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FIANNA FAIL ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 7 MARCH: NORTHERN IRELAND AND
ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS

SUMMARY

1. TAOISEACH STRESSES THE NEED FOR NORTH/SOUTH CO-OPERATION
AND FOR CONSENT, DENOUNCES VIOLENCE AND ADDRESSES THE UNIONISTS
DIRECT. RANK AND FILE RESISTANCE TO DELETING ARTICLES 2 AND 3
OF THE CONSTITUTION. COMMENT IN MIFT.

DETAIL

2. ADDRESSING THE FIANNA FAIL ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON 7 MARCH,
THE TAOISEACH SAID THAT THE CONFLICT IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND
WAS CRUEL, CHRONIC AND A CONSTANT PERSONAL GRIEF. A PEACEFUL
RESOLUTION WOULD TRANSFORM RELATIONS WITH THE REPUBLIC AND
RELEASE THE POWERFUL POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT ON THE ENTIRE
ISLAND IMPRISONED FOR OVER 20 YEARS. 'WE MUST STOP THINKING
SO MUCH IN THE PAST AND START THINKING IN THE FUTURE'. SEAN
LEMASS HAD INITIATED A 'GOOD AND GENEROUS POLICY OF DETENTE
AND CO-OPERATION', AND HAD RECOGNISED THAT THE ULTIMATE
ACHIEVEMENT OF A UNITED IRELAND COULD ONLY BE 'THE FINAL FRUIT
OF A FUNDAMENTAL IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE
PEOPLE WHO LIVE ON BOTH PARTS OF THIS ISLAND'.

3. REPUBLICAN PARAMILITARIES HAD NO HISTORICAL SANCTION IN
SEEKING TO COERCE THE UNIONIST PEOPLE. 'PARTICIPATION IN
VIOLENCE, OR DEFENDING THE RIGHT TO ENGAGE IN IT, PRECLUDES
INVOLVEMENT IN ANY COMPREHENSIVE DIALOGUE ON LEGITIMATE
POLITICAL AIMS'.

4. REFERRING TO HIS MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER ON 26
FEBRUARY, THE TAOISEACH SAID HE WAS GLAD THAT THE PROBLEMS OF
NORTHERN IRELAND WERE VERY HIGH ON THE LATTER'S AGENDA. BOTH
GOVERNMENTS WOULD GIVE A FIRM AND POSITIVE LEAD IN
RE-ESTABLISHING NEW POLITICAL DIALOGUE. HE WOULD ASSIST THE

NATIONALIST PEOPLE 'IN COMBATting ALL MANIFESTATIONS OF DISCRIMINATION, INJUSTICE OR INTOLERANCE...'. 'NOTHING CAN CALL INTO QUESTION THE FACT THAT NORTHERN NATIONALISTS, AND INDEED UNIONISTS TO THE EXTENT THEY THEMSELVES CHOOSE, ARE AS FULLY AND UNQUESTIONABLY IRISH AS ANY PERSON IN THIS ISLAND. THE POLICIES OF THIS GOVERNMENT WILL ALWAYS START FROM THAT REALITY.'

5. SPEAKING DIRECT TO 'THE UNIONIST COMMUNITY', THE TAOISEACH SAID THAT HE KNEW THE SUFFERING OF THE PAST TWENTY YEARS AND UNDERSTOOD THEIR ANXIETY ABOUT THE FUTURE. 'SADLY, AT DIFFERENT TIMES EACH TRADITION IN IRELAND HAS TENDED TO IGNORE THE OTHER FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES, CREATING A FEELING OF ISOLATION, SIEGE, BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS'. THE LESSON WAS FORGIVENESS, AND NO RETALIATION. THIS DEMANDED HUGE COURAGE AND GRACE. THE TASK FACING ALL IN IRELAND WAS 'TRANSFORMING A PSYCHOLOGY OF MUTUAL REJECTION INTO A PSYCHOLOGY OF MUTUAL RESPECT'. 'WITHOUT AGREEMENT AND CONSENT ON BOTH SIDES, THERE WILL BE NO LASTING STABILITY': THIS WAS THE HARD-LEARNED LESSON.

6. 'I WELCOME THE WISH OF THE UNIONIST REPRESENTATIVES TO RAISE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES WITH ME. LET THEM ALL BE ON THE CONFERENCE TABLE. ARTICLES 2 AND 3 AS WELL AS THE GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND ACT, 1920 - THE ONE THAT PARTITIONED THIS COUNTRY IN THE FIRST INSTANCE. AT THAT TIME A UNITED IRELAND WAS THE ULTIMATE AIM OF BRITISH POLICY TO BE BROUGHT ABOUT BY AGREEMENT. BUT IN THE MEANTIME IT ALWAYS ENVISAGED THAT THE EFFECTS OF PARTITION WOULD BE MINIMIZED BY CLOSE POLITICAL LINKS AND ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH. THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY OFFERS A NEW FRAMEWORK, NEW POSSIBILITIES, FREE OF THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE PAST...WHILE RECOGNISING DIFFERENCES AND DIVERSITY.'

7. AFTER REFERRING TO CONTACTS BETWEEN THE CBI (NORTHERN IRELAND) AND THE CONFEDERATION OF IRISH INDUSTRIES, AND OTHER PROPOSALS FOR ENCOURAGING NORTH/SOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, THE TAOISEACH SAID HE PROPOSED SHORTLY TO PUBLISH A STUDY ON NORTH/SOUTH ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE SINGLE MARKET.

8. EARLIER, OPENING THE DEBATE ON NORTHERN IRELAND, THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS SPOKE STRONGLY AGAINST VIOLENCE. 'UNLESS ALL THE PEOPLE COME OUT AND REPUDIATE VIOLENCE, UNLESS

THE MEN OF VIOLENCE ARE DENIED SHELTER AND UNLESS THE PEOPLE ARE SINGLE-MINDED IN THEIR DETERMINATION TO RID THE ISLAND OF THESE MURDERERS, THERE WILL BE NO PEACE.' ANDREWS REJECTED CALLS FROM THE FLOOR FOR SINN FEIN PARTICIPATION IN TALKS. MOST FLOOR SPEAKERS URGED NO CONCESSION ON ARTICLES 2 AND 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION, WHICH ANDREWS AGREED WERE NOT FOR SALE, BUT WOULD BE ON THE TABLE IN STRAND II WITH OTHER ASPECTS OF BRITISH/IRISH RELATIONS INCLUDING THE 1920 ACT. THE CONFERENCE ADOPTED A RESOLUTION AFFIRMING ARTICLES 2 AND 3 'AS THE EXPRESSION OF THE IDEAL OF THE IRISH PEOPLE TO NATIONAL UNITY'.

9. SEE MIFT FOR COMMENT.

BLATHERWICK

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ADDITIONAL 51

NORTHERN IRELAND

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