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21/4
Text of statement made in Dáil Éireann by the
Taoiseach, Mr. John Lynch, T.D., following
the fatal shooting of thirteen civilians
in Derry on 31st January 1972

This is the saddest occasion on which I have ever addressed this House. We share with the people of Derry the tragedy which has befallen them.

Derry has a special place in the history of Ireland. It was there that Columcille founded a church and it was from there that he carried his torch to Iona. Columcille is claimed as much by Protestants as by Catholics as one of the great Irish pilgrims of Christianity.

Derry has been magnificent also in other ways. It has been fought over, been attacked and defended heroically. Derry is a city which could be beautiful. Its people have the desire, the ability and, above all, the pride to make it so. To have misunderstood this about Derry's character is the most ignoble thing of all.

The madness that brought death to Derry last Sunday will never be forgotten. In time it will be forgiven - out of charity. I can say no more about this and nothing better than Columcille said:

Is aire charaim Doire
ar a réide, ar a gloine;
ar is iomlan aingel finn
on chinn co n-ice ar-olle.

Which translated, means "This is why I love Derry, it is so calm and bright; for it is all full of white angels from one end to the other".

What we can do now and resolve to do is to bend every effort to ensure that these days and months, indeed years, of refusal to govern justly in Northern Ireland shall end and never again will recur.

The Government consider that there must now be

- (i) an immediate withdrawal of British troops from Derry and Catholic ghettos elsewhere in the North and cessation of harassment of the minority population;
- (ii) an end to 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. We also believe that these proposals will put an end to violence.

I know the two Opposition parties support these proposals in the main. I had discussions on the present situation with their leaders, Deputies Cosgrave and Corish. We are united in our concern to show national solidarity at this time without letting other differences we may have intervene. I ask all the people

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to stand behind and to support this united endeavour to secure the unity that really matters and which alone will be enduring - the unity of minds and hearts of all the Irish people.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs is leaving today to visit other Governments and the Secretariat General of the United Nations to explain our position and to seek support wherever we can find it.

As I said in my broadcast statement last night, subject to the approval of the House, the Government have also decided to provide out of public moneys finance through suitable channels for political and peaceful action by the minority in Northern Ireland, designed to obtain their freedom from Unionist misgovernment.

I would also repeat that in this time of grave national danger Irish men and women will show to the world their patriotism by their dignity and their discipline. I have already indicated that the Government have called for a national day of mourning tomorrow. Many organisations had already undertaken to do this. Civil servants will be given permission to attend religious services and local authority employees will be given similar permission. I hope business and other undertakings will make suitable arrangements likewise. To mark the mourning of the nation, Dáil Éireann will not meet tomorrow.