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Statement by An Taoiseach, Mr. Liam Cosgrave, in Dáil Éireann,
28 May, 1974

NORTHERN IRELAND EXECUTIVE

Dáil Éireann will have heard of the resignation of some members of the power-sharing Executive in Belfast today. Members of the Dáil will join with me, I am sure, in expressing our deep regret at what has happened.

The establishment of this Executive on 1st January was seen by all of us as an historic attempt to bridge the deep differences between sections of the community in Northern Ireland.

Those in the North who joined in this attempt deserve the respect of all of us for their courage and dedication in the face of great pressures from the more extreme elements in both sections of the Northern Ireland community. Few democratic politicians anywhere have ever faced such odds, so bravely, and with so little regard for their own personal position and indeed personal safety.

In the Dáil on the 22nd November, 1973, I said that the formation of this power-sharing Executive was "an important and necessary

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first step in the working out of political institutions providing the basis for a settlement that can bring cooperation and peace in this island". For the first time in the history of Northern Ireland representatives of the communities there agreed, notwithstanding the fundamental difference in their basic aspirations, to work together in the common good. The Executive represented an attempt to provide a form of Government widely accepted throughout the community in Northern Ireland. This great experiment in cooperation has been wrecked by deliberate misrepresentation of its purpose on the one hand and by the continuance of violence on the other.

As we warned it would, the campaign of the IRA, has provoked a massive sectarian backlash. This has undermined the only kind of solution that can bring peace to Northern Ireland and security to the minority in the area.

In present circumstances it is vitally important that all should remain calm. There just is no point at this stage in our entering into recriminations as to what might have happened if events had been handled differently. We must go forward from here. The principles of partnership and cooperation with democratically elected representatives in this island - upon which we have worked for so long - remain as true and genuine a basis for progress as they have ever been.

We have in the past worked towards this goal. We shall continue to do so, recognising that the supreme aim must be - as it has been for all of us throughout these tragic years - the safeguarding of lives in Northern Ireland and indeed in the whole of Ireland.

28 May, 1974