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NOTE

Yesterday afternoon the Taoiseach telephoned me to say that Mr. John Hume, M.P., had been in touch with Deputy Cosgrave about a critical situation which was developing in Derry. He said that a second individual had been shot by British troops yesterday afternoon. The Taoiseach expressed concern lest the British troops were over-reacting and getting a little trigger happy. He also expressed surprise that Mr. Hume should have approached Deputy Cosgrave in the first instance and asked me whether we had any information in the matter. I undertook to make enquiries in the Department and also to speak to the British Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

I spoke to Mr. Williams, the British Chargé d'Affaires, on the telephone and conveyed our concern to him. Mr. Williams had no immediate information about what was happening but, at my request, undertook to get in touch with Belfast immediately and to come in to see me to inform me of the result. The Department had no definite information about the second shooting in the afternoon but shortly after the Taoiseach's call, Mr. Eamonn Gallagher received a telephone call from Mr. Hume - see note attached.

At about 5 p.m. Mr. Williams called to see me to say that the information he had received from Belfast was as follows. In the course of the mid-morning youths began to collect in groups. This built up after lunch when about 200 aggressive youths started hurling stones at the British troops. About 3.15 p.m. at Fox's corner during heavy stoning a lorry drove out to a side road and struck an Army land rover. The troops in the Landrover fired two shots at the man in the lorry. The man in the lorry was seen to throw out something which proved to be a nail bomb. Mr. Williams did not know whether the nail bomb had exploded or not. He said that earlier the troops had used about 100 rubber bullets and C.S. gas. His information was that four soldiers were mildly injured and one badly injured.

I told Mr. Williams what we had heard from Mr. Hume and there seemed to be a conflict of evidence as to whether the troops were not in fact over-reacting. I reminded Mr. Williams of the fact that Derry had been peaceful for a long time now and it would be tragic if any excessive use of force or over-reaction on the part of the British troops led to an outbreak of violence in that city. I also reminded him of our earlier representations about the folly of permitting the Apprentice Boys Parade in August in that city as there could be no justification whatever for it. I told him of the Taoiseach's grave concern at this latest development in Derry and asked him to convey to London and to his authorities in Belfast the importance of taking all possible steps to cool the situation and to ensure that the troops do not become trigger happy. I also asked Mr. Williams to keep in touch with the situation and let me know at home as soon as he heard of any developments. In particular I would like to know the facts about whether the individuals who had been shot at had been armed or carried offensive weapons. Mr. Williams promised to keep in touch with the situation.

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Just before Mr. Williams left I was informed by Mr. Seán Ronan that Mr. Small of this Department had received a telephone call from Miss Bernadette Devlin, MP in London to say that some of the women at the Meenan Flats in Derry wished to seek refuge in Donegal last night and asking that we make arrangements to receive them. Mr. Ronan spoke to the Department of Defence and asked them to help in any way they could.

I reported the foregoing to the Taoiseach and with his agreement I telephoned Ambassador O'Sullivan at 5.30 p.m. informing him of the developments and asking him to speak to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office expressing our concern on the lines of my conversation with Mr. Williams. Ambassador O'Sullivan telephoned me at my home at about 10 p.m. to confirm that he had spoken to Sir Stewart Crawford. The latter had not heard of the developments in Derry at the time the Ambassador was speaking to him. He assured the Ambassador that the British Army were under the strictest instructions not to over-react to provocation.



9 Iúil 1971