and directed science documentaries (including highlighting what have become the climate and global crises of today and co-founding the long running Tomorrow's World). In 1968 I went freelance, made a film for cinema

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<sup>1</sup> B.Sc. (Econ.) at University College London, Ph.D. at the London School of Economics.

(The Body) and moved into directing a series of dramas for The Wednesday Play and Play for Today at the BBC and for Granada Television.

7. My work was awarded and critically acclaimed. In 1970 it was given the then equivalent of the BAFTA for the Best Film Drama, *“Roll on Four O’Clock”* at Granada Television, and again in 1973 for *“Leeds United”* at the BBC. In 1969 the Observer critic wrote this about my first dramatic film, “...while there have been many admirable and excellent programmes on television, there are very, very few masterpieces and in my view *“Some Women”* is one of them.” Later I shared in multiple BAFTAs and international awards for series including *“Between the Lines,” “Cracker”* and *“Morse”* and in 1995 was given by the British Academy the individual lifetime award (BAFTA) for *Outstanding Creative Contribution to Television*. I worked with many distinguished producers including Tony Garnett, Kenith Trodd and David Puttnam, with many first class writers and actors and technicians.
  
8. I am sure that my work opportunities were limited by being blacklisted at the BBC for my political views and activism. I develop this point, below <sup>2</sup>. There was a lot of work I wanted to do and which others wanted me to do, but which I could not do. For example, the producer David Puttnam (now Lord Puttnam) wanted me to direct one of his (Oscar winning) films for cinema but told me he could not offer it to me as he would not be able to raise the big budget finance because of my blacklisting (I am forever indebted that he made it possible for us to do two low budget films together).

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<sup>2</sup> See below, from para 137.

9. I was active in my trade union ACTT (the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians) between 1969 and 1978. I served as Vice President for Film and then for Television and was a member of the General Council for some years.
  
10. Through work I met with other like-minded left-wing figures involved in film, television and theatre. We held discussion groups first at Tony Garnett's house, then at the Maida Vale flat I shared with Liz until we went to Derbyshire in 1975. Playwright and author Trevor Griffiths captured the spirit of these discussion groups in his play *'The Party'*, commissioned by the National Theatre. In his last stage role, Laurence Olivier played the Glaswegian Trotskyist, based on the leader of the SLL/WRP, Gerry Healy. The Friday night discussions attracted many writers, actors, film technicians, most prominently Vanessa and Corin Redgrave (both of whom became leading figures in the WRP). As well as being very active in their respective trade unions (Equity and the ACTT) members of this large group wrote and performed work about various aspects of British working class life, contemporary and historical. One broad aim we shared was to reflect back to our audiences what it was to live in Britain at that time.

#### My involvement in the WRP

11. Both Liz and I were active in the WRP (and its predecessor organisation, the Socialist Labour League 'SLL') from about 1968.

12. We were active in the local branch, the Outer London branch. It consisted of some of those active in television and film.
13. I was also a member of the WRP's Central Committee ('CC') between 1970 and 1980. I explain more about the Central Committee and the WRP generally, below.
14. One became a member of the committee by being nominated by one's local area or (sometimes) by being personally selected by one of the leading figures already within the WRP. CC members represented branches across England, Scotland and Wales. This was democratic centralism in practice. I cannot remember how I got on the committee – whether my branch nominated me or whether Gerry Healy wanted me on.
15. I also wrote for the paper, the Workers' Press ('the WP'). I recall one piece I wrote (welcoming a book on a famous case of Freud) attracting adverse comments by Gerry Healy at a CC meeting. I was an admirer of the well-known analyst R.D.Laing and had shared in the running of one of his therapeutic communities for young people seeking refuge from the often brutal psychiatry of the day.
16. In 1975 Liz and I moved to and ran the WRP's White Meadows education centre. We remained there until 1978. I say much more about this below, as does Liz in her statement.
17. In 1978 Liz and I were transferred by the WRP to Scotland. I was in charge of the local branches, the development of its Youth Training Centre and the opening of a bookshop in Glasgow.

18. During my five years of full time activity in the WRP (1975-80) I was offered only one professional job - in ITV. I did it. In December 1980 I left the WRP and returned to film and television work. It was a difficult time. I was blacklisted, below <sup>3</sup>.

### The WRP

19. The WRP was formed in 1973 and ended in 1985. It was preceded by the Socialist Labour League ('SLL'), founded in 1959.

20. The party's main offices were in Clapham, south London. The original SLL office was on Clapham High Street and this continued to be an office for the WRP. Around the corner, in Clapham Old Town there was (until it was moved out of London) the print shop for the party's publication, the Workers' Press ('WP').

21. The CC's role was to settle the general direction of the party – eg the WRP's policy, structure, constitution. There were anything between 20 and 50 people on the CC at any one time. They included Corin and Vanessa Redgrave.

22. Its work revolved around meetings which were held about once per month, depending on how much it had to address. An agenda and papers were sometimes circulated in advance. Meetings were then held at the WRP's Clapham office and in the print shop. Discussions took place and decisions

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<sup>3</sup> Para 137.

- were made. The CC members were all notified of the decisions and then CC members reported the outcome of these meetings to their local branch and other nearby branches in their area.
23. Members could participate also by attending national conferences.
  24. However, the decision making process was not as streamlined and conventional as that. The WRP was to some extent an autocratic organisation driven by strong figures like Gerry Healy. So, if Healy had political issues he wanted to drive forward or deal with these would be advanced in the meetings. He also challenged members' views or conduct – such as my piece on R D Laing, above.
  25. Being on the CC did not mean you knew or decided everything. There were smaller, more powerful and less formal decision-making processes.
  26. One was the 'political committee' ('PC'), comprising about 6-10 CC members. It met daily. I occasionally attended PC meetings if for example I happened to be in Clapham when their meetings took place and was invited. Otherwise, like other members of the CC I found out about its decisions later. Indeed some information held by the PC did not make its way even to the CC but does appear to have been obtained by SB <sup>4</sup>.
  27. Within the PC there was an even closer inner circle comprising Gerry Healy and Alex Mitchell, Dot Gibson and Sheila Torrance, Gerry Healy was its long-standing General Secretary. Dot Gibson was the person who knew all about

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<sup>4</sup> See my comments on paras 2-4 of the intelligence report at para 74, below.

the WRP's finances. Alex Mitchell was not only editor of News Line (the WRP publication) but also made and had contacts with the WRP's sensitive and political supporters abroad. I was never party to their meetings. This group for example had key and accurate information about matters such as the number of WRP members and the party's finances. Others, outsiders like me, would very occasionally be given numbers for members and information about finances, but we were always sceptical about whether these were accurate or whether they were just for public consumption, to give others the impression that the WRP was a successful and growing party<sup>5</sup>.

#### General questions

28. I am asked by the Inquiry a number of general questions about the about the WRP.

*What were the aims of the WRP?*

29. I refer to Liz's answers and broadly agree with them.

*Did it seek to overthrow the State as it was in the 1970's? If so, in your view, how realistic was the realisation of this aim?*

30. I refer to Liz's answers and broadly agree with them.

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<sup>5</sup> Again, see para 74, below.



*Did the WRP use violence to advance its aims? Did the WRP foresee a time when violence would, or might be, necessary to realise its aims? Did the WRP advocate, provoke or approve of public disorder in order to advance its aims?*

31. I refer to Liz's answers and broadly agree with them.

32. I am reminded that I expressed views consistent with this in an article which was written shortly after the police raid on White Meadows, below: 'We are naturally a political organization, but we are not plotting terrorism. We are totally opposed to terrorism as a means to political change and have made our position quite clear in our newspaper' <sup>6</sup>.

*Did the WRP vet its members?*

33. I refer to Liz's answers and broadly agree with them.

34. I played a central role in one very high profile – and inaccurate – example of how WRP was said to have vetted its members, Irene Gorst ('IG') <sup>7</sup>.

35. It was alleged in an Observer article on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1975, that I, with other leading figures in the WRP, detained and interrogated IG, an attendee in early September 1975 at one of the first schools held at WM, about suggestions that she was an informant. This article should be read with a SB report dating from

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<sup>6</sup> Article 'Police raid Trotskyist study centre', the Guardian 29.9.75.

<sup>7</sup> In the interest of her privacy I would prefer for the Inquiry to keep her name confidential.

this time which I obtained independently of this Inquiry. I shall deal with the Observer article and the SB report in more detail, below <sup>8</sup>.

36. Much of the Observer's account of that 'vetting' of IG was inaccurate and indeed libellous. But on a number of points I agree with that article: IG was an informant of some sort, we were aware of that likelihood at the time and we challenged her over it <sup>9</sup>. The Observer article read with the SB report confirm that she was an informant to the Observer and that the Observer met with and shared information about this with SB.

37. Although I did not have all this information at the time, our concerns were that she was a SB informant and / or close to someone who was linked to SB: John Gale ('JG'). JG was chair of the West End Theatre Managers Association. Privacy

Privacy She was also the lover of Corin Redgrave. It was possible that she obtained confidential information about the WRP from Corin and shared it with JG.

38. The background to the 'vetting' of IG, which does not appear in the Observer report is the following. IG was due to travel with others attending WM in Derbyshire on the Sunday, before course began on Monday, in a minivan from a pickup point in London. She did not arrive with the van, but turned up later that day, at Derby railway station. She was collected by car. When asked what had happened, she told Corin and me that she had been 'kidnapped' by

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<sup>8</sup> From paras 110 and from para 86.

<sup>9</sup> The Observer article asserted that she, IG, 'was left with Battersby [and another]. 'Battersby said 'the matter has now become very serious. You have infiltrated the central committee'.

JG. She repeated this account when questioned separately by Vanessa Redgrave and (I think) Roger Smith.

39. As to the details of her account, she said JG offered her a lift from her home in London to the tube station on the Saturday but then, against her will, was taken instead to a hotel in South Wales so she would not be able to attend the planned course at WM. JG's intentions was to keep her from the WRP generally but also he had had a tip off that WM was to be raided by the police and he wanted to save her from that experience. I recall she told us something along the following lines about what JG told her - 'I have friends who say some bad stuff is going to happen at that place [WM] and you must not be part of it whatever happens'. The police raid of course did indeed take place a few weeks later – see below. If IG's account of JG's speech can be believed it might also suggest SB were already developing an intervention against WM weeks before being "informed" by the Observer of its planned article. So, we had misgivings about her.
40. The manner of the interrogation, as described in the Observer, is not accurate. She was asked to leave WM after one night there, rather than attend the full fortnight course. She was invited to attend the introductory session that evening, to stay the night and be driven to the London train after breakfast the next day. This is what happened.
41. But, given her (indirect) connection with SB via JG and his insistence that some action against WM by the police could be imminent we checked her bags, with her present and her permission, for any planted drugs or similar which might be used to incriminate us if a raid proved imminent. I also had

security do a thorough search of the whole house; and another search after she asked if I had a gun and if the fire alarm board in my office was a security bugging system. Further, we changed (enhanced) our precautions at WM from there on. Visitors' bags were checked. It is against this background that one must read the parts of the intelligence report from early 1976, on security arrangements at WM, which I am asked to comment on, below.

*Did the WRP take other security precautions to keep its plans, tactics or other matters confidential? If so, please explain.*

42. I refer to Liz's comments and broadly agree with them.
43. Security precautions were in place at the Clapham office / print works. These premises were just for WRP members, not accessible to the public. There was security at the door and entries were logged. As with any office, visitors were asked to say who they were and asked the purpose of their visit.
44. I also have been told of the accounts given in intelligence reports of security measures adopted by the WRP generally and at WM. These are broadly accurate.
45. I can confirm for example, that the WRP was always concerned about bugging, such as the placing of illicit listening devices in buildings or vehicles and the interception of phone calls or correspondence. Indeed, what I have read from the Inquiry reinforces me in my view that some of the 'intelligence' obtained about the WRP may have come from those sources.

46. It is for this reason that the WRP was constantly live to the possibility of bugs. The WRP employed technical people – a small informal security group of 2 or 3 people who had a sophisticated understanding of how bugging etc might be conducted - to carry out regular sweeps of WRP premises and grounds. This led to the uncovering of bugs at WM, which I am asked about, below.

*Was the WRP concerned about the infiltration by the Police or others? If so, please explain why?*

47. I refer to Liz's comments and broadly agree with them.

*Does it come as a surprise that the police deployed undercover officers to report on the activities of the WRP, above? Please explain your answer.*

48. I refer to Liz's comments and broadly agree with them.

49. To these I can add the following comment.

50. We have little doubt that there was interest in us by or on behalf of MI6 and foreign governments. WRP members were in touch with radical and revolutionary movements in various parts of the world which must have led the British state to take some interest. The WRP's contact with the PLO, while at an early stage in the mid 1970s, had been well publicised. This was in part due to the involvement of high-profile WRP members including Vanessa Redgrave (and me) in the controversial film, 'The Palestinian', in 1977. When I returned to Heathrow from Beirut after completing the shoot on the film I was

greeted by name by an extra man standing at passport control. Not needing to look at my passport he cheerily asked "Good trip Mr. Battersby?". At the time of the police raid on WM, in September 1975 (and which I deal with, below), most of the students were from overseas, including countries such as Greece, Portugal and Spain which were ruled by dictatorships at the time.

### Questions about report on surveillance on White Meadows

51. I have been asked, as has Liz, a number of questions, which I summarise below, about a single document, part redacted <sup>10</sup> a cover letter dated 11<sup>th</sup> March 1976 from Commander Matt Rodger / SB to 'Box 500' / MI5. It attaches a 6 page 'intelligence report' by SB (supposedly) dated 4<sup>th</sup> February 1976, on the WRP. It is attributed (largely if not wholly) to undercover police officer ('UCO') 'Mike Scott' ('MS', HN298) from the Special Demonstration Squad ('SDS'). The report is on the WRP, with a focus on intelligence gathered on White Meadows by 'Scott; who attended one of the courses at WM between 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> February 1976 <sup>11</sup>.

### *Your role in the White Meadows centre?*

52. I was the CC's representative in charge of the whole place and its running. I was there from 1975 until about 1977/8.

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<sup>10</sup> (Doc 1: UCPI0000012240).

<sup>11</sup> For further background, I refer to counsel to the inquiry's ('CTI') opening statement ('OS') from tranche 1, phase 2 ('T1P2') para 12.67 from p121 <https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/20210421>.

53. My initial role was to oversee renovation and construction work at WM after it was bought and in preparation for its use.
54. Thereafter I was in overall charge of the school, responsible for security arrangements, organising lectures, ensuring the safety of the physical fabric of the building, liaising with local authorities. I would not describe myself as 'the warden', a term used in the intelligence report and which implies parallels to prisons.
55. I was also in charge of the branches in the local areas of Derby, Nottingham and Leicester.
56. I assisted in distributing the News Line, collecting branch subscriptions, attending and speaking at meetings.
57. Once the routines of the school had been well established, I was often sent to work in other areas of the country, particularly to areas which were seen to be struggling with recruitment, paper sales, finance.

*In respect of para 1 of the report we are asked whether it was a "drama, history and literature study centre"; what was the purpose of this education; and who was it intended should use the centre (eg was it reserved for WRP members only)?*

58. WM was for members of the WRP, the Young Socialists, members of the Fourth International. Although I do not remember anybody in particular who was not a member or potential member attending, I imagine we would also

have welcomed anybody else we felt would benefit from it or we might be delighted to get to know better.

*In respect of paras 7-14 (about an address given by Roy Battersby about discipline and security) we are asked if this account is accurate? And why was such stringent security required (including paras 16-19)?*

59. I cannot swear that the report of my talk about security is what I said but it does not sound wildly inaccurate.
60. The reasons for the quite meticulous security were obvious. We were subject to provocation which we knew about (e.g. the police raid and being demonised in the press). We had had the experience of Irene Gorst. We had to take these sorts of risks and threats into account. We probably expected more scrutiny than we actually received or were aware of at the time. From what I have seen of the evidence emerging in this inquiry, we were right to be careful. Ours were hardly the actions of a paranoid group of people.

*In respect of para 7 we are asked about these comments of what students were told by Roy Battersby as reported by the UCO: 'this was the first of the political raids on the party and the start of police intimidation. He said that the Party was not completely unprotected and not prepared. The organisation had a few surprises for them when the time came'. We are asked if this account of what was said is accurate? If so, what did he mean by it?*

61. I do not remember saying this.



62. I am more likely to have said that we have had the police raid and we would be wise not to assume it was going to be the last. By that date we had experienced plain clothes men strolling about near our boundaries, calling out mock friendly queries no doubt to let us know we were still being watched and in order to Intimidate us.

63. I may also have mentioned the subsequent WRP campaign against the raid, the support it received, the high level correspondence between our lawyers and the police, much of which was covertly reported on by the police, below.

*In respect of para 19 the contents of the education was described in the report as follows: 'the subjects for discussion were quite straightforward and innocuous and included dialectical and historical materialism, capital and philosophy'. We are asked if this is a broadly accurate description of the course?*

64. I refer to Liz's comments and agree with them.

65. It was indeed "innocuous", in so far as philosophy is innocuous.

*In respect of para 21 and speculation by the person who wrote the report that the WRP had located listening devices at WM and that they 'would probably have left some of them intact as a means of channelling lectures, chit-chat and other usefulness information to those listening in', we are asked if any listening devices were found at WM? And, if so, did the contents of the educational course change as a result of the knowledge that someone may be listening in?*

66. Yes, listening devices were found at WM.

67. The security guys did a trawl of the telegraph poles around us, both within WM's grounds and outside to see if there was anything. This is pre-digital of course. They found at the bottom of one of them a well-concealed and weather protected metal box with electronic equipment inside. It had a connection to a cable running up the side of the pole to the top. It was clearly transmitting and/or receiving. Nobody at WM / within the WRP seemed to know anything about it. We established it was not standard British Telecom equipment. The advice, conclusion was that it was 'rogue'.
68. We did not remove it. We thought on balance that was the right choice. If we moved it, whoever put it there would know we were onto them and find some other way to bug us. Indeed, other devices were located but I kept no details.
69. As to whether the contents of the educational course changed as a result, the answer is 'no'. No changes were made to the content of the education courses for the following reasons. What we were teaching, in common with all human knowledge, and to the best of our ability, was some of the hard-won fruit of millennial labours by mankind, a communal treasure. To tailor that for peeping toms and eavesdroppers would have been unworthy (to put it mildly) a betrayal of our students.
70. Apart from everyday socialising I do not remember much 'chit-chat'. The content of what we advised students to say, or not to say, on the grounds did not change as a result. We always advised them to be very cautious. So far as I was aware, the content of their conversations outside the courses themselves did not alter either.

71. I note that the Inquiry will not normally consider evidence relating to the use of bugging devices / 'interception-related conduct'<sup>12</sup>. However I see that the Chair has indicated in a ruling on s56 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 that there may be 'exceptional circumstances' in which it will do so. I note that at para 5 of the relevant ruling, the Chair says this: *'I can conceive of two circumstances in which the Inquiry might wish to receive evidence about interception-related conduct: when investigating the justification for a deployment or for intrusive actions within a deployment. I do not exclude the possibility that other circumstances may arise. In each case, I would have to consider whether the exceptional circumstances of the case made the disclosure to me or to me and to the solicitor or counsel to the Inquiry essential to enable the Inquiry to fulfil its terms of reference'*. I ask that the Inquiry consider making an exception in relation to the bugging of WM. I am told that the issue primarily depends on arguments of law, rather than further evidence from me (or Liz) and the Inquiry has not – so far – authorised the instruction of counsel to assist or advise me, so I shall not develop this point further in this statement.

*We are asked, generally, whether the writer's account of WM accurate? If not, can inaccuracies be identified and set out.*

72. I refer to Liz's comments and broadly agree with them.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/20201014-chairmans-statement-IPA-2016.pdf>.

73. In general, his statement is 'accurate enough' as an account of the training course. This all took place, of course, about 45 years ago.
74. However paras 3 and 4 of the report are important (and should be read with my comments, above, about information within the WRP <sup>13</sup>). That information (about membership numbers and the costs of renovation at WM) would not have been obtained by a student, even an inquisitive UCO, attending a WM course. This is information which, more likely than not, would have been known only to those at the very heart of the WRP, a CC member or similar. Although at this distance in time, I do not have or recall the relevant numbers, the figures given in this report appear to be realistic and accurate. The conclusion I draw from this is that SB obtained this intelligence from a source close to the heart of the WRP's leadership – eg from a well-placed central source, human or otherwise.

#### Additional observations on the report

75. I refer to Liz's comments and broadly agree with them.
76. In addition I have the following comments.

#### *Page 6*

77. Para 20. The report includes this comment: 'As an evening's relaxation, a film, previously shown on BBC2 entitled 'The General Strike' was shown (this film was produced by a member of the Party who was allegedly informed by

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<sup>13</sup> At para 27.

the BBC subsequent to the furore which followed its screening, that he would never do television work again)'.

78. I think it was not me, but Tom Scott Robson who made the reported comment. Tom was an editor who worked with me, when he was working in television, and subsequently ran the WRP film department. And the producer in question (referred to as having been blacklisted) was a colleague of Tom Scott Robson Tom edited the film with that producer. I do not remember that producer's name.

79. It is significant that this comment was made by the WRP at the showing of the film; that it was considered by the UCO important to record; and that that comment was passed by SB to MI5 and held in their records <sup>14</sup>. It is relevant to my comments about the practice of blacklisting at the BBC, based on MI5 intelligence received from SB and UCOs <sup>15</sup>.

### Context

80. This intelligence report from early 1976 must be seen in context for the Inquiry and the public to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the role of the State in spying on the WRP. That report was preceded by at least five interconnected events.

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<sup>14</sup> Security service record of 'Scott' report on White Meadows dated 26.3.1976 (doc 2: UCPI0000033495) at p7.

<sup>15</sup> Para 137 onwards, below.

81. First there is a SB report dated 25th September 1975 of confidential discussions between the Observer and Special Branch about WM, IG and the raid, which I attach <sup>16</sup>.
82. Second there is the raid by the police on WRP's WM centre on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1975 at which nine .22 bullets were supposedly 'found.' The WRP were not responsible for or aware of those bullets. They must have been left there by someone else or planted during the first few hours of the raid, when the police had unfettered access to the property, in order to disrupt and / or discredit us.
83. Third there is an article in the Observer dated 28<sup>th</sup> September 1975 (headline 'Vanessa and the Red House Mystery' published on its front page and continuing on later pages within). This pointed to close and covert liaison between the Observer and the SB, in particular an apparent tip off by the police to the Observer of their plans to raid and 'find' bullets/weapons/arms at WM. It also evidenced close liaison between SB and uniformed police and other parts of the security services and State. The account of Irene Gorst and the role of John Gale was central to this <sup>17</sup>.
84. Fourth, there is the WRP campaign around the police raid and police surveillance of that campaign.
85. Finally, there is the libel action, arising from the Observer article, I and 5 other leading WRP activists took to the High Court. That, and other legal pre-litigation skirmishes and campaigning around it, were covertly monitored by

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<sup>16</sup> (doc 3: UCPI0000034744)

<sup>17</sup> Para 83 onwards, above.

UCOs and presumably reported to SB, MI5 and presumably beyond. I assume that material held by Derbyshire police, other police forces (up to 4 others according to Liz) and / or SB, relevant to that litigation, and supportive of our case was withheld from us and the court to our disadvantage in the litigation.

SB report dated 25<sup>th</sup> September 1975

86. This report appears to be a document created by a Deputy Assistant Commissioner. It refers to contact between the then editor of the Observer, David Astor and SB that day and the day before.
87. David Astor told SB that the Observer was 'intending to run an article on the activities of the [WRP] and that reference has been made by their informant to Special Branch' (their emphasis). According to the SB report, and at the request of the Commissioner, a meeting was arranged between the Observer and SB.
88. The report gives an account of the meeting at the Observer offices with David Astor, his deputy and Colin Smith, Observer reporter.
89. It discussed the Observer's planned piece on the WRP, the 'informant' ('a lady, a former girl friend of the WRP activist Corin Redgrave'), her attendance at a WRP training course at, presumably, WM 'a few weeks ago'. This 'informant' was Irene Gorst (see above). It covered the woman's 'strenuous interrogation [by members of the WRP]...mainly about her alleged activities as an informer for Special Branch'.

90. The SB report also recorded the following comment, relayed by the woman informant, that 'Healey passed a remark to the effect that he was fully informed, almost on a weekly basis, of all the confidential discussions conducted in Cabinet'.
91. The woman also reported 'a remark (passed) to her by Corin Redgrave to the effect that the WRP had a quantity of arms buried (or secreted) in the grounds of the Derbyshire establishment'.
92. According to the report 'The Observer representative explained that they wished to publish this information on Sunday next as part of an article... on the WRP and they referred especially to the three points which they knew would affect police': (a) the woman was a suspected SB informant (a factor in the WRP's 'constant security hysteria') (b) the alleged arms dump which the Observer 'realised fully ... would necessitate some reaction from police' (to which SB commented the 'police would, if they took action which 'might spoil the effect of the Observer article ... feel morally bound to liaise first with the Editor of the Observer') and (c) the claim that the WRP had access to Cabinet secrets (which led SB to record that they 'should take appropriate action to ensure that relevant government departments were alerted in advance to this publication', and, again, if any action were taken it would not happen 'without prior reference to the Editor of the Observer').
93. The report concluded that 'Arrangements are now in hand for discussions with Derbyshire Police and the Security Service about action in respect to the alleged reference to firearms and Cabinet secrets and Home Office are being fully informed'. I note that the report was seemingly stamped by Derbyshire



police on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1975, which indicates to me that it was received, considered and acted upon by them from that date onwards.

94. As to the provenance of this report, it was not disclosed to me by this Inquiry. I believe it came into WRP hands during the course of the libel trial which followed. I have read a press report from that time <sup>18</sup> which includes these comments: 'A confidential Special Branch report on the [WRP] was disclosed yesterday in the High Court libel action by Vanessa Redgrave and other leading WRP members against the Observer newspaper. The report was prepared by the then head of Special Branch, Mr Victor Gilbert, who is now Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire. It detailed a meeting he had with Mr David Astor, then editor of the Observer and two of his staff about an article the paper was proposing to publish about the WRP.... Miss Redgrave, her brother, Corin and their four co-plaintiffs seek damages over the article 'Vanessa and the Red House Mystery'....They complain that it made them out to be violent and unlawful..... The Special Branch report was produced in court by Derbyshire's Chief Constable, Mr Walter Stansfield, subpoenaed as a witness by the WRP members. Copies were handed to Mr Justice O'Connor and the jury'.
95. At this distance in time and given the very short deadline for my statement, I am not able at the moment to comment further on the basis upon which the subpoena was obtained, what evidence Mr Stansfield was required to provide or what he did provide. I assume that other SB material, in the hands of SB or

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<sup>18</sup> 'Secret report on Redgrave party revealed', the Guardian 31.10.78.

in the hands of Derbyshire police, and sourced from the SDS about the activities of the WRP may have been relevant to the libel case.

96. That SB report was not the only or first evidence of discussion within the police and security services, about WM, police action against it or the deployment of an UCO to spy on WM. I understand that the first evidence published by the Inquiry that SB sought approval for UCO HN298 'Mike Scott' to attend WM dated from 25<sup>th</sup> September 1975 <sup>19</sup> (the same day as the Observer / SB memo, above). This was followed up on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1975 as evidence by a sequence of internal SB memoranda <sup>20</sup>. On that date, HN332 a SB Chief Superintendent wrote to 'Commander 'Ops'' as follows: 'Authority is being sought for [HN298] to be allowed to attend the W.R.P. 'college' for a week's course'. The application was made '[i]n the light of recent developments...'. I do not know what those 'recent developments' were, but I would like the Inquiry to find out and tell me.

97. I also note the unsuccessful attempt in February 1976 to cancel the deployment was explained as follows in a note from the A/Commander to the DAC: 'It was agreed that the authority for such a visit, given in September last year, should be cancelled, in view of major issues subsequently raised by the WRP regarding the raid by Derbyshire police on the Centre' <sup>21</sup>. Again, I do not know what these 'major issues' were, but I would like the Inquiry to find out and tell me.

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<sup>19</sup> SB memo from Chief Inspector SB to Chief Superintendent 'S' squad dated 25.9.1975 (doc 4: MPS-0741114).

<sup>20</sup> Sequence of internal SB memoranda, beginning 26.9.1975, about the deployment of HN298 at WM (Doc 5: MPS – 0741115) at p1.

<sup>21</sup> (Doc 5: MPS – 0741115) at p2.

98. There is also evidence that SB recruited a spy of some sort within the WRP and in particular within WM and may have done so at the request of MI5. The True Spies documentary from 2002 <sup>22</sup> makes this assertion: 'MI5 told one of its Special Branch handlers in the Midlands that it wanted intelligence on the WRP's educational centre in Derbyshire, known as the 'Red House''. And according to one former SB officer the SB's attitude was: 'Let's see what's going on behind closed doors, is this just a leftwing, Trotskyist, revolutionary party spouting all the information you'd expect them to spout, or is there a hidden agenda?'. An agent was recruited to spy on the WRP and MI5 paid them. I would like the Inquiry to find out whether and how this initiative was connected with the police raid in September 1975 and / or the deployment of HN298 at WM in February 1976 and discussions and decisions which preceded that deployment.

#### Police raid on WM

99. On the evening of Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September 1975 the police raided White Meadows.

100. I was present in WM at the time of the raid, as was Liz. I have seen Liz's account of the raid and her interpretation of events including her contribution to Norman Harding's chapter <sup>23</sup>. I do not disagree with that.

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<sup>22</sup> P8 onwards of True Spies, from 2002

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2771570-Transcript-True-Spies-E2-Proofed-Transcript.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Chapter 4 of book - 'Staying Red: why I remain a socialist' which was I believe first published in 2003 and the electronic version available here since 2011 - <https://stayingred.wordpress.com/> (doc 6: UCPI0000034743)

101. That chapter also contains a wider exposition (the section headed 'The Astor Connection'), by Norman Harding of the connections between David Astor / the Observer editor; the Labour party establishment and its social democratic wing; 'Whitehall chiefs'; the Foreign Office particularly in the Middle East and Africa'. It develops the thesis that the police raid on the school was 'organised in conjunction with the Home Office and the police and followed a witch-hunt against the 'Militant' group". He expressed the view, and basis for saying, that there were 'clear signs that the raid on the WRP formed part of an orchestrated campaign' involving the Observer and the 'social democratic alliance' wing of the Labour party.

102. Indeed this is the position I took when I gave evidence in the High Court libel proceedings. According to a contemporaneous press report of my evidence, in response to being asked whether the police raid was 'the result of 'an Establishment plot"', I am reported to have said: 'We thought the police raid involved the State, and we were thinking particularly of the Home Secretary. I think the Observer article could certainly be seen as not just a libel but also as part of such an operation' <sup>24</sup>.

103. The supposed discovery by the police of bullets at WM was significant as was the 'intelligence' which supposedly underpinned the raid – the account by Irene Gorst as relayed to the police by the Observer. I understand that the raid was conducted following the issuing of a warrant obtained by Derbyshire police from a magistrates' court dated 27th September 1975 under s46 of the

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<sup>24</sup> Article: 'Police raid 'part of conspiracy plot against workers' party', a Guardian article from 1.11.1978, I understand.

Firearms Act 1968. In an ideal world (ie if records were still available) it would seem to be appropriate to ascertain whether and to what extent relevant intelligence obtained by the SDS / SB and provided to Derbyshire police was put before the magistrates who were asked to issue the warrant.

104. The WRP denied at the time and continued to deny any suggestion that the bullets were attributable to them. Indeed, they may have been planted.

105. For my own part I can say this. I was at WM at the time of the raid. Amongst much else, I was concerned about items being planted. I asked the police if I could accompany them as they searched the property. They refused this. I was detained in my office for the first two and a half hours; while the raiders ranged freely everywhere in the school. Only then was I allowed to attend the search. "Finding" the bullets was a transparent pantomime which I witnessed, have described many times and of course am ready to do so again if it is of help to the Inquiry.

106. And just before the raid, by chance, I had asked a reliable long-time member of the WRP (Robert Myers) to clean the particular, empty attic cupboard in which the police staged their "discovery". He had done so, including sweeping and vacuuming and unquestionably would have seen anything in it. There were no bullets there at that time he told me.

107. Another colleague, Lorenzo, was outside in WM's grounds and saw in the back of parked police vehicles, wooden boxes, one part-open with guns evident. As a local copper laughingly said to me later, "What are you suggesting? That policemen brought the evidence they needed to find with them?"

108. I am aware of WP press reports, dating from early October 1975, about correspondence and efforts by the WRP's lawyers to find out more about the warrant, the raid and a possible prosecution. For example, in correspondence reported on 4<sup>th</sup> October, the lawyers wrote to the Chief Constable of Derbyshire asking this: "We must ask you to let us know who instigated the police operation and on what information and basis was the search warrant applied for and granted. Who was the officer in overall charge of the operation and under whose orders was he acting?".

109. No one was prosecuted for the find. I am aware of a WP press report from 7<sup>th</sup> November 1975 indicating that the DPP had written to an MP (supportive of the WRP). The piece reported: "The DPP has considered a police report, and he has advised the police that the evidence in respect of the findings of firearms bullets does not justify proceedings".

#### Observer article on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1975

110. On Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September the Observer published an article on the WRP – headline 'Vanessa and the Red House mystery'. I understand that early editions were available in London on the night of Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September. The timing and contents of that first edition indicate further collusion between SB / the police on the one hand and the Observer on the other.

111. At this distance in time we have only been able to obtain one version of the Observer article, the one which is in the British Library and copied in January 2022. I assume that this is a later edition. I can provide the Inquiry with a copy of the article. There may however be copyright issues about its wider use and

it contains what we consider to be inaccurate and libellous comments about the WRP and key activists.

112. The article was written by Colin Smith and Robert Chesshyre. It is a report on White Meadows ('the Red House'), its acquisition by the WRP (Corin Redgrave), its links to Vanessa Redgrave and Gerry Healy, my role as 'warden', an account of how it was run. It describes WRP's campaigning and membership, including its links to journalists, the media and unions, such as Equity.
113. It includes these comments: 'Members have been known to hint at arms caches hidden in the grounds, and access to secret Cabinet minutes'.
114. It refers to 'a blacklist of actors in the WRP that was being circulated around theatre management' though states that 'The existence of this list has never been proved'.
115. It includes reference to Irene Gorst, her connections with the WRP, Corin Redgrave and the 'training' at WM. The article makes inaccurate allegations from IG about how she was treated by members of the WRP. It makes no mention of her connections with JG or, through him, SB. It makes no mention of the Observer's contact with SB over this article or generally.
116. It appears that an early edition of the article reported the police raid on WM, even before it had happened and that the Observer were confident enough to report that an 'arms cache' 'had' been found there. The obvious conclusion I draw from this is that, at the very least, the Observer had advance notice from

the police that a raid was going to happen and that they had been told by the police that something to do with 'arms' would be found.

117. I note that Liz in her statement confirms she has a clear recollection, even now, that she was made aware of the impending police raid before it happened and how this was consistent with what Norman Harding wrote.

118. This sequence of events is consistent with my recollection too, both expressed at the time and which I currently hold. In a newspaper report on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1975 <sup>25</sup> I am quoted as follows: 'Mr Battersby said that on Saturday evening party members had gathered in the house for a normal discussion. Just after 10 pm he was on the telephone to an associate in London about the pending Observer article when police arrived'. It went on to say; 'All the police would say last night was that their attention had been drawn to a paragraph in the Observer article and that they took 'appropriate action''. Again, the Observer did not disclose their close cooperation with the security forces.

119. There is another important issue about the timing of the Observer article. It is made by Norman Harding in his book: 'Although the Observer had the Gorst Affidavit for two weeks the story was not published until September 28th, the day before the 75th annual Labour Party conference. It coincided with the Blackpool speech by Prentice, pre-released to the press, in which he denounced "extremists" in the Labour Party, and the publication of an SDA [Social Democratic Alliance] document alleging links between Labour MPs

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<sup>25</sup> Guardian 29.9.75, article by Malcolm Pithers, 'Police raid Trotskyist study centre'.



and Trade Union Leaders and the Communist Party. These are clear signs that the raid on the WRP formed part of an orchestrated campaign'. The background is that Reg Prentice was a moderate / social democratic Labour MP who was de-selected from his seat at Newham North East, by what were characterised as 'militants' / Trotskyists in that constituency.

120. I note that UCO HN298 'Mike Scott' reports on the meeting of the Little Ilford branch of the WRP. There are several reports on his infiltration of that branch. It is a branch within the Newham East constituency, I understand, as is the East Ham branch. One reports on 'the campaign to oust Reg PRENTICE as the local [MP]' <sup>26</sup>. The Inquiry has heard that 'HN298 attended meetings of the Little Ilford branch of the WRP which held meetings at a private house and also attended some larger WRP meetings in London. He does not believe he is the source of other reports' <sup>27</sup>. I am bound to ask, how it came about the Little Ilford (and nearby) branches were the WRP branches which 'Scott' infiltrated and where, beyond SB, was intelligence from that branch sent?.

121. I understand that on 4 October 1975, the WP reported that David Astor had resigned as editor of the Observer.

#### Campaign about the raid

122. The raid was controversial and was followed by a high profile campaign, run by the WRP and supported by others on the left, including left-wing Labour MPs.

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<sup>26</sup> Report dated 18.7.75 of meeting of East Ham sub-district of the WRP on 13.7.75, p1, para 4 (doc 7: UCPI0000012640). See also 'Mike Scott's evidence at p147 of transcript of his evidence - [https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/20210504-ucpi-t1\\_p2-evidence\\_hearings-transcript.pdf](https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/20210504-ucpi-t1_p2-evidence_hearings-transcript.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> P119, para 12.56/7 of CTI OS for T1P2 [https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/20210421-CTIs\\_T1P2\\_Opening\\_Statement.pdf](https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/20210421-CTIs_T1P2_Opening_Statement.pdf).

The Labour party was of course in power from the February 1974 election until 1979.

123. As part of this campaign we had gone widely to the labour movement seeking for it to assert its solidarity in condemning these actions of the State. Our position was that whatever our differences with other groups, 'if it is us today it can be you tomorrow'. The response was deeply encouraging. The raid was met with uproar by the left. It provoked a considerable wave of protest from the Labour party and trades unions against the police action.

124. A petition at the Labour party conference in Blackpool demanded an inquiry into the raid by the Labour government. It attracted support from dozens of MPs. It was supported by trades unionists from the most senior (leaders of the transport, engineering and mining unions) to the grass roots. In November 1975 many of them attended a large demonstration in the WRP's defence in London. The labour movement principle that "an injury to one is an injury to all" actually took on some meaning. The WRP's often very strident attacks on "reformists and revisionists" hardly made it popular in the official labour movement, but the campaign in its defence gained momentum in spite of that.

125. Even the Communist party, our sworn political enemies, issued a statement in support.

126. WP press reports also record that Labour MPs supporting an independent inquiry into the raids were in contact with the Home Secretary and Attorney General; that the raids were being raised with 'ministers, including several in

the cabinet'; and that Labour MPs were to raise the issue in the House of Commons<sup>28</sup>.

127. I note that SB, and its UCOs spied on the campaign and this initiative was significant enough to be reported in its annual report for that year, according to which: 'Following the police raid on their educational centre in Derbyshire, the [WRP] has held several indoor meeting and outside demonstrations protesting against the raid and demanding a full enquiry'<sup>29</sup>.

128. I would like the Inquiry to establish whether any of these events were factors which led to SB's decision to withdraw its authority for HN298 to go undercover at WM in February 1976<sup>30</sup>.

#### Libel case

129. I was one of six leading members of the WRP who brought a libel case against the Observer over this article. The other plaintiffs were Vanessa Redgrave, Corin Redgrave, Gerry Healy, Roger Smith and Michael Harrigan.

130. The case came to trial in 1978 at the high court before a judge, Mr Justice O'Connor and a jury. The case was called Healy and others v Astor and another.

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<sup>28</sup> [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1975-11-05/debates/48eebd0e-ee00-47b7-b707-c304c0e3f088/WorkersRevolutionaryParty\(PoliceRaid\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1975-11-05/debates/48eebd0e-ee00-47b7-b707-c304c0e3f088/WorkersRevolutionaryParty(PoliceRaid)).

<sup>29</sup> SB annual report for 1975, para 28, at p7/8 (doc 8: MPS-0730099). For an individual intelligence report, see (doc 9: UCPI000009257) report on WRP meeting on 13th October 1975 'Protests against police raids and in defence of democratic rights'.

<sup>30</sup> From my reading of the relevant SB memos, the initiative for authority for HN298 to attend WM was discussed among senior SB officers who made the application (Chief Superintendent to 'Commander Ops'). However, the decision not to authorise his deployment may have been discussed and decided at an even more senior level. See sequence of memos, (doc 5: MPS-0741115) at p1 and also see handwritten notes on p2 of discussion 'some time ago'.

131. The issue in the case, the libel, was the suggestion in the article that the WRP and individuals within the WRP, were violent and dangerous. A press piece from the time <sup>31</sup> includes this explanation: 'Mr John Wilmers QC for the plaintiffs said that Miss Redgrave and other members of the WRP were not the 'violent unlawful lot' they were portrayed as in the article. He alleged that the Observer's report was 'grossly slanted and designed to throw the worst and most ridiculous light' on Miss Redgrave and her colleagues. The plaintiffs, he said, deny Miss Gorst's allegation. In addition to Miss Redgrave, the other plaintiffs are her brother, Mr Corin Redgrave; Mr Gerald Healy, former general secretary of the WRP; Mr Roy Battersby, film and television director' Mr Roger Smith, film and TV writer and Mr Michael Harrigan, an actor'.

132. Another newspaper report <sup>32</sup> set out the basis on which the Observer "won." The case appears to have turned on s5 of the Defamation Act 1952. According to the report: 'That, in effect, allows a newspaper to get some facts wrong 'if the words not proved to be true do not materially injure the plaintiff's reputation having regard to the truth of the remaining charges'. So the jury apparently decided that although the actress, Irene Gorst, the former girl friend of Corin Redgrave, had given an exaggerated account of her experiences at the WRP's Derbyshire hideaway to the Observer it didn't matter anyway. [The jury were asked three questions]. ... Question number one had been: 'Were the words complained of defamatory?'. The answer to that question was 'Yes' as it was to the next question; 'Were they in substance untrue?'. ....question

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<sup>31</sup> 'Redgraves sue The Observer', an article appearing in the Observer on 28.10.78 I am told.

<sup>32</sup> 'The day the libel law showed its clause', an article appearing in the Guardian on 11.11.78 I am told.

three – did it materially injure the plaintiffs? The answer ‘No’ to that meant it was unnecessary to ask the amount of damages’.

133. Predictable sections of the Tory press claimed this outcome to mean that our reputations were so bad that they were not damaged even by these false, malicious and libellous claims, and that the failure to be awarded damages was evidence of the jury’s intentions.

134. My own interpretation of the libel case is this. I think we ‘won’ it. We had not brought the case for financial gain, damages. Our motive was to establish the falsehood of the allegations against us. Through answers in our favour on the first two questions, we achieved this. The jury’s answer (‘no’) to the final question did not undermine these points. It meant simply that the comments in the Observer, false and damaging of reputation, malicious, as they are, did not damage the plaintiffs’, our, reputations. The jury had intended to make clear that the Observer’s article was a libellous attack on us - that all its claims were false, and that our reputations were intact and undamaged.

135. Either way, from this I conclude that that our reputation, the reputation liable to injury before the article, was central to the case. A number of points flow from this from the perspective of this inquiry. First, what had the SDS through its reports (and the use made of those reports by those to whom the reports were sent) done (rightly or wrongly, accurately or inaccurately) to affect our reputations. Second, should / could those reports (and the use to which others put those reports) have been made available to us in the litigation. Did the Observer have records of its dealings with SB, mirroring the SB 25<sup>th</sup> September report which came to light? Did the Observer have further

undisclosed records of any other dealings it may have had with the police or other authorities? Or could / should the police (eg Victor Gilbert, head of SB or Walter Stansfield, Chief Constable of Derbyshire, who had been required to give evidence) have made available other SB records. Third, what other records might there have been which should have been disclosed. This is for others to say, but two sources spring to mind. Most, if not all, of the plaintiffs in the case had their own SB files, prepared, presumably in part at least from UCOs' reports <sup>33</sup>. Our MI5 files may be relevant too. These appear to have been compiled, in part at least from 'intelligence' provided by UCOs, via SB / the SDS and have been used to damage my reputation, such that I was blacklisted at the BBC <sup>34</sup>.

136. In short, the Observer article and the police raid in September 1975, and the conclusion of the libel trial in Autumn 1978, were the two bookends of a sustained campaign to destroy the reputation of the WRP, and the reputations and livelihood of WRP leading members, including my own. It was not fought fairly, as the so far limited disclosure in this Inquiry shows.

#### BBC and blacklisting and MI5

137. I was blacklisted by the BBC and I believe that UCOs played a significant role in the process by which this came about. The BBC blacklisted me at the bequest of MI5 and in liaison with them. It seems almost certain that the intelligence upon which MI5 based its assessments came, in part at least, from

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<sup>33</sup>. For Vanessa Redgrave and Gerry Healy see SB intelligence report dated 24.10.1975 (doc 10: UCPI0000009257) at p3 and 4. For Liz and my SB file references see the 'Scott' intelligence report on WM (doc 1: UCPI0000012240).

<sup>34</sup> Below, para 137 onwards.

SB and presumably to them from the SDS, in part at least. There is evidence too that the BBC shared confidential information with SB (and presumably also the SDS) and / or vice versa. The raid on WM and the 'finding' of bullets there and my supposed role in these events were highly damaging to my reputation and false. The SDS reported on these events and this libellous comment must have made its way to MI5 and contributed to MI5's assessment of me.

138. This is borne out by independent evidence and accounts which I summarise here.

139. There is now ample independent evidence that MI5 / the security service had a role in vetting those who were allowed to work within the BBC. Indeed the BBC has itself reported on this. One such article from 2018 begins: 'For decades the BBC denied that job applicants were subject to political vetting by MI5. But in fact vetting began in the early days of the BBC and continued until the 1990s. Paul Reynolds, the first journalist to see all the BBC's vetting files, tells the story of the long relationship between the corporation and the Security Service. "Policy: keep head down and stonewall all questions." So wrote a senior BBC official in early 1985, not long before the Observer exposed so many details of the work done in Room 105 Broadcasting House that there was no point continuing to hide it. By that stage, a policy of flatly denying the existence of political vetting - not just stonewalling, but if necessary lying - had been in place for five decades. ...A memo from 1984 gives a run-down of organisations on the banned list. On the left, there were the Communist Party of Great Britain, the Socialist Workers Party, the Workers Revolutionary Party and the Militant Tendency. ....A banned applicant did not need to be a member

of these organisations - association was enough. ' <sup>35</sup>. I also recall a Sunday Times 'Insight' piece on the decades long permanent presence in Broadcasting House of an MI5 officer who supervised all BBC staff appointments above a certain grade.

140. There is also evidence that the BBC willingly provided information to SB on political activists who worked within the BBC <sup>36</sup>. One SB officer active during the relevant period stated: 'I did have a source within the BBC to which I could go for information if I wanted it.... We'll be looking at trade union activity bordering on militancy and stuff like that'.

141. There is also substantial independent evidence that I personally was subject to blacklisting within this regime. I refer for example to an article in a national newspaper <sup>37</sup> which, in turn, trailed the book, 'Blacklist' <sup>38</sup>. The article / book says this: 'director Roy Battersby was a marked man for 13 years. In 1972 he had been invited by ... [the BBC's] head of plays to direct The Operation, a satire about a property speculator. MI5 objected: he was an active member of the WRP. 'Yes, there was an objection to him' recalls [the head of plays]. 'It was indicated to me that they (the personnel department) would be happier if

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<sup>35</sup> See eg <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-43754737> - 'The vetting files: How the BBC kept out 'subversives' 22.4.18. See also 'Revealed: How MI5 vets BBC staff' by David Leigh and Paul Lashmar, The Observer, 18 August 1985 -

[https://www.cambridgeclarion.org/press\\_cuttings/mi5.bbc.staff\\_obs\\_18aug1985.html](https://www.cambridgeclarion.org/press_cuttings/mi5.bbc.staff_obs_18aug1985.html).

See also 'THE BLACKLIST IN ROOM 105' by David Leigh, Paul Lashmar, Observer, 18 August 1985, page 9 [https://www.cambridgeclarion.org/press\\_cuttings/mi5.bbc.page9\\_obs\\_18aug1985.html](https://www.cambridgeclarion.org/press_cuttings/mi5.bbc.page9_obs_18aug1985.html).

<sup>36</sup> Eg True Spies documentary, episode 1, broadcast 2002, account of 'Alan, Metropolitan Police Special Branch 1965-83' -.

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2642522-Transcript-True-Spies-E1-Proofed-Transcript.html>

(also <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2771570-Transcript-True-Spies-E2-Proofed-Transcript.html>).

<sup>37</sup> The Guardian 7.9.88 entitled 'Marked men whose talent destroyed MI5 objections'.

<sup>38</sup> 'Blacklist: the inside story of political vetting: the Hogarth Press', see esp p114-117.



he was not engaged. I said that he was the best director for the job and I wasn't prepared to accept it'. Battersby went on to direct Leeds United, a controversial play about a clothing strike in Leeds. He then left television to work full-time for the WRP. It wasn't until the spring of 1985 that he next came up against the BBC blacklist... Battersby was refused a contract [to direct Stuart Hood's book Pebbles From My Skull]... Within six weeks MI5 again targeted Battersby'. He was prevented, blacklisted, from directing the BBC2 series King of the Ghetto.... For much of the time drama and arts producers like Battersby were able to survive MI5's attempt to blacklist them. This had little to do with the security services' or personnel office's magnanimity or flexibility. It was for two reasons. Firstly, some of the victims were sufficiently talented to overcome the blacklist. Secondly, the individualistic, even iconoclastic nature of many arts and drama executives meant that they often refused to accept the recommendations from MI5'.

142. There is evidence that MI5 was involved in surveillance of the WRP direct. According to the authors of one book <sup>39</sup>: on the WRP's emergence in the 1970s 'MI5 immediately targeted the WRP and, according to David Shayler, cultivated 'a well-placed informant who kept them briefed' on the Party's activities. This source discovered that one of the WRP's secret benefactors was John Lennon...'. The book also recounts close liaison between MI5 and the FBI over Lennon and appears to confirm the existence of a 'MI5's mole ... inside the WRP'.

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<sup>39</sup> 'Defending the Realm. MI5 and the Shayler Affair' by Mark Hollingsworth and Nick Fielding, p86-87.

## Other questions and answers

*We are asked for our comments on 'Mike Scott' and 'Peter Collins' (UCOs), whether we recall them, what they did and the impact on us of finding out about them. I am asked, do you have any documents that may be potentially relevant?*

143. I cannot recall either 'Mike Scott' (HN298) or 'Peter Collins' (HN303), or, other than what I say below, what they did.

144. I note that 'Scott' was active in the WRP between Spring 1975 and April 1976. I have given, above, what comments I can on his report on WM and how this deployment fits in with the wider picture of the SDS's surveillance of the WRP and me.

145. I note that 'Collins' was active in the WRP between 1973 and 1977. I note that the Inquiry has been told that 'Collins' largely reported on 'matters concerning the Central Committee'<sup>40</sup>. I refer to my comments above about the CC and the likelihood that there was reporting at the WRP's heart<sup>41</sup>.

146. I am hampered in assisting the inquiry further for a number of reasons. First, for activists such as me, simply being given the name of an UCO, especially if I may only have come across them 45 or so years ago (and in the absence of a photograph of them) is unlikely to jog a memory. Someone in my position is better able to assist the Inquiry if given the intelligence reports of events in which I was involved, especially if I am named in those reports and know that I

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<sup>40</sup> CTI OS T1P2 para 16.8 at p134 [https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/20210421-CTIs\\_T1P2\\_Opening\\_Statement.pdf?v1](https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/20210421-CTIs_T1P2_Opening_Statement.pdf?v1).

<sup>41</sup> Eg paras 26 / 27 and para 74.

was named. However the Inquiry does not appear to have sought out these reports in laying the groundwork for this tranche of the Inquiry. They have not provided them to me – I have been given just one to comment on and that is the only one of the published WRP reports where my name has been unredacted. I cannot believe that this is the only report in which I was named. I was, after all, allocated, with Liz, my own SB file <sup>42</sup>. The police, MI5, the Inquiry and no doubt others hold all the ‘documents that may be relevant’.

147. This state of affairs is frustrating and unnecessary, to my mind.

*‘Other’ – ‘Is there anything else that you wish to add that may be of assistance to the work of the inquiry’*

148. My view is that there has been a concerted campaign by the WRP’s opponents, using the SDS / UCOs as a tool, to discredit and disrupt the WRP.

149. It has involved organs of the State – the police and security services. It has included the media (the Observer and BBC). It has involved the sharing of information and objectives. It has been conducted for the benefit of the Labour party and the State. Indeed, it may have been directed politically.

150. It has not been conducted in order to preserve public order or prevent violence.

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<sup>42</sup> See (Doc 1: UCPI0000012240).

151. It has been done to challenge a political party which stood candidates in the two general elections which more or less spanned the period when the WRP was an identified target of the SDS / SB. It was, in this sense (and others) undemocratic.
152. Its targets included broadcasters, programme makers and journalists. It had a direct effect on those working in the BBC (which, at the time more even than now, was the dominant media outlet). Its effect was not just to stifle personal careers but also to neuter the range of voices and the plurality of the contents of programmes the BBC broadcast. It was part of an attack of freedom of expression.
153. One of the methods by which this was done was through blacklisting. And one of the reasons I and others were blacklisted was our commitment to unions and workers' rights. It was an attack on freedom of association.
154. The Inquiry made an early decision not to investigate undercover policing of the WRP and those of us who put ourselves forward. I have been denied, so far, core participant status in this Inquiry. These decisions only consolidate my and others' impression that the Inquiry is unlikely to discover or make public the full extent of these last 50 years' of undercover policing and their impacts.

Statement of Truth

155. I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed:

Roy Battersby

Date:

11<sup>th</sup> February 2022