



P/11/2/3(7)



Ladies and Gentlemen:

As you may recall, when I spoke here at the General Assembly in October last I said that the British forces in Northern Ireland, who, we were told, had been sent there as a peace-keeping force, had become in the eyes of the minority a coercive instrument to prop up the Northern regime.

I think that there can be no possible doubt now, in the light of what took place in Derry on Sunday last, that these forces, on any objective analysis and not merely in the eyes of the minority are an instrument of coercion.

As far back as 1969, when I spoke to the Security Council, I said that the use of British forces alone in Northern Ireland was unacceptable and that, ultimately, they would not contribute to a peaceful solution of the conflict there.

It is not a cause of satisfaction to me that these words of mine proved correct; the events of the intervening years are too tragic to warrant any such sentiments. Because British forces in the North have been allowed to become an instrument of coercion at the service of a privileged group, the Northern Ireland Unionists, my Government believe that it is imperative that they be withdrawn immediately from Derry and from other predominantly Catholic areas throughout the North and that harrassment of the non-Unionist population cease. We have also demanded an immediate end to internment without trial. Internment, more than any other measure, has totally alienated the minority in Northern Ireland from consent or compliance with a regime that for half a century oppressed them politically, socially and economically and has denied them expression of their legitimate allegiance to the ideal of a united Ireland. Finally, my Government have asked Britain to make a clear declaration of her determination to achieve a just settlement of the Irish question and to convene an early conference of all interested parties for that purpose.

Since 1968 the Civil Rights campaign in Northern Ireland, and the way in which it has been repressed, have shown clearly that the Unionist regime is either unwilling or unable to grant to the minority in the North a just share in the political, social and economic life of the community. And here I would make the point that the minority in question is in fact approximately forty percent or two-fifths of the total population of the area. It is one thing to say, as is being said, that formal or legal equality has been provided for in the recent reforms but we all know that there can be a big gap between the formal position and the reality. And it is obvious, as the continuing unrest in the area shows, that real participation and a real share in the community life of the Northern Ireland and in Ireland as a whole cannot be accorded to the minority by the present regime.

In the Downing Street Declaration of August 1969 and since, Britain has said that she would pursue reforms relentlessly in Northern Ireland. We welcomed this Declaration. But, as I said in the General Assembly a few months ago, consent to values is not equal to commitment nor does promise mean performance.

As a result of the brutal onslaught on a defenceless Civil Rights demonstration on Sunday last the world is once again watching Britain and will judge whether her declarations of intention to establish justice and peace in Northern Ireland have any value. The world is also well aware that, for these declarations to have any value, the British Government must be willing to confront and impose their will on the reactionary elements in the Unionist regime who stand in the way of justice in Northern Ireland and the final resolution of this tragic conflict.

The Irish Government and the Irish people, and not only the Irish Government and people but responsible opinion in Britain and elsewhere are convinced of the necessity for the creation of a new administrative structure which can be made the basis for reconciliation between the divided communities and the foundation on which the Irish problem can be solved once and for all through territorial unity by consent.

This is our aim, this is what we think must be done; and this is what we intend to bend all our efforts to achieve. We confidently assume that in this aim we can count on the active goodwill ^{and} cooperation of the international ^{and} community in accordance with the purposes / principles of the Charter.



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