

SECRETS. of S.Northern IrelandMeeting of Ministerial Group; 2nd MayThe New Prime Minister of Northern Ireland

The Governor has sent for Major Chichester-Clark, and Ministers will no doubt wish first to discuss the implications of his heading the Government of Northern Ireland. The choice lay between Major Chichester-Clark (the brother of the Westminster member) and Mr. Faulkner. Major Chichester-Clark is 46 and was Minister of Agriculture for two years before he resigned last week. He resigned because he thought that the timing of the decision on the local government franchise would give rise to disorder, but our information is that he will almost certainly adopt reform of the local government franchise as his policy (contriving to state that he now falls in with it as the policy of the majority of the party). His general outlook is liberal, but he is said to be likely to approve of strong measures to prevent disorder. He will be a little more acceptable to the civil rights elements than Mr. Faulkner and correspondingly a little less acceptable to the extreme Paisleyite faction. It has been said he is not a strong man, that he wavers in his decisions, and there must be some doubt whether he has the experience and competence to discharge the duties of Prime Minister effectively. The fact that he was elected as leader of the party by a majority of only one vote suggests that he is likely to take Mr. Faulkner (and perhaps some of his supporters) into the Government. There will be discords within the Government and Mr. Faulkner, now the most astute politician in Northern Ireland may well try to erode his position. It is questionable whether Major Chichester-Clark would last for longer than about six months.

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2. You may wish to inform your colleagues that you sent the new Prime Minister a brief congratulatory message and intend to speak to him after the week-end making the following points:

1. That your policy is founded on the belief that Northern Ireland must solve its own problems.
2. That ~~you recognise that~~ the new Government must ^{prove} succeed in reforming policies, ^{but that you} and will not press them to a course that would cause great offence to either extreme view.
3. That public opinion in Great Britain demands standards in Northern Ireland equal to those in the rest of the United Kingdom.
4. That the Northern Ireland Government could not expect British troops to be made available to deal with disorder without calling into question the constitutional relationships and bringing about the possibility of total intervention, a course which H.M.G. would adopt only as a last resort.

The most favourable time for a meeting in London with the new Prime Minister might be during the week after next.

Military Reserves

3. At the last meeting Mr. Reynolds was authorised to inform the Commanding Officer of the 1st Queen's, stationed in Great Britain in confidence, that his battalion was earmarked as the next reserve for Northern Ireland. Ministers will want to settle before the week-end whether this battalion is to be brought to a special state of readiness at once. This could not be done secretly. If it were done, it could not be explained that this was for further guard duty on public utility installations and the conclusion in the public mind would be that the appointment of a new Prime Minister was in

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itself so grave a matter as to call for reinforcements being stood by. In the absence of any grave disorder resulting from this afternoon's announcement, it would seem best not to bring this battalion to any special state of readiness for the time being.

Current Intelligence

4. You will already have received the latest assessment of the Ulster Working Group of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC(A)(69) (UWG)1). Information has just come from military sources in Northern Ireland that the Civil Rights Associations' campaign of civil disobedience is to start on 3rd May. One possible first phase will be to picket (during daylight) Aldersgrove Airport, docks, railway stations, border customs posts, town halls with 'minority' councils (presumably unionist councils in areas where an extension of the franchise would return a non-unionist council). Civil rights committees may be told to prepare immediately for the setting up of machinery for local government elections on an extended franchise. Savings may be withdrawn from post offices. Squatting may take place. The second phase (designed "to engage mass participation" is to be revealed at a meeting in a fortnight. All this information comes from a sensitive source and is not confirmed.

*Not for use
in the
detail at
the meeting.*

5. In paragraph 7(d) ^{of para 238(b)} there is a reference to further powers enabling the military to take direct action to restore order. This envisages an extreme situation in which there is a complete breakdown of the ordinary machinery of law and order, and where it might in the last extremity be necessary virtually to rule by military government, to take exceptional powers of arrest and search, to give the military all the powers of the police and to give military courts jurisdiction over civilians and so forth. The

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situation seemed to be so extreme that legislation on this point has not been brought to the same state of readiness as the draft Bill to enable H.M.G. to assume direct rule.

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Whitehall

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