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31st January, 1972

Text of address to the Nation by the Taoiseach,  
Mr. John Lynch, T.D.

N1/2/1

The Government met during most of today to discuss the present situation. The Government are satisfied that British soldiers recklessly fired on unarmed civilians in Derry yesterday and that any denial of this continues and increases the provocation offered by present British policies both to the minority in Northern Ireland and to us here.

In order to show our extreme concern about present British policies, the Ambassador in London has been recalled. I met today the Leader of the Fine Gael Party, Mr. Liam Cosgrave, T.D., and the Leader of the Labour Party, Mr. Brendan Corish, T.D., in order to exchange views and information. Mr. Cosgrave and Mr. Corish are as concerned as I am to show that the Irish people are united in their approach to the critical situation that now exists in our country.

We know very well the shock of horror and indignation which has passed through the entire length and breadth of our country, but our policies and our reactions must be calculated and our decisions must be taken calmly, and with determination. The Irish people can rely on Dáil Éireann and the Government in this regard. The Government have called for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Derry and from other areas in the North where there is a high concentration of Catholic homes. We have called, too, for the cessation of the harassment of the minority in the North. We have called for the end of internment without trial which is recognised by almost every observer to have been a disastrous mistake.

We have also asked for a declaration of Britain's intention to achieve a final settlement of the Irish question and the convocation of a conference for this purpose. The Government are satisfied that these steps are essential to the ending of violence and the obtaining of peace. Certainly, the non-Unionist population in Northern Ireland will never again tolerate a Unionist Government, whether it is attempted to be imposed upon them by force of arms or otherwise. Equally certainly, the people of the rest of Ireland will support the minority in their refusal to re-enter a system of government from which they expect continued discrimination and permanent brutality.

The Government are determined to use every means available to them to bring this message home to the British Government and to the British people. In that regard, I distinguish between the two.

I have said before and I repeat now again that I do not believe that the British people wish their Government to act in the way they are acting in Northern Ireland, and would themselves repudiate the kind of local administration that now exists there. We are a small nation, placed by destiny close to a larger and more powerful neighbour. For too long throughout our history, might has been always the ultimate arbiter in our relationship. In recent years, there have been indications of welcome and fruitful changes in this pattern which were working to the benefit of both peoples. The present British Government, however, appear to have reverted to the old unprincipled doctrine that might is right.

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We must and will turn to other nations for support. On the instructions of the Government, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Hillery, will leave tomorrow on a visit to other Governments and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to explain our position and to seek support wherever we can find it. Subject to the approval of Dáil Éireann, the Government have also decided to provide out of public monies finance through suitable channels for political and peaceful action by the minority in Northern Ireland, designed to obtain their freedom from Unionist misgovernment.

The continuation of this crisis poses the gravest threat to peace and to the well-being of all the people of this island. Yesterday's tragedy must convince the many thousands of enlightened and decent Unionists that the course of action being pursued by the British authorities and Stormont is leading to disaster.

They know as we do that a peaceful solution to Ireland's problem can be worked out between Irishmen. I call on them now to make their voices heard before it is too late.

In ending this broadcast, I am sure that the Irish people and men of good will everywhere join with President de Valera and myself and the Government in expressing our sympathy to the families and friends of the men who were wantonly killed yesterday, to those who were injured yesterday, to all those killed and wounded in Northern Ireland during the past two-and-a-half grievous years and above all tonight to all the people of Derry and Belfast, and elsewhere in the North, who have shown their fortitude in the face of coercion.

Next Wednesday will be a day of national mourning. Schools will be authorised to close and business premises and all others are asked to mark the occasion in a suitable manner. The President and Government will be represented at the funerals of the victims. Flags will be flown at half mast on all public buildings throughout the country and at embassies abroad. In this time of grave national danger Irishmen and women will show to the world their patriotism by their dignity and their discipline.

31st January, 1972

N1/2/1

Text of statement issued by the Government  
Information Bureau on behalf of the Department  
of the Taoiseach

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The Government are fully satisfied that there was an unprovoked attack by British troops on unarmed civilians in Derry yesterday. Any claim to the contrary increases and continues the provocation from which 13 civilians have already died. The Ambassador in London is being recalled.

The Taoiseach has invited the Leader of the Fine Gael Party, Mr. Liam Cosgrave, T.D., and the Leader of the Labour Party, Mr. Brendan Corish, T.D., to meet him for an exchange of views and information. In doing so, the Taoiseach is also concerned to show that the Irish people are united in their approach in this critical situation.

The Government considers that it must now be clear to the British Government that their policies in Northern Ireland are misguided and that what is now required are:

- (i) the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Derry and Catholic ghettos elsewhere and the cessation of harrassment of the minority population;
- (ii) the end of internment without trial; and
- (iii) a declaration of Britain's intention to achieve a final settlement of the Irish question and the convocation of a conference for that purpose.

The Government are satisfied that nothing less can bring about peace. They also believe that these proposals will put an end to violence.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs will visit friendly Governments and the Secretary-General, United Nations, to explain the position and seek support.

The Government express their sympathy with the relatives of those who were killed, those who were injured and with the people of Derry.