

E.R.

*Dunne*

At about 2.45 p.m. on 14th August the Secretary to the Northern Ireland Cabinet, speaking on behalf of the Security Committee of the Northern Ireland Cabinet, telephoned me to say that the Inspector-General feared that the situation might very soon be reached when the police at the Bogside in Londonderry were unable to contain the situation. It might be necessary to call on the military to assist the civil power in the maintenance of law and order in Londonderry. The Inspector-General was presently asking the G.O.C. Northern Ireland to bring his troops to an immediate state of readiness to comply with any request that might be made.

Mr. Black wished that United Kingdom Ministers should be alerted to the possibility that a request for the use of troops might very shortly be made. If a request for military assistance were made, the reason could be stated as follows:-

"If troops are not called in the situation, as we see it, is likely to be:-

- (i) a compelled retreat by the police from their present position in William Street to Victoria R.U.C. Police Station which they will have to defend, if necessary, with fire arms.
- (ii) Occupation of the centre of the City by a riotous mob with the prospect of arson and looting, extensive damage to property and injury to the populace".

Mr. Black emphasized that the request had not yet been made; it might even be averted by the use of special constables. If the request were made it would be by the Inspector-General to the G.O.C. and he would use his best endeavours at the same time to communicate the request to us. In the meantime, the Northern Ireland Government recognised that they were under an obligation of government to

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government consultation before the use of troops was requested, and this telephone call constituted the beginning of that consultation.

The Prime Minister, the Secretary of State and Mr. Hattersley of the Ministry of Defence were consulted. An assessment of the situation having been obtained by the Ministry of Defence from the G.O.C., ~~and~~ the three Ministers agreed that if the request was made, the G.O.C. should be authorised to comply with it (subject to his own discretion as to the needs of the situation).

Mr. Black was informed of this.

At about 4.35 p.m., Mr. Black informed us that a request was then being made by the Inspector-General to the G.O.C. for the immediate deployment of troops to assist the civil power. The G.O.C. has now complied with this request.

NK  
14th August 1969

Home Office  
Whitehall