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Text of statement issued in Cork on behalf of the Taoiseach John M. Lynch T.D., concerning the entry of the British Army into the No Go Areas (as reported in the Irish Times of 1st August 1972)

"When it became obvious after my meeting in Millstreet last night that the British Army were about to remove the barricades I asked Dr. Hillery, who was with me in Millstreet and who had been keeping in touch with the British Ambassador over the past few days, to arrange a meeting at once for me. The meeting took place in the early hours of this morning in Cork.

It appears that by this time the army action was already under way. I asked for and received from the Ambassador an assurance that if Bogside and Creggan barricades were removed all U.D.A. barricades would be removed as well. I also asked for and received his assurance that every effort would be made to avoid injury to innocent people and that the minority would be protected.

"It was obvious that these barricades would have to be removed sometime. Since the British Government have decided to take them down now, I hope that the same sense of urgency will be applied in trying to remove the barricades of fear and hate that exist between the two communities in the North.

"I hope that the moderate people on both sides will consider the new situation calmly and will not permit themselves to be influenced or goaded into any precipitate action that could bring about a most serious and dangerous situation. If such a mature and calm approach is adopted, this new development could lead to greater understanding and co-operation all round and create a better atmosphere for political talks, which I urge should be held without delay."

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Asked if the Army would set up military hospitals along the Border as it had done before, he said:

"Only if necessary. On that occasion we had been informed that a lot of people had been injured in the Derry scenes at that time after the Apprentice Boys' march were unwilling or afraid to go to hospitals. It was mainly for that purpose that we set up field hospitals."

Had there been any military movements by the Irish Army so far?

"Oh no, certainly not," said Mr. Lynch.

Had he been in diplomatic contact with Mr. Whitelaw's office since meeting the British Ambassador in Cork? - "No, I haven't," the Taoiseach replied.

When asked to comment on Mr. Ivan Cooper's view that the military action had undermined the possibility of political initiatives being taken Mr. Lynch said: "I think it unwise to be making statements like that. I think the elected people should certainly not make any effort or give any intimation that political talks, are unlikely. I don't believe Mr. Cooper had consultations with his colleagues in the S.D.L.F. in advance."

Asked if he would seek personal urgent consultations with Mr. Heath or if Dr. Hillery would meet Mr. Whitelaw, he said: "In the first instance I have directed all our members of the Government to withdraw from the election campaign here. That's not to say it won't be continued. But I have summoned a meeting of the Government for tomorrow because I want to keep - and I want the Government to keep - in touch with the situation as it develops and naturally we will be taking our decisions from there on as we watch the situation. But I still want to indicate that this is no panic decision. The purpose of it is to keep in touch with the developments because they may change from hour to hour and day to day."

How seriously did he regard the situation in the North?

Mr. Lynch - "I think now the situation has reached a very serious point. But nevertheless I want to say again that there is a new development and out of this new development there may be prospect of progress. And there must be political progress. I think the new developments and the removal of the barricades clearly indicate that from now on there must be political action."

Was he disappointed or hurt at not getting better notification from the British Government?

Mr. Lynch - "I can't say I'm hurt about it. But I suppose people like to get prior notification and we would like to be able to make our views known earlier on the matter."

Asked if he felt that at critical times in the past few years the British Government had apparently ignored the best advice from Dublin and that this usually had a worsening effect on the North. Mr. Lynch said: "That's true, perhaps, of the earlier days in August, 1969, and indeed earlier than that when we gave them certain advice about the necessity to avoid the Apprentice Boys' march that really commenced the violence. We have been giving them good advice ever since. They realise that as a result of our advice then and subsequent advice given to them in relation to happenings in the North that we can be depended upon to give sound advice. I think they have been listening to us more and more. Indeed, initially, when Dr. Hillery went to the former Home Secretary, the suggestion was that this was not our business. But now they accept that it is our business and they accept that we have been in close touch with the situation" and we have been fully informed about it".

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When asked if he thought the present situation could escalate or could take on more serious proportions, he said: "I hope that won't happen and I prefer that people wouldn't talk about escalation at this stage because it would be dangerous. I think that more than ever now anybody with influence, may I presume to say journalists and otherwise, should try to maintain a calm and mature outlook and translate that into the population generally."

Mr. Lynch said that he hoped to discuss the situation last night with Mr. Corish on the telephone and that he expected to contact Mr. Cosgrave also. "Our meeting will be informal at this stage," he said, adding that it was not his immediate intention to meet Mr. Corish and Mr. Cosgrave "around the table" in Cork.

When I asked him if he intended contacting Mr. Heath or Mr. Whitelaw personally, or whether communications through the ambassador were satisfactory at this stage, Dr. Hillery interjected and said: "Events will catch up with all this, whatever you do now, because Mr. Whitelaw is now making a statement".

When asked if the main reason for recalling the Ministers from the by-election campaign was to keep in touch with the situation, Mr. Lynch said it was intended originally to hold a Government meeting on Wednesday or Thursday. "It is prudent to have that meeting on Tuesday now", he added. "I think it is wise that the Government should come together at this point because we want to be in touch with developments".