



*Copies to
Mr Carrington
my hand*

STORMONT CASTLE,
BELFAST, 4.
BT4 3ST

26th February, 1969.

My Dear Jim,

You sent me on 14th November an eye-witness report by three of your Members of Parliament on the incidents that took place in Londonderry on 5th October last during the Civil Rights demonstration. I now enclose a Police statement dealing with the report. You will notice that this is dated 19th December, 1968; the reason for the delay in forwarding it is that I thought it necessary to refer the statement back for the comments of the Inspector General (whose office requires that he should take an objective view of Police activities) and for the independent comments of the present Minister of Home Affairs, who was not, of course, in post when the incidents occurred.

I am sorry that because both have been under extreme pressure it has taken some time to complete the matter but I now enclose the Inspector General's comments dated 7th February, 1969. The Minister last week informed me that he had discussed with the Inspector General the latter's comments on the report and had satisfied himself that there had been a painstaking and thorough attempt made to seek out the truth, even though it might reflect in some respects on Police behaviour; he went on to say that the report, while maybe not satisfactory to those who lodged the complaints, nevertheless in his view faithfully represents the results of a full and conscientious investigation into the whole affair.

Certain proceedings arising out of these incidents have not yet been determined by the Courts; you will understand that as the Police are unable to anticipate the evidence that may be produced in these cases they are somewhat restricted in the terms of their reply to the report by the Members of Parliament.

/I am not



STORMONT CASTLE,
BELFAST, 4.
BT4 3ST

I am not sure to what extent all this is now relevant in view of our decision to appoint an independent Commission of Inquiry under Lord Cameron, since the Commission will clearly be looking at the circumstances of this and other disturbances.

Yours sincerely
James

The Rt. Hon. James Callaghan, M.P.,
Secretary of State for the Home
Department,
Whitehall,
LONDON, S.W.1.

Comments by the Inspector General of the Royal
Ulster Constabulary

- (1) As I understand it, these three persons attended in Londonderry on 5th October at the invitation of Mr. Gerry Fitt, M.P., and I would wish to make it clear that they must have been aware that the procession in the Waterside Ward was banned.
- (2) Nowhere is it mentioned in their report that the clearest instructions were given to all those present in the Station Square by County Inspector Meharg that there was a ban; that they should not participate in the march, and the warning given to women and spectators.
- (3) Their report does not indicate the fact that the procession, when it did start to march, deviated from the route which it said it was going to go and turned straight down Duke Street towards Craigavon Bridge.
- (4) They assess the number of persons present as approximately 3,000 but they entirely omit to mention the fact that in the police estimate some 300 to 500 of those at a point adjoining the Railway Square were, in fact, Protestant opposition. This was the very factor anticipated by the police and led to the advice tendered to the Minister to ban the parade in the sectors of the city where the ban was imposed.
- (5) They make much play of the party in rear at the time the meeting was going on in Duke Street, and it is correct that they were there. There was a very good reason for them to be there because immediately adjoining the point where they took up position were demolished buildings, containing more than ample ammunition for violent demonstration. It was, however, I think, a tactical error on the field that this party did not draw aside when the advance was made by police from the Craigavon end of Duke Street towards the Railway Station to enable the crowd to scatter freely.
- (6) There is the statement that the three eye witnesses saw little retaliation by the crowd, but the fact remains that 16 police were injured in the Duke Street affray.
- (7) I have, as I stated at the time in my covering submission to the Minister, absolute confidence in the accuracy of the reports prepared by County Inspector Meharg, who was in charge at the time. He is an officer of the highest standard of probity, and with the small force available to him - less than 80 men - I am satisfied that he handled the situation in the best possible manner in the light of the circumstances prevailing.

(8) I do not say this idly because during the entire period of the Duke Street affray I was present in the Operations Room at this Headquarters and while not all the R.T. signals were available for us to read I was able to read sufficient to follow the progress of what was happening and to confirm the timings of the major changes in the position as outlined in the report of the County Inspector.

J.A. Peacocke

Royal Ulster Constabulary Headquarters,
Brooklyn,
Knock Road,
Belfast.

7th February, 1969.