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4 MAY 95.

Visit of Prime Minister to Derry

1. Mark Durkan, SDLP Chairman, made the following comments on the Sinn Fein-RUC clashes outside the Tower Museum:
 - Prime Minister Major had been due to meet party leaders from Derry, Strabane and Limavady Councils and some cross border groups.
 - The Tower Museum (on Union Hall St., adjacent to the Guildhall) had been chosen as the venue as the Prime Minister had expressed an interest in visiting the Museum.
 - Durkan said he went to the Museum about half an hour before the PM was due to arrive. He said SF supporters at that stage were clearly antagonistic and he gained the impression the protestors were aiming to prevent the PM entering the Museum or having him pass through a gauntlet.
 - Technically, there were three separate protests taking place: nurses; representatives of Rosemount estate protesting against Rosemount Tower and Sinn Fein.
 - After the ugly reception given to Gregory Campbell of the DUP when he entered the Museum, the RUC tried to persuade Sinn Fein supporters to move away from the immediate area around the Museum.
 - Durkan had left the scene by this stage but witnesses later told him that clashes began when the RUC attempted to push Sinn Fein away from the Museum entrance. Sinn Fein supporters in response began to kick the RUC. The situation then deteriorated with stones and bottles fired at the RUC.

- Durkan concluded by saying that, in retrospect, it might have been better to hold the meeting with the PM in the Guildhall but that, from his impression, the RUC had clearly not anticipated the scale of the Sinn Fein protest.

 - In Durkan's view, the Sinn Fein protestors were "deliberately antagonistic and provocative" and must bear the main blame for what happened. Questions of RUC preparation; control tactics and the location chosen for the meeting are all issues to be examined but, in Durkan's view, Sinn Fein organisers sought to provoke an ugly scene as a deliberate tactic.
2. Pat Devine, SDLP leader on Derry Council, made the following comments this morning:
- Devine arrived at the Museum around an hour before the PM's planned arrival and at that stage found the RUC "sympathetic" to the protestors.

 - In retrospect, he feels the RUC allowed the protestors too close to the Museum entrance.

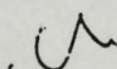
 - Devine said that it was clear to him at every stage that hard-line Sinn Fein organisers were in charge. The McCartney brothers (Sinn Fein activists, one of whom was recently released from prison) seemed the main organisers and at one stage even appeared to give direct instructions to Mitchel McLaughlin.

 - The reception given to Gregory Campbell seemed to badly shake RUC confidence.

 - The RUC, in Devine's view, did their best to persuade the crowd to move back but Sinn Fein organisers responded by giving their people

instructions not to move.

- In Devine's view, Sinn Fein were determined to make the PM "run the gauntlet" and the RUC then had no choice but to take action to push the crowd back.
- Devine said today that his main criticism of the RUC was a tactical mistake of allowing the protestors too close to the Museum.
- The PM later visited the Museum but by that stage Devine had left for the Airport.
- In conclusion, Devine said he later spoke to the Prime Minister at the Airport and he appeared "unruffled". Devine expressed his regret at the incident and invited the PM back to Derry on a future occasion.



G. Corr
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