7 NOVEMBER

1. In Northern Ireland, two views about the ideal pattern of government have long confronted each other. There is the present reality - in fact and in international law - of the Union - the Union, that is, between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. That Union is affirmed by the first Section of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act of 1973 which declares that in no event will Northern Ireland or any part of it cease to be part of the United Kingdom without the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland. We stand firmly by that most solemn declaration and assurance. But in so doing we acknowledge that there is another view - strongly held by the nationalist minority within Northern Ireland. That is the aspiration to a United Ireland - not simply to the Republic of Ireland which exists today but to a 32 county state covering all the territory of the island, and worthy in their view of the support of all Irish people.

2. It is possible to take either position with integrity. It is acceptable to uphold the one or advocate the other by all legitimate peaceful and democratic means. What is not acceptable, and what totally lacks integrity, is the promotion of either view by the crude and brutal methods of violence and coercion.

3. I believe, in particular, that a huge majority of those who would wish to see a united Ireland one day, both in the North and in the whole of Ireland, know in their hearts that a 32 county state in the terms I have used could never be created by force or advanced by putting a union of territories before a union of hearts and minds. A state brought into being by such corrupt methods could never live up to the vision of a united Ireland enjoying the loyalty and protecting the rights of Catholic, Protestant and dissenter. 95% of Nationalists within the island of Ireland have chosen to assert their Nationalism by casting their first preference votes for constitutional parties. It is only a diminishing minority, whether in the Republic of Ireland or in Northern Ireland, who have deliberately chosen another path. It is their arrogant and wholly mistaken belief that unity can be achieved by violence that is still causing death, injury and destruction, not only in Northern Ireland, but also here in Great Britain and, as recent events have shown, in Europe as well.

4. Many people have died over the last two decades because a minority will not accept that a unity of hearts and minds can never be achieved by such corrupt means as these. If this rate of killing applied across the United Kingdom as a whole, we should now be mourning something over 100,000 dead. To its enormous credit, and in spite of the appalling recurrence of "tit for tat" killings, society in Northern Ireland has

not disintegrated as, no doubt, the men of violence would like it to do. On the contrary, I have been impressed and often greatly moved as I have met people, right across the Province and in all walks of life, who remain determined to get on with their lives in peace, and to see the community in which they live becoming a better place for themselves and their children. But while levels of violence have fallen far below their peak there is no room for complacency. The grief and loss remain, and the appalling human waste. Long after the names of victims are forgotten in the wider community, relatives still grieve for their dead and tend their wounded. In a hospital in Enniskillen, a loyal wife still sits regularly at the bedside of a husband who has never regained consciousness since that fatal Remembrance Day three years ago. We in the rest of the United Kingdom - indeed in its Government and Parliament - have suffered alongside the decent people of Northern Ireland. Nor have other countries, and other innocent lives, been spared the blight of violence. Men and women in uniform, going about their lawful duties, have been treated as so-called "legitimate targets". Assassins lurking in the shadows have usurped the name of soldier.

5. For what purpose does this killing continue? Why does the plea of the Pope himself, made so movingly on Irish soil, and recalled again by Bishop Cahal Daly, now designated Archbishop and Primate of All Ireland, at the Requiem Mass

for Cardinal O'Fiaich earlier this year, not receive a positive answer? Why, in particular, has a desire for unity to be pursued in a way which can only deepen division?

6. At the heart of this matter there is the question of the so-called "British presence" in a part of Ireland. It is to remove that presence that republican terrorism is said to be dedicated. So let us examine, for a moment, just what the "British presence" actually is.

7. It has four main aspects. The <u>first</u>, and perhaps the most high-profile aspect, is the visible presence and activity of British troops on the streets and in the countryside of Northern Ireland. There are two points to be made about this presence and activity. The first is that these troops are in reality United Kingdom troops, drawn from the whole of the United Kingdom and present in Northern Ireland because Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom which needs them. The United Kingdom has of course no vested interest in maintaining these high force levels a day longer than is necessary.

8. And the second important point is that this kind of high military profile was made necessary by violence, will be maintained as long as there is violence, but will certainly be reduced when violence comes to an end. We have heard for so long about the "security forces" because others have

created a security situation. What we want is a return as soon as possible to a situation in which the Police Service in Northern Ireland can by itself enforce the law and keep the peace for the benefit of its fellow-citizens. But Policemen are civilians drawn from the community they exist to serve. Today they are, and for many years have been, at risk from men and women prepared to kill and wound them in pursuit of political objectives. In such a situation the Police are entitled to have and will certainly get the additional support that the military can provide. If the threat were no longer there then the military support would no longer be necessary and Northern Ireland could have a police force with no need of Army support or, indeed, for its own formidable arsenal of weapons.

9. The second aspect of the British presence is, of course, my own presence in Northern Ireland as Secretary of State, supported by a team of Ministers and officials in the Northern Ireland Office and answerable to Parliament at Westminster. But it is the clearly stated policy of this Government to seek to find ways of returning significant responsibilities for the affairs of Northern Ireland to locally elected representatives in a way which would command widespread acceptance within Northern Ireland.

10. Thus it is that we have the extraordinary state of affairs in which a small group of people are mounting a terrorist

campaign aimed at removal of "the British presence", when it is the clear wish of the British Government to ask elected representatives of local people to assume as much responsibility as possible for their own affairs. It is interesting, is it not, that those who cry "Brits out" are amongst the most nervous when they see any possibility of real movement towards giving real power and responsibility to the local people themselves?

11. The third main aspect of the "British presence" is simply this: the transfer from the common Exchequer every year of very large sums of money to enable programmes well beyond the capacity of locally raised taxation to be carried out. This support is not given in furtherance of some strategic interest or in the expectation of some corresponding gain to the people of Great Britain. It seeks no return other than the satisfaction of improving the conditions of life in Northern Ireland.

12. This brings me to the fourth and most significant aspect of the British presence. Every time I hear that call for "Brits out", it brings home to me the paramount reality that the heart and core of the British presence is not the British army or British Ministers, but the reality of nearly a million people living in a part of the island of Ireland who are, and who certainly regard themselves as, British. This is not simply a debating point made by an English

politician. It has been very specifically acknowledged by the democratically elected representatives of all the parties of constitutional Irish nationalism through for example the New Ireland Forum Report of 1984. The Report states that:

> "Unionists generally regard themselves as being British, the inheritors of a specific communal loyalty to the British Crown. The traditional nationalist opposition to British rule is thus seen by unionists as incompatible with the survival of their own sense of identity .....".

This "Britishness" (a word which the Forum Report itself uses) is not only a legal status; it is also a fact of life and a product of history.

13. The Anglo-Irish Agreement, to which successive Irish Governments have committed themselves, similarly acknowledges the reality that the people of Northern Ireland have different views about the status of Northern Ireland. The preamble to the Agreement draws a distinction between "those who wish for no change in the present status of Northern Ireland" and "those who aspire to a sovereign united Ireland achieved by peaceful means and through agreement". Against that background Article 1 of the Agreement - registered at the United Nations as a binding international treaty -

acknowledges that the status of Northern Ireland can only be determined by the people of Northern Ireland themselves, by affirming that any change in the present status would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people who live there. The Article also recognises that the present wish of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland is for no change in the status of Northern Ireland.

14. The question which arises, therefore, is whether this sense of Britishness deeply felt by one million people and their desire for no change in the status of Northern Ireland can be reconciled with an Irish identity which would embrace them and to which they would freely consent? At present a great number of these people clearly do not feel or wish themselves to be Irish in the sense that nationalists would like them to do, although they may well feel Irish in other important respects; but the obstacle to the development of a new and more inclusive Irish identity if people want this for themselves is <u>not</u> to be sought in <u>Great Britain</u>. Those who live here would not bar the way if at some future time that were to be the wish of the people of Northern Ireland themselves; indeed the Government has made clear on several occasions, notably in signing the Anglo-Irish Agreement, that if in the future a majority of the people of Northern Ireland clearly wish for and formally consent to the establishment of a united Ireland it would introduce and support in Parliament legislation to give effect to that wish. However, we will

fully support our fellow-citizens while, by their own free and clearly-expressed wish, they remain our fellow-citizens. Partition is an acknowledgement of reality, not an assertion of national self-interest. The border cannot simply be wished away.

15. There is, as we all know, some difference of emphasis between the Conservative and Labour Parties, in that the Labour Party have declared themselves to be in favour of unity. But neither party, I am sure, would tolerate a coerced unity brought about by force. It would not only be immoral; it would also be unworkable. Neither party stands in the way of constitutional and peaceful attempts by Irish nationalists to persuade unionists that a change in status could take place without prejudice to the interests of its community as reflected both in its Protestantism and in its "Britishness". We continue to value the contribution which Northern Ireland and its people make to our Union. As Remembrance Day draws near, and as plans are being made to commemorate next year the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, we do well to remember the form in which that contribution has often been made, though I should also pay tribute to those born in the Republic who laid down their lives in that same cause in both wars. Both parties, indeed all the main parties in Great Britain and the Irish Republic, not to mention the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland itself, cannot fail to see that continuing violence can only

replenish old animosities and indefinitely postpone any real and lasting reconciliation between the traditions in Ireland, in whatever context that may be achieved.

16. Violence is futile. Violence can never be allowed to succeed. It is, and will remain, the first priority of the Government to defeat terrorism, from whichever side of the community it comes. For this Government, as for the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland, there is no acceptable level of violence; and, for so long as violence continues, it will be met with a firm and resolute response. It is of course in the interests of everyone that violence should end now. Just imagine what developments of positive benefit to all sections of the community and both parts of the island of Ireland would be bound to follow a permanent end to violence.

17. Military support for the police would in time no longer be required, and the police service would be able to play without diversion its proper role of helping the whole law-abiding community. An Irish republicanism seen to have finally renounced violence would be able, like other parties, to seek a role in the peaceful political life of the community. In Northern Ireland it is not the aspiration to a sovereign, united Ireland, against which we set our face, but its violent expression. I should hate to think that all those who have in the past voted for Sinn Fein political

representatives were doing so without a care for the murder of their protestant and catholic neighbours. Or for the risk - which is a reality - that they themselves, a relative or a friend could become victims either through retaliation or through the gross incompetence or brutal unconcern of the paramilitaries who purport to defend them.

18. Our unwillingness to do business with political representatives who support murder as a legitimate way of promoting a political goal does not indicate any unconcern with the real social and economic problems faced by those they represent or lack of respect for the Irish identity and culture of such people.

19. Only if violence is abandoned can a true reconciliation be achieved. There is a need for reconciliation at three levels - between the communities in Northern Ireland; within Ireland; and between the peoples on both these islands. The terrorists constitute a major impediment on the road to peace and greater understanding and to new political institutions which adequately reflect everyone's interests. The British Government has no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland: our role is to help, enable and encourage. Britain's purpose, as I have sought to describe it, is not to occupy, oppress or exploit, but to ensure democratic debate and free democratic choice. <u>That</u> is our way.