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by Merlyn Rees, MP, Secretary of State for

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Constitutional Convention

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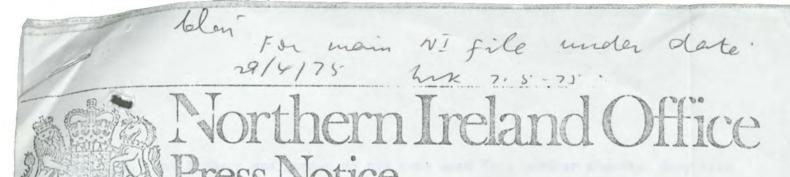
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Stormont Castle, Belfast 29 April 1975

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STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, HR HERLYN REES HP:-

The people of Northern Ireland are about to go to the polls to choose those who will represent them at the constitutional Convention. The exercise of this democratic right to play a part in determining the shape of their own pelitical institutions is rightly foremost in the mind of Ulstermen of all pelitical persuasions. But none of us can afford to ignore the continuing herrifying level of violence in the community. If it persists unchecked rational pelitical debate could become difficult if not impossible.

In recent years people have had to learn to live with vielence in Northern Ireland. There has however been a significant change in the nature of vielence during 1975. During the past four months little of the bombing and shooting that has taken place has been the work of the Provisional IRA. But others have taken their place and the killings and mainings go on as before. Some of the victims have been guilty of pothing but having the wrong religion or the wrong mans or living in the wrong street. Some have been caught up in power struggles between organisations who claim to have political aims. Some are gangstors quarrelling over their speils.

The RUC are doing everything they can to arrest these violent men and to bring them before the courts and they have had some notable successes this year as a result of good, patient police work. There is no other solution to the problem of violence in a democratic society than for the forces of the law who act on behalf of that cociety to do their duty. But they cannot do it alone. They need your help to identify the

criminals. The bombers and gunmen do not come here from another planet. They live amongst us. They have friends and workmates. I ask everyone in Northern Ireland, any one of whom may be the next victim, to consider very carefully in the light of his own conscience whether he has information which would help bring these criminals to justice and which he must give to the Police. This will contribute more than anything else to stopping the bomber and the gunman. It is every citizen's duty.