

UNDERCOVER POLICING INQUIRY

T1P4

[Redact]

BEFORE:

SIR JOHN MITTING

(CHAIRMAN)

COUNSEL TO THE INQUIRY

MR DAVID BARR QC

MS REBEKAH HUMMERSTONE

MR HARRY WARNER

SOLICITOR TO THE INQUIRY

MR PAUL BISHOP

SECRETARY TO THE INQUIRY

MS CECILIA FRENCH

MR PETER SKELTON QC and MS AMY MANNION and MS PRIYA MALHOTRA
appeared on behalf of MPS-CL.

MR OLIVER SANDERS QC and MS CLAIRE PALMER and MR CHRIS BURROWS
appeared on behalf of MPS-DL.

PROCEEDINGS

DAY TWO

MR FERNANDES Thank you. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN Yes, Mr Warner.

MR WARNER Thank you. Could you start by giving us your full name, please?

A *[Redact] [Gist: HN41].*

Q Thank you. Now, *[Redact] [Gist: HN41]*, I think it is right, is it not, that you are known within this Inquiry certainly as HN41? I am going to refer to you by your real name, if you do not mind, for the purposes of this afternoon's proceedings. The first thing I would like to ask you is you have provided the Inquiry with two witness statements, I think. The first is dated *[Redact]* 2019 and the second *[Redact]* 2020. Can you just confirm that both of those witness statements are true to the best of your knowledge and belief?

A Indeed, yes.

Q Thank you. Now, *[Redact] [Gist: HN41]*, we know that you were deployed as an undercover police officer within the Special Demonstration Squad between *[Redact] [Gist: the 1970's and 1980's]*, is that right?

A That is correct.

Q And I think the groups that you were involved with were, *[Redact]*.

A Correct.

Q From there, you moved onto the *[Redact]*.

A Correct. *[Redact]*

[Redact] [Gist: HN41 confirms he used the name of a deceased child].

Q Did you reach the conclusion that it was necessary by yourself or was this something that your managers within the unit told you was safer when you were preparing for deployment?

A You are saying the decision to use----

Q The decision to use. *[Redact]*.

A That was the system that was in place when I joined SDS. So, that was explained to me, discussed with me, and I accepted it and went along that road.

Q So, they, they told you that was how things were to be done?

A That was the system.

Q Right.

A And I understood that had come from the Security Service as an idea because I don't think initially that was done.

Q Putting it bluntly, did you consider you had any other choice about what you needed to do name-wise?

A Not in a long-term deployment. I mean, there are other police operations that are short-term for two or three weeks where your identity isn't potentially open to long-term research. So, no, I considered there was no alternative.

Q And you consider, I think from your statement, that the longer the deployment, the higher the risk there was of groups interrogating your cover name, so that was why a deceased child's identity was safer, is that right?

A I wouldn't necessarily say that, no. I think the first year to 18 months was when you were being considered to be looked at in depth. [Redact] once you were accepted, you were accepted unless of course some incident happened that detracted from your acceptance.

[Redact]

Q [Gist: The incident] I would like to ask you about are the events outside [Redact].

A Right.

Q Which took place, I think, on [Redact]. You have told us in your witness statement that really the actions of a, I think, a [Redact] chief superintendent -you described him as rather a chief----

A That was the impression.

Q -- superintendent [Redact] led to what can probably described as a successful diffusion of a potential public order incident. Would you agree with that?

A I would.

Q Can we take it from your witness statement that you were quite impressed with how this officer handled a difficult situation?

A Yes, yes, [Redact].

Q Is that something that you would have passed on to your managers, your impression of what had happened that day?

A Yes, yes, very much so.

Q We know that [Redact], the events at [Redact], passed without major public disorder. [Redact].

A On behalf of [Redact] [Gist: some groups]?

Q Yes.

A No, they thought it would be exactly the same. Whether they would be allowed into the meeting they didn't know.

Q Yes.

A Whether they would be allowed to get near to [Redact], they fully expected that.

Q Was the intelligence that you were able to provide any different in the run-up to Southall than it was in the run-up to [Redact], as far as you can remember?

A Not that I can remember, no difference at all.

Q Okay. In terms of what went wrong at Southall, and we know there was major public disorder, in your witness statement you have described really two things going wrong -- and, just for the record, this is at the end of para.128 of your witness statement. You have said: 'The problem was to be intransigence with any response to the issues on the day and the lack of police reserves'. I am just interested to sort of explore more what you meant by "intransigence with any response to the issues on the day". Would it assist to go to that section of your witness statement?

A Right.

Q It is para.128, which starts on p.35 and then moves onto the next page.

A Again, it is really perhaps inappropriate for me to make comments about the public order planning, but I think closing down a part of Southall was a disastrous mistake, in my opinion. It upset many local people who couldn't move to work or come back from work or go out and do shopping. It antagonised the [Redact] [Gist: far left] and I don't know what it achieved rather than demanding more policemen spread out further.

Q And is in your view, as someone who was there and experienced it on the ground----

A Yes.

Q -- is that at least part of the reason why the police lost control of events at Southall as opposed to what happened at [Redact]?

A Absolutely. There was too much going on spread out over a wide area, whereas in [Redact] it was contained in a small area.

Q Another difference between, I think, some of the demonstrations and events that had gone before and at Southall was that the Special Patrol Group was used at Southall, was it not?

A Yes.

Q Did the fact that they were there affect how the demonstrators that you were amongst behaved?

A My memory of, of it was that the sort of, the chaos that was going on around lunchtime and early afternoon meant that the SPG were the only mobile units that the police had left to try and deal with outbreaks of violence and incidence other than around the big cordon area. So, in the afternoon, they provided the only police effective response to, to that type of disorder.

Q Reading your witness statement, you seem to be suggesting that the SPG only responded when they were attacked. Is that right?

A That was definitely my experience.

Q That was your experience.

A That is what I saw, yes. Whether other people would say different things I don't know, but that is certainly what I saw.

Q Thank you. You told us that you left for your own safety that afternoon or, rather, that evening. Is this something you had done before at previous public order incidents?

A What, left because of----

Q Because you felt unsafe.

A No, because it was the only time I, on two occasions was threatened and on one occasion on the Underground station nearly attacked by a local gang.

Q Can we take it from that that the violence that you experienced that afternoon was worse than the previous incidents you had been present at?

A Worse than [Redact] yes, I think it was because it was spread out over a big distance and there was just chaos in organising everything, communicating with the various law enforcements, allowing us to deal with the problems.

Q In your witness statement, you have told us that, in the run-up to this demonstration at Southall, your managers did not particularly want you to go. Can you remember why that was?

A From memory, it was because the uniform police were going to clamp down on the demonstrations. That was the public order response was the impression and, therefore, I believe the management considered that the dangers were, were more than normal.

Q How were you able to convince them to let you go?

A Because I said, you know, I had been asked to go. [Redact]. So, I persuaded them that it was necessary and I would take appropriate measures to try and ensure my safety.

Q What was their response when you called in to say that you were safe and then subsequently went back to tell them what had happened? How did they react?

A I think they were pleased to hear that I was okay and were very aware that serious problems were occurring in Southall at the time and, had I not phoned in, I got the impression that they would probably come looking for me.

Q Were the events of what had taken place discussed within the unit afterwards?

A Yes, they were. There was quite a bit of concern about the way the whole, the whole day had gone, but that was more in a theoretical policing manner rather than specifically around SDS.

Q Was this a conversation that happened amongst everyone who had been there or something that happened privately between you and your managers or manger?

A I think it probably evolved into a general discussion. There was a perception that the public order branch weren't perhaps as receptive to some of our ideas as we thought they might have been. That was the impression I got from the management because the Met, with [Redact] and then with Southall, had had sort of significant problems that perhaps they needn't have had.

Q Did you feel that you had passed enough information from your previous experience to have helped them deal with events better?

A Well, I sincerely hoped more than anything that they had learned the lessons from [Redact] just before that and the fact that this was a public meeting held in a town hall that is specifically covered by the legislation, as I mentioned, so I was, I was very surprised in the way Southall was managed.

Q We know that that afternoon Blair Peach died and there was then an investigation into the circumstances surrounding his death. You have told us in your witness statement that you were smuggled into Scotland Yard to give a statement.

A Yes.

Q Was this something you were asked to do by your managers within the unit or someone outside, can you recall?

A What, how the timeline went I'm not quite sure whether the Murder Squad that had been formed contacted SDS management or vice versa. I don't quite know how that went, but, as I understood it, they had heard that I had been there that day and wanted me to come in and make a statement and they asked the SDS management to organise that.

Q Are you able to remember what you put within that statement at all?

A Briefly sort of day, date, time and place that I attended, saw this, saw that, was not involved in anything and had no recollection of having come across Blair Peach or his group at an earlier stage because, obviously, I left----

Q Yes, we know you left----

A -- before.

Q -- some time before----

A Yeah.

Q -- the incident. Did you have any other involvement with the investigation into Blair Peach's death?

A No, not at all.

Q More generally, was the fact that Blair Peach or someone had been killed during the course of this demonstration discussed amongst your SDS colleagues at around the time?

A I don't remember any specific discussions, no. It may well have happened, but I don't remember any particular conversations around that incident.

Q Did you have a particular attitude towards the death that had happened that afternoon that was shared with your colleagues?

A Honestly, you know, it is a horrifying thing to have occurred. In, in a fight, when you are using a truncheon, if somebody ducks down when you are going to sort of hit them on the arm or something, that sort of issue. I mean sort of 18 years before in Paris some 200 to 300 demonstrators had been killed by the French police, so this didn't appear to be a huge issue, but it was a, a very serious issue.

[Redact]

Q I see. I would like to move onto a slightly different topic now.

A Yes.

Q Your interaction with the Security Service or lack thereof during your deployment.

A Yes.

Q You have told us in your witness statement -- just for the record, that is para.137 -- that "Special Branch dealt with short-term public order and the Security Service's role was long-term analysis of violent revolutionaries". What do you mean by this? What did you understand this, these differences to be?

A Well, that in the situation of deteriorating public order, the Security Service would prepare records on potential Fifth Columnists, people who would be involved in, in increasing subversion. That was the impression that I had.

Q Did you consider that subversion was primarily the Security Service's area of operation?

A Yes, as distinct from public order.

Q You have told us in your witness statement that you had no personal interaction or contact with the Security Service. Were you aware of them having any influence over your deployment?

A Not at all.

Q Do you remember ever answering any briefs that they had submitted for you?

A I may have done, but I have got no recollection of it.

Q Can I perhaps ask you to look at one which is within your bundle? It is volume 3, tab 273A *[Gist: UCPI0000028777]*.

A Two hundred and?

Q 73A.

A Yes.

Q This is a minute which has been retrieved from Security Service's files which relates to [Redact]----

A Yes.

Q -- which, as far as you are aware, you attended and we have a report in relation to it and the note asks, at para.4: "I would be grateful for any information your sources may be able to obtain on the following" and then gives a number of areas of interest. This was a brief that was passed to your managers within the SDS, coming from the Security Service. You can see, at the top of p.1, there is a handwritten annotation that says: "Copy passed to SDS", I think it says, "cover arranged and [something] report received" or "helpful report received", I think.

A Hmm mm.

Q That report is within the bundle. I do not need to take you to it. Just for the record, it is at tab 276. As far as you are aware, was this brief ever passed onto you?

A No, no memory of it whatsoever.

Q Were you made aware by managers of particular requests or areas of interest for some meetings and not others?

A I have no recollection of that at all in relation to this. In fact, I have got no recollection of any Security Service thing, so I certainly wasn't shown this, so it wasn't discussed with me.

Q We have a similar brief -- I am not going to take you to it, just given your answers and for reasons of brevity -- about [Redact] which took place, I think----

[Redact]

A Yes.

Q Do you remember whether you attended that?

A No, I didn't attend it. [Redact] I understood that the Security Service were interested in it.

Q Why were the office against it?

A Because of security reasons and their assessment. They didn't go into length certainly with me.

[Redact]

Q I won't take you to them. There is one other Security Service note I would just like you to look at very quickly, please, and it is in the next volume, volume 4. It is at tab 312.

A 312?

Q 312. (Pause) It is a report from early [Redact] in response to a Box 500 letter, which appears to have sought information about somebody who is mentioned within a report that you had submitted, I think, over a year before that in [Redact]. The response is that enquiries through a reliable source establish that the mark was not identical with the name that had been given as a possible, the name they had been given possibly of the person concerned. Do you remember answering Box 500 letters about individuals you were reporting on?

A Not at all.

Q Is this the sort of report that you ever remember submitting in your deployment?

A No recollection of it whatsoever. It may have been done in the office. They may have sort of done the checks there and submitted the report back rather than come to me.

Q Right, it is perfectly----

A Because they would have access to records and things that I wouldn't have, so they were probably best doing it themselves.

Q So, you are saying it is quite possible they may have asked you a question about somebody and you didn't realise the request that you were answering was anything to do with the Security Service?

A And I am saying they may not have even asked me the question. They may have been able to resolve it themselves. They may have had their own records, but the two people weren't identical.

[Redact]

Q Just more generally on welfare and the welfare of the officers on the unit, you have described it as being "managed superbly" by your managers, but you have said also in your statement that there was an outrageous lack of funding for long-term welfare within the Metropolitan Police and

that access to counselling would have been a good idea. Why do you say that?

A I remember quite vividly the weeks, two weeks, three weeks, of standing down from SDS before I went to [Redact] and it was a strange feeling. Without the strength of having my [Redact] [Gist: family] around and, you know, sort of doing things for them, it might have been a lot worse. So, yes, that is something that has to be looked at and managed. I, I was okay, but it was still strange because you had lived a life for [Redact] years that you have been very, very careful and precise about and suddenly it is no more.

Q Were you aware of any of your contemporaries having problems adjusting or more generally between home life and the SDS?

A Not really. [Redact]

Q Was this sort of adaptation period after you had left the unit ever discussed between you and your managers or between you and your other officers? Was it something that people were aware of before you experienced it yourself?

A Hmm not really, no. Again, I don't think I identified the problem until a considerable time after. It was there, but I didn't identify it as what it was that I had suddenly stopped doing something that I had been doing for [Redact] years and had a huge change of lifestyle and you feel as if you are useless, that you are not doing anything, you know, because previously you were constantly either writing reports or going to meetings or doing things or doing your cover work, you know. Things were constant and suddenly that stopped and it is a dramatic change of lifestyle. It really is.

[Redact]

MR WARNER Thank you.

WITNESS Thank you.

CHAIRMAN Thank you very much for the very great assistance that you have given me and, as far as I have every reason to believe, that is the end of your involvement in the Inquiry.

WITNESS Right, Sir. Thank you very much.