

NATIONAL ARCHIVES**IRELAND**

Reference Code: 2002/8/77

Title: Statement by Prime Minister Edward Heath on the resignation of James Chichester-Clark as Prime Minister of Northern Ireland.

Creation Date(s): 20 March, 1971

Level of description: Item

Extent and medium: 1 page

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Access Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

CIRCULAR RETRACT 43922 RPT 43922

RESIGNATION OF MAJOR CHICHESTER-CLARK

FOLLOWING IS STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER MADE TODAY (MONDAY).

THE HOUSE WILL HAVE SHARED THE REGRET WHICH THE GOVERNMENT FELT AT THE NEWS THAT MAJOR CHICHESTER-CLARK HAD DECIDED TO RESIGN. THIS GOVERNMENT, AND RIGHT HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OPPOSITE BEFORE US, HAVE HAD A CONSTRUCTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM, AND WE HAVE ALL ADMIRING THE DETERMINATION WITH WHICH HE HAS PURSUED THE POLICIES WHICH HE AND WE BELIEVE TO BE RIGHT IN NORTHERN IRELAND. THERE HAS BEEN NO BASIC DIFFERENCE OF VIEW BETWEEN US ABOUT THESE POLICIES, WHETHER IN THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC OR SECURITY FIELDS.

CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE DURING HIS TERM OF OFFICE IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MEASURES, AND IN INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES, DESIGNED TO ENSURE EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS BETWEEN EVERY CITIZEN IN NORTHERN IRELAND. THIS PROGRESS WAS ALREADY BEGINNING TO BRING ABOUT AN EVIDENT IMPROVEMENT IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO MAIN COMMUNITIES IN THE PROVINCE. THIS IMPROVEMENT IS NOW BEING DELIBERATELY PUT AT RISK BY EXTREMISTS WHO REGARD A REDUCTION OF COMMUNAL TENSION AS CONTRARY TO THEIR PURPOSES. THESE EXTREMISTS HAVE RESORTED TO THE TACTICS OF URBAN GUERRILLA WARFARE AND OUTRIGHT TERRORISM.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE SECURITY FORCES IN NORTHERN IRELAND REMAIN TWOFOLD. FIRST, TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER AND TO PREVENT COMMUNAL STRIFE. SECOND, TO ROOT OUT TERRORISM AND TO DEAL WITH EXTREMISTS WITH THE LEAST POSSIBLE DAMAGE TO THE PROGRESS THAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED AND TO THE LIVES AND WELFARE OF INNOCENT PEOPLE. THE ARMY WILL ACT IN PURSUANCE OF THIS POLICY WITH THE UTMOST VIGOUR, AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE ARMY WITH ALL THE AUTHORITY WHICH IS NEEDED TO CARRY OUT THE MILITARY MEASURES JUDGED NECESSARY FOR THE PURPOSE.

FOLLOWING MAJOR CHICHESTER-CLARK'S VISIT TO LONDON LAST TUESDAY, THE DECISION WAS TAKEN TO SEND AN ADDITIONAL ARTILLERY REGIMENT IN AN INFANTRY ROLE, AN INFANTRY BATTALION AND AN ARMoured RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON TO NORTHERN IRELAND. THE ARTILLERY REGIMENT HAS NOW ARRIVED, AND THE OTHERS WILL FOLLOW IN THE NEXT DAY OR TWO.

I AM SURE THAT THE HOUSE WILL WISH TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE CHARACTER AND BEARING OF THE TROOPS IN THE DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THEY ARE OPERATING.

WE ALL FULLY APPRECIATE THE GRAVITY OF THE THREAT POSED BY THE TERRORISTS, THE DISRUPTION WHICH IT INFLECTS UPON THE LIFE AND ECONOMY OF THE PROVINCE AND THE CONTINUING STRAIN WHICH IT IMPOSES UPON THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND. NORTHERN IRELAND IS PART OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, AND IT IS OUR FIRM PURPOSE TO WORK FOR THE SAME STANDARDS THERE AS ELSEWHERE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, WHETHER IT BE IN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRESS OR IN THE MAINTENANCE OF LAW AND ORDER. THAT IS THE OBJECT OF THE POLICIES PURSUED BY RIGHT HON. GENTLEMEN OPPOSITE AND BY MY COLLEAGUES AND MYSELF. THE UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, WILL GIVE ITS FULL SUPPORT TO ANY GOVERNMENT THERE WHICH CO-OPERATES IN IMPLEMENTING THE POLICIES WHICH WE JUDGE RIGHT FOR THOSE PURPOSES.

CENTROFORM LONDON