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The Derry Killings

N1/25/1

On the afternoon of 8th July (Thursday) the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs spoke to Mr. John T. Williams, the British Charge d'Affaires, by telephone and conveyed to him the Taoiseach's concern about the situation in Derry following the shooting of Seamus Cusack and another shooting which had occurred that afternoon (this turned out to be the shooting of George Desmond Beattie). Mr. Williams undertook to get in touch with Belfast immediately and subsequently came to the Department at about 5 p.m. At that stage it was apparent that there was a conflict of evidence about the circumstances of the shootings. Again Mr. Williams was told of the Taoiseach's grave concern and he was asked to convey ~~this~~ to London and to his authorities in Belfast the importance of taking all possible steps to cool the situation. The Secretary reported the foregoing to the Taoiseach and with his agreement telephoned the Ambassador at London 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 his conversation with Mr. Williams. Ambassador O'Sullivan telephoned the Secretary at home at about 10 p.m. that night to confirm that he had raised the subject with Sir Stewart Crawford of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who had no information from Derry at that time.

and to ensure
that the British
troops were not
over-reacting
or getting
"trigger-happy"

On the following morning, Friday 9th July, the Ambassador at London was instructed to approach the Foreign and Commonwealth Office stressing the conflict of evidence, ^{and} suggesting the need for an enquiry and indicating the difficult situation in which the Taoiseach was now placed. At 1.40 p.m. Dr. O'Sullivan reported back and said that he had received a cool reception from Sir Stewart Crawford who said that there was "absolutely nothing to enquire about in these cases". According to the GOC's report there was no doubt whatever that Seamus Cusack was seen with a rifle and had raised it to fire. As regards George Desmond Beattie the GOC's report was not quite so specific but there was conclusive evidence that he was seen with a nail bomb. Dr. O'Sullivan had enquired whether the nail bomb had been recovered as practical ~~is~~ evidence and Sir Stewart undertook to enquire from the Ministry of Defence about the matter and to let him know the response later in the afternoon.

Dr. O'Sullivan telephoned the Department again about 4.55 p.m. to say that he had just heard from Sir Stewart Crawford who had been in touch with the Ministry of Defence and Belfast and now confirmed that Cusack had been given an order to halt, went into a doorway, raised his rifle and was then shot; Beattie was with others and seemed to be about to throw a nail bomb when he was shot in the chest. Sir Stewart added that the GOC's reports on the incidents were absolutely clear and there was no case whatever for a special enquiry.

It might be added for information that Mr. John Hume M.P. was in touch by telephone with Mr. Eamonn Gallagher of the Department on Saturday morning last. He gave as his personal ~~opinion~~ ^{view} to Mr. Hume, without knowledge of the foregoing, that as the British Army could be seen as the last line of defence of current British policy in the North there was no prospect of obtaining an independent enquiry. On Sunday afternoon the SDLP took their decision without informing Mr. Gallagher and without further exchange of views on the subject. Since then there ~~has~~ been no further substantive exchanges between the SDLP and this Department.