



PRESS RELEASE

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF NORTHERN IRELAND
(MAJOR THE RT. HON. J.D. CHICHESTER-CLARK, D.L., M.P.)
FROM STORMONT CASTLE TODAY

My colleagues on the Security Committee - that is to say the Ministers of Home Affairs, Education and Development, - have been in almost constant session with me over the past days.

Today we of course have been considering the tragic situation in Belfast. Evidence available to us makes it very clear that subversive Republican elements were to the fore in the events of last evening. Well-disciplined and ruthless men, working to an evident plan, attacked the police at a number of points in the city. The police were of course obliged to return that fire, and in the subsequent exchanges a large number of injuries - some of them fatal - occurred.

I repeat what I said yesterday in Parliament. Quite clearly we confront here a deliberate conspiracy to subvert a democratically-elected Government. The disorder which is being created in our capital city cannot and will not be tolerated. The police forces, dealing as they are with armed conspiracy, evidently require reinforcement. The Inspector General has therefore requested the deployment of troops in the city, and the G.O.C. has assented to this, with of course the knowledge and agreement of both Governments.

A considerable number of persons suspected of subversive activities are being held by the police for interrogation.

We have gratefully accepted an offer from the Home Secretary to make available to the R.U.C. the services of two very senior and experienced police officers from Great Britain, who will be available for liaison and consultation as required. They are expected to arrive this evening.

The Cabinet have decided to set up a Public Information Centre under the direction of the Minister of Finance, to keep the public informed and counter malicious rumour. Bulletins will be issued at regular intervals through the Press and broadcasting media. Further details of this will be given shortly.

We ask all sensible people to keep off the streets. It is intolerable that the work of the forces of law and order should be impeded, as it was at times last night, by irresponsible sight-seers. Parents should make sure that their children, out of natural curiosity, do not expose themselves to needless risks.

I am in no doubt that Ulster faces today the most serious and malevolent threat in its history. We will resist it by every means in our power. If every responsible person keeps off the streets and lets us isolate and deal with the real trouble-makers, the job will be greatly simplified. But let me make this clear. The United Kingdom and Northern Ireland Governments stand together in their complete determination that we will not be forced out of the United Kingdom against our will. In the last resort our enemies face not only the determination of Ulster but the might of Britain. All they can hope to achieve is a tragic and unnecessary loss of life, and the gravest damage to all our people, Protestant and Roman Catholic alike.

15th August, 1969.