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Irish Republican

. of 8.

Northern Ireland -Commemoration of 1916 Rising

As you know the Easter week-end passed off peaceably, but the Northern Ireland authorities have consistently warned that this coming week-end is likely to be a critical period. A large number of republicans are to demonstrate on Sunday afternoon, marching in procession through the middle of Belfast to a mass meeting in Casement Park. R.U.C. intelligence suggests that I.R.A. members (including a large number from the Republic) intend to be present and to make the demonstration both spectacular and provocative. At the same time ultra-Protestants, led by the Reverend Ian Paisley and including members of an organisation calling itself the Ulster Defence Volunteers, are staging a counter-demonstration; their march through Belfast to the Ulster Hall will be on a more or less parallel route, which at one point will be only 400 yards distant from the Republican route. There is obviously a risk of a clash.

2. The Northern Ireland authorities are taking all measures possible to prevent a breach of the peace and the latest measures, as you know, include a ban on rail traffic from the South and intensive police scrutiny of cross-border travellers by road. The police will keep a special watch on rail traffic on Saturday before the rail ban comes into operation. A copy of the Northern Ireland Government's announcement of these measures is attached.

3. Mr. Gerald Fitt, the new Republican Labour M.P. for Belfast West, telephoned this afternoon to protest at the action of the Northern Ireland Government. He was told that the maintenance of law and order in Northern Ireland was a responsibility of the Northern Ireland Government and that this was not a matter in which, according to constitutional practice, the Westminster Government would be prepared to intervene; his representations would however be made known to the Northern Ireland Government.

SECRET

SECRET

4. The present view of the Northern Ireland Government is that the R.U.C. will not need to call on the military for assistance. There is close and continuous contact between the Northern Ireland authorities and the G.O.C.-in-C., and adequate military support will be available if real need arises. The military will not be called in except as a last resort.
5. Copies of this minute are being sent to the Commonwealth Relations Office, the Ministry of Defence (Army Department), Sir Burke Trend and the Commissioner of Police.

15th April, 1966

SECRET