

METROPOLITAN POLICE

Reference to (C.O. DIVN. /BRANCH CIB
Papers (STATION

Registry Folio No. OG117912234

23 August 199

G.O./Police Order refers

Re: BLAIR PEACH

Deputy Commissioner

1. You directed me to undertake a cold case review of the 1979 investigation into the death of Blair Peach. This was prompted by letters from ***** on behalf of Person 59, ***** Blair Peach, and the Minister of State, Paul Boateng, who had recently met the Blair Peach 20th Anniversary Committee. Person 59 is also a member of the Committee and so our petitioners" can be considered as a single entity.
2. In short they seek: (i) a public enquiry, (ii) a copy of the original investigation report, and (iii) a new police investigation. The Minister has ruled out (i) but has brought (ii) and (iii) to attention, for consideration by the MPS.
3. Perusal of the case papers suggests this was a robust enquiry consisting of 30 officers headed by a Commander. Between April 1979 and February 1980 a total of 31,000 police man hours had been expended on the enquiry. Indeed the then Director of Public Prosecution wrote: "I should like to take the opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the way in which officers of the Complaints Investigation Bureau carried out their investigations into this matter, and of the very full and frank way in which they have co-operated with my Department. In my view the reports which they submitted were extremely thorough and well prepared, and certainly it is no fault of theirs that we cannot at this stage take and criminal proceedings following the enquiries." Similarly the

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Secretary of Police Complaints Board wrote: "The Board accept your decision not to prefer disciplinary charges in respect of the many allegations made, and wish you to know how impressed they were by the swiftness and thoroughness of the investigations conducted by Officer 84 and Officer 83. Their determination to establish the truth of the events in Southall, particularly as regards the death of Mr Peach, is most commendable, and, as the DPP has said, it is no fault of theirs that proceedings have not resulted."

4. The clear perception of the 20th Anniversary Committee, that the original enquiry was superficial and half-hearted is not borne out by the foregoing.
5. The inquest after legal challenges, took place between 28 April and 27 May 1980, with the Coroner sitting with a jury. 83 witnesses were called before a verdict of misadventure was given. The Coroner later wrote, and this exemplifies the difficulties faced by the enquiry team: "There were eleven eyewitnesses to the attack on Blair Peach and, in every case, the witness volunteered evidence that made it impossible to believe the account."
6. I have seen former Officer 83, the deputy I.O., (see 7A) and a number of other officers involved in the original enquiry have been spoken to (see 6A). Whilst helpful background information was forthcoming no new lines of enquiry were identified.
7. The Branch Notes at 6A and 9A, describe the large quantities of truncheons and police clothing seized during the enquiry. Whilst I am forced to the view that these items have all been destroyed, I cannot trace documentation showing on whose authority this was done.
8. Of more concern are my dealings with the Forensic Science Service (see BA and 12A). Clearly the obvious area for further investigative activity lies with DNA testing; a process not available to the original enquiry team. Unfortunately whilst 3 hairs have been found (in sealed bags attached to the FSS notes), and these have been sent for DNA testing, a further 62 hair which were apparently

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mounted on glass slides have yet to be found. Person 160 of the FSS, has written to me (at 12A): "I have found no record that states that these hairs were destroyed and I know of no reasons to have done so, therefore, the search for the hairs continues."

9. I have had a meeting with Person 183 ***** and Person 184 (Southall Monitoring Group), unfortunately Person 59 was unwell and did not attend (10A). They reiterated their earlier stance, in expressing dissatisfaction with the original enquiry and sought a copy of the original IO's report. They cited the Reel case as a suitable precedent. When asked as to the whereabouts of the statements and documents, hitherto supplied in connection with their civil action against the Commissioner, they claimed that the solicitor formerly acting for the family (Person 185) could not now find them! When pressed as to the possible direction of a new enquiry they claimed (not unreasonably) to be unable to answer that until they had had sight of the original enquiry report.

They were particularly scathing about the conduct of the original inquest and what they saw as the perverse verdict of "misadventure".

Whilst Person 184 could provide no new lines of enquiry he did say that the family of Blair Peach had traced and interviewed ***** in Scotland. ***** was a pivotal figure during the original enquiry. Person 184 had not been present during the interview but had been, he said, in the "vicinity". He also alluded to other investigative activities undertaken by the family.

Clearly Person 59 must be seen to explore these areas and indeed to ascertain whether she, or others, are holding any material that would be germane to a further enquiry. Unfortunately my appointment to see Person 59 was cancelled at short notice (see 13A, 14A and 15AIC).

10. My imminent departure from the MPS precludes me taking this matter forward. As a minimum requirement the officer appointed to replace me will, in my view, need to:

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- (i) Secure the interview with Person 59,
- (ii) Consider the DNA results of the hairs already sent for testing,
- (iii) Pursue the FSS until the missing 62 hairs are traced and sent for DNA testing,
and
- (iv) In the light of the foregoing make recommendations for further investigative
action, if any, in respect of the investigation into the death of Blair Peach.

Officer 93

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