

S. of S.

*lu.*

The Prime Minister of Northern Ireland is to call on you at 3 p.m. tomorrow. Captain O'Neill is mainly concerned to inform you about the current situation in Northern Ireland following the disturbances surrounding the march last week from Belfast to Londonderry organised by "Peoples Democracy", an organisation of students at Queen's University, Belfast, and, it is thought, at St Mary's Roman Catholic College, Trinity College, Dublin and University College, Dublin, which culminated in serious disorders in Londonderry over the week-end.

2. Peoples Democracy is, I understand, a "soviet" of students - no committee or leaders - which is thought to have extreme left-wing overtones and to be subject to republican, communist and trotskyist influences. Doubtless many of its members are sincere in their desire to improve the lot of the minority - they marched under the banner of civil liberty - but others are suspected of seeking to disrupt the orderly government of Northern Ireland. Certainly I heard (T.V. report) one speaker in Guildhall Square stating the aim of the movement as being "to kick out the Tories",

*is the only Govt. viable at present.*

3. There can be no doubt after the public response to Captain O'Neill's broadcast that the overwhelming mass of moderate opinion, both Protestant and Catholic, supports the Northern Ireland Government in their declared policy of reform and for improvement in community relations. The disturbances during the week, and especially in Londonderry, arose from a clash between extremists of both kinds with the police attempting to maintain order by keeping them apart and being attacked by both sides. The police secured the passage (although hardly a safe passage) of the marchers to Londonderry and mounted guard over night.

4. Two aspects are deserving of special mention. The R.U.C. have been accused of wanton destruction in the Bogside (R.C.) area of Londonderry, especially in Lecky Street, which has led to a demand from the residents that

the police should not enter the area and to the formation of vigilante patrols by them. This is the subject of investigation by R.U.C. headquarters ordered by Captain Long, who, you will remember, has succeeded Mr. Craig as Minister of Home Affairs.

5. The other is the steps now being taken by the Northern Ireland Government to enforce law and order. I attach statements issued by the Northern Ireland Government. That Government has announced its intention to strengthen the R.U.C. by calling up special constables primarily, it is stated, to free regulars for emergency duty by using specials for routine police duties such as traffic control. These B Specials as they are known are widely regarded as being partisan; this stems from the fact of their organisation as a force to combat I.R.A. attacks on Northern Ireland. It is to be noted that there is an understanding that one-third of the strength of the R.U.C. should be reserved for Roman Catholics. Certainly this proportion could be accommodated but it is a fact that they have not come forward in these numbers and at present only about 10% are Catholics.

6. Captain Long has stated publicly that no question arises at present of calling on troops to help in maintaining law and order and that if the question of such an extreme step were to arise it would be a matter for consultation between the two Governments.

7. The civil rights movements are reported to be considering their next moves. There is some suggestion that a demonstration will be staged next Saturday at Newry, a Nationalist controlled town close to the border in the south-east of the province.

8. In case you wish to touch on other matters I attach the correspondence (i) arising from the meeting with the Prime Minister of 4th November and (ii) about Northern Ireland's participation in the work of the Commission on the Constitution. Replies on both subjects are awaited from Captain O'Neill.

8th January 1969