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**Title:** Extract from a speech by the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, at the Annual Dinner of Westmeath Comhairle Dáilcheantair, Fianna Fáil, held in Mullingar, County Westmeath. The speech refers to the views of Harold Wilson, leader of the British Labour Party, on Northern Ireland; the Abercorn Restaurant bombing of 4 March 1972; and the need for talks between British and Irish governments.

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5th March 1972

Extract from speech by the Taoiseach, Mr. J. Lynch, T.D., at the Annual Dinner of Westmeath Comhairle Dailcheantair, Fianna Fáil in Mullingar.

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I would now like to refer briefly to the situation in the North.

Only political means will bring to an end the succession of atrocities, including yesterday's, that continues with ever-increasing viciousness. We are filled with horror at the rising toll of deaths and feel deeply for the victims, their families and their friends. But we must avoid despair which is the ultimate failure, and go on encouraging, with all the other interests, the adoption of the measures that will best ensure that the killings and the destruction will cease. I consider that Mr. Harold Wilson has been consistently constructive in his approach to the Irish question. He spoke on the subject again last Friday. What he said is not very far from my own views.

The tragedy of the Abercorn Restaurant has filled all Irish people with horror and with shame that there should be people amongst us who for any cause, or who are so depraved that they would place a bomb in a crowded restaurant deliberately to kill and maim hundreds of innocent people, fellow Irish men and women.

So far no group or organisation has claimed responsibility for this outrage. Is it that even those capable of conceiving planning and perpetrating such a murderous act at least feel a sense of shame? These inhuman people seem incapable of comprehending that no ideal justifies such wanton and indiscriminate killing not only in the eyes of Irish men and women but in the eyes of the world.

Only maniacal murderers would be so insensitive to the concern that our common heritage of being Irish and Christian behoves us to have for each other. When the final page of this sad chapter in Irish history is written, Irish men and women throughout all the land will have to live with each other.

It is a sad reflection on us all that it is not just one killing after another or one bombing after another but the scale of such killing and bombing that shocks our consciences. As these incidents increase in number and scale the greater will become the polarisation of the two communities in the North and the more intransigent will become the problem.

I ask the I.R.A. - both wings - and I accuse neither of responsibility for this latest outrage - in the name of Ireland and for the cause of Irish unity, to desist from further violence. The people of Ireland North and South like the people of every other country have the right to live their lives in peace and well-being.

A great and terrible responsibility rests on those who, by institutional violence by repression and discrimination, deny their neighbours their rightful place in society, and who want to maintain their domination at any cost, as well as those who by physical violence seek to defeat democratic and political processes.

Certainly Mr. Wilson is right to suggest that responsibility for security cannot remain with Stormont and that internment without trial should be wound down and replaced, in appropriate cases, with activation of the ordinary rules of law.

I am convinced that once the security and internment issues have been dealt with properly and an interim Commission to administer the North has been established, - thus opening the way to talks between the leaderships of the majority and of the minority in the North on how the future administration of the area should be structured - violence can be ended by the practice of mutual restraint.

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There must also be talks between Dublin and London. In this respect Mr. Wilson's proposals about the establishment of a constitutional Commission between Dublin, London and the North are a welcome reaffirmation of our legitimate interest.

On Friday night last I had occasion to comment and give my views on certain charges made against my Government by Mr. Brian Faulkner. I do not intend to go over this ground again to-night. I think, however, that, insofar as I have chosen to refute his allegations, I should also be ready to acknowledge the value of other things Mr. Faulkner said. He spoke two days ago on the need of those he represents "to be ready to show wisdom, courage and indeed generosity". On matters touching the well being of Ireland I can assure him that there will be an equal measure of wisdom, courage and generosity from those whom I, as Taoiseach, represent.