

P.A.

Note for P.M.'s Press Conference GSU. 47
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The shooting of two civilians in Londonderry has quite naturally attracted much attention and many people have sought to gain political and other advantages from the two incidents. In doing so they have conveniently closed their eyes to the series of events which led up to the shootings. From what has been said by representatives of the SDLP for example, anyone who is not aware of the facts could be excused for thinking that the shots which killed the two young men in question were fired at random and without justification. It must be said firmly and clearly that this was not so. These men died because of their involvement in armed attacks on the Security Forces in Londonderry; attacks which bear all the signs of careful planning and with a particular aim in view - the heightening of tension in the city at the time of the Orange parades.

For some time prior to the beginning of this present month the situation in Londonderry had been steadily improving. There were the occasional incendiary and bomb attacks by the IRA designed as it were to keep the pot boiling, but generally the improvement in relations was evident and one had reason to hope that a more prosperous era lay ahead for this troubled city. However at midnight on 3 July, and I would suggest that the careful timing is not insignificant, street disorders returned to Londonderry when two police officers in Sackville Street were attacked with stones and other missiles by youths from the Bogside. These youths attempted to set fire to a bakery in William Street but were prevented from doing so by the Security Forces. Just after midnight on 4 July the attack was resumed. Two police constables on duty in Waterloo Place only just escaped injury when petrol bombs and other missiles were thrown at them from William Street and when an Army Unit arrived at the scene within minutes shots were fired at them from further up William Street. They did not return this fire. A further unsuccessful attempt was made to set fire to the William Street Bakery.

Later that night, or rather early in the morning of Monday 5th July, a youth was seen in the Colmcille Court area carrying a sub-machine gun, and while the Army was carrying out a search for this person they were attacked ^{with} petrol bombs.

I feel we should pause here to consider the careful build-up of this operation - for that is the only work which accurately describes what took place.

Stones thrown at police and an attempt to destroy property. Later a petrol bomb attack and when this was being investigated, shot-fired at the security forces. Note also that at this stage the riot situation which was being carefully planned had not yet reached fruition. It was to do so at a later stage of the operation.

The following night at about 9.30 pm two marked men emerged from the Bogside area and fired eight shots at soldiers on duty at Bishop's Gate. Later there were several stone throwing incidents in the Sackville Street, William Street, Rossville Street area and business premises in William Street were attacked. There were two explosions near Colmille Court.

During the evening of 6 July the operation gained momentum and stones were thrown by a large crowd from Longtower Street into Fountain Street. The Security Forces intervened and this crowd ran back into the Bogside and used the ruse which gained them a measure of uninformed sympathy in 1969 of erecting barricades and adopting the attitude of people under seige. Just before midnight 6 shots were fired at the Army from the vicinity of Foxes Corner; 12 - 15 shots from Rossville Street Flats and a number of shots were fired from a moving car at soldiers on duty at Bishop's Gate. Later some shots were fired from Hentietta Street. ~~but~~ ⁷ Fortunately none of these caused any injury and The Army did not reply in any of these cases.

There were further disorders during the evening of 7 July and the early hours of 8 July. Bombs, both petrol and gelignite, were used in attacks on the Security Forces and on private and public property. The Army, for the first time during this entire episode, used weapons against their attackers. They did so on two separate occasions: the first was when they were attacked with petrol bombs in the Howard Street area (one shot was fired): and the second was when Seamus Cusack was observed carrying a rifle. The details of this latter incident have been given on several occasions, but let me repeat that the man was carrying a gun; he was warned to stand firm and a shot was only fired at him when he refused to do so, and indeed adopted a firing position. The man was hit on the leg and had he been

taken to Altnagelvin Hospital immediately his life could have been saved. Those who removed him from the scene and denied him this treatment must bear responsibility for his death.

The death of this young man was, of course, used as an excuse for further rioting and it was during the course of this that Desmond Beatty died. He was clearly seen in the action of throwing a nail bomb at soldiers in Westland Street shortly after four of these devices had exploded nearby. Since then, as we all know, there have been repeated attacks on Security Forces in the Bogside and Creggan areas.

The point which must be emphasised is that the Security Forces did not at any time fire indiscriminately but only when they had definite targets. Since 3 July some 177 shots have been directed at soldiers and police officers and the Army has fired only 8 shots in return. They also fired two shots as warnings. It is ludicrous for the Provisional IRA to describe their subsequent murder of two British soldiers as revenge for the deaths of Cusack and Beatty when these deaths were the natural outcome of their deliberate and carefully executed plan to cause trouble by engaging the Security Forces in Londonderry in armed conflict.