

*Copy to Mr. [unclear]*



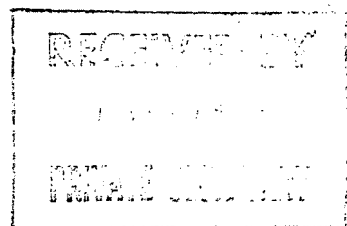
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MO/19/1

14th October 1968.



*James Callaghan*

DEMONSTRATIONS

As you are aware there has been some uneasiness in my Department about the possibility, however remote, that troops might have been called upon at the last moment to help cope with the demonstration planned for 27th October. However, I now understand that the Commissioner of Police has come to the firm conclusion that he could see no possible circumstances arising during the demonstration which would lead him to call for help from the Services. This is, of course, a welcome conclusion as far as we are concerned.

2. However, the incident has prompted me to look closely at the assistance which we could give in circumstances such as this, and I thought I should let you know what has emerged from this examination. Most importantly, it is quite clear that it would be extremely undesirable for troops ever to be used in an active role once a demonstration had got out of hand. Quite apart from the constitutional problems, the troops are not trained in riot control in this country; nor would I, for various reasons, wish to initiate such training. It follows from this that troops should only be used, if they are used at all, in a purely passive role in order to prevent a situation from getting out of control. Examples of the sort of thing which unarmed troops might be able to do are internal protection and security of Government buildings, or the passive blocking off of an area or street using normal Police techniques of the less active kind. Even if we were to plan to use troops in this passive role, they would have to be given some training in the techniques to be used. And although this training would not be long or difficult there would of course be the danger of a leak to the Press of the fact that we were carrying out such training. Once the men were trained, a number could be made available at comparatively short notice in any times of difficulty.

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The Rt. Hon. James Callaghan, MP.



3. There may also be other areas where we could give help to the Police; I am thinking of such things as the provision of helicopters, ambulances or MT to supplement Police and other civilian resources. But if such assistance were needed we would have to have at least 2 - 3 days notice.

4. I thought that it would be wise for me to draw your attention to these facts about our ability to assist the Police, if our help was ever needed; and to impress on you that it would be impossible for us to respond at the last minute if the Services had not been given at least a modicum of training in the roles which they might be called upon to fulfil.

*Yours etc*

*Dakin*