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Title: Note by HJ McCann, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, reporting a telephone conversation with Ambassador of Great Britain to Ireland John Peck, regarding the effect of the likely resignation of James Chichester-Clark as Prime Minister of Northern Ireland.

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SECRET

*Joseph
The Minister
me to read you this.
Hugh Keenan*

The British Ambassador telephoned me at my home this morning shortly before 9.00 a.m. He referred to his undertaking to keep in touch with me about developments in the North and asked whether he could come to see me at my home at 11.00 a.m. I agreed to this and he arrived shortly before that hour.

The Ambassador told me that he had received instructions to inform me of the visit of Lord Carrington and the Chief of Staff to Belfast - which he realised had already become public knowledge.

The Ambassador then went on to tell me that Ronnie Borroughs, the British representative in Belfast, thinks that Lord Carrington's visit will not alter the intentions of Mr. Chichester-Clark to resign - only the timing may be affected. The Ambassador indicated that the purpose of Lord Carrington's visit was to make clear the role of the security forces in the North and that he will have no new proposition to put forward.

In reply to an enquiry of mine the Ambassador informed me that the extra armed forces announced will begin to arrive to-day.

On the question of the possible resignation and replacement of Mr. Chichester-Clark I mentioned the attitude of the Taoiseach and the Minister that it is policies that matter rather than personalities. The Ambassador fully endorsed this point of view.

The Ambassador referred to an earlier conversation he had with the Minister about the activities of British patrol vessels off the Northern coast and said that he had instructions to inform me that a vessel named "Belton" would be operating north of Carlingford Lough from 19th March to 2nd April. It seemed that this patrol vessel would be on the look-out for particular vessels.

In the course of a general discussion which followed the following points emerged:

1. The Ambassador agrees that the present position in the North is now essentially a confrontation between London and the Unionist Party. The Ambassador feels that this is the most dangerous crunch since 1922.
2. The Ambassador remembers well the views the Minister had expressed to him about Mr. Brian Faulkner as a possible new Prime Minister in the North.
3. In the course of a brief reference to Mr. Heath's message I indicated that while I had no ideas as to what reply the Taoiseach might give, it seemed me that at least one of the requests could not be met, namely that in respect of extradition as under our law this was a matter ultimately for decision by the Courts.
4. The Ambassador commented that if the Taoiseach's reply must contain certain negative elements he hopes that it will also contain positive indications of good intentions as well and in this context he referred to the logic of the requests in relation to the Taoiseach's stated policy.

2

5. The Ambassador recognises the inherent risk for us because of our concern for the safety of the minority in the event of a further swing to the Right in the North, but he also is fully conscious of the responsibility on their side to act against gun clubs and extremist elements of the Right. He commented that this would be easier if there were direct rule from Westminster and he added that it may come to that.

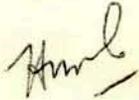
6. The Ambassador asserted that the minority will be protected by the British Army and he assured me that London would not give way on their present policies with regard to the B Specials, the RUC and reform.

7. The Ambassador fully realises all our preoccupations in this whole matter and had made the position abundantly clear to London as recently as yesterday.

8. The Ambassador referred to Captain Orr's statement about the possibility that the Westminster Unionists might cut themselves off from the Tory Party and he commented that this might not be a bad thing.

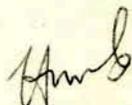
9. The Ambassador thought that the Taoiseach was wise not to cut short his visit to the United States as this would have escalated the air of crisis. He also agreed with my suggestion that perhaps it would be better for him not to go out to the airport to meet the Taoiseach on arrival.

10. Finally the British Ambassador assured me that he was at the disposal of the Taoiseach and the Minister all the time and promised to keep in touch with me.



20 Márta 1971

The British Ambassador telephoned me from the Four Courts Hotel at about 9.30 p.m. where he was about to speak at a Regimental Dinner to tell me by way of courtesy for the information of the Minister that he had now learned that Mr. Chichester-Clark would announce his resignation at 10.00 p.m. He said that this information was also being conveyed to the Taoiseach in the United States. I telephoned the Minister and informed him accordingly.



20 Márta 1971