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**Letters**

## The police have a poor record in the fight against fascism

The actions of the Met's Special Demonstration Squad infiltrators should be the subject of an inquiry

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 Information provided by the Special Demonstration Squad was used by the police to try to manage a march against the BNP in Welling in 1993. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA news

In 1993, Sir Paul Condon, then Metropolitan police commissioner, refused to negotiate with the organisers of the demonstration against the British National Party's HQ in Welling (an area where there had been four racist murders and a 210% increase in racist attacks). ("[The astonishing story of 'Officer A' and how he infiltrated the UK's violent left](#)", News.)

Condon warned there would be "riots" caused by "troublemakers" and never answered any calls I made, asking him to share his information with me. I now know the Met's priority was to stop the demonstration reaching the BNP HQ by any means possible.

As chief steward, I received a truncheon blow to my head resulting in seven stitches and 13 innocent men were jailed, for an average of three and a half years. Officer A was praised and paid off, yet no compensation has been paid to those who were wrongfully jailed. There should be a public apology from the Metropolitan police and a public inquiry into their role in tackling the rise of fascism in Britain.

This has direct relevance today as we see the English Defence League being protected by the police as they parade their racism on the streets.

**Julie Waterson**

Anti-Nazi League,  
London N1

I was at the demonstration in 1993 protesting against the BNP Bookshop in Welling, as its presence had provoked a number of racist murders in the area, including that of [Stephen Lawrence](#). My memory of that day is nothing like the unsubstantiated description given by Officer A.

I went with a coachful of NUT members and a number of us took our children as we knew that the march was to be led by Mrs Lawrence and her family and that the protest would be a peaceful expression of the disgust of the whole community at the racist bookshop in their midst.

The march was violently attacked by the police and a large number of innocent protesters were injured. What attempt did your reporter make to speak to people who were present on that day and who witnessed these assaults?

**B Parsons**

Birmingham

I was involved with the left for many years during the 1980s and violence was never on their agenda. Most activists were terrified of the police, and rightly so.

These SDS people are living in a fantasy world: they have to "invent" violent situations or embellish what may occur or their superiors would pull them out. Most left-wing activity is rather mundane: getting people to meetings,

demos, putting out leaflets and so on - not the stuff their bosses want to hear about.

The idea that someone can join an organisation on the strength of a punch-up is nonsense. The taxpayer having to pay this guy compensation and him claiming PTSD is as bad as the MPs' expenses claims. Officer A should be prosecuted and his unit disbanded.

**Ian Hughes**

Bridgend

Officer A's actions are entirely consistent with the police's approach to anybody who dares to criticise it. That he felt he was living a lie when masquerading as a consistent anti-racist only goes to show just how thoroughly he was imbued with the spirit of the police of the time.

**Nik Wood**

London E9

While I was a journalist at Granada TV in the 1970s, a colleague was reported - by this newspaper in October 1987 - to have been asked by the local Special Branch to keep an eye on me - an ex-communist - and, by association, my then girlfriend.

Ever since, I have wondered how wide was the network of covert surveillance, infiltration and part-time informers. And is it more or less extensive now? Anyone any ideas?

**Trevor Hyett**

London SW12

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